

Strategy in action – healthy schools

Introduction

A Healthy School helps students do their best within a school ethos of a healthy lifestyle. The National Healthy Schools Programme (NHSP) is designed to lead to more structured health promotion in schools. It is part of a government plan to help the public to a healthier and fitter lifestyle.



Factors

There are important external factors to be taken into consideration when planning and executing a programme. For the NHSP these included changes in society. Although people are living longer, they face serious health issues such as obesity. 21.8% of 2-15 year old boys and 27.5% of girls are overweight, with about a quarter of these obese. This costs around £3.3b per year. Causes could be youngsters eating more junk foods, spending more time watching TV or playing computer games, or taking less exercise and spending more time travelling in cars.

Aims

Having clear aims and objectives helps to ensure that everyone involved in delivering the programme:

- understands the programme's end purposes
- works together as a team?
- spends the available funding in the most effective way.

The main Departments involved are Education and Health. They shape the aims of which key ones are to:

- Raise levels of achievement as educated people tend to be more healthy.
- Reduce health inequality and provide access to healthy lifestyles for all e.g. smoking, lack of exercise and unhealthy eating are all found more in lower income groups.
- Promote social inclusion by ensuring all groups have access to the benefits of society.

Objectives

Objectives are more specific and are often **SMART**. This acronym stands for:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Realistic (or relevant)
- Time-related.

An example of a **SMART** objective was set by the Health Department in 2004. This is to stop the rise in obesity by 2010. The NHSP objective to reach this is for half of schools to be awarded NHSP status by 2006. All should be working towards it by 2009.

Strategy

The NHSP strategy is to improve diet and encourage exercise. Schools have a whole school approach to this. Issues are covered in many lessons, healthy food is available and there is education about nutrition and exercise. School support is also given on other health issues (such as drugs and sex). Personal Health Guides (PHGs) for children have been developed to encourage young people to build health into the way they live their lives.



Conclusion

The government regards the development of healthy citizens and a healthy society as an important priority. The NHSP helps to reach targets to reduce obesity and promote healthy lifestyles.