



Ferry-Health (Confidential Student Centre) Ferryhill, County Durham, North East England

Aims

Ferry-Health (Confidential Student Centre) was established to provide a confidential, generic health centre for 11-18 year olds within the grounds of Ferryhill Business and Enterprise College.

Working in partnership with a range of organisations the objectives of the Centre are to:

- provide easily accessible, confidential services in a 'teacher free' zone in a separate building;
- provide an effective signposting service for students;
- provide a variety of professionals available every day to talk with young people on site;
- target health issues pertinent to students through effective consultation;
- promote positive mental health;
- give opportunities for young people to express views to peers and professionals;
- encourage resilience and independence through peer support mechanisms;
- further develop the existing peer support mechanisms;
- increase confidence of users in accessing other mainstream services;
- support and further develop the Personal Health and Social Education programme (PHSE);
- alleviate some of the pressure on school pastoral staff.

Rationale

The initiative arose from concerns by the School Counselling Co-ordinator about the number of young people disclosing unprotected sexual activity. Following discussions with potential partners (school nursing services, GPs, health promotion, youth workers) a steering group of professionals was established. Confidential questionnaires were completed by students at the school and several focus groups were held. This led to a dedicated student group being established – The Student Health Partnership (SHP) - to work alongside the adult steering group. It became clear from surveys of students that they were requesting a 'one stop shop', on the school site, which offered advice, support and information on any aspect of physical, emotional, and sexual health.



Local Context

Ferryhill is an ex-mining village in the North East of England. Unemployment is high, as are rates of teenage pregnancy, alcohol and drug abuse, and mental health problems. The area has no dedicated provision for sexual health services for young people in the local community. When surveyed, students of the school reported that they did not access the local services as they didn't expect to receive a confidential service. They also reported that some of their experiences of these adult services were that they were not young person friendly.

Use of Ferry-Health

Since Ferry-Health opened in 2003 it has been used by approximately 50% of the school population. Students can 'drop-in' at lunchtimes and/or they can make private appointments which take place in a comfortable office within the centre. Professionals currently available for students are school nurse, school counsellors, sexual health outreach worker and youth workers. The school's peer mentoring team is also based within Ferry-Health, and younger students who are identified as vulnerable are allocated a mentor with whom they meet regularly in the building. Students go to Ferry Health for support, advice and information from professional staff, mentors, leaflets, videos, and the internet, on any aspect of their physical, emotional or sexual health. If appropriate support is not available on a particular day appointments with relevant agencies are made for students.

The Centre, managed by the Director of Student Services, also provides various other initiatives and programmes to support students.

Group work in Ferry-Health for students lacking in self esteem and confidence is a regular feature of the school year, with students at risk identified in Y6. These young people then receive intensive support during their transition to Y7.

Some relevant Personal Health and Social Education (PHSE) is also delivered within the centre, and the Director of Student Services regularly delivers workshops on depression, domestic violence and body image to whole classes or small groups of students. Other staff partners of Ferry-Health also are involved in PHSE delivery, within the Sex and Relationship Education aspects of the curriculum in particular. A successful 'Baby Think it Over Course' was held in 2007, and it is hoped that this will be repeated in 2008.

An exciting recent development is the Drug and Alcohol Peer Education. Nine students from Y9 were recruited and trained as drug and alcohol peer educators. These students are now passing on their knowledge to their peers across the school and within the community.



Costs and sustainability

Initial bids to Sedgfield PCT and Awards for All were successful and provided initial financial support. Further funding from the PCT has continued over the years in the form of small yearly grants. Three awards from National Mentoring Network and a one-off sum from the Sheena Amos Trust also gave financial support, used mainly for resources.

All the external professionals providing support through the centre give their time in kind with the school directly funding the Student Services Department which is the core of the services offered.

Next Steps

Currently the Steering Group has recommended that Governors of the school consider a full contraceptive service on site within the usual working arrangements of Ferry-Health, which student surveys have demonstrated a need for.

Contact Details

Business and Enterprise College
Tel: 01740 658016
kcr@fbec.co.uk



John Dower House Crescent Place Cheltenham Glos. GL50 3RA **Telephone** 01242 521381 **Facsimile** 01242 584270
55 Whitehall London SW1H 2EY **Telephone** 0207 270 3324 **Facsimile** 0207 932 5811
Email info@ruralcommunities.gov.uk **www** ruralcommunities.gov.uk