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Innovative sexual health artwork

Wandsworth Primary Care Trust's (PCT) public health department recently teamed up with their local college, South Thames, to run an innovative sexual health project.

The public health team approached 16 and 17 year old students studying on the Multimedia course, and asked them to design and create a range of campaign materials, aimed at their peers, which would raise awareness and understanding of sexual health issues.

The public health team presented the initial brief to the students in March 2006, and explained how their work would fit into the existing local sexual health and teenage pregnancy campaigns.

The brief was kept very open in order to encourage innovative thinking. Students were asked to come up with a health message relating to sexually transmitted infections (STIs), aimed at 17-24 year olds, in any group whether straight, gay or bisexual.

Campaign objectives

The three core campaign objectives were to:

- ◆ Encourage young people to use condoms when they have sex
- ◆ Respect their sexual partners and themselves
- ◆ Think about what is right for them regarding when to have sex and with whom

At the start a series of workshops were delivered by sexual health professionals. These ensured the students had a thorough understanding of the health issues surrounding STIs and how sexual health is portrayed in the media.

The finished work was entered into a competition, with the three best designers each receiving an iPod. There was also the possibility of their work being used in future

local sexual health campaigns.

Winning designs

To date, two of the winning designs have been used. One formed the basis for Wandsworth PCT's World Aids Day and 2006 Christmas sexual health campaign. The key message was the link between alcohol and unprotected sex, and posters and condom wallets were displayed and distributed to youth sites. The second design was selected to advertise the integrated youth service condom distribution scheme. It was printed on postcards and circulated to the relevant centres. All materials direct young people to the local sexual health website www.gettingiton.org.uk.

Effective

This project was effective on many levels. The students gained further knowledge of sexual health issues outside the traditional Personal Social Health Education (PSHE) curriculum and the PCT and college created closer partnership links.

The success of the initiative has led to other projects which work at embedding PSHE into the wider college curriculum. The public health team are currently working with HND drama students, to develop a theatre in education piece exploring the links between sex and alcohol. The Multimedia project is being repeated this year, with a focus on re-branding the local sexual health clinics.

The commitment and enthusiasm of all staff and students has enabled sexual health to be put high on the agenda of the college. A health sub-group with multi-agency membership has been formed to drive forward health issues in the college in a co-ordinated way, which would not have been possible before the partnership links formed throughout the Multimedia project.