

PET(4)-08-12 : Tuesday 15 May 2012

P-04-368 Promote Physical Activity and Health in Further Education Colleges

The Physical Activity Network for Wales response to consultation on petition received by the National Assembly for Wales entitled:

'We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to promote physical activity and health in Further Education colleges.'

Whilst we have no particular knowledge or understanding of the present specific physical activity promotion activities of Further Education colleges in Wales, we would always endorse any actions that promoted an increase in physical activity in the Welsh population as a whole and amongst particularly 'inactive' groups in particular. In that regard we know that over 70% of the population do not achieve the necessary recommended levels of physical activity to benefit their health, and teenage girls appear to be a group where levels of physical activity appear to drop significantly.

However, whilst there is undoubtedly a role for Further Education colleges, we have no evidence that they are any better or worse at promoting physical activity than other educational sectors or settings including schools, Higher Education or workplaces. Nonetheless the potential for post-16 education to contribute to improving physical activity is recognised within the Welsh Assembly Government's Physical Activity Action Plan 'Creating an Active Wales' with a specific identified action to "*Develop a 'healthy campus' model for use by further and higher education institutions in order to provide increased physical activity in the post-16 sector*", with a timescale of 2010 – 2015, and we are pleased to see that work has been initiated at a number of colleges within the context of a 'Health College' scheme modelled on the 'Healthy Schools' programme to address this action.

In terms of feasibility, there are a range of actions available to colleges to increase physical activity amongst their student population including:

- Utilising existing sport & exercise facilities outside of the normal curricular timetable.
- Encouraging the development of individual travel plans that promote the use of active travel options.
- The provision of adequate facilities on-site that support walking and cycling. e.g. Covered and lockable cycle storage areas, showers &

changing facilities, safe routes to local amenities to/from the college.

- The development of college-based sport and recreation teams with associated events to promote them.

Among the barriers to participation may be:

Lack of facilities or infrastructure.

Perceived lack of time.

Prioritising academic responsibilities.

Alternative attractions during free time. e.g. The bar.

I hope this contributes usefully to the debate.

Sincerely

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