

Dudley – Providing smoking cessation support to pupils at a community college

Key features

Describes how healthy schools provides a framework for translating national and local priorities into practice

Highlights how pupils' views influenced the type of support provided

Reducing smoking prevalence is central to the government strategy to reduce inequalities.¹³ Local needs assessment data available from the 'Lifestyle Survey' undertaken in Dudley every two years and funded by the local healthy schools programme, identified smoking prevalence at a local college to be above the national and local average. The school nurse consulted with pupils about what type of support they wanted from her, and smoking cessation support was identified.

The local education and health partnership funded specialist smoking cessation training and resources to support the school nurse in addressing a whole school approach to the smoking theme of the local healthy schools programme. As a result the nurse set up smoking cessation support within the college and has delivered smoking education as part of the PSHE curriculum for Year 7 pupils. The nurse has also worked with pupils to develop peer-led smoking education and cessation support.

Impact

- Within two months of setting up the smoking cessation support approximately 40 students visited the school nurse for 'smokerlyser' (carbon monoxide) readings. Ten pupils re-visited on subsequent occasions
- Although it proved difficult to get regular commitment from students, those who did attend regularly either cut down or quit
- A more stringent monitoring system has been developed and implemented and a

repeat of the Lifestyle Survey will demonstrate whether there has been a decrease in the prevalence of smoking in the college.

Challenges/learning points

- One challenge was to help staff at the college to understand the wider benefits of the service being offered by the school nurse, and not to use it for punishing students caught smoking
- The learning point was to set realistic expectations about what could be achieved. The smoking cessation support helps students to understand the process of stopping smoking and aims to equip them with the appropriate skills for now and for the future should they relapse.

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¹³Department of Health (2001) *Tackling health inequalities: consultation on a plan for delivery*. London: Department of Health Publications.