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# Kim McGarry, Mike Powell, Anne Low and Louise Unsworth

## Derwentside College Health Promotion Strategy: a whole college approach to promoting health

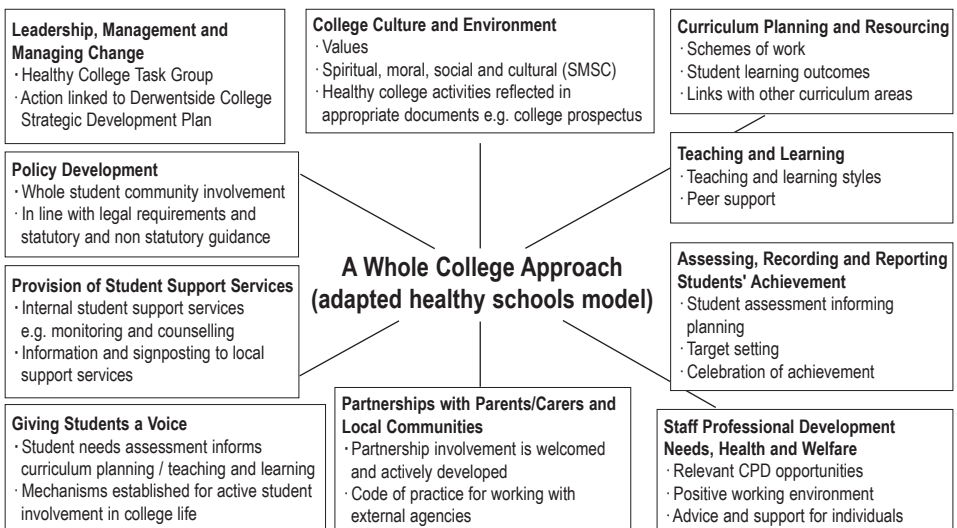
Derwentside College, in partnership with County Durham Primary Care Trust, is planning to launch (early in 2007) the Derwentside College Health Promotion Strategy 2007-2010.

The Specialist Health Promotion Service has been working with the College for a number of years, assisting with campaigns, health events and training for staff. With the growing interest in the healthy college concept and the need to reduce health inequalities in Derwentside, which is a major PCT and Local Strategic Partnership objective, a more strategic approach to promoting health within the college has been realised (see diagram below).

### Strategic approach

The strategy provides background information on the healthy college concept and the whole college approach. It gives information about the College, the lifestyles of students and current College activities and services, that support health and which are available to students and staff.

The strategy has a clear aim and related priorities and contains initial action plans, which have been developed using a multi-agency approach. The strategy includes the organisational framework and communication structure required for implementation of the strategy.



## The aim

The aim of Derwentside College Health Promotion Strategy is to promote healthy lifestyles and reduce health inequalities through interventions in the College. The main requirements to achieve the aim are:

1. The strategy is endorsed by the College, recognised and developed as a strong strategic framework towards a whole college approach
2. The strategy is owned through establishing a multi-agency Healthy College Task Group, that includes College staff and students, and actions are successfully carried out
3. The College develops in line with the strategy so that it is in a favourable position should the College decide to apply for a National Healthy College Status
4. The key actions that are outlined in the action plans are integrated into the Derwentside College Strategic Development Plan (DCSDP) and are included in line with progression and DCSDP reviews

## Derwentside College and health-related data

There have been several recent initiatives, which have provided information on health and health related behaviour and attitudes of the students in the College, which have helped to inform the priorities and initial action plans. These have included a lifestyle survey, a sexual health questionnaire, a food and catering audit and chlamydia screening events. These reveal that there are high numbers of students who continue to make unhealthy lifestyle decisions.

## The main findings

### Student Lifestyle Survey

The lifestyle survey was carried out to establish the current prevalence of behavioral risk to health of students at the College.

In September and October 2004, all full time students at the College were asked to fill in a lifestyle questionnaire and 89% responded (613 students) 67% were 16-17 year olds. Postcodes were used to identify whether students lived within Derwentside and which electoral wards they lived in. 91% of respondents were Derwentside residents i.e. over 10% of the local 16-19 year old population. Specifically the information from the survey was used to:

1. Compare the prevalence of behavioural risks to health between Derwentside College students and other populations of similar age
2. Identify any relatively high prevalence of behavioural risk among Derwentside College Students
3. Compare the prevalence of behavioural risk to health between groups within Derwentside College
4. Establish baselines against which future progress can be assessed
5. Inform the development of Derwentside College Health Promotion Strategy

The survey results revealed that there are high numbers of students risking their health through unhealthy lifestyles e.g. low fruit and vegetable consumption, lack of physical activity, excessive alcohol consumption, high levels of smoking and unprotected sex

“Younger males were least likely to eat the recommended five portions of fruit and vegetables every day, and only 6% of the total respondents consumed the recommended 5-a-day”

### Sexual Health Questionnaire & Chlamydia Screening Events

171 students completed a sexual health questionnaire during 'Fresher's Fayre' at Derwentside College.

“Of 146 students who were sexually active 85

always used contraception (58%) 54 sometimes did (37%) and seven never did (5%)”

There have been three Chlamydia screening events at the College with varying numbers of students coming forward for a test.

“25% of students from the last event tested positive for Chlamydia compared to the national average of 10% indicating high levels of infection”

### Priorities of the strategy

Priorities have been identified and informed via the health related data, the Kirklees Pilot Healthy College Standard criteria, and also through a number of national and local policy drivers including:

- ◆ Every Child Matters
- ◆ Choosing Health: Making Choices Easier
- ◆ County Durham and Darlington Healthy Schools Programme
- ◆ The Derwentside Tackling Teenage Pregnancy Action Plan
- ◆ The County Durham and Darlington Obesity Strategies for Children and Young People and Adults

The priorities are:

1. To promote whole college awareness of the concept of the health promoting college
2. To work towards an eco friendly college environment
3. To ensure a smoke free environment
4. To promote healthy eating awareness and opportunities
5. To further develop physical activity opportunities
6. To promote sexual health
7. To develop drugs, alcohol, tobacco awareness to encourage informed choice and harm minimisation
8. To promote the mental health and emotional well-being for staff and students and destigmatise mental ill health issues
9. To emphasise and encourage active participation as a key life skill

After the Health Promotion Strategy is launched a multi-agency Healthy College Task Group will be established to take forward the strategy. We will be mindful of the fact that a whole college approach means thinking about how things are done, as well as what is done. The process of achieving the outcomes will need to ensure meaningful student participation is at the core of the work.

**Education and Health has published a number of articles about the health developments taking place in 6th Form and FE Colleges. The Editor would like to invite others to write about the activities in their college.**

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