Background and Policy Context
Recognising that “health is created and lived by people within the settings of everyday life; where they learn, work, play and love” (WHO, Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion, 1986), the healthy settings approach seeks to embed health within a setting’s culture, ethos, structures, processes and routine life. Building on the experience of other programmes such as Healthy Schools and Healthy Cities, there is a growing movement of universities interested in developing and applying the approach within the higher education sector.

This approach is supported at a national policy level. For example, the public health strategy for England (H.M. Government, 2010) states that: “The Healthy Schools, Healthy Further Education and Healthy Universities programmes will continue to be developed by their respective sectors, as voluntary programmes, collaborating where appropriate and exploring partnership working with business and voluntary bodies” (Para. 3.15, p.34); whilst the Welsh Government is currently developing a Healthy and Sustainable FE and HE Programme and Accreditation Framework.

The UK National Healthy Universities Network has emerged out of an informal network initially established in 2006, in response to growing demand from higher education institutions (HEIs) interested in developing and implementing this ‘whole university’ approach. It was greatly strengthened through a HEFCE-funded project, Developing Leadership and Governance for Healthy Universities – which also facilitated the development of a comprehensive website and online toolkit. It currently has a membership drawn from more than 60 HEIs (representing a diversity of staffing groups – including Student Services, Sports, Human Resources and Academic Departments) and 20 other stakeholder organisations.

Governance
The Network is co-ordinated by the University of Central Lancashire and Manchester Metropolitan University, and supported by a Board comprising representation from Leeds Trinity University, Nottingham Trent University, Teesside University, the University of the West of England – with additional representation from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to be agreed.

Vision
The Network is driven by the vision that:
“A Healthy University aspires to create a learning environment and organisational culture that enhances the health, wellbeing and sustainability of its community and enables people to achieve their full potential.”

Aims
The Network aims to:
- Facilitate the exchange of information, research, practice and experience related to the implementation of Healthy Universities.
- Develop and promote models of good practice.
- Advocate and advise on the Healthy Universities approach at regional and national levels.
- Encourage collaborative development and research.
**Membership**

- The UK National Healthy Universities Network is open to people employed by higher education institutions and other interested stakeholders from local authorities, NHS bodies, voluntary and community organisations and relevant national agencies.
- The network is currently chaired and administered by the Healthy Settings Unit at the University of Central Lancashire.

**Meetings and Communication**

- Meetings are held twice a year at locations across the UK. Attendance via telephone or video conferencing is not usually possible due to the format of the meetings.
- Meetings will offer members the opportunity to:
  - receive updates about national project progress
  - network with other members and engage in peer support
  - discuss any ‘hot topics’
  - participate in a themed session/workshop
- Further ‘virtual’ communication will be enabled by email and via the website.

**Framework for Action**

The Network has an agreed framework for action for HEIs to work within and to build a common understanding of what the Healthy University approach means. This reflects a broad holistic understanding of health and well-being and has the following aims:

1. To create healthy and sustainable working, learning and living environments for students, staff and visitors.
2. To increase the profile of health, wellbeing and sustainability in teaching, research and knowledge exchange.
3. To contribute to the health, wellbeing and sustainability of the wider community.
4. To evaluate their work, building evidence of effectiveness and sharing learning.

Within this framework, the Healthy University approach is understood to incorporate six key elements:

- **Generating High Visibility Innovative Action**: through high profile projects exploring the interconnections between different stakeholder groups and their environments and behaviours.
- **Leading Organisational and Cultural Change**: by embedding the principles and aims of the Healthy University into the organisational ethos, culture and policy and planning processes.
- **Securing Senior Level Commitment and Corporate Responsibility**: through the leadership and advocacy of senior decision-makers for health, well-being and sustainable development.
- **Enabling Wide-Ranging Participation**: by encouraging and facilitating the active involvement of students and staff in identifying and prioritising needs and planning and delivering action.
- **Anticipating and Responding to Public Health Challenges**: by ensuring the university is at the forefront of action to address key challenges pertaining to its population.
- **Helping to Deliver the Institutional Agenda**: by mapping public health challenges against the university’s core business agenda and demonstrating clearly its role in helping to deliver this.

**Further Details**

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References and Further Reading


