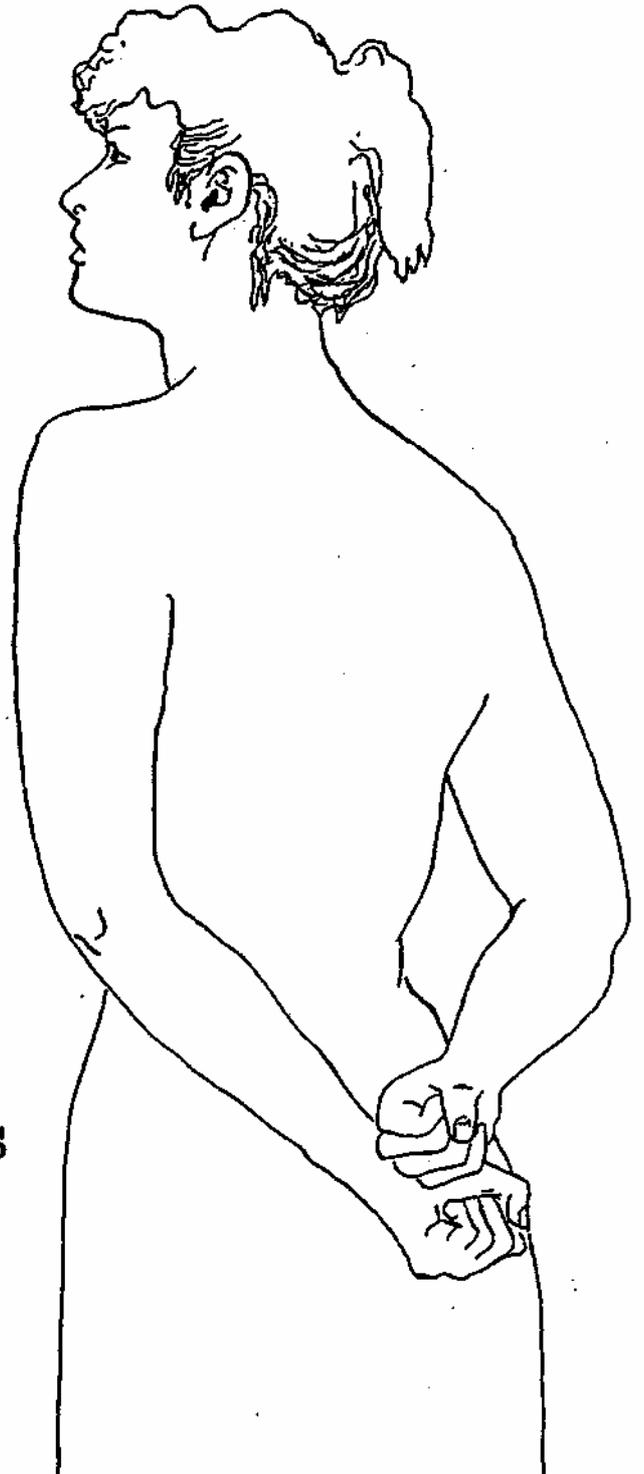


15♀

GROUP



Addressing problems
facing young
women today

Introduction and Aims

The 15+ Group was originally conceived at Treherbert Youth Centre where the then Warden and Deputy Warden were made acutely aware of the fact that teenage girls, once they had left school, began to drift away from the Youth Centre. It seemed that many Youth Centres were unable to provide a venue for their needs. It seemed sad that at a crucial period in the lives of these young women, they were not looking to the Youth Service to address their problems. These needs were consequently discussed and it was realized that what many young women required was an opportunity to further their life skills as women:- a forum where opportunities to discuss problems, obtain information and also most importantly to develop their ideas in an atmosphere that was inviting and relaxed.

Initially, to establish this forum, a workshop in the area of Health and Beauty was planned. While the information giving and learning processes took place, discussions and conversations were encouraged. In this way staff were able to develop an awareness of existing problems, it was hoped that a lead could be obtained for future development, thus planning the way forward. One important device used was that of a suggestion box. This proved very valuable in highlighting main areas of concern, many of which proved to be serious and sensitive issues. Aids, Rape, Sex Education, Family Planning, Abortion and Self Defence are just some of the topics suggested by the members themselves.

Topics had to be tackled in a forthright and comprehensive manner. The young women required accurate and positive information, presented in a sensitive manner, in an atmosphere that would not ridicule their ignorance, nor at the same time be patronising or dictatorial. The suggestion box proved crucial and workshops in Family Planning, Rape and Self Defence, and Drugs and Alcohol Abuse, were later arranged. Plans for other issues raised are in progress.

The aims of the 15+ Group were further clarified - to encourage young women to make conscientious decisions on matters affecting their own lives, thus promoting better life styles.

Each Workshop consisted of a basic framework that was considered adequate to meet its needs. Format and presentation included invited experts to give talks, using audio visual aids, where appropriate. Posters and leaflets were displayed and made freely available, youth workers encouraging and guiding members, giving support and confidence.

While local meetings of the 15+ Group at Treherbert Youth Centre take place regularly, the Workshops are arranged with other Youth Centres and Officers at District level, and are attended by Youth Workers and members from within and outside the District. Curriculum Development Officers have visited with a view to developing similar work within their respective districts.



Health. & Beauty Workshop

Health and Beauty Workshop

March 1987

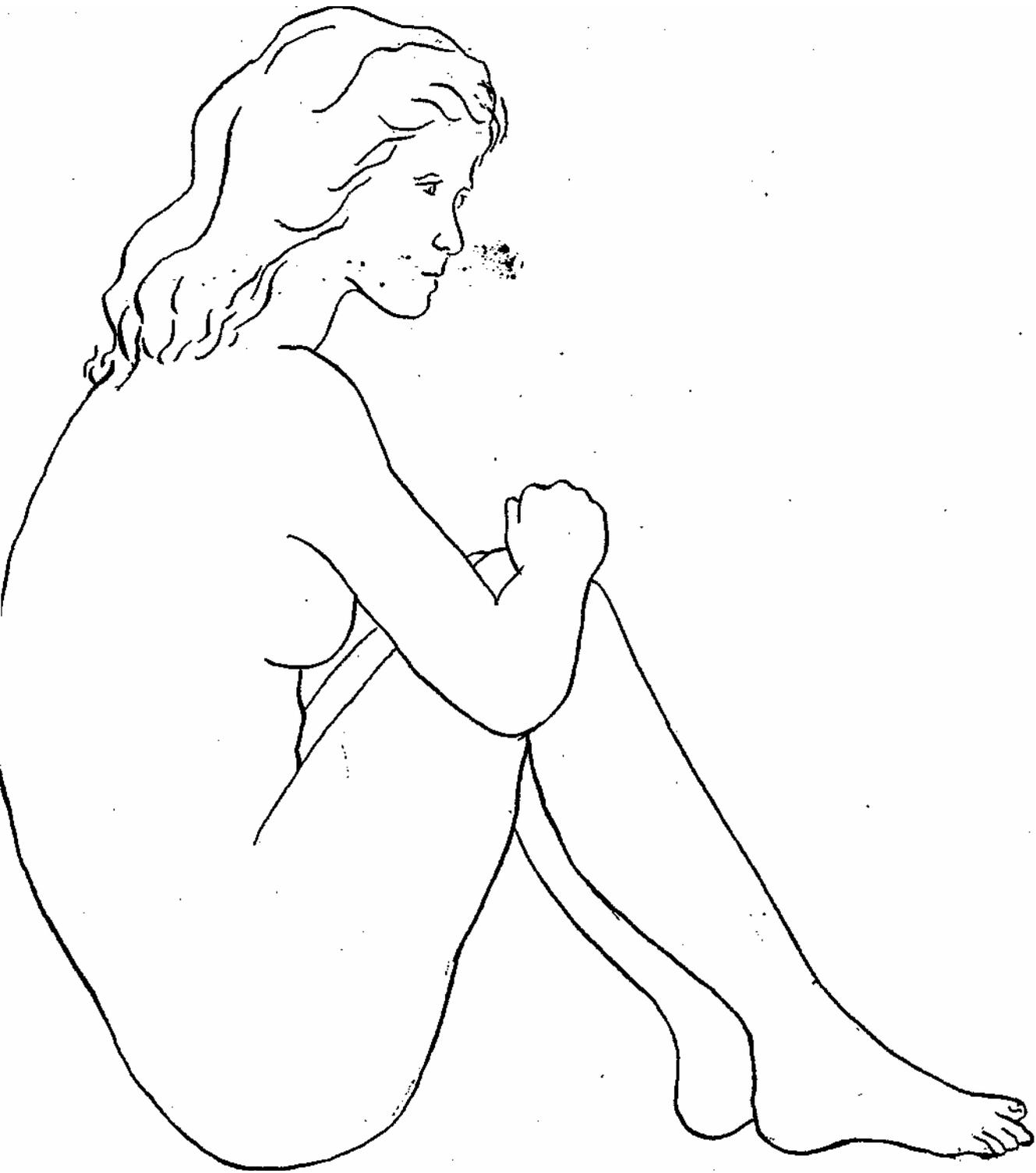
The Health and Beauty Workshop was the first one implemented by the 15+ Group. As stated in the Introduction, it was felt that this would be a good starting point, as it was something that would have wide appeal and attract young women of most persuasions. A poster was produced inviting girls to attend the first meeting.

Eight second year students from Pontypridd Technical College were asked to take part, and agreed to set up four workshops to run simultaneously. These were :- Body Massage, Facial Massage, Make-Up Techniques and Manicure, all using the latest equipment and ideas.

Fifty young women plus staff attended. Those present were invited to act as models and demonstrations were made for the benefit of all. Small groups moved freely between each workshop. and were encouraged to ask questions.

At 9.00 p.m. a light buffet was provided. Girls from Trehafod Youth Centre presented the students with gift tokens and thanked them for an interesting evening. Members were asked to contribute to the first suggestion box with ideas for future subjects for workshops. To help with ideas and to stimulate thoughts on what topics they might be interested, the organisers displayed a poster with the headings - Look After Yourself, Diet and Healthy Eating, Self Defence, Know Your Rights, Family Planning, etc. This first meeting was to prove to be the beginning of a new and interesting era in working with girls in the Rhondda.

A Woman's Choice



A WOMAN'S CHOICE

July 1987

Following the Day Conference on Girls Work at the Polytechnic of Wales on June 6th, 1987, a district team was set up to promote Girls Work in Rhondda - these included Val Evans (now acting Field Officer for Rhondda), Gaynor Satherley (Acting Warden at Treherbert C.Y.C.) Ann Toomey (part-time Warden at Trehafod C.Y.C.) and Rene Carter (Curriculum Development Officer) appointed at end of June.

A Woman's Choice was the title for the next Workshop. Topics dealt with were Family Planning, Women's Health, Well Woman Clinics in the Rhondda and Sexually Transmitted Diseases including Aids.

Three professional people from the Health Education Council were invited to attend:-

Dr. Janet Thomas - Community Health Doctor (working in Well Woman Clinics)

Mrs. Mari Evans - Family Planning Officer and District Nurse
(works in Clinics in Rhondda)

Mrs. Jennifer Grant - District Nurse (Special responsibility for Aids
and other sexually transmitted diseases).

It was decided to invite and encourage as many clubs in the District as possible.

The evening was very successful once again with approximately 50 girls, plus staff present. A full-time Voluntary Centre had joined, and showed an interest in developing Girls Work more definitely in their Club.

Again the evening was arranged and planned in a way that would not be intimidating? but hopefully impart maximum information.

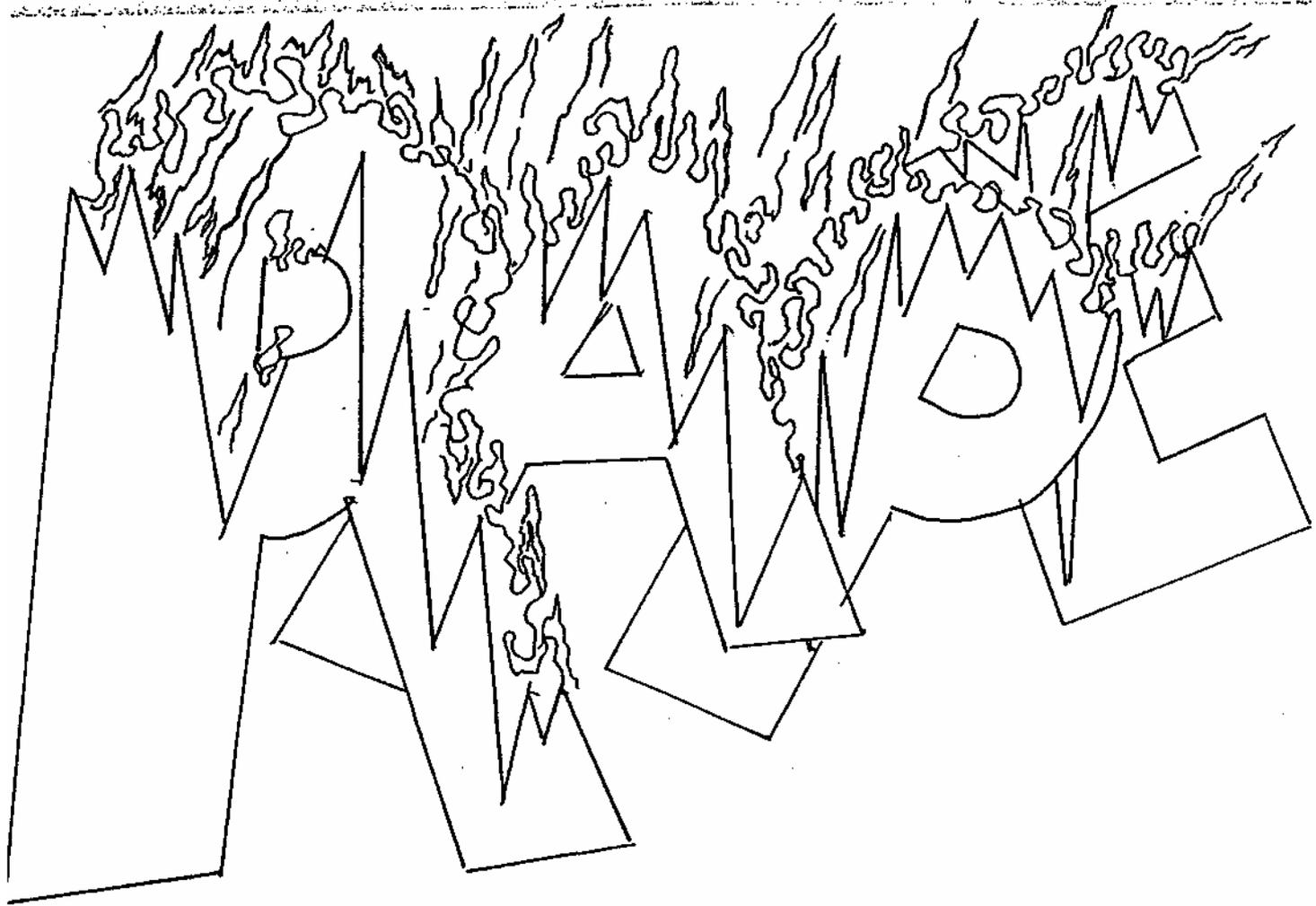
Tables and screens around the walls displayed posters and pamphlets in abundance. One table contained examples of different contraceptive devices and a model of the female reproductive system - all with explanatory notes.

The three guests agreed to circulate around small groups to talk about their own particular specialist area of work, and help with other general information. Each group was accompanied by a youth worker, who helped to break the ice and encourage members to ask questions.

A light buffet was provided by the Host Youth Centre, and small gifts as a token of thanks, presented to the guests.

Some findings and observations by staff from the evening:

- a) Many girls did not know about Well Woman Clinics and thus did not know they could choose to see a Female Doctor if they so wished.
- b) Many girls did not know how to deal with Thrush/Cystitis and were often too shy to admit to being troubled by either of these ailments.
- c) All girls needed more information on Family Planning and needed to discuss problems together, and with their leaders.
- d) All girls needed correct, reliable information, guidance and support and needed to know where to obtain this.



and

SELF DEFENCE

RAPE AND SELF DEFENCE

October 1987

Suggestions for the next workshop after the very successful "A Woman's Choice", came flooding in via the suggestion box. Rape and Self Defence was high on the list of concerns for many.

After discussing the aims of the proposed evening, the Girls Work Team identified the main areas of concern. These were:-

1. To promote an understanding of rape
2. How to avoid ever becoming a victim
3. How to help a victim
4. To examine reasons for the apparent increase in the incidence of sexual crimes.

Approximately 50 staff and members were present, these included visitors from Cynon Valley, Merthyr and Gwent.

Sgt. Cowlin from the Community Liaison Department at Pontypridd Police Station showed a video on how one can protect oneself, wise precautions that can be taken, therefore lowering the risk of attack. She also gave a talk on the Police approach to rape.

Those present were then divided into small discussion groups. Each group elected a writer and a leader. The leader controlled the group and the writer took notes. They were given various questions to discuss relating to the 4 identified aims.

The Self Defence demonstration, which was conducted by two invited experts from Action Sport, proved to be very interesting with girls volunteering to take part in demonstrations.

Later the groups presented their answers to the prepared questions. Sgt. Cowlin in turn gave the experts point of view. She was very helpful with other questions that arose from these talks, reassuring those present that they have the right to refuse any sexual advance, regardless of where one is, or how one is dressed.

Many related issues were raised during the evening including male attitudes as opposed to the female point of view. Information on help for victims was presented and leaflets and crisis telephone numbers made available. The medias role in reflecting attitudes and its sensationalising effects, coupled with a sometimes marked curiosity was presented by displaying newspaper and magazine cutouts. These articles also emphasised the frequency of sexual attacks on primarily women and children.

Time for this workshop was a problem and it was felt that discussions of issues raised could have gone on much longer.

Rennie Carte, Curriculum Development Officer, made up a training pack that was presented to each youth worker. She also researched and presented the evening.

There was very good participation, generating an atmosphere that imbued confidence. This confidence and ability to talk openly within a large group was very encouraging and staff felt that they had helped to arm the young women with a valuable insight into one of Society's more brutal aspects.

2.

At the end of the evening one of the members presented "Thank you" gifts to each of the guests.

Members of the Girls Workteam had previously visited Blaenau Gwent, to talk to other youth workers about girls work in Mid Glamorgan. (This was a request from Muriel Howells, Deputy County Further Education Officer)

Evaluation - Rape and Self Defence

1. Did you enjoy the evening Yes 100% No -
2. How did it rate in enjoyment?
A night out
An enjoyable evening -
An enjoyable and informative evening - 100%
3. What did you find most useful/enjoyable?
Police information 76.4%
Self Defence 94.1%
Personal Plan 49.9%
Group Talking 85.2%
4. What skills did you develop?
Listening 41.1%
Talking 20.5%
Writing 2.9%
Making decisions 41.1%
Considering other points of view 67.6%
Giving your point of view 70.5%
Working in a group 85.2%
5. I would like to attend another course.
Yes - 97% Abstain 2.9%
6. Suggestion for Future Workshops
Aids and STD. 23.5% N.S.P.C.C. on Child Abuse 11.7%
Rape 2.9% Know your rights 20.5%
Fashion/Hair Care 5.8% Family Planning 11.7%
Careers 11.7% Sexism 2.9%
Drugs & Alcohol Abuse 32.0%

Evaluation of the Rape and Self Defence workshop shows that all young women that attended had an enjoyable and informative evening.

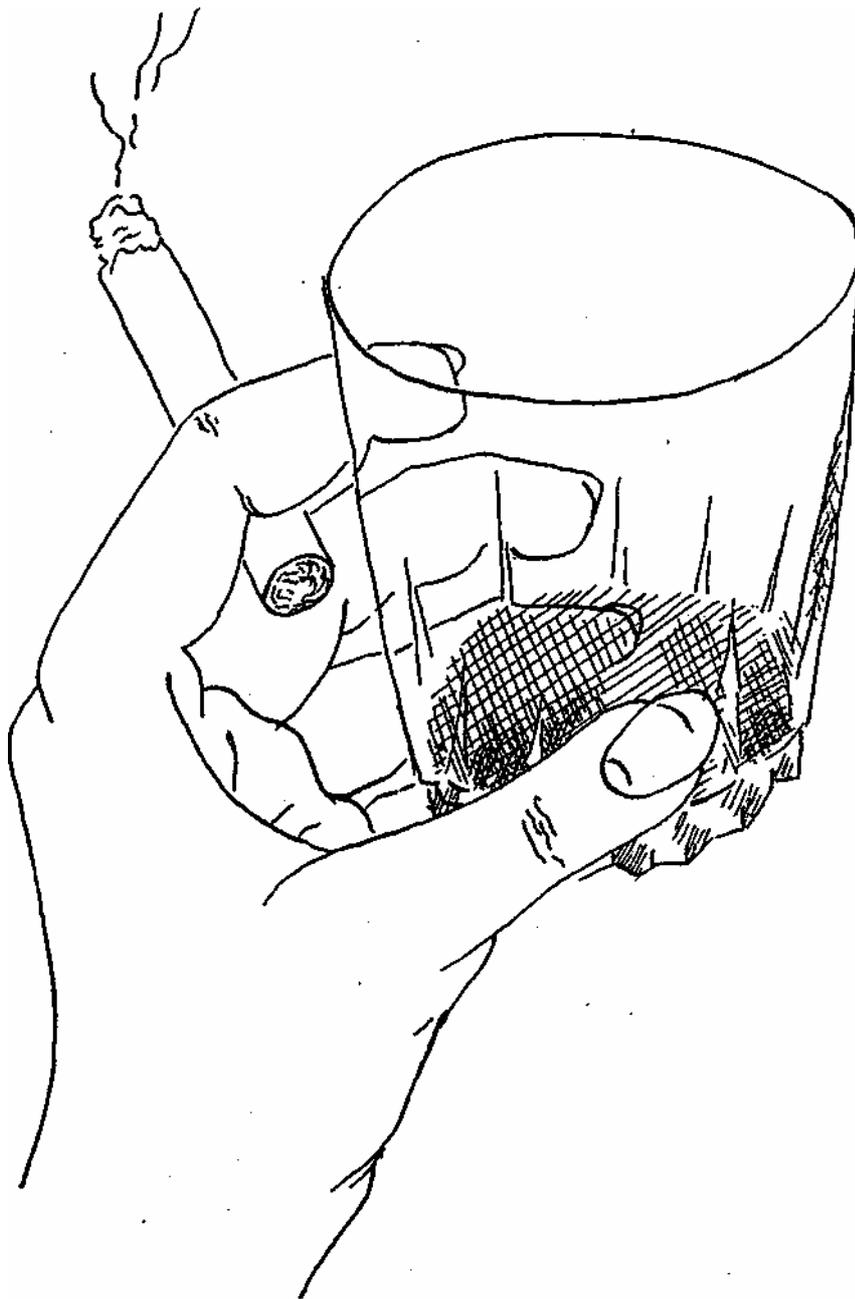
Self Defence was the most popular aspect of the night, although I feel that it should be made quite clear in future workshops, that this is only a demonstration of what can be achieved by attending classes, and of the confidence women can gain in knowing that they too have physical strengths that can be trained and used against an attacker.

Group work and talking is essential as identification with peers, and recognition of problems is very rewarding and constructive. The young women always appreciate the opportunity to hear first hand information from 'experts' and the chance to ask direct questions, without fear of reproach, is extremely valuable to their learning and development in coping with problems.

Writing skills were not developed to a great extent - I feel that the primary form of expression on these occasions is essentially verbal, and that as verbal skills develop, so other forms of self expression may follow as need arises. One way forward to develop writing skills as a means of expression in young women, could be a writing workshop. Girls, drawing on, and writing about their own experiences of being a young female in Rhondda Today.

S. Davies.

Drug and Alcohol Abuse



Drugs and Alcohol Abuse

February 1987

"Drugs and alcohol Abuse - and their effect on the young female body", was the agreed topic of the next workshop.

Sue Birchell of SWAPA (Heather Holloway and Ann Allen of SWAPA attended on the night), Dr. D. Kessel and Mrs. Colleen Thomas from Hensol Hospital and Mrs. Lynwen Williams, the Drugs Advisory Officer of Mid Glamorgan, were the invited experts. They were heavily involved in the planning stages and their advice and support was indispensable both before and during the workshop.

Others present were members from various Rhondda County Youth Centres (full-time and part-time) plus staff.

The plan for the evening was that small groups rotated around 4 district areas.

These were:- Area A. Mrs. Lynwen Williams who produced a pairing game about drugs and their effects, followed by a lecture/discussion of these drugs in more detail.

Area B. SWAPA introduced themselves to the client group and explained about the work they did. There followed a discussion on what type of people use drugs and their needs. An excerpt of a video was also shown of a young woman addicted to hard drugs and her consequent social and physical decline, and its effect on her young child.

Area C. Dr. Kessel explained to each group in turn the physical properties of alcohol and how long the liver takes to break down one unit of alcohol. The unit system of measuring alcohol was graphically described by a game in which each participant represented a unit of alcohol, and numbers placed on the floor, represented a clock. A hypothetical situation was envisaged of a person's alcoholic consumption during the course of a day. It soon became clear that alcohol remains in the body long after one has stopped drinking.

Area D. Mrs. Colleen Thomas looked at alcohol and its other long term and short term effects (social and physical). Reasons why people drink were also looked at and discussed.

The four areas, once covered, were followed by a feed-back session with staff and members. Each member was asked to contribute to the suggestion box with ideas for future workshops. Leaflets on drug and alcohol abuse were made available, along with a diagram describing the unit measuring system described by Dr. Kessel.

Once initial inhibitions had been overcome, groups participated fully and tutors remarked on the mature attitude of all the young women present. In Area A, a high success rate was achieved, during the pairing card game, demonstrating an already considerable knowledge of drug abuse.

Careful planning and consultation for the event had been worthwhile for its successful outcome and good response from members. At the end of the evening special thanks went to Maerdy Youth Centre, where the workshop took place, and all the invited experts.

Choices for Life



Choice For Life

May. 1988

After careful consideration of responses from Workshops and the suggestion box, the 15+ group next Workshop was one that looked at the difficult decisions that many young women are faced with at some time in their lives. These choices can affect their health, both mental and physical, and the decisions that they make have repercussions lasting the rest of their lives, for better or worse. It was also felt that there is a need to emphasise to young women that they do have these choices, and that they can change the course of their lives in a constructive way.

Present at the Workshop were Nurse Marie Evans, Family Planning Officer and District Nurse, and Dr. Janet Thomas, Community Health Doctor, both of whom have contributed to an earlier workshop - "A Woman's Choice". They both consider the needs of the young to be of prime importance, and have wide experience dealing with health problems in a sensitive manner. Many staff and members from various Youth Centres in the district were present, plus representations from voluntary groups in the area.

Staff briefing for the Workshop was as follows:-

"Society today is very different from yesterday. There are many choices to be made considering the problems of alcohol, smoking, drugs, eating the "right food" and slimming. There are changes in family life, one parent families and divorces are prevalent. Pregnancy is on the increase for under sixteen year olds. Is this because of changing attitudes, social influences, or lack of health and sex education? Does this highlight other related issues of relationships, leaving home and managing on a tight budget?

Does the threat of Aids influence our choices? What other influences are there because of attitudes and moral standards? Considering boy/girl relationships, what are the realities of life in the cold light of day, compared to the passions of first love. Pregnancy and contraception will be key issues which will effect a young persons' life and for advice on these choices there will be two extremely experienced specialists who have the interests of young girls very close to their hearts".

A collage depicting the influences on a young woman and how young people saw themselves was produced by two groups of girls from Treherbert and Wattstown Youth Centres as a graphic way of showing outside influences that can affect us, thus leading us on to the need to make choices that can improve our lives, or can have a destructive effect, depending on which way we turn - which choices we make.

An ice breaking exercise was employed. Those present were given a list of questions that they asked each other. After introducing themselves to a fellow member, they had to ask the same question until they got an affirmative answer from another person - in this way everyone had an opportunity to meet and talk to everyone else.

To form into groups they were asked to select a piece of card with part of a picture on it. Those with matching parts of their picture, formed a group. They were 5 groups. Each group was given a "case study" to discuss the health choices available to that individual young woman.

They were :-

Karen She did well at school and has a very good job. She has lost
----- her boyfriend. . All her friends are getting married. She
also wants children.

Laura She has been going steady with Dave for six months. She is 16. They want to sleep together, although they don't have many opportunities to be alone.

Julie You get on well with Julie. She tells you about the latest men in her life. She is usually very bubbly, today she is worried. She has missed her period, if pregnant, she can't be sure who the father is.

Jackie Has a little girl. She has maintenance money from the father, but he has nothing else to do with the child. She tried living on her own, it was too expensive. She now lives with her parents. Jackie feels that she is still young enough to enjoy life.

Joanne She is friendly and popular. At parties Joanne can always be found drinking someone under the table. She never gets home before 12 noon on these occasions.

The discussions within the groups were open and informal. The tutors guiding and helping to encourage and balance the group. Dr. Thomas and Nurse Evans introduced themselves to each group, helping them with information and generally stimulating discussion.

Once the case studies had been completed with much debate and consideration, each group reported its findings to all the groups present. The guests commented and talked about the evenings work, drawing on their professional views and expertise. There then followed a plenary session that included everyone.

The evening was very successful in achieving its aims of emphasising the choices a young woman has to make in the course of her life.

Many other issues were "touched on" and would benefit from further discussions. Among them was feeling, attitudes and relationships with partners, abortion, health care during pregnancy and a need to understand oneself.

It must be realised that these are girls choices, and that she has a right to sexual relationships if she chooses, and also a right not to have sexual relationships.

We cannot put an "old head on young shoulders" but we can open up the channels for discussions, for self development, assertiveness, peer group understanding, self expression and skills of communication. Through the 15+ Workshops, we are able to aim at confidence building, aided by increased knowledge and professional guidance from specialists.

Evaluation
Choices for Life

Enjoyment of evening.

O.K. 8.6% Good 52.1% Very Good 39.1%

What did you enjoy most?

Talking	31.7%
Discussion	39.1%
Mixing	13.0%
Everything	4.3%
Talking to experts	4.3%
Asking questions	4.3%

What would you like to know more about?

Discussions	4.3%
Boys taking part	4.3%
Child birth and teenage mothers	4.3%
Health	8.6%
Drugs and Alcohol	8.6%
V.D.	4.3%
How to set up a 13+ group at Penrhys.	4.3%
Choices for Life	4.3%

Which skills did you develop?

Listening	56.5%
Talking	65.2%
Writing	13.0%
Making decisions	78.2%
Considering other peoples points of view	82.6%
Giving your point of view	65.2%
Working in a group	95.6%

Suggestions for other topics you would like to discuss?

Army (Military Services)	4.3%
Women in a mans world	4-3%
Why boys were not allowed to join in.	8.6%
School girl pregnancy	17-3%
What can lead to prostitution?	4.3%
Careers	13%
Drugs and Alcohol Abuse	13%
More work with Dr. Thomas	4-3%
Child abuse/incest	13%
Runaways	4.3%
3rd World Countries	4.3%
Aids	4.3%
Pressure of Examinations	8.6%
Family Problems.	4.3%
Children in Care	

Would you like to talk more about what you have learned tonight at your own Y.C.

Yes about sexual relationships	4.3%
Yes	60.8%
No	30.4%

Rather discuss with people : I

Don't know 17.3%

The evening was greatly enjoyed by the majority in attendance.

Talking and discussing issues was enjoyed and considered most important. They also enjoyed meeting new people. Most felt they had gained experience and developed skills in considering other peoples point of view, working in a group, making decisions and giving their point of view. Very few felt they had developed writing skills.

Women's Health issues, sex education and pregnancy were still top of the list of topics that they required more information about. They were also interested in learning more about careers for women. Being able to talk to experts in a relaxed informal environment also seemed much appreciated.

Findings show that group work is very much the way to continue and develop. Evaluation results showed that 95.6% (the highest score) felt they had developed skills in this area, and as already stated, the evening was considered "good" and "very good" by 91.2% (8.6% said it was "O.K.").

Summary

Feed back from members and staff continues to be very important for future development. By analysing what happened in each workshop, it is possible to determine whether or not objectives were achieved. (What went wrong? What went off well? Where could we improve? And so on). Staff are concerned about talking to and noting reactions from members of the group. The group members are encouraged not to be passive, to contribute ideas and are involved in the democratic development of the 15+ group.

Suggestions for future workshops made at the Drugs and Alcohol Abuse workshop were wide and varied:-

Jobs for Women	Aid/Sexually transmitted diseases
Under-age sex	Child care
Contraception	Child Abuse
	Black Magic/Spiritualism
Old Age neglect	Bullying
Abortion	Vandalism
Prejudice	Drink/driving
Divorce	Justice and the Courts (Borstal)
Rape	Yuppies
Self Defence	Sex Education
Cruelty to animals.	

Suggested topics that continue to come up as a priority are Aids, Prejudice (Racialism, etc.), Abortion and Contraception. It must be noted that as the 15+ group progresses, so new members will continue to join and there will be a need for workshops to be repeated for the benefit of these new members.

Some suggestions made by members can be tackled with appropriate planning and research by youth workers, although they frequently require professional help in more specialised areas. To date, all professional help has been given with great enthusiasm and regard for the client group and has been much appreciated by all recipients.

A natural development from the 15+ group is work with young men. How they relate to women in society, in their homes, and their expectations of relationships with women. Helping them to become more sensitive and aware of their feeling towards other men and women in their lives, and to appreciate that issues such as family planning, rape, and abortion are not issues that just effect women.

On 22.11.87 a Day Conference at Treforest Polytechnical College set out to evaluate work with young women. Responses to the days work were varied, but most reflected a positive need to continue, and to develop an all embracing strategy that would not leave areas within the county isolated. The need for further staff training was also recognised.