

Using books & magazines to tackle health inequalities

'The real challenge is that people don't want to hear messages from government on television campaigns. But people will listen to messages in lifestyle magazines'
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How to make people want to read about health

Consistently around 35-40% of the target population highlighted in the Sunderland research listed books as an interest. There is therefore an opportunity to reach a sizable number of people with health content through this medium. Of course the readability and kind of book varies from group to group. In some groups the language may be quite simple. Overall, in Britain 'at least 15% of adults have literacy skills at only the most rudimentary level - making it difficult for them to cope with the rising skill demands of the information age.'² So the best approach may be to keep any writing simple and to supplement it with other formats e.g. music.

Local research may find that different genres of books appeal to different groups. Perhaps local libraries could help here. Romantic fiction however is particularly popular.

Magazines are another way of reaching key target groups. How the health content of these can be focused can be seen later in the chapter. A feature of many magazines worth highlighting because of their popularity in the research is crosswords and puzzles. Health education needs to consider making more use of these formats. See later in the chapter for ideas on this subject.

Graphic novels for younger people are another possibility. These are covered on in this chapter too.

'Few annual reports can have achieved as much interest as *Bethan's Story*... The annual report, in the form of a paperback novel, essentially followed the life of 15 year old Bethan, a fictional character whose brushes with local health services were used as lead-ins for factual information.'

'Bethan got pregnant by her drug-abusing boyfriend – yes, very *Trainspotting*', grins Dr Donnelly. 'Then her father is involved in a tanker accident. I suppose it was like a bad episode of *Brookside*, but it had a major impact. People actually wanted to read it.'

Bethan's Story was produced by Dr Peter Donnelly, the Director of Public Health for Iechyd Morgannwg in Swansea. ³

Public health: File under fiction

The Mosaic research singles out romantic fiction as a popular genre. Around 30% of the population in the Sunderland groups read it. Figures from America would suggest that around 80% of these are likely to be women.⁴ This could mean almost 50% of all local women in Sunderland read a form of romantic fiction. However they may not all read the

same kind of titles, as the style has many subgenres from traditional Mills & Boon to Chick Lit.

In Mexico, public health workers have used light fiction as an educational tool.⁵ Health promoters noticed that sex workers were keen readers of novellas. They worked with writers and the women themselves. They came up with plots and characters that would both appeal to the women and help them in their daily lives. More specifically they created dialogue that they could use if clients were pressuring them to have unsafe sex.

UK health workers could produce fiction with groups of women on issues around mental health, sexual health, childcare, stop smoking or obesity. Perhaps healthy recipes could even be built into some stories. The book or short story would need to follow all the rules of the genre and be easy to read. If a target group was identified, the appropriate subgenre of romantic fiction could be worked out. Local libraries and shops may be able to help here, as well as the target group themselves. The story should be written by a professional writer. The Romantic Novelist Association could perhaps suggest someone. (Their website is at www.rna-uk.org/.)

If public health was a book it would be a best selling blockbuster: Sex, the struggle against poverty, drugs, unintended pregnancy, sport, early death, a fight against good and evil. Nobody could put it down! Instead too often it is one of those leaflets we continue to churn out that make the Telephone Directory look like an exciting read. ⁶

Earlier, I questioned how many people are interested in health. However many people pay good money to see 'health' topics explored in books, TV programmes and films. The challenge is to move people from a vicarious interest in health topics to them changing how they live.

Commissioners would need to be able to ask potential fiction writers the right questions before commissioning them. The below titles may help in this process.

- *Writing Romantic Fiction* by Daphne Clair and Robyn Donald ⁷
- *How To Write Romances* by Phyllis Taylor Pianka ⁸

Aspects of the theory of story-telling are also briskly covered in the section on musicals in the previous chapter. (Topics such as how to use structures such as myth however are not covered there.) Resist the temptation to turn the story into an 'information dump'. The health content must flow naturally out of the plot and characters.

Non-fiction books may reach certain target groups. Dr. Ian Banks worked with the publisher Hayes to produce health books in the format of car maintenance manuals. By early 2005, 180,000 copies of the edition on male health had been sold. ⁹

In some parts of the country, books on prescription scheme exist. These are sometimes partnerships between libraries and the NHS. Specific stock is bought on topics such as depression. Health specialists can then suggest that certain patients might benefit from reading these books.¹⁰ Specially commissioned novels however might also tie in well with this approach.

As well as the normal health campaign dates, World Book Day in March might be a good time to get publicity for a project launch.

'People will listen to messages in health magazines'

Mosaic data can also be used to see how popular magazines are with different target groups. As mentioned earlier the Department of Health has already commissioned Dr Foster to produce a number of magazines in a popular style. They focus on three different target groups

- *Your Life!* is aimed at women aged 18-35 in disadvantaged groups
- *Fit* focuses on men aged 18-35 in disadvantaged groups
- *Prime* is aimed at people of both sexes aged over 40

"I was a smoker and (*Your Life!*) has helped me give up. It's been hard and there have been temptations, but Holly Aird's story really helped as she went through the same scenario at home with her son as I did. My four year old daughter was making comments about my smoking which scared me"

*Writing for the public only appears to be top-down. It's actually bottom up. You cannot make anyone read anything, only entice them to. This means writing in a way that they want to read. This is communication. Anything else, such as simply publishing what you think they should read, is merely printing. This feedback from reader Jackie Carlyon quoted in an early evaluation suggests that '*Your Life!*' was successful in this.¹¹*

The national pilot of *Your Life!* was evaluated using in-depth interviews. This found that

- 90% of readers liked the magazine and found it accessible
- 86% found the information it contained useful or very useful
- 67% said they had already changed their behaviour as a result of reading the magazine or planned to do so
- Among these 67%, the most popular behavioural changes were
 - Improved diet/weight loss (60%)
 - Increased exercise (40%)
 - Stopped smoking (25%)

How to reach your 'hard to reach' group

If research shows that a target group read and take notice of magazines, then the next step is to find out what style they like. Sometimes however it may be necessary to produce a publication for everybody in an area e.g. an annual report in a magazine format. Looking at national statistics from the newspaper market about half of people read papers like the *Sun*, *Star* or *Mirror*. About a quarter read mid-market papers like the *Mail* and *Express*. Less than a quarter read the 'qualities'.¹² It may make sense then if targeting a large area to go for a style like the *Mirror* or *Sun*.

The issue of balancing being like a commercial magazine whilst still influencing the target audience is the key to successful health outcomes. Commercial magazines may be tempted to simply pamper to their audiences. If they try to change them too much, their

readership and profits may go down. Public health however, like advertisers, has its own agenda. This is often to change behaviour. (Sometimes of course it may to reinforce existing behaviour.) Public health workers need to research their target audience if they are influence them. The questions to ask are

- What would make them read the publication?
- What approach would get them to change their behaviour?
- Where are they on the cycle of change?

The AIDA model can be applied to written materials, as it can most other means of communication. It stresses

- Attracting attention
- Keeping interest
- Creating desire
- Enabling action

Fortunately there has been a lot written about how to do all this by magazine and advertising specialists. The next few pages cover attention and interest. After this the focus shifts to desire and action.

Getting attention and maintaining interest: Learn from professional writers

Attracting attention and keeping interest is partly about content. It is important to engage the reader by tying in with one of their deep felt issues. This could be a local issue such as the health hazards on a local beach. It could be something lighter such

Writing for the public is different from writing for teachers or lecturers. They were paid to read what you'd written. Indeed they might get sacked if they didn't. The public have to *want* to read your words. They must interest or entertain them.

Academic writing also often encourages people to use long-winded language to sound 'impressive' or to meet a specific word target. The rules are quite different when writing for the public.

as fashion. This can then be linked to health e.g. attractive sun safety clothing. It is not just about content however as the look, length of article and choice of language are all important. Get this wrong and people still will not pick up the magazine in the first place or will soon put it down.

Pitch your writing at the right reading level ¹³

- Make it easy for readers and use plain English
- Choose words learnt early in life
- Stick to one thought per paragraph
- Keep sentences to 20-25 words maximum but vary their length

Create a relationship with the readers

Find out if they want the writer to come across as a wise relative, an expert, an equal, or some other figure.

Make the most of how people read a page

Research shows that people read magazine advertisements in a particular order.¹⁴ Readers

- 1) First scan the picture
- 2) Then look at the headline
- 3) Then go to the caption under the picture if there is one
- 5) Then look at other details such as cross-headings or smaller illustrations
- 6) Then read the main body text

It is worth therefore making points 1-5 as interesting and informative as possible. This increases the chances that the reader gets as far as reading the main text. (Even if they do not, they may get some information or a positive impression from the little they do read.)

Think about how to structure the article

Articles can be sequenced in a number of different ways. ¹⁵ These include

- In order of importance
- By what happened when or what steps to follow
- By presenting the problem and then the solution
- In terms of who, what, where, why and how (though not necessarily in that order)
- By describing the benefits and costs
- By simple to complex e.g. in a health science article for lay people
- By starting with the big picture and then moving to the detail or vice versa
- In groups e.g. an article on an organisation might be by departments

Magazine articles are generally put together in a particular way. ¹⁶ They often contain

- A headline
- The writer's name
- A stand first (separate introduction line away from main text)
- Paragraph titles
- Pull quotes (those short quotes taken from the main text)
- One or more illustrations
- Captions (that add to the picture, not just describe it)
- Fact files are becoming common too. For magazines these are better than footnotes. Keep references to a minimum.



Professional magazine writers try to reward their readers as often as possible to keep them interested. This could be with exciting headlines, fact boxes etc.(a)

Know the ‘tricks’ to interest readers and keep them interested ^{17, 18}

- Use descriptive headlines e.g. ‘We Can Reduce Your Tax’ not ‘Tax’. A tip from advertisers is to use ‘why’ in headlines e.g. ‘Why Sue Gets The Boys And Kate Can’t’ (with a picture of a couple kissing, for an advert about giving up smoking). Alternatively consider using ‘how’ e.g. ‘How To Enjoy Safer Sex. ‘12 Top Tips’ or ‘10 Golden Rules’ may also get people’s attention.
- Good headlines are particularly important on the cover of a magazine. If readers do not pick up the publication in the first place there is no chance of engaging them about health. The choice of image is also vital. (This is covered in one of the later sections)
- Keep things concrete rather than go into abstract theory
- Use case studies of people to maintain the human interest angle
- Make the article interactive by giving readers a phone number or email address to contact for more information or a chance to reply

Keep the grammar simple

Stick to full-stops and commas unless you know the audience have a good grasp of grammar.

Link your health articles to topics that you know interest readers

For example:

- Accidents
Changing Rooms Meets Casualty
(DIY accidents)
- Alcohol
Drinking To Good Health
(Benefits and otherwise of alcohol)
- Cancer
Fashions To Die For – And Live For
(Sun safety)
- Children
iPods – Are They Good Or Bad For Your Kids
(Messages in songs, benefits of dancing, hearing damage etc.)
- Diet
Want The Perfect Picnic?
(Also includes sun safety and physical activity)
- Drugs
Surviving Christmas Parties
- Emergency resuscitation
Avoid Dying At The Match
- Health Inequalities
Monopoly: Where Would Your House Be On The Board?
(An area could be divided up by income like the real Monopoly. The link to health status could then be explained.)
- Mental Health
Stress: What You Can Learn From Dogs and Goldfish
- Physical Activity
Where To Go If It Chucks It Down All Summer
- Sexual Health
The Ten Most Romantic Places Locally

(Family planning clinics could slip in at number 10)

- Smoking
Spring Sales: Dresses Not Smoking Will Buy You
- Workplace Health
Scrooge: What He'd Make Of Today's Workplace
(Christmas article on health at work)

Celebrities may be happy to talk about issues, like their kids' health, for nothing for a good cause like an NHS magazine. Otherwise quote them from other sources as long as they are reliable. Photographs may be expensive, so consider getting someone to do a cartoon or line drawing.

The other way to use celebrities is to prepare general articles in advance. Then drop in information about the celebrity who is in the news that day. Celebrities are often in the news for stories connected with drugs, alcohol, stress, weight or sex. These all offer opportunities for health education.

There is more on using celebrities in the chapter on music.

Layout: Keep it simple

- Software packages like *Microsoft Publisher* are useful for providing templates
- On the whole stick to the columns and do not write across them. However occasionally breaking this rule by having quotes go across two or three columns can be very effective ¹⁹

A picture is worth a thousand words – but are they the right words? ²⁰

- What kind of pictures are the audience used to, ones that reassure, shock or educate?
- Don't forget the human interest angle. If possible try and have a person somewhere in the picture
- Try and get clutter out of the picture before you take it, e.g. bags etc
- Crop the picture to get the details you want
- Think about what's in the background and foreground. What do they say? Books for example might say 'expert' or 'ivory tower' depending on the readership
- Be wary when providing a photo for an article someone else is writing. They may give it a caption with a negative spin
- The caption should add something extra, that you cannot get from the picture alone, e.g. a name or context. Also remember that people read the captions before the main text. This is a chance to give them key information or a reason to read on
- Print quality is measured in dpi or dots per square inch. Anecdotally pictures in magazines need to be of a quality of 300 dpi. For papers 150 dpi is OK ²¹

Writing involves at least two people: Find an editor

- Get one or more people to check the piece once it is written. Tell them about the background to why the piece is being written. Be clear what the feedback is on. Different people may be better on editing advice about the content, the grammar, the style, the structure etc
- The writer needs to go through the piece and highlight where the key ideas are that need to be got across. They should be mainly at the beginning, but all paragraphs should have some in. (If some don't, consider deleting them.)
- Go to <http://juicystudio.com/services/readability.php> for readability tests

- Keep anything that has been edited out. It may come in handy another time

Creating desire and ensuring action ²²

- To create a desire in the readers for change requires good social market research. What stops them from behaving healthily? What would help them to change? The answers may be about focusing on the benefits as perceived by the reader of changing. This may not be the same as the health benefits. So as a hypothetical example, people may want to get fitter to keep up with their grandchildren rather than to be healthier
- The magazine should have a personality or image so as to build up an ongoing relationship with readers. By doing research to create the right personality they can relate to, writers and readers can create a shared agenda to move forward with together
- People are generally interested in a service or message only in as much as it helps them in their lives. Focus everything on them
- Advertisers have broken down the possible interest to the reader into a number of categories. These are given below with examples from sexual health:
 - The benefit of the new behaviour or a service, e.g. peace of mind, health
 - The attributes of the service, e.g. reliable, confidential etc
 - The values attached to the behaviour or service, e.g. is carrying condoms seen as being sensible, immoral or daring
 - That the user is part of a group e.g. using contraceptive services may be linked with being an adult
 - The role of the user, e.g. loving partner is different from being a 'lad on the pull'.

Articles are more likely to create a desire for change in the reader if they focus on one or more of the above.

- Try to turn facts into personal experience to make them feel more relevant. Teenagers in particular respond to personal stories
- There should be a promise in the article. Make sure the information given is something the reader can actually use and benefit from. An example could be what to do if someone is thinking of having sex. However, do not dictate to people what they should do
- In terms of the action phase of AIDA, magazines often give contact information at the end of articles. It may also be useful if articles address all the legs of the three legged stool model, i.e. information, attitudes/feelings and skills

Pre-testing and evaluation

As well as double checking all the above guidelines at the editing stage, get the views of the target reader. One problem here is that if someone is asked or paid to read something, they probably will read it. In real life of course, they may not have even picked it up or may have only looked at it for a few seconds. Try and work out ways to get round this. Perhaps give people a range of materials on similar topics to pick up and not just the magazine being pre-tested. Ask them which they would pick up first and which not at all. Find out why. What can be learnt from this, in terms of the pre-testing?

Also try asking people to look at a page and say whether they would read it or just turn over. Ask them to mark where they got bored on the page and skipped on. Then talk to them about why they made these decisions. These approaches appear undeveloped in the NHS ²³. It may be worth discussing sharing any findings with the Patient Information

Forum (www.pifonline.org.uk/) Alternatively try to join the HP-Resources network (www.mailtalk.ac.uk/)

Commercial magazines often use competitions as a way of seeing how many readers are actively engaging with their publications. This is probably even more important in a publication which is free.

Test the magazine out with people who it is not aimed at too if they are likely to see it. A classic error was made by the Health Education Authority in 1988 with its press advertising around AIDS. They placed an advert that asked ‘What is the difference between HIV and AIDS?’ and gave the answer ‘Time’. This pre-tested well but when it ran, upset many people who had HIV. The campaign was soon dropped.²⁴

Also check that all the magazines that have been given to GPs, supermarkets etc have actually been taken by the public.

“We displayed more than 3,000 copies on all of our checkouts and all the copies have been taken”

This is a comment from an Asda checkout manager about ‘Your Life!’²⁵ It’s not only the content and style of the magazine that matter. Where to give it out is also important. Good social market research will answer all the questions about where to distribute a successful magazine. Mosaic data can also be used to mail it to people’s homes. However, make sure it does not fall into the hands of anyone it might offend or prepare a response in advance. Sexual health information for young people is probably the most likely topic to offend other groups.

(Many of the tips mentioned for magazines also apply to websites. Most NHS sites target people who are already interested in health. To reach those who are not, how about a ‘What’s on?’ site? This could include features on where to eat out locally, DIY tips on bank holidays, where to take the kids over the summer holidays, what’s on TV etc. These could be linked to health information as long as this was not too blatant. The site could also include a ‘What’s in the news?’ section. This could include celebrity and general news with a slight health slant.)

Crosswords, puzzles and competitions can be a winner for health

This paper stresses concentrating on the particular interests of specific target groups. However, crosswords and puzzles are popular in all of the groups listed in the appendices. (These make up over 50% of the population of Sunderland in total.) Around 30-40% of people said that they were interested in this pastime. About a quarter of people said that they were interested in competitions. Many magazines of course regularly use crosswords and competitions as part of their mix.

There is now software that makes creating crosswords and puzzles much easier. For example with crosswords, start by writing out about 200 health questions. Then write out the list of words that make up the answers. The software then creates the crossword square. (It may still need to put in an odd word with nothing to do with the topic to make it work.) A range of companies produce software. I used *Crossword Compiler* at

www.crossword-compiler.com/ for the crossword on the back page but Google will throw up many more. Remember to pre-test that the target group understand the clues.

Alternatively, compilers who write specialist crosswords can be found at <http://www.puzzlecraft.co.uk/index.html> . For an idea of how much this service might cost go to <http://www.londonfreelance.org/feesguide/xwords.html>

(There is also an interesting site for producing anagrams at www.anagramgenius.com/ Dan Brown used it to generate the anagrams for *The Da Vinci Code*.²⁶ These could form the basis of other word puzzles though the knowledge gain here may be minimal.)

One way of using crosswords would be to produce regular free puzzle books on a health theme. This format is probably more useful for drawing people in and passing on information than motivating change. As they may take in only a little from the clues the books themselves perhaps should also include supporting articles on health. (Given the statistics on literacy in the UK these would need to be easy to read.) Health adverts could also be included. Alternatively the books could be funded through appropriate paid for advertisements. Including competitions in the book would appeal to many readers. It would also be a way of measuring what response the book gets. Commercial magazine publishers often do this. A thorough evaluation of the effectiveness of using crosswords to give out information would also be vital.

The books could be distributed to places that the research shows the target audience go to or sent directly to their homes.

They might also be popular in NHS waiting rooms. (In passing, health professionals may also be interested in a health quiz for the public. This was developed for using with PowerPoint in GP waiting rooms. For more details go to <http://www.emedica.co.uk/quiz.htm>)

Strip cartoons and graphic novels

Comics aren't just for kids

As well as articles and crosswords, magazines often also have cartoons and comic strips. Cartoons are usually single panel pictures, which are meant to be funny. (Off the shelf examples on different themes can be purchased at

'I don't think of comics as just entertainment. It's a rare privilege to be able to talk to millions of people on a given day, so I'm eager to say something meaningful when I can... When cartoons dig beyond glib punch lines, cheap sentimentality, and tidy stories to deeper, truthful experiences, they can really touch people and connect us all.'

*Bill Watterson, the creator of Calvin and Hobbes comic strips.*²⁷ His style was 'cartoony', however a comic does not need to be like Batman or Dennis the Menace. Any style that is appropriate for the audience can be used. This can even include photograph stories, as used in classic girl magazines.

[http://www.cartoonstock.com/.](http://www.cartoonstock.com/)) Cartoon or comic strips are made up of panels of words and pictures telling a story over time. They often appear in a paper or magazine or in a comic devoted to this format. Often the story is told bit by bit over a number of weeks. Graphic novels are often longer strips that tell a complete story.

Regardless of what they are called, stories told by pictures and words have a bad press in the UK. They are seen as being just for children. The assumption is that they are not capable of dealing with themes covered in 'proper' literature. This is not so in all countries. In any case it is not true in practice in the UK. For example check out 'Maus' written by the son of a Holocaust survivor or 'Dragon Slippers' on abuse. 28, 29 Raymond Briggs, famous for Christmas favourite *The Snowman* 30 produced a graphic novel about nuclear war. 31 (*When the Wind Blows* was successful enough to later be turned into both a BBC Radio 4 play and a film with music by David Bowie, Genesis and Roger Walters. 32, 33)

The two most syndicated strip cartoons in the world in the mid-nineties were *Peanuts* with Snoopy and Charlie Brown by Schultz and *Calvin & Hobbes* by Bill Watterson. Each reputedly appeared in around 2,500 publications.34 Although they are funny they also covered issues such as the environment and the complications of relationships. Other strips such as *Alex* and *Dilbert* concentrate on workplace issues. 35, 36 These have often been used to illustrate points in management text books. 37 Buying the rights to famous characters however, may be beyond the budgets of public health workers. (A European writer once used images of Captain Haddock from *Tintin*, to illustrate the symptoms of alcoholism. This was without permission. He lost the following court case.) 38, 39

Graphic novels have a lot in common with film. Both mediums deal in words and images telling stories overtime, except of course that the special effects and actors are much cheaper in graphic novels.

'I rank Schulz with Gandhi in the scope and influence on people in this century. Sure, Gandhi spoke to multitudes, but has anybody counted Schultz's circulation? And the same message is conveyed: Love thy neighbour even when it hurts. Love even Lucy.'

OK, perhaps a tad over the top about the power of Charlie Brown and Snoopy to end imperialism and create a new philosophy of non-violence. You get his point though. (The quote is by Bill Maudlin, a famous Second World War cartoonist talking about Charles Schultz who produced the Peanuts strips.40) I first came across the 'moral aspects' of Peanuts when Mr. Collins, a much loved RE teacher, had them plastered all over his walls.

Comics aren't just for kids but...

However, this is an examination of how to use popular culture in the UK. It is probably fair to say then that comics are probably most suited to children and young people in this country. They are perhaps particularly useful with those who have low reading abilities in English. The pictures can help give clues to the content. Adults within ethnic groups whose first language is not English may find this helpful too for the same reason. However this will depend on their cultures' particular views of the medium. If an English

version is to be translated into another language, it is important to check first that the illustrations and content are suitable.

How to apply comic strip theory to health

The AIDA theory can be used with comic strips and graphic novels too. The format and content of a comic might be used to **attract** the client group to it. Then the information within it perhaps used to keep **interest**, create a **desire** for change and point the reader in the direction of **action**. The format could be also used for the different legs of the three legged stool i.e. giving information, exploring feelings/attitudes and developing skills.

The FPA currently uses comics for sexual health issues. They use a story format in '*Love S.T.I.NGS*'. ⁴¹ (See music chapter for more on story theory). It was produced by the Comic Company who specialise in health education. See their site at <http://www.comiccompany.co.uk/index.php> However, probably the best known exponent of the medium is Lifeline. They have used it mainly to look at issues around drugs and alcohol. They use social marketing principles, so involve their audience all through the creative process. This is probably why it is popular with the target group but offends others. Go to <http://www.lifeline.org.uk/about.asp?ID=37> for more information

There are a number of books about producing comic strips that are useful to read. One is itself written in this format. It gives an in depth understanding of the principles behind using comic strip as a communication tool. This is *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* by Scott McCloud. ⁴²

Another is *Writing and Illustrating the Graphic Novel* by Mike Chinn. ⁴³ This includes

- Elements of the novel
 - Panels
 - Framing devices
 - Speech and captions
 - Characterisation

- Writing the script
 - Basic scripting techniques
 - Pace
 - Scene changing
 - Telling the story
 - Writing styles
 - Briefing an artist
 - Writing realistic characters
 - Setting

- Illustrating the script
 - Style of artwork
 - Techniques
 - Drawing from a script
 - All about layout
 - Thinking like a movie director
 - Lighting
 - Body language
 - Lettering

As the internet becomes more popular and download times become quicker, online comics may come into their own. 'Webcomics' by Steven Withrow and John Barber is a good starting point for exploring this approach. ⁴⁴

Producing a health comic needs team work

To produce resources in this format needs a writer, an illustrator, health experts, the people doing the market research and the target group. The target group are vital but will not normally be skilled enough to do the illustrations themselves. (If the project is lucky enough to have some talented artists amongst the target group point them towards the recommended text books above. This is a specialist area that needs more than simple drawing skills.)

Comics can however still be used by non-artists. In 1991 the Terrence Higgins Trust



There is any number of books about how to draw in a particular style e.g. Manga or Marvel. These can be purchased online, at bookshops or in the specialist comic shops that have sprung up in many cities.^(b)

commissioned '1+1'. This was a comic about HIV. Youth workers and teachers could also get the '1+1 Users Guide'. ⁴⁵ The guide contained ideas on how to use comic strips with groups of young people who did not necessarily have drawing skills. The ideas included

- Completing the story in the strip
- Acting out the strip and improvising round it

- Having a picture of characters thinking – then asking what is going on in their head

The comic strip form is good for illustrating body language and facial expressions. This may be useful in starting discussions off around mental health.

Who would pay for a health comic strip?

'Myths over Pendle' by Peter Rigg appeared in local papers in the Lakes.⁴⁶ It was funded by a Local Strategic Partnership to use gentle humour to address issues that concerned the community. (72% of the people interviewed thought that it helped raised awareness.)

For an idea of rates for artists go to <http://www.londonfreelance.org/feesguide/illust.html>