

Peter Chell is the FE Advisor: National Healthy School Programme.

Take part in the national consultation on Healthy Colleges, please email: peter.chell@dh.gsi.gov.uk

Peter Chell

Extending the Healthy Schools principles into Further Education

Being a young person in today's society can be difficult at times, with greater pressures and demands than previous generations. A proportion of the young people in our current Further Education (FE*) system have a range of social and emotional difficulties that can lead them into poor choices regarding their health and education.

The National Healthy Schools Programme is inviting dialogue to gain an understanding of how government could help young people in FE settings adopt healthier behaviours. Some young people tend to have a lifestyle where risky behaviours are commonplace. Government public health campaigns seek to address issues like binge drinking, smoking, obesity, sexual health and drug misuse. We have an opportunity to explore whether the Healthy College approach, with its inherent understanding of the links between health, education and achievement, can support young people to fulfil their full potential.

Over the last 3 years, a lot has been learned through developing and implementing the infrastructure and organisational change model of the National Healthy Schools Programme (NHSP). The programme now clearly meets the needs of schools and young people and provides a model of working that is tried and tested, with tangible and measurable outcomes for schools and young people.

The NHSP operates an audit based self - evaluative process, is supported and quality assured at a local authority level and has become a key tool in improving the health and well-being of staff and children and is established as part of the local authority toolkit supporting the school improvement process.

The promotion of a Healthy College approach within FE is clearly supportive of ECM and impacts upon 14 - 19 reform agenda by seeking to create a safe and healthy learning environment. Extending the Healthy Schools

experience into the FE sector will ensure a continuity of process in terms of creating a sustainable, whole organisation approach to young people's health and well-being.

The Government's 2004 *Choosing Health* White Paper gave Healthy Schools a high profile for development and also specified an intention to promote the concept into colleges

The National Healthy Schools Programme (NHSP) is currently enjoying a high level of success with schools, with participation levels at 91% and the milestone of 55% of all schools achieving National Healthy School Status by December 2007 is well on target. The programme is bringing about a range of improvements and beneficial outcomes for schools and students across the four themes of PSHE, Healthy Eating, Physical Activity and Emotional Health & Well-Being.

We now need to focus on the next step of supporting the development of a quality based, Healthy Colleges programme to ensure those in FE receive the benefits now being experienced in schools. Nationally and locally there is a great deal of experience and good practice to share to build a similar healthy culture within FE that promotes positive mental health and well-being and creates a learning environment that young people wish to be actively engaged with.

Further Education is already supporting many aspects of the Government health agenda, helping to support vulnerable groups and tackling particular health issues.

Much of this is fuelled by the hard work being carried out across the established Healthy Colleges Network and by the growing number of Healthy Schools working with the FE sector, covering a wide range of themes and approaches all driven by local needs.

Working in partnership with colleagues in: Department of Health, Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS), other key organisations and young people, we need to build a consistent and robust model of practice, which will service the needs of all young people and particularly those deemed as vulnerable.

* In this article the term FE, will include FE Colleges, Sixth Form Colleges and other Tertiary settings.