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Stafford College finds the right prescription for a healthy college

"Everything we've done here is really making a difference. All the ways in which we have focussed on keeping our students healthy and safe have created a culture of care. We're seeing success in holistic terms, looking at the wellbeing of our students, not simply their performance in exams."

That ringing endorsement of the healthy college drive at Stafford College comes from Angela Ray, co-ordinator for the Every Child Matters and Tutorial strands at the College.

Stafford College has paid more than lip service to achieving a healthy college. The programme has its own vibrant logo designed by a former student and extends into almost every facet of college life for students and staff.

"This year we held our first Bike to College Day and involved everyone from the toddlers in our campus nursery, through students, staff and even the local MP," reports Angela Ray, adding reassuringly that the nursery tots were not expected to pedal their way along the busy roads leading to the town centre campus: *"We closed the car park to four-wheel vehicles for the day and laid out a special cycle track there for the nursery occupants to use. We offered lots of healthy incentives for students and staff who cycled in to college and looked after their bikes, too, with plenty of extra bike racks plus security marking a 'bike doctor' on the*

campus".

Proving that the Healthy College drive is more than a logo, Stafford College also stages annual exhibitions focussing on health and supported by the local PCT. One of their roles at these events is to promote smoking cessation, something that is of year-round concern on the campus.

"We offer support and guidance to those who need help to quit smoking as well as providing regular, free Chlamydia screening sessions with information on sexual health. We also run seasonal campaigns, tying-in with national programmes where possible. So in October we focus on cancer awareness. Each December we put the emphasis on issues around HIV and for the first time this year we will be linking with the Suzy Lamplugh Trust to help students consider their personal safety", says Angela Ray.

The health, safety and wellbeing of students are embedded into the successful tutorial system too, with sessions on sexual health, dealing with stress and combating bullying as well as exploring responsible driving with young motorists.

"A lot of people remark on the very special atmosphere at this college," says Mike Shaw, Head of the Faculty of General Education. *"It is a very friendly, accepting environment in which there is a readily apparent respect for others. That is something that is noticed by visitors to the College as well as by new students and members of staff. The culture of Stafford College is something that has been enhanced and amplified by everything that we have done to ensure that our students are healthy, happy young people who are encouraged to fulfil their potential in every area of their lives."*

