

Strategy in action – healthy schools



Introduction

A Healthy School is one that helps students do their best within a school culture of a healthy lifestyle. The National Healthy Schools Programme (NHSP) is designed to lead to better health programmes in school. As a result youngsters should become healthier .

Factors

There are key factors to take into account when planning such a programme. For NHSP these include changes in society. People are living longer but face new health issues. For instance, being very overweight or 'obese'. One in five 2-15 year old boys and more than one in four girls are overweight. About a quarter of these are obese. The problem costs the UK around £3.3b per year. The problem could be caused by young people:

- ▶ Eating more junk foods.
- ▶ Spending more time watching TV or playing computer games.
- ▶ Being less active.
- ▶ Spending more time in cars.

Aims

Having clear aims and objectives is vital. It helps to make sure that all those involved in the programme:

- ▶ Understand its purpose.
- ▶ Are working together.
- ▶ Spend the funds in the best ways to reach the aims.

The two main Departments involved are Education and Health. They shape the long term aims. Key ones are to:

- ▶ Raise levels of achievement. Educated people tend to have more healthy lifestyles.

- ▶ Reduce health inequality. This means making sure all have access to good health. For instance, smoking, lack of exercise and unhealthy eating are all seen more in lower income groups.
- ▶ Promote social inclusion. Make sure all groups have access to the benefits of society.

Objectives

Objectives tend to be targets on the way to reaching aims. It helps if these are **SMART**. This stands for:

- ▶ Specific.
- ▶ Measurable.
- ▶ Achievable.
- ▶ Realistic.
- ▶ Time-related.

A SMART objective set by the Government in 2004 is to halt the rise in obesity by 2010. To reach this the NHSP SMART objective is for half of schools to be awarded NHSP status by 2006. All should be working towards it by 2009.

Strategy

This is a set of plans. The NHSP strategy involves a whole school approach. Schools will improve the diet of pupils and encourage exercise. These issues are covered in many lessons. There is healthy food available. There is school support on other health issues (such as drugs and sex). Personal Health Guides for children have been developed. These are to help children and young people to build health into the way they live their lives.

Conclusion

The government sees healthier people and society as important. The NHSP helps to reach targets to reduce obesity and promote healthy lifestyles.

