

**ENGLISH NATIONAL HEALTHY UNIVERSITIES NETWORK
UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST OF ENGLAND, BRISTOL
TUESDAY 13 NOVEMBER 2012**



**REPORT OF MEETING
&
REPORT OF THEMED SESSION/WORKSHOP ON ALCOHOL**

The English National Network of Healthy Universities is led by the University of Central Lancashire and Manchester Metropolitan University, supported by a Project Board comprising partners from Leeds Trinity University College, Nottingham Trent University, Teesside University and the University of the West of England.

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WELCOME, INTRODUCTION AND NETWORK UPDATE

WELCOME

Professor Judy Orme opened the day and introduced Professor Steve West, Vice-Chancellor of the University of the West of England (UWE), who welcomed Network members, outlined his interest in and commitment to Healthy Universities and highlighted the challenging context within which we are all working.

INTRODUCTION AND NETWORK UPDATE

Mark Dooris provided a brief update report, highlighting:

Network Funding and Governance

- The HEFCE-funded project, [Developing Leadership and Governance for Healthy Universities](#), ended in July 2012. The [Final Report](#) and [Executive Summary Report](#) from the project are now available.
- The University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) and Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) have agreed to fund a limited amount of time for Mark Dooris and Sue Powell to continue to co-ordinate the Network and maintain the website.
- The Project Board – comprising Ian Kenvyn (Leeds Trinity University College), Hazel Wright (Teesside University), Sarah Bustard (Nottingham Trent University), Judy Orme (University of the West of England) and Sharon Doherty (UCLan) – has agreed to continue to provide support to the Network and its development.

Website and Toolkit

- The HEFCE-funded project enabled the Network to be strengthened and for the [Healthy Universities Website](#) and the [Healthy Universities Toolkit](#) to be developed. The Website and Toolkit are currently being updated to reflect governance changes and other developments.
- Members are actively invited to contribute case studies using the [case study template](#) form available on the website.

Gambling and Gaming

- The Project Board responded to a consultation exercise regarding a proposal for British Universities and Colleges Sports (BUCS) to secure commercial investment and deliver activity from the gambling and gaming industry.
- The response expressed the unanimous view of Project Board members that it would be entirely inappropriate for BUCS to accept such investment and to link gambling and gaming to sport – as it is increasingly clear that these activities can cause harm to health and wellbeing.

Scotland and Wales

- The Welsh Government has established a Task and Finish Group with a view to developing Healthy FE and HE schemes. The first meeting was held in July and a follow-up meeting is planned for December.
- Gil Barton (Robert Gordon University) and Linda Orr (Dundee University) are continuing to explore the establishment of a Scottish Healthy Universities Network. They have held an exploratory meeting with NHS Health Scotland. A Healthy University Committee has been established at Robert Gordon University.

SELF REVIEW TOOL – EXPERIENCES, REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Sarah Bustard facilitated this session, which included an [overview presentation](#) and interactive group work giving participants an opportunity to explore and/or reflect on their use of the [Self Review Tool](#).

This online resource forms part of the [Healthy Universities Toolkit](#) and offers a mechanism for HEIs to review and reflect on their progress in embedding a whole system approach to health and wellbeing into their core business and culture. It is designed to encourage and facilitate strategic-level engagement and partnership development within individual HEIs, ideally used by a multi-departmental and multi-service cross-university group in assessing progress and informing planning.

Key benefits and opportunities of the Self Review Tool that were noted included:

- It provides a useful mechanism for getting people together, developing partnerships and encouraging some healthy competition – the process is as important as the ‘answers’
- It provides a valuable baseline against which to progress – prioritising and managing change
- It can provide a starting point for helping people understand what a whole systems approach may look like.

Key challenges of the Self Review Tool that were highlighted by the presentation and discussion included:

- Ensuring that diverse staff and student voices are heard and included.
- Gathering and collating evidence to support answers and provide reference point to use when completing questionnaire at a later date – allowing the Self Review Tool to be used as a ‘management tool’.
- Finding/agreeing a motivated individual to take on co-ordination role in absence of having a dedicated Healthy University Co-ordinator (linked to challenge of resourcing a Co-ordinator).
- Working with a lengthy questionnaire that requires input from many different services/departments/stakeholders and has to be done sequentially online with no option for answering ‘don’t know’ (N.B. this means that it may be useful to use the downloadable pdf version to collect and collate responses from stakeholders before completing online).
- Appreciating that the answers to questions in some sections are subjective.
- Recognising that no-one likes to be red!

NETWORKING: UPDATES, SHARING OF PRACTICE AND PEER SUPPORT

Smoke-Free Environments and Health Behaviour Change:

- Judy Orme outlined developments at UWE relating to the creation of and adherence to smoke-free environments and to smoking cessation (including the training of Health Psychology students).
- Jane Meyrick highlighted the opportunities that exist for Health Psychology students to conduct research linked to health behavior interventions more generally.

Eating Disorders:

- Sarah Bustard outlined an NHS-funded programme at Nottingham Trent University that has successfully addressed low-level eating disorders. It was agreed that it is important to appreciate the connections with mental health.

Alcohol, Students' Unions and Cultural Change:

- Sharon Doherty drew participants' attention to **Unit Check**, a web-based alcohol tool that includes an online questionnaire, also available via a link on the HU website. Rachel Brown suggested that Network members may find it useful to read an evaluation report examining the effectiveness of Unit Check.
- Nigel Thomas provided an overview of a students' union (SU) led week of events for Freshers' Week that provided a largely alcohol-free alternative to 'traditional' events at Loughborough University. This has received positive feedback, particularly from international students. However, it was noted that it had been initiated and co-ordinated by one committed individual – which led on to a discussion about the challenge of embedding learning and activities within students' unions (due to the transitory nature of sabbatical posts).
- Feedback from Bernadette McGrath at Liverpool John Moores University highlighted the ongoing tensions between the culture of many SUs being wedded to income generation through the sale of alcohol and a more general drive to reduce alcohol consumption. She also highlighted some interesting research on the night-time economy in Liverpool.
- A discussion about alcohol and SUs concluded that it is an appropriate time to address the culture of alcohol, as bar sales have generally decreased due to the comparatively cheap availability of off-sales (leading to 'pre-loading').
- Jeannie Warmington from the University of Worcester gave a tangible example of how one of their SUs had sought to shift the culture and promote alternatives to alcohol, with one of its bars – called 'The Dive' – being revamped and reopened as 'The Pear Tree'.
- There was a discussion about the challenge of building effective student engagement and wellbeing into roles such as wardens for student residences.
- Kathy Owens and Cheryl Dunford from the University of Southampton mentioned their SU's safe transport scheme.
- Sharon Doherty from UCLan informed participants about 'Give it a Go', a programme run by the SU that started life as a month-long experiment but is now throughout the year. Programme of trips/activities that are not alcohol based to encourage students to try new activities, make friends and promote joining clubs and societies. Nigel Thomas mentioned that Loughborough University has a similar programme encouraging informal physical activity as an alternative to competitive sport, which is funded by Sport England.

Staff Wellbeing:

- Kathy Owens and Cheryl Dunford from the University of Southampton talked about a successful scheme whereby staff can take time to sit with a colleague and have a free cup of tea/coffee, designed to generate innovative ideas and engagement from staff concerning their wellbeing.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the English National Healthy Universities Network is scheduled for **Thursday 16th May, at Teesside University in Darlington**. The meeting will include a themed session focusing on **physical activity**.

Further information will be circulated in due course.

THEMED SESSION ON ALCOHOL

Alcohol Consumption Amongst Young People: Dr Felix Ritchie, UWE

Dr Felix Ritchie from UWE gave a **presentation** (co-authored by Dr Caroline Ritchie from Cardiff Metropolitan University and Richard Ward from the University of Bournemouth) entitled 'Alcohol Consumption Amongst Young People' – based on quantitative and qualitative research that had explored the questions:

- Are students like other young people?
- Do students change?
- Do young people understand drinking behaviours?
- Do young people understand safe drinking behaviours?

Key findings were that: males are less aware of heavy drinking; females are aware but not bothered; and 'safety' in relation to alcohol tends to be understood as physical safety (e.g. not getting drinks spiked) – especially for females.

Responses included the revision of marketing messages (e.g. 'one drink=two units'; 'safety = inner safety'); preliminary discussions with the working group; and production of a student crib card.

The Development, Implementation and Evaluation of a Multi-Level Social Norm Intervention to Address Alcohol Misuse in Four Welsh Universities: Rachel Brown and Dr Simon Murphy, Cardiff University

Rachel Brown from Cardiff University gave a **presentation** that provided an overview of the Wales Students and Alcohol Project, commissioned by the Welsh Government and delivered by Drinkaware in partnership with NUS Wales. A mapping exercise identified a number of key issues: lack of consistent policy; pre-loading and related incidents; and lack of evidence-based campaigning. Following this, the proposed intervention comprised: a social norms campaign in halls of residence supported by the development and roll-out of a toolkit of best practice and the appointment of a project officer to provide training and support. Significantly (in the context of 'Healthy Universities'), the Toolkit identified the importance of adopting a whole system approach.

Simon Murphy from Cardiff University gave a **presentation** (co-authored by Annie Williams, Graham F Moore and Laurence Moore) concerning the evaluation of the halls-based social norms campaign and development/implementation of the toolkit, which used an exploratory clustered randomised control trial design. Fifty residence halls in four universities in Wales were randomly assigned to intervention or control arms of the trial – and web and paper surveys (n=3800) were distributed, assessing: exposure/contamination, recall of and responses to intervention messages, perceived drinking norms and personal drinking behaviour at six months follow-up. 554 (14.6%) students within 43 halls of residence (20 control/23 intervention) provided complete responses.

Additionally, a process evaluation was conducted, using focus groups, interviews and observation to explore the role of alcohol in student lives, the process and context of intervention development and implementation, and the impact of the social norm materials and toolkit.

A number of implementation problems were reported, including inadequate structures for cross-department working and a failure to integrate the social norms campaign with university-wide toolkit activity. A large majority of students in the intervention group reported having seen posters in their own hall, but students were more likely to report exposure to pro-alcohol

promotions than to intervention materials. Whilst the majority who reported seeing at least one material reported that messages were believable and relevant, students continued to 'overestimate' actual norms and to report almost identical levels of alcohol consumption whether in intervention or control groups, and whether or not exposed to intervention materials.

The toolkit was initially disseminated to four or five key stakeholders in each university and was well-received, although time demands led to requests for an executive summary and for the development of interactive elements. Institutional contexts varied considerably, and the toolkit was disseminated more widely in those universities at a more advanced stage of problem recognition and readiness to change and with more developed systems for internal partnership working. In other institutions, the toolkit appeared to act as a catalyst for such cross-university working. Although it was generally felt that a longer follow-up than six months was needed to assess impacts, some universities reported that the toolkit served to increase stakeholders' understanding of wider environmental influences on student alcohol use and to highlight the need to formulate/review student alcohol policies and employ a cross-department approach. It was generally recognised that there are considerable obstacles to developing whole university systems and structures in larger and more complex institutions – and that this points to the need for a dedicated role.

The research concluded that:

- A social norm approach for students should not be continued in its current format – and if it is used, it should combine a universal population approach with more intensive approaches targeted at heavier drinkers.
- 'Pro-alcohol' environmental influences are likely to drown out the positive impact of any social norm approach without sustained whole system ecological interventions to support it.
- Those universities with established structures for inter-departmental working are likely to be more receptive to and able to implement interventions effectively.
- Promoting awareness of and responsibility for the consequences of alcohol misuse is likely to be more successful when located within the wider context of student wellbeing, retention and attainment.
- Further support is needed to facilitate a whole system approach and create dedicated identifiable role(s) within universities – potentially within the context of a Welsh Network of Healthy Universities.

A range of recommendations were made for:

- universities and SUs
- the Welsh Government
- researchers.

Further information on the above interventions and research can be accessed on line:

[Murphy, S., Moore, G., Williams, A. & Moore, L. \(2012\) An exploratory cluster randomised trial of a university halls of residence based social norms intervention in Wales, UK. BMC Public Health, 12:186 doi:10.1186/1471-2458-12-186](https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-12-186)

Interactive Workshop: From Recommendations to Action

A question and answer session was held, which highlighted the challenges of addressing students and alcohol within the context of aggressive marketing by the alcohol industry (with Mark Dooris drawing participants' attention to a recent BMJ article:

[Hastings, G. \(2012\) Why corporate power is a public health priority. British Medical Journal, 345, e5124.](https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.e5124)

A workshop was then held with table-top discussions. Key issues emerging from these discussions included:

- The importance of developing supportive policies and procedures in universities and SUs – and of embracing a partnership approach.
- The importance of raising awareness of environmental issues and of responding to the effects of student alcohol use on local communities.
- The value of focusing on auditing issues as well as developing alcohol messages and campaigns (e.g. student spend – both total and alcohol).
- The value of creating messages personal to your campus.
- The need to shift the culture and ethos surrounding 'freshers' week/fortnight – possibly through renaming – and to address some of the underlying causes of excessive alcohol consumption (e.g. loneliness, anxiety) through shifting the focus to 'life skills' development (e.g. financial management, cooking skills).
- The need to view alcohol as part of a wider whole (e.g. link to problem gambling).
- The importance of disseminating information prior to students arriving at university – potentially setting out a 'contract' concerning acceptable behaviour.
- The biggest pro-alcohol influences are located outside of universities and the financial/societal costs associated with alcohol-related harm could be an important lever to action.
- The value of setting expectations regarding attendance early on (N.B challenge of e-learning).
- The value of creating alternative environments that are not primarily alcohol-based (e.g. cafés).
- The importance of viewing student behaviour in context (e.g. first year excessive drinking may 'calm down').

APPENDIX 1: ATTENDANCE

Present

Rachel Brown	Cardiff University
Sarah Bustard	Nottingham Trent University
Sophie Davies	University of the West of England
Sharon Doherty	UCLan
Mark Dooris	UCLan
Cheryl Dunford	University of Southampton
Richard Kimberlee	University of the West of England
Bernadette McGrath	Liverpool John Moores University
Jane Meyrick	University of the West of England
Simon Murphy (afternoon)	Cardiff University
Judy Orme	University of the West of England
Kathy Owens	University of Southampton
Adrian Parsons	Welsh Government
Caroline Ritchie (afternoon)	Cardiff Metropolitan University
Felix Ritchie	University of the West of England
Jayne Seymour	University of the West of England
Nigel Thomas	Loughborough University
Jeannie Warmington	University of Worcester

Apologies

Susannah Attwell	British Universities & Colleges Sport (BUCS)
Sue Bowker	Welsh Assembly Government
Charlotte Britton	Swansea University
Linda Jones	The Open University
Ian Kenvyn	Leeds Trinity University College
Joel Kesterton	Sheffield Hallam University
Jenny King	University of Worcester
Vincent La Placa	University of Greenwich
Joanne Newton	London South Bank University
Sue Powell	Manchester Metropolitan University
Stuart Wade	University of Liverpool
Hazel Wright	Teesside University

APPENDIX 2: BIOGRAPHIES OF SPEAKERS

Dr Felix Ritchie is an economist and social researcher. He has worked in a variety of private and public sector companies, and lectured at the university of Stirling for four years whilst completed his PhD. Prior to joining the University of the West of England in June this year, he spent nine years as senior Economic Advisor and Head of Microdata Analysis at the Office for National Statistics. His main interests are the effective use of data and the application of economic principles to practical issues in organisation and strategy, particularly incentive modelling. Since 2007 his research interests have extended to qualitative social research, particularly drug and alcohol use and eastern European migration. He has co-authored papers and is supervising a PhD on alcohol use amongst young people.

Publications: http://www.felixritchie.co.uk/publications/felix_pubs.html

Contact: felix.ritchie@uwe.ac.uk

Dr Simon Murphy is a chartered health psychologist who has worked in the health sector and academia. He has substantial experience of the mixed methods evaluation of complex interventions for health improvement. He is one of the co-investigators for the Centre for the Development and Evaluation of Complex Interventions for Public Health Improvement Research (DECIPHer), one of the UKCRC Centres of Excellence for Public Health Research. DECIPHer is explicitly concerned with the health of young people and he is responsible for leading the school and other youth settings health research theme. He is also keen to develop the quality of public health improvement research and takes a leading role in the Public Health Improvement Research Network.

Contact: MurphyS7@cardiff.ac.uk

Rachel Brown completed her undergraduate degree in 1997 in psychology and is currently undertaking a PhD within DECIPHer at Cardiff University. She has worked in drug and alcohol services in Cardiff for many years, both in the voluntary and statutory sectors and has recently completed a project for NUS Wales relating to social norms and student alcohol consumption. Her interests are in identification of barriers to health behaviour within social groups, specifically in relation to substance use, through understanding the perceived benefits of excess alcohol use to students and the identification of environmental influences within universities that encourage the behaviour. She hopes to identify barriers to implementation of interventions and to develop solutions.

Contact: BrownR14@cardiff.ac.uk