Communicating Health as part of a Whole System Healthy University Approach

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Key messages

• Running ad-hoc health promotion campaigns in isolation is less likely to achieve sustainable lifestyle change

• A comprehensive ‘joined-up’ approach i.e. whole-system approach much more likely to bring success
The guidance package offers:

- An approach to health promotion activities which has a whole university approach embedded within it

- A planning framework for designing and developing campaigns and activities

- Advice on identifying key partners and potential for collaboration in delivering health promotion campaigns, events and activities
Key Concepts and Terms

Public Health
‘the science and art of preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting health through the organised efforts of society’ (Acheson, 1988)

Health promotion
‘the process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve, their health’ (WHO, 1986).
Key Concepts and Terms

Health Education
- Tends to involve simply giving information
- Can also include, health literacy, skills development, consciousness raising (Green and Tones, (2010)
- Less effective in changing behaviour

Whole-systems approach
- Securing high level commitment and leadership
- Engaging with a wide range of stakeholders
- Combining high visibility health-related projects with system-level organisation and developmental change
Key Concepts and Terms

- Health promotion campaigns, events and activities
  - Processes which aim to improve the health of the population via the communication of health
  - Different communication methods used e.g. social media, mass media
  - Focus on a particular population and/or health issue
  - Aimed at raising awareness, shifting attitudes or changing behaviours
  - Involve key stakeholders
Key Concepts and Terms

• Social Marketing
  – used to develop activities aimed at changing or maintaining people’s behaviour for their benefit.
  – commercial marketing ultimately seeks to influence consumer behaviour for profit, social marketing encourages behaviours that provide benefit for individuals and society as a whole
Wider context and evidence base

- Nationally - Department of Health has lead on campaigns
  + Key role of other issue-based charities also

- Locally – Public Health – PCT- develop and lead local campaigns
  + Working with LA and 3rd sector organisations

- Future changes
  - Public Health England (nationally)
  - Public health moving to local authority control (locally)
Wider context and evidence base - Social marketing

National Social Marketing Centre (NSMC) - Established by Government in 2006, as the centre of excellence for social marketing and behaviour change in the UK.

Going beyond messaging and communications

- Simply being aware of the risks will not change behaviour
- People often don’t like being told what to or bury their heads in the sand
- Just using posters, media and leaflets is unlikely to make an impact
- One size fits all approach will not have the desired effect
Wider context and evidence base - Social marketing – what works?

- Consistent messages over time from a credible source
- A focus on positives rather than negatives – although there are some exceptions where using ‘scare tactics’ has been shown to be effective (e.g. drink driving campaigns)
- Robust evaluation including short term and long-term health outcomes
- Agreed targets between stakeholders
- Must be clear which segments of the population are to be targeted
- Need to look at the problem through the eyes of the students
- Understand the reasons why people behave the way they do
- Bring about sustainable change
- Use a mix of interventions
Wider context and evidence base

• In terms of Healthy Universities
  – Communicating health via high profile campaigns, events and activities can contribute to Healthy University goals through:
    • effective targeting of information
    • enhanced health awareness
    • increased consciousness of the wider economic, political, social and environmental determinants of health
    • integration of health into the routine life of the institution.

  – However, it is also clear that this communication will be more effective if it forms part of a comprehensive whole system approach
    • Health-enhancing policy
    • Create supportive living, learning and working environments
    • Develop life-skills
    • Strengthen community-level action – advocacy, mediation and enablement
University Context

- Health promotion activities can take a variety of forms:
  - Half or full day events on a particular issue or number of issues e.g. healthy eating, mental health
  - Sustained campaigns focusing on a particular issue, or on different issues over a set period of time

- Types of activities can include:
  - Taster sessions, information stalls, interactive activities, workshops, short courses, comprehensive communications strategy, volunteering and training

- Communications methods used:
  - Website, social networking, texting, email, virtual learning environment, posters, leaflets, student newspaper, magazine and radio
University Context

- Challenge of ‘integrating’ health within a university
  - Health not a central aim!
  - Therefore when planning and implementing campaigns essential to align to core business and objectives of the university
    - Volunteering and training
    - Curriculum – e.g student projects and assignments
    - Aligning to local, regional and national campaigns
    - Evidence-informed
    - Work across the institution and with external agencies
    - Try to build sustainability by building in to longer term annual cycle of university and community events/campaigns
Planning and Implementation - What to consider?

- Academic year means working within imposed timescales
- Important to prioritise what campaigns to run
- Ensure effective use of, and appropriately targeted, resources

- Needs and priorities
  - Needs analysis can be time consuming and costly
  - Alternative options include
    » Use existing information – staff surveys, specialist audits eg healthy workplace award needs assessments
    » Harness undergraduate and postgraduate research – students carry out needs assessment for dissertation or thesis
    » Student Union
    » Service audits/usage – e.g. student services
    » school reps, course reps, retention officers, disability coordinators, HU steering group
Planning and Implementation

• Who will lead the work?

  – Important to have named coordinator
  – However, also important to ensure the lead department does not focus the campaign to the detriment of others e.g. staff v students
  – Appropriate at times to segment population, however also significant overlaps in demography of students and staff
  – Therefore valuable to work in partnership across schools and departments and with external agencies
  – Important to ensure you have the right people round the table and have buy-in from all involved
Planning and Implementation

• When should the campaign, event or activity take place?
  
  – Academic year poses time constraints
  – Annual plan of events – possibly linked with national events e.g. world mental health day
  – However also, dependent on focus of campaign:
    • Flash-points for drop out?
    • Induction?
  – Timescales – what are aims and objectives of campaign? – awareness raising v changing behaviour

• Evaluation – must plan for this as well to measure success
Consultation and partnerships

- Consultation will ensure effective targeting of resources
- Partnership working is key to successful whole university approach
  - Sharing expertise
  - Achievement of shared and individual objectives
  - Contribution of university to local public health programmes
  - Important to plan together to ensure buy-in and ownership
  - Be aware of the challenges
Consultation and partnerships

• How do I identify key partners?
  – Mapping exercise – within the university and in the local area - who does what?
    • Statutory, private and voluntary sector
    • Local forums and committees
    • Student Union
    • Services/activities not branded as ‘health’ which are congruent with goals of HU
Evaluation and Impact

- What will success look like?
- Evaluation must be included in planning of campaign or activity
- Key considerations during planning:
  - What are your aims and objectives?
  - What are your Critical Success Factors? Partners sometimes competing objectives!
  - Do your campaign targets, outcomes or KPI’s fit with University or Departmental objectives?
  - What information do you need to collect – quantitative / qualitative?
Evaluation and Impact

- Linking evaluation to overall aims and objectives
  - Raising awareness – no. of participants, feedback from participants
  - Changing behaviour, attitudes - Need short, medium and long term goals

- What type of evaluation?
  - Process
  - Impact and outcomes
    - Impact – immediate, shorter term effects of intervention
    - Outcome – longer term effects
  - Economic
  - Comprehensive - combination
Example case study

• Re-thinking Student Mental Well-being at UCLAN
  – Used a Whole University approach
  – Clear aims linked to evaluation
  – Over 3 years changed attitudes, knowledge and behaviour