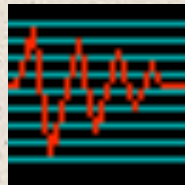# GROWING TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE

Teenagers and Health

Sheila Caldecott

Decisions for Parents

➢ When do I let go?

➢ When do they take over?

➢ When do they see Health Professionals on their own?

➢ How do I get them to that position?

➢ How can I support my child with health matters?

Parents Role

From birth we are continually teaching our children how to manage their health by

➢ Example

➢ Training

➢ Giving them tasks to complete themselves

➢ Allowing degrees of independence suitable to their changing abilities

➢ Continuing to support them in their independence

Managing Record Access

➢ I was given internet access to my medical records

➢ My 13 year old was interested and I showed him how it worked

➢ He asked about accessing his record

➢ I assessed him as being mature enough with parental support

➢ We both discussed the benefits and issues at length with our GP who also assessed his abilities and maturity before agreeing

How we managed

➢ Initially he was given access to a CD containing his medical records which we looked at together

➢ Then he was given internet access online – as a parent I also had access to his records

➢ Our GP and myself continued to support him

➢ At 14 yrs together we assessed his ability as being fully competent for him to manage his own records

➢ As a parent I don't have access to his records now but along with his GP I am still there to support, answer questions and prompt as required

What I found As a Parent

➢ My child looks at his records in the same way as any adult would, there was no obsession and he had an excellent knowledge of confidentiality issues and internet safety – perhaps better than my own

➢ It improved his own health management and knowledge. He makes healthy food choices, and keeps fit outside school

➢ He still needs prompting to make/follow/remember appointments but is able to make his own online

➢ He was able to see the Practice Nurse, GP, Optician and Dentist on his own while I stayed in the waiting room

➢ For health information he chooses Wikipedia if he wants to know anything, checks the verification of the source of information. If he needs to know more he uses the GP website links, NHS direct or asks to see his GP or Practice Nurse

➢ As a parent I feel confident that he has established a good relationship with his GP and that he is confident in asking questions, obtaining information, following health care instructions and beginning to make health choices and decisions for himself

What were his issues
for having record access

➢ He had the same name and date of birth as another local patient – it will always be in his best interest to be able to check that the information in his medical records is related to him – he is also the best place person to do this

➢ He has medical problems with his eyes and feet which were not picked up in screening at a younger age – both conditions were hard to spot and can lead to further problems/disability if left unmanaged – he is able and aware of their management and able to pass this information on to other future health care medical practitioners

➢ It helps him to manage his general health and health knowledge – likes to keep informed and up to date - also promotes understanding of other peoples health issues which in turn promotes more social acceptance and understanding of disability and mental health issues in society

➢ He will have to manage his own health fairly soon anyway - if away from home at university, college or now that he is older longer school trips abroad – it was better for him to do this in gradual stages now rather than having a sudden cut off as there will be so many other new things to get used to at that time

What Teenage Health Issues?

We wanted to find out so produced a short form

- ➢ Aimed at secondary school and sixth form students (11 – 18)

- ➢ Who are they? Do gender or age needs vary?
- ➢ Anonymous – asking just age and gender

- ➢ Asking the 5 questions stated with yes/no or tick box answers

  - ➢ **Which NHS services do teenagers use?**
  - ➢ **Are they already searching health information sites. If so which ones?**
  - ➢ **What is the best way of getting messages across to them? (Preferences)**
  - ➢ **What health information /help do they want and what do they need?**
  - ➢ **In what format?**

  - ➢ When do they get to speak for themselves as a user group?
- ➢ Giving them space on the form and an invitation to give their views, ideas, questions and suggestions

Thank you for listening

Any Questions?