

Stockton Public Health/ Tees Valley Arts/ Stockton Riverside College/ Morelife

The Rightsize project

The **2012 All Party Parliamentary Group on Body Image report** executive summary says, with reference to growing up:

- Body image dissatisfaction is seen to undermine self-confidence, contribute to depression, and lead to the onset of a range of physical, emotional and societal problems
- Around half of girls and up to one third of boys have dieted to lose weight...young people with body image dissatisfaction are less likely to engage in learning and participation in school
- Half of bullying experienced by young people was because of appearance
- Media, advertising and celebrity culture were perceived by almost 75% of respondents to the consultation to be the main social influences on body image
- The appearance ideals portrayed by visual media and advertising were seen to be at odds with the general population
- Media criticism of body weight, size or appearance together with a perceived lack of body diversity...and image manipulation was seen to contribute to body image dissatisfaction
- Research suggests that consumers approve of greater diversity and authenticity because they felt closer to what is presented

The **2015 SBC Arts, Leisure and Culture Select Committee Scrutiny Review** notes reports from other counties on the contribution to good health made resulting from participation in culture and says:

- Arts and cultural activities can contribute to a sense of well-being, promoting good mental health and promoting better outcomes in physical health

The **Rightsize** project proposal has come about following initial discussions between Rowena Sommerville (Director TVA) and Emma Champley (Strategic Commissioner Stockton Public Health), and then a meeting at Stockton Riverside College, attended by RS, Gemma Mann (SBC Public Health), Julie Wilson (SRC 16-18 year olds) and Sharon Bartram and Michael Pound (both from Morelife, weight management service).

It was agreed that there was a need to give young people (14-19) supportive and encouraging messages about the range and diversity of real body shapes, to help counteract the distorting images peddled through the media, whilst also encouraging the awareness that healthy living really does lead to longer life and happiness, and all whilst simultaneously letting young people who are concerned about their weight and/or appearance know that there are people and organisations to turn to for help.

It was agreed that, given the inevitable limitations of resource, the best output would be a short animation exploring and playing with all these issues (but including correct messages and information), to be made by an animator and a creative writer, working with a group of circa 12 SRC arts students. The animation (as DVD and online resource) would then be made available to SRC, to SBC and to Morelife (subject to a non-commercial use agreement) to be shown as and when appropriate to reach audiences of young people across Stockton.

It would also be possible to agree with the animator that some still images from the animation could be made available to be used as eg posters and leaflet covers – but the costs of creating suitable text for, designing and printing those subsequent posters/ leaflets etc will lie outside of the TVA project budget and will be down to the agencies who wish to use them in this way.

It is envisaged that the making of the animation with the selected group of participant students will take place within the context of wider college creative engagement exploring the subject of body image. Thus it would be useful for the animator/ writer to have an early meeting with SRC creative staff to explore ideas and to ensure that materials, primarily in the form of pictures and text, could be recruited from a wide cross-section of college students to inform the subsequent making of the animation, and/or to be displayed as stand-alone works around the college.

It is envisaged that voice over/s for the animation will be done by SRC performing arts students, and that SRC will be able to provide recording studio space/ equipment/ technical help to facilitate that.

It is hoped that the SRC music department might be able to work with some SRC students to make original instrumental music track/s to be used (edited) as backing for the animation, but if this is not possible then music will be bought in, as is the usual practice.

It is assumed throughout that SRC can support the project through provision of suitable premises/ room and the provision of basic arts materials, and that Morelife can contribute advice and guidance as needed throughout.