

OVER-SIZED AND OVER HERE

Published on 03/05/2006

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A FAT camp for American kids starts in Penrith in July.

Around 30 youngsters aged 11 to 15 will head for the Cumbrian town's Newton Rigg campus to try to lose weight.

They will be fed a low-fat diet and take part in exercise on the campus and in the surrounding Lake District.

The University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) is running the camp for American firm Wellspring Camps.

A spokesman for the university said the first group will start a eight-week course in July. They will be coming from America, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates among other countries. No British children are expected at the first camp.

The spokesman said: "Those taking part have to have been overweight for a certain period of time and be persistently obese or have food issues."

UCLan's Newton Rigg campus has been selected to deliver the healthy living programme through its Outdoor Education experts.

Project manager for the camp is Jonathan Lynch.

Children on the course will stay large round Mongolian-style yurt tents to encourage community spirit and team working.

University leaders are due to meet today with representatives from the American firm to discuss the details of how the camp will be run.

The camp will focus on behavioural and emotional therapies which can often help weight loss as well as diet and exercise.

Through a combination of cognitive behavioural therapy, an introduction to healthy eating habits, daily exercise and adventure activities, campers at Wellspring's American programmes typically lose two kilograms per week during camp. The camp is being established for Healthy Living Academies, the organisation that manages Wellspring Camps.

Deb Sweeney Whitmore, director of Wellspring UK said: "Obesity and excess weight are the most serious health issues facing British children.

"A recent study by the Health and Social Care Information Centre revealed that in 2004, 24 per cent of 11-15-year-old boys were obese along with 25 per cent of 11-15-year-old girls – nearly double the rate of 10 years earlier."

UCLan vice chancellor Dr Malcolm McVicar said: "We welcome Wellspring to England, and are delighted that they will be partnering with UCLan Penrith."

Campers at Penrith will be provided a low-fat, low-calorie diet and participate in a range of adventure activities including rock climbing, ghyll scrambling, abseiling, canoeing and backpacking.

Students also will participate in sports on the UCLan Cumbria campus, with the goal of walking more than 10,000 steps a day.