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The Healthy FE Framework - Update

On 3 July 2008 FE Minister Bill Rammell announced a new national initiative - the Healthy FE Framework - to help improve the health and wellbeing of students and staff in FE. It implements a commitment made in the Choosing Health White Paper (2004).

The Healthy FE Framework is an initiative funded by DH with support from DIUS and DCSF. Sam Mellor joined as the Project Manager in September to support Peter Chell, the Healthy FE Advisor.

In order to move the Framework forward, two key principles will steer the way:

- ❖ It must be sector led; colleges should identify what is wanted and what can be delivered by them (in partnership with local health services) as part of their mainstream business.
- ❖ It should not seek to create new infrastructure and processes but make use of and develop existing arrangements wherever possible.

A Stakeholder Steering Group - the shape of which is still to be decided - will help oversee the initiative and help ensure these principles are adhered to. The Group will be chaired by a college Principal and will have a membership mostly drawn from the FE Sector, but also from college partners such as PCTs and LAs and from interested parties in the voluntary sector and across central and regional government.

Now, the Framework is being developed through two closely related but independent strands of work.

Strand One will put in place the infrastructure to enable colleges to be part of this national initiative, and will support them in a stronger focus on the health and

well-being of their students and staff. **Strand Two** will examine the options and demand for establishing a "national standard" against which colleges can self-assess.

Whether the two-strand approach is persisted with and exactly what the two strands will actually put in place must depend on what the Steering Group recommends. Options on the table for Strand One include: an on-line self-assessment process to benchmark current activity against; a web portal providing tools, guidance, links information and a good practice repository; and, a national/regional network for ensuring effective two-way communication with the sector to inform programme developments

Strand Two will run in parallel with the establishment of the basic Framework, but its products and procedures will not become clear until later in the process, and these products will only be delivered if there is a demand for them. Discussions are already taking place with the Kirklees Healthy College scheme to agree on the relationship between their existing standard and the new national arrangements. A joint statement on this will be issued shortly.

The piloting of the "Healthy Schools Plus" development in the South West will also involve colleges and will provide a good testing ground for the Framework. An evaluation process will be put in place, taking account, amongst other things, of the DCSF/Ofsted development of pupil wellbeing indicators.

The timetable for delivery will be confirmed once the Steering Group has given its view on the proposals that are put to it. It is hoped that the Group will meet by early December.