

Angela Balding is the Survey Manager at SHEU. For further details please visit www.sheu.org.uk
For correspondence please email: angela.balding@sheu.org.uk

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Supporting young people's health

The Students Health Education Unit (SHEU) is an independent Unit that continues to support the health developments taking place in colleges.

In the late 1990s, SHEU successfully piloted a FE student survey instrument with colleges and student groups. The purpose of the survey was to promote debate and change in the colleges who received reports about the health-related behaviour of their students. The data also informed and to some extent provided feedback on local health campaigns.

By 2001 the survey was available online. By 2006 a unique databank of student healthy lifestyle data was developing, SHEU sponsored an online college questionnaire and the first Healthy Student News monthly email had appeared.

Healthy Student News

Healthy Student News (HSN) is a free monthly email that first appeared in January 2006. It provides links to information about young people aged 16+ and their health and behaviour chosen from our databanks and the Internet.

Around 30 new links are added each month and past links archived. As interest grew, the task to maintain and update HSN became more time consuming and users were asked to support the venture. The following comments show how HSN has become an important resource,

"Please let me know if it is true that the resource is going to close, as I've found it an invaluable resource for collating specific info re. FE, with an international perspective, as well as more local research and practice. I hope it is not going to happen."

Sexual Health Development Officer

"Please don't close this resource. I may not be able to access articles at the time they come through, but I often either refer specific items to team members, or revisit links to follow up particular research/actions. Thank you for you work on this."

Student Services Manager

Baseline data

SHEU is well placed to provide baseline data. Our unique history of questionnaire development in the FE sector made it possible for us to support colleges that were working towards the Kirklees Healthy College scheme. We received many favourable comments from FE staff including,

"The online survey is beneficial to be able to benchmark with other organisations and the potential to share good practice." Student Services Manager

"The online survey went very well. We originally planned to undertake 700 questionnaires online, but I had to increase the number due to the volume of willing participants." Welfare Services Principal

"All the students found the online survey easy to navigate, very clear and easy. As a tutor incredibly easy to administer." Student Services Manager

A new national initiative

The development of a new national healthy FE framework is an exciting initiative. SHEU aims to continue to support colleges in their work.

"...the starting point for every aspect (National Healthy College Standard) will be to have a baseline by which to measure outcomes...I can't think of a better way of getting a baseline than through your survey." Specialist Health Promotion Advisor

We thank the contributors to this second special issue. The articles describe national developments and local actions to improve the health and wellbeing of college students and staff.