

I confirm that I have not used any AI tools in the research and creation of this assignment. I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated materials as my own work. I confirm that I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used, which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

Youth in Action Speakers Notes:

Good afternoon, my name is Bethany and I'm going to talking about the impact of Tests, Targets and Education (Palmer, 2015) on young people and what parents and carers can do to help their children and young people.

What does "Tests, Targets and Education" mean? Young people spend 6 hours a day, 5 days a week of their childhood and adolescence in school, in education. It causes a lot of stress, a fair amount of anxiety and depression in young people, especially when exam pressures are high. Young people are expected to perform well in National Tests and class tests from as young as six and seven. Students are pressured to get good grades more than working for the love or enjoyment of the subject. There is so much hyper-focus and competitiveness around standardised testing and exams. Therefore, young people whose potential and talents lie outside of academia and formal education are marginalised. (Palmer, 2015)

According to a study published by The Association for Child and Adolescent Mental Health, there was an almost doubled increase (13% to nearly 26%) in perceived pressure in young people between 2009 and 2021 (Armitage et al, 2025). The most pressure reported was in females in the older school years, with up to 57% of females in Year 11 reporting a lot of pressure in 2021 (Armitage et al, 2025).

There are four points that I have picked out of how Tests, Targets and Education impact young people. These are Physical health, Mental health, Emotional health, and Peer pressure and Grade pressures

I have also included how parents/carers can best support their young people, Mental health and revision resources and services to help young people, and lastly, how youth workers are best placed to support young people.

Regarding physical health, when there are high levels of stress, anxiety and depression can cause individuals to exercise less. When there is also high levels of revision needed, so there is less time to exercise or to get outside. Therefore, some individuals' physical health may decline due to pressure from school and education.

Then with mental health, the same lack of getting outside and getting fresh air attributes to high levels of stress and anxiety, as it has been well proven that being outside and in nature helps mental health. This is also on top of the general declining levels of mental health in young people.

With emotional health, according to the study from ACAMH (2025), feeling a lot of pressure in school and education often leads to emotional problems, such as being less able to regulate certain emotions due to high levels of stress and anxiety. This decrease in emotional health also followed the same pattern of being higher in the older of the female students.

During exam times, young people can be affected by peer pressure because of the competitive nature of the exam period. Schools also tend to put a high level of

importance and emphasis on getting high grades when exam times come around.

The pressure that is put on schools to deliver high numbers of good/high grades is often passed on to the students and perpetuated because of the pressure that teachers and school staff are under.

There are mental health resources available such as; Mind, a charity that offers Counselling and a range of online resources and advice, Get The Boys A Lift, a Pembrokeshire based charity that offers free counselling and a safe space to be and have coffee, Better Help is an app you pay for that offers therapy and counselling, Finch, Calm and Headspace are free apps to help with mental health, sleep and motivation. Some services that are available are; the 111 option 2 mental health crisis team if it is an emergency, or there is the school pastoral team, teachers and the school youth worker, as well as local youth clubs and youth workers.

Some revision resources are; BBC Bitesize, WJEC website/revision books (other curriculums have the same), Twinkl - GCSE revision guides, and Collins Revision resources for GCSE and A-Level's.

Youth workers are best placed to support young people through their school experience because;

- Most exam and grade pressure comes between the ages of thirteen and eighteen, but some young people may already feel academic pressure starting in Year 7 at the age of eleven.
- Youth workers are meant to build strong, sustainable, supportive and meaningful relationships with young people (CLD Standards Council Scotland, 2019).
- Youth workers work with a head, heart and hands framework, which encompasses everything that young people need when going through the pressures of being in the education system (Afrin et al, 2022).

Thank you for listening. Any questions?

Reference List:

Armitage, J.M. Anthony, R. Collishaw, S. Moore, G. Murphy, S. Page, N. Tseilou, F. (3rd March 2025). Change over time in perceived schoolwork pressure and associations with emotional problems among 11-16-year-olds: A repeat cross-sectional study in Wales. The Association for Child and Adolescent Mental Health. <https://acamh.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/jcv2.70005>

Afrin, S. Islam, Md.A. Said, A.B.H.M. Sobhani, F.A. Umarlebbe, J.H. (14th October 2022). Conceptulization of head-heart-hands model for developing an effective 21st century teacher. National Library of Medicine.

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9615563/#:~:text=The%20H%20model%20proposes%20that,during%20teaching%20and%20learning%20activities>

CLD Standards Council Scotland. (2019). Youth Work National Occupational Standards. CLD Standards Council Scotland.

Palmer, S. (2015). Toxic Childhood: How the Modern World is Damaging Our Children and What We Can Do About It. Orion Books Limited.