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Kate Birch

Collaborative working between colleges and health in Kirklees

In 2001, Huddersfield New College and the Kirklees Healthy Schools Team joined forces with college staff and students to produce the Kirklees Healthy College Standard which was published in October 2003. At this time there was no national work on healthy colleges and the Kirklees partnership set up a National Healthy College Network to raise the profile of health in colleges and to share good practice through the Kirklees Healthy College Standard.

This work went from strength to strength and following two successful National Healthy College Network conferences in 2007 and 2008, the then Minister for Further Education, Bill Rammell, announced the intention to produce a Department of Health and DCSF backed Healthy FE Framework in July 2008. The Kirklees Healthy College Standard received the Yorkshire & Humber Teaching Public Health Network Innovations in Health Award in May 2009.

I am the college lead for this work and have been seconded for two days a week to the Kirklees Healthy Schools Team since September 2004. This has enabled me to promote healthy college work nationally while at the same time gathering insight on health issues in the three Kirklees Colleges and involving them with strategic and operational links to NHS Kirklees.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) funding for this secondment resulted in a local conference

for senior college managers in June 2006 based on the Every Child Matters theme. The results of interviews with learners, college pastoral staff and CAMHS staff were presented at the conference.

It was clear that colleges felt a sense of frustration that they were funding both pastoral and counselling support, thereby easing pressure on hard-pressed NHS services, but lines of communication were ad hoc and unclear when they needed to refer learners into health services. CAMHS services felt overwhelmed by the number of sometimes inappropriate referrals being made, resulting in long waiting times, because some young people found life in college stressful and a very big contrast to school, impacting on their ability to cope with college life.

The formation of the Task Group

Promotion of emotional health and wellbeing and enabling learners to access mental health services were seen as the highest priorities following the conference and the Task Group was formed to try and establish an emotional health and wellbeing care pathway with supporting materials. Task Group members said that they did not want a 'talking shop' but something which would have real impact.

The group has met regularly since its inception and has made remarkable progress, demonstrated by the *Emotional*

Health and Wellbeing Toolkit available online since December 2009 at www.kirkleeshealthyschools.org.uk

The Task Group in action

Development of the emotional health and wellbeing care pathway and toolkit

The main challenge was to establish links with CAMHS and Adult Mental Health Service (AMHS), since young people and staff in colleges may qualify for either service depending on age. Transition from one service to another can also be difficult for younger learners with a pre existing condition.

The Primary Mental Health Workers have proved to be an important link with CAMHS services, being available for advice but also being willing to come into colleges to make initial assessments of learners. The colleges have also benefitted from Primary Mental Health Workers' documentation which enable them to make effective contact with the service.

The Early Intervention team which deals with possible psychosis has also been keen to work with colleges and will not only answer queries but also take direct referrals instead of working through the GP route.

Links with AMHS have proved more challenging but bridges are being built through the task group at a strategic level, particularly with commissioners for adult and children and young people's mental health services as well as promotion of the adult service's bid for foundation status. Experiences with the group indicate the importance of understanding the bigger strategic picture.

Local changes and the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) agenda mean that the toolkit will have to be regularly updated by the task group. The pathway was launched in September 2008 and further additions made available as the *Emotional Health and Wellbeing (EHWB)*

Toolkit through the Kirklees Healthy Schools website in December 2009.

The contents of the *Emotional Health and Wellbeing Toolkit* are:

- Introduction
- Pathways
- Support groups/services
- Referral & feedback forms
- Glossary
- Training & information (in production)

Key learning in the formation and operation of the group

- The group exists because the members want it to; it will cease to operate when its function is completed
- The group has a clearly identified purpose
- The group might well change its purpose and composition over time
- It has provided an opportunity for collaborative working, building positive, personal relationships between education and health
- It has provided an opportunity to share information about other aspects of health and colleges' involvement in it
- As part of her secondment, Kate Birch (Chair) has the opportunity to meet with representatives from colleges and NHS Kirklees, Kirklees Local Authority, CAMHS & AMHS as well as attend additional strategic groups such as the EHWB Partnership Board. Contacts and information can then be fed into the group as appropriate
- The group is able to discuss both operational and strategic issues as they may affect learners and also to influence insight and service commissioning
- The group meets for two hours once or twice a term
- Venues alternate around the three

colleges

- Sub groups have been set up to deal with specific issues such as design of the EHWB Care Pathway feedback sheet

Task Group members currently (2010) include:

- Kate Birch (Chair), Huddersfield New College Healthy College Coordinator
- Vice Principal, Greenhead College
- Student Support staff, Greenhead College
- Director of Student Support, Kirklees College*
- Occupational Health Nurse, Kirklees College
- Senior Counsellor, Kirklees College
- Pastoral Support, Kirklees College
- Sexual Health Nurse, Kirklees College
- CAMHS Primary Mental Health Worker
- Representative of the Early Intervention team
- Representative of SWYMT
- Health Improvement Specialist (Mental health) NHS Kirklees
- Teenage Pregnancy Coordinator
- Kirklees Healthy Schools Team, Task Group administrator

A range of other people has also attended meetings by invitation including:

- NIACE
- Connexions

- Adult and Children & Young People's commissioners for mental health services
- Members of NHS Kirklees Public Health team
- Northorpe Hall Counselling Service

* Kirklees College was formed from the amalgamation of Huddersfield Technical College & Dewsbury College in August 2008

Future work of the Task Group

As well as monitoring and upgrading the EHWB care pathway and toolkit, the group will be working on other areas such as challenging the stigma around mental health with staff and learners, staff training, mental health promotion and initiatives such as Mental Health Aid First Aid courses in the college setting.

In June 2009, NHS Kirklees funded further work into school-college transitions at the three Kirklees colleges. Information was sought to determine whether additional help, through group support, may be useful for (thus far) untargeted learners. The support would help them cope with school-college transitions, bereavement and a range of other life events affecting their emotional health and wellbeing and academic performance.

It is hoped that this information will be used to look at novel ways of reaching young people who may not currently access existing pastoral and counselling services in colleges.