

HEALTHY UNIVERSITIES

DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

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WELCOME FROM JOINT CHAIRS

"I was delighted when I was asked to be joint Chair of this hugely important initiative on Healthy Universities.

I have welcomed the various initiatives over the last 6 years since we were established which focus on the projects by an increasing number of universities to foster a positive and healthy culture for students and staff alike. Our own research and practice in the sector suggests to us that there is a strong relationship between high quality leadership and healthy organisations. Often these processes are not well joined together in universities and this project offers a real opportunity to learn how to do it.

The next five years are going to be tough across the whole HE sector. Resources will be tight, major change and restructuring will take place, and positive staff commitment will be vital to underpin the change processes that will be taking place. Fostering a culture of healthy universities will be a vital ingredient in supporting this transition.

The issue of healthy universities is an agenda that brings staff and students together in a common cause. This sense of inclusiveness is itself one of the crucially positive values of higher education that we need to hang on to, and build upon in a time of major change."

*Ewart Wooldridge (CBE), CEO, Leadership Foundation for Higher Education
Joint Chair of the Leadership Advisory Group*

"I regard the opportunity to become Joint Chair as both an honour and an opportunity. Health is created or lost in the places where we live out our daily lives. Increasingly, universities are at the heart of so many people's everyday activities and the 'Healthy Universities initiative has the potential to be of real benefit, not just to students and staff, but also to the wider community.

Universities are engines for social and economic change and we know only too well from the recent report by Sir Mir Michael Marmot these are all too important considerations in building a healthy and equitable society for the future. And what is in the interest of the community will be of advantage to the universities themselves. We are looking at a win-win situation for all concerned."

*Professor Richard Parish, Chief Executive, Royal Society for Public Health
Joint Chair of the Leadership Advisory Group*

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Welcome from Joint Chairs

What are Healthy Universities?

Project Overview

Project Developments and Update

WHAT ARE HEALTHY UNIVERSITIES?

A Healthy University aspires to create a learning environment and organisational culture that enhances the health, well-being and sustainability of its community and enables people to achieve their full potential.

www.healthyuniversities.ac.uk

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Developing Leadership and Governance for Healthy Universities is a two year project funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) LGM Fund. The importance of investing for health and well-being in and across the wide range of contexts and places within which people spend their time reflects an appreciation that “health is created and lived by people within the settings of their everyday life; where they learn, work, play and love.”¹ With 169 higher education institutions (HEIs), almost 2.4 million students and more than 370,000 staff, the UK higher education sector is a key setting in which and through which to promote public health.

With regard to student well-being, it is clear that many national health-related priorities such as alcohol, mental health, sexual health and obesity are particularly relevant to the student population – and that life events such as leaving home can be important catalysts to behaviour change. In relation to staff well-being, a Government review of workplace health has argued that the business case for promoting and supporting employee health and well-being is becoming increasingly clear.² More widely, HEIs have the potential to impact positively on the health and well-being of communities in which they are located and on wider society through environmentally and socially responsible institutional practice and through the ‘future shaping’ of students moving into professional, community and family roles,

Building on demand generated in part by the focus on higher education within Choosing Health,

the Government’s 2004 public health strategy, an informal English National Network of Healthy Universities was established in 2006 by the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan). During 2008, UCLan led a National Research and Development Project funded by the Higher Education Academy Health Sciences and Practice Subject Centre with the and the Department of Health, with the aim of reporting on the potential for a national programme on Healthy Universities that could contribute to health, well-being and sustainable development. An audit of current activity revealed a growth of interest and activity among HEIs, with 28 of 64 respondents indicating that they have a Healthy University initiative in place and 97% expressing interest in a national programme. Interviews with key national stakeholder bodies also demonstrated significant engagement with the agenda and recognition of the value of adopting a strategic whole system Healthy University approach. Such an approach aims to achieve impacts and long-term outcomes in relation to both public health and core business agendas – and is understood to focus on three main areas:

- creating healthy and supportive learning, working and living environments for students, staff and visitors
- integrating health and sustainable development as multi-disciplinary cross-cutting themes in curricula, research and knowledge exchange
- contributing to the health and environmental sustainability of the wider community.

Funded for two years, *Developing Leadership and Governance for Healthy Universities* is led jointly by UCLan and Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU), working in partnership with Leeds Trinity University, Nottingham Trent University, Teesside University, the University of the West of England, the Royal Society for Public Health and the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education. Its aims are to:

- strengthen, formalise and expand the National Network – which now has approximately 60 members
- generate and disseminate web-based guidance tools and case studies that enable HEIs to develop as Healthy Universities
- support further national developments, building on the findings of the National Research and Development Project

The project receives strategic guidance from a high-level Leadership Advisory Group comprising senior representatives from partner HEIs and national stakeholder organisations, and is operationally managed by a project board made up of representatives from the six partner HEIs. Alongside this, the National Network membership provides an important wider reference group.

UCLan and MMU have also been commissioned by the Royal Society for Public Health to work on a Department of Health funded project involving the development of a model for Healthy Universities and the production of recommendations for the development of a National Healthy Universities Framework.

Mark Dooris
Director – Healthy Settings Development Unit,
School of Public Health and Clinical Sciences,
UCLan

Sue Powell
Head – Academy for Health and Well-Being,
MMU

1. World Health Organization (1986) *Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion*. Geneva: WHO.
2. Black C. (2008) *Dame Carol Black’s Review of the Health of Britain’s Working Age Population: Working for a Healthier Tomorrow*. London: The Stationery Office.

PROJECT UPDATE

The English National Healthy Universities Network

The first of the three key aims of *Developing Leadership and Governance for Healthy Universities* is to strengthen the National Healthy Universities Network. The National Network began informally in 2006 with group of HEIs interested in the healthy settings approach meeting up to discuss some of the challenges and to share current practice. Since then its membership has grown and currently includes over 45 HEIs from across England long with partner organisations such as PCTs and NUS. Network meeting are held twice a year in locations across England and offer the opportunity for members to discuss current issues and inform National developments. In between meetings, Network members keep in contact by email, sharing ideas, asking for advice and generally providing support to each other.

The project will work with the existing membership to strengthen, expand and formalise governance arrangements of the Network to ensure it is robust and in a position to provide leadership and support to HEIs. A significant aspect of my role as Network Coordinator is to develop an interactive and dynamic virtual 'hub' and a programme of training and development activities to support this objective.

Web-Based Guidance Tools and Case Studies

The second aim of the project, to generate and disseminate web-based guidance tools and case studies, is to be supported by the development of a Healthy Universities website: www.healthyuniversities.ac.uk. Phase one of web development is underway and will provide general information about the healthy settings approach and Healthy Universities, an overview of national projects relating to Healthy Universities and details of English National Healthy Universities Network. Phase one will also include the development of guidance and resources to support anyone interested in 'getting started' with Healthy Universities. The second phase of development will support the dissemination of guidance tools and case studies generated through the course of the project.

Further Support National Developments

The final aim of *Developing Leadership and Governance for Healthy Universities* is to support further national developments. To date, we have achieved this through our joint work with the Royal Society for Public Health on a project funded by the department of Health. The project objectives are to:

- articulate a model for Healthy Universities whereby the healthy settings approach is applied within the higher education sector
- produce recommendations for the development of a National Healthy Universities Framework
- align and co-ordinate the development of a National Healthy Universities Framework with the HEFCE-funded project 'Developing Leadership and Governance for Healthy Universities'.

The project runs from October 2009 to March 2010. In November 2009 we consulted on two draft papers with a sub-group of the English National Healthy Universities Network and with the *Developing Leadership and Governance for Healthy Universities* Leadership Advisory Group. The first paper articulates a model for Healthy Universities; the second explores options for developing a National Healthy Universities Framework and makes recommendations relating to the operationalisation of such a framework.

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CONTACT DETAILS

For further information please contact:

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DATES FOR THE DIARY

The next National Network meeting will be held on 26 April 2010 at Bristol University. If you would like further information please contact me.

www.healthyuniversities.ac.uk