

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

Angela Balding

Support for Healthy Colleges

SHEU continues to support the promotion of healthy lifestyles and healthy settings in Further Education and 6th Form Colleges.

In the late 1990s, SHEU successfully piloted an 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.¹

Online developments

The desire to make the survey instruments more accessible to colleges came with the development of SHEU's online survey services in 2001.

As the Kirklees Healthy College network² developed, SHEU worked closely with colleges to improve its surveys services.

By 2006 a unique databank of student healthy lifestyle data had developed. In January the first Healthy Student News monthly email³ appeared and in September SHEU sponsored an online questionnaire for use in colleges.⁴

Use of results

As part of the sponsorship offer, colleges were asked how they planned to use the information resulting from the survey. The following points summarise the responses from many colleges:

- Help to move our Healthy College project forward
- The data would help to formulate our action plan and help develop and implement our Every Child Matters (ECM) strategy
- Use the findings of the survey for further evidence

for the ECM section of the SAR and to further support our contribution to the Joint Area Review

- Use the data to take into account the students as key stakeholders in the college's ECM framework and action plan
- Beneficial to be able to benchmark with other organisations and the potential to share good practice

The first National Health Colleges Conference took place in early 2007⁵ and SHEU presented the findings from its sponsored survey that involved 34 institutions and nearly 5,500 students.⁶

Since then SHEU has continued to work with colleges by providing baseline data for programme planning. Colleges involved in the 2006 sponsored survey are planning to carry out repeat surveys.

Experience gained, since first developing lifestyle surveys in 1977, has shown how powerful data can be. Survey results can empower staff and students to change lifestyle practices and encourage the development of healthy settings.

The sponsorship of this special FE issue of Education and Health confirms SHEU's commitment to provide services that promote objective debate about the best ways to serve and educate young people about health and social issues.

SHEU would like to thank those who contributed to this publication and may their work continue to inspire others working for healthy colleges.

References

1-6 articles are available as pdf files from:
www.sheu.org.uk/whoweworkwith/healthystudents.htm