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Kate Birch and Jane Marshall

National Healthy College Network Conference Report

The second National Healthy College Network conference, 'Working Towards a National Standard' was held in the Victorian elegance of Bradford's Midland Hotel 23rd April 2008. It was organised by Jane Marshall, Healthy College Manager, Bradford College.

150 delegates attended from across the country including places from as far a field as The Isle of Man, Luton, Twickenham, Newcastle, Halesowen and St Helens. A positive feature of last year's conference was the mix from both health and education and this was again the case, providing the opportunity for networking, sharing good practice and partnership working.

National Healthy College Standard

The conference was opened by Michele

Sutton (Principal, Bradford College) who commended the healthy college approach and the impact it was having locally. Kate Birch (Chair of the National Healthy College Network, Huddersfield New College) reflected on the focus created by the Kirklees Healthy College Standard and developments in the past year, in particular the scoping exercise for a national healthy college standard and continuing increase in network membership. Future projects will include moves to sustain the network and its activities.

Key note speaker, Peter Chell (FE Adviser, National Healthy Schools Team) acknowledged the importance of the Kirklees standard and the network, updating delegates on progress towards a national standard. He has visited and spoken to people in a large number of colleges as well as organisations such as

OFSTED. Support for healthy college work has been overwhelmingly positive and he is keen to ensure that colleges will be fully involved in consultation before the launch of the standard. As yet there are hurdles to overcome before work can get underway but he was optimistic that progress would be made in coming weeks.

Kate Potter (Director, Podium) explained the role of Podium which is the FE and university arm of Sport England. The organisation is very much involved with communicating with education about the benefits and opportunities of the 2012 Olympics in terms of business and sport. The healthy college approach being an important way of raising the profile of a healthy lifestyle for all.

Drama and passion

One of the highlights of the day was the very powerful drama performance by Bradford College National Diploma students. The 'Recklessness Award Ceremony' was both entertaining and thought-provoking as it explored the realities and consequences of young people's actions with alcohol, drugs and sexual activity. The show is to be used in local schools with year 10 pupils.

Celebrity chef Lesley Waters from 'Ready Steady Cook' shared her passion for healthy eating and an active lifestyle in an entertaining and stimulating speech. Her own personal experiences of tackling health issues have led her to be a strong advocate of the need for everyone to appreciate the importance of healthy eating and the need to develop cooking skills from an early age.

Workshops

Workshops during the day included practical advice on getting started with the Kirklees Healthy College Standard by ourselves and Dawn Vincent and Sharon Shaw (Stoke on Trent College). This was an opportunity to look at the business case for the healthy college approach, how to achieve the standard and cross college health related activities.

Well@college and Healthbytes also ran workshops on software based solutions to the tutorial programme and health communication through animated desktop creatives.

Nutrition information was provided in 'Food for Thought' from Personal Nutrition and explored how food affects our moods and behaviour.

Delegates were also able to get ideas from a wide range of organisations including caterers Mellors, Stress Check, Purely Nutrition, Comic Company, Central YMCA Qualifications and input from the local PCT on Stop smoking, Health Trainers and Chlamydia testing.

Feedback on the day was very positive and delegates went home loaded with goodie bags and good ideas! Presentations from the conference can be downloaded from the Bradford college website:

<http://healthycollege.bradfordcollege.ac.uk/conference.htm>

and the Kirklees Healthy College website:

www.khcs.org.uk

Next year's conference will be hosted by Huddersfield New College and will have an Emotional Health & Wellbeing theme.

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