

EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Thursday, 13th July 2023
Report Subject	Healthy Schools Scheme and Healthy & Sustainable Pre-School Scheme (HSPSS)
Cabinet Member	Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure
Report Author	Chief Officer (Education & Youth)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report has been developed to provide elected members with an update on the Healthy Schools programme delivered in Flintshire schools as part of the Welsh Network of Healthy School Schemes (WNHSS) and in early years settings as part of the Healthy & Sustainable Pre-school Scheme (HSPSS). In particular, the report includes a focus on the challenges experienced as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, information on the improving children's dental health programme, Designed to Smile, and the increasing public health risk of vape use by pupils.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	Members confirm they have received an appropriate level of assurance regarding the work of the Education & Youth Portfolio in supporting schools with meeting the current requirements of the Healthy Schools programme and in preparing for any changes as a result of the national review.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	Welsh Network of Healthy School Schemes (WNHSS)
1.01	Background

	<p>The Welsh Network of Healthy School Schemes (WNHSS) is an example of a 'settings' based approach to health promotion. Settings based approaches are universal approaches which seek to influence the environment, policy and practice within the setting to enable better health and wellbeing of those in that setting. The approach in Wales has drawn on international developments led by the World Health Organisation (WHO), in the European Region by the Schools for Health Europe Network (SHE).</p> <p>SHE defines a health promoting school as <i>'a school that implements a structured and systematic plan for health, well-being and the development of social capital of all pupils, teaching and non-teaching staff...characterised as a whole school approach to health and well-being.'</i></p>
1.02	<p>WNHSS was launched in September 1999, as a national framework. It is a network of local healthy school schemes (one in each of the 22 Local Authority areas), with national and local responsibilities. Each local scheme is responsible for supporting the development of health promoting schools within their area. The aim of the WNHSS is to support schools to become health promoting institutions in line with national healthy schools' criteria.</p> <p>The independently assessed National Quality Award was introduced in 2009. Indicators for the WNHSS National Quality Award (NQA), were issued in 2010. These indicators look for a whole school approach to each of seven health topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • food and fitness, • mental and emotional health and wellbeing, • personal development and relationships, • substance use and misuse, • environment, • safety and • hygiene <p>in the areas of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • leadership and communication • curriculum • school environment /ethos • and family /community involvement. <p>Pupil involvement in leading, designing and delivering change is central to the approach.</p>
1.03	<p>Review and Reform of WNHSS</p> <p>Public Health Wales (PHW) has identified that the Welsh Network of Healthy School Schemes requires significant reform to optimise its potential in supporting the health and wellbeing of children and young people in the future. Work began reviewing the scheme in 2019 however this has been delayed by the pandemic. Work to complete recommendations identified in the review remained on hold until June 2021 and has since recommenced by the national health improvement team.</p>

	<p>In Autumn 2022, PHW proposed a reform to the architecture of the programme to move away from 22 schemes towards a single all-Wales framework. Local delivery and ownership would continue but supported by a single benchmark and framework of what is considered effective practice, as part of a continuous improvement model. This reform would bring together both WNHSS and the Whole School Approach to Emotional and Mental Wellbeing Framework (WSAEMWB) which are currently running as two separate workstreams since 2021 with significant overlap. The timeframe for the proposed relaunch of the scheme is spring 2024.</p>
1.04	<p>Despite the pause on the accreditation aspect of the scheme since the start of the pandemic, the work of the Flintshire Healthy schools team remains focused on supporting schools in health and wellbeing.</p> <p>WNHSS Local Priorities 2022-23</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Whole Schools Approach to Emotional and mental wellbeing (WSA) 2. Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) 3. Food and Nutrition <p><u>WSA:</u> The Flintshire Healthy Schools team have been supporting schools to complete the WSA self-assessment tool to provide a current baseline of wellbeing provision for pupils and staff in their school and action plan accordingly. In Flintshire, 82.1% of schools are engaged with this process which is higher than the Wales average of 52%. In Flintshire, 67% of schools have completed the self-assessment tool in comparison with the Wales average of 42.5%. These schools are now developing their action plan with the aim that plans will be in place ready for the new academic year.</p> <p><u>RSE:</u> The Flintshire Healthy Schools team are also supporting schools to meet the requirements of the RSE Code / Curriculum for Wales. This has resulted in dedicated professional development for schools and policy templates for primary and secondary schools, regular updates and a dedicated Teams Professional Learning Community (PLC) for primary and secondary schools.</p> <p><u>Food and Nutrition:</u> Much work has been undertaken with secondary schools in reviewing the existing food provision in line with the Welsh Government regulations. Working with colleagues in Newydd, two learner events have taken place this year for consultation and engagement and a new menu offer with input from learners will be launched in September 2023.</p>
1.05	<p>Coordination of Programmes</p> <p><u>Healthy & Sustainable Pre-school Scheme (HSPSS):</u> There are 45 settings participating in the scheme in Flintshire. Each setting must demonstrate that it is promoting health and well-being through its policies, planning and ethos over 7 different health themes. At the end of each theme the setting is locally assessed and once they met the required criteria, they are accredited by PHW. Assessments as part of the HSPSS have continued and are not affected by the current review and reform of WNHSS.</p>

	<p><u>Food and Fun:</u> The Healthy Schools team have coordinated the Food & Fun programme in Flintshire since it began in 2018. This includes the initial recruitment of schools, stakeholder group meetings, managing funding and direct support for schools prior to the programme beginning, throughout and afterwards. Last year Food and Fun was delivered in 9 cohorts and this will increase to 13 schools (14 cohorts) for summer 2023.</p> <p><u>Period Dignity:</u> The Healthy Schools team has overseen the grant expenditure for this national project since it was first issued in 17/18 and in 22/23 this continued with the online ordering and delivery of home packs in partnership with an external provider, alongside a wide range of community-based initiatives to distribute products including through food banks, community hubs, youth services and adult community learning providers.</p>
1.06	<p>WNHSS Local/Regional Priorities 2023-24</p> <p>Aligned to the national strategic priorities determined by PHW, the following priorities have been agreed regionally across the six local authority areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole School Approach to Emotional and Mental Wellbeing Framework WSAEMWB • New Curriculum for Wales (Development and implementation of the Health and Wellbeing Area of Learning and Experience) (CFW) • Supporting Schools to prepare for and implement the Relationships and Sexuality Education Code (RSE) • Taking a Whole System Approach to Eating Well & Being Active in Schools • Continue to promote and support the best use of School Health Research Network (SHRN) data within primary and secondary schools, to inform priorities.
1.07	<p>Designed to Smile Overview</p> <p>Designed to Smile is a national programme that works across schools and preschool settings to improve the oral health of young children in Wales. Settings are invited to participate in the toothbrushing programme with pupils up to school year 2.</p> <p>School and preschool staff are trained by the Designed to Smile dental nurses to facilitate toothbrushing in a safe and hygienic way daily. Home toothbrush packs are also supplied to settings to be distributed twice a year to pupils participating in the programme.</p> <p>In recognition of the commitment and continuing support to the Designed to Smile programme a Designed to Smile Award is presented to schools and preschools that participate in the Designed to Smile programme. A plaque has been developed to showcase the settings efforts in striving to improve the oral health of young children in Wales.</p>
1.08	<p>Designed to Smile in Flintshire</p> <p>The reintroduction of the tooth brushing programme following the pandemic has been very well received in Flintshire schools where the majority are very happy to recommence tooth brushing. Initially some preschools were</p>

	<p>concerned as to whether they would be able to take part as they thought they were not able to stop play to do the tooth brushing, but this was soon clarified, and they were happy to proceed.</p> <p>To date, Designed to Smile has been re-established in 19 preschool settings and 26 primary schools. One school has decided against re-joining. The programme is expanding in Flintshire, 5 new preschools have been invited to join, 3 will commence in September, 1 has deferred until January 2024, and the Designed to Smile team are awaiting a decision from one setting. 6 additional schools have been invited to join the programme; 1 will commence in September, 1 has deferred until January 2024 and there are meetings planned with the others to discuss joining the programme.</p>
1.09	<p>Vaping definition</p> <p>An e-cigarette ('vape') is a battery powered device that converts liquid nicotine into an aerosol (or vapour) that the user inhales. They work by heating a liquid (called an e-liquid) that typically contains nicotine propylene glycol, vegetable glycerine and flavourings. Both propylene glycol and vegetable glycerine are used in food production. Tobacco which produces tar and carbon monoxide, the most damaging products of traditional smoking is not burnt in e-cigarettes but nicotine is present; it is this substance that causes the user to become addicted.</p> <p>There are a variety of e-cigarette devices available, one of the most used by young people is a pod vape. In 2022 these were the most frequently used vape at 52% compared to 7.7% in 2021. Unlike traditional vapes a pod vape is an all in one, self-contained device, where the atomizer, juice and battery are housed inside a single unit. They are available to purchase very cheaply either prefilled or as refillable pod.</p>
1.10	<p>Vaping Laws and Regulations</p> <p>It is illegal to <i>sell</i> nicotine containing vapes to under-18s, (maximum £2,500 fine) but it is <i>not</i> illegal to own, or use vapes underage. Those purchasing vaping products for those under 18 can be prosecuted in the same way as buying alcohol for under 18's.</p> <p>All e-cigarettes containing nicotine must be certified by Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), the highest nicotine strength is 2% (or 20mg/ml). Nicotine free e-cigarettes do not have to be certified by the MHRA – they are subject to product safety regulations by Trading Standards.</p>
1.11	<p>Vaping Cause for concern</p> <p>Wales, in common with other parts of the United Kingdom and countries internationally is experiencing a rapid increase in reports of young people vaping. The School Health Research Network (SHRN) study showed a marked increase in vaping among young people between 2019/21 and 2021/22. Concerns have been raised that this rise is attributable, at least in part, to the marketing and availability of disposable vapes.</p>

	<p>There are multiple reports of concerns from headteachers and parents not only in Flintshire but across Wales and the UK who are experiencing significant challenges in managing this behaviour, which would suggest this figure has increased further. These include growing reports of addiction to nicotine which is disruptive to day-to-day life and learning.</p> <p>Concerns have also been raised about the safety and quality of the products with laboratory testing of samples finding high levels of contaminants and higher than permitted levels of nicotine. There is also growing concern about the growing presence of illegal products in the marketplace.</p>
1.12	<p>Vaping Position</p> <p>Public Health England, The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) all agree that e-cigarettes are less harmful than tobacco and are a harm reducing alternative to smoking tobacco. Vaping is offered as an alternative to smoking cigarettes to aid people to quit smoking. Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) Wales encourage people to switch from smoking cigarettes to vaping but strongly suggest that if you don't smoke, do not start vaping.</p> <p>However, the need to address the issue has been raised in multiple arenas now in Wales, including by the Minister for Education and Welsh Language, by schools, School nurses and parents. Public Health Wales is proposing that an Incident Response Group (IRG) is established to investigate the incident and propose a response.</p> <p>There is also a clear demand for vaping educational resources from schools and partners across Wales. Work is underway by PHW at a national level to review what resources are available and what can be developed to support professionals working with young people.</p>
1.13	<p>Action on Smoking and Health (ASH)</p> <p>The ASH Policy Brief on Vaping (February 2023), makes several recommendations to the UK Government which includes reducing appeal of vapes to children by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taxing disposable vapes which are the cheapest and most popular vape for children. • Stricter regulation of advertising and promotion, particularly at point of sale in shops • Stricter regulation of packaging, labelling and product design features (e.g. prohibiting cartoon characters; product names associated with sweets; and design features such as "light up" vapes. • Reducing underage access to vapes by better funding for enforcement using MHRA e-cigarette notification fees • putting vapes behind the counter • mandatory age verification in shops for anyone looking under 25 • prohibiting free distribution (currently legal to anyone of any age).
1.14	<p>In Flintshire we have developed a model Smoke free policy template which will be shared with all schools for the start of the next academic year. All schools have been issued with clear signage. Well-being leads in secondary</p>

	schools have been offered training opportunities this term as have primary headteachers. All secondary schools will be supported to complete the bi-annual SHRN survey in the autumn term 2023 and the data will be available in the spring term 2024.
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2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	<p>Funding for the WNHSS is allocated as grants via the Public Health Wales Health Improvement Division to each local authority area. The scheme is delivered by small teams employed by each grantee organisation. Much of the funding is used to employ a coordinator in each area with the remaining non-pay budget for activities such as training. In Flintshire there are two officers employed by the grant and one vacant post.</p> <p>The funding model which determines the allocation the local authority get has remained the same for over ten years meaning a significant real term reduction. At a national level as part of the review, there is a need to consider how funding is distributed with the need to reform the approach going forward.</p> <p>Current funding confirmed until 31st March 2024.</p>

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	None

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	None

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	None

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>ASH Policy brief on vaping, February 2023 https://ash.org.uk/uploads/ASH-Policy-brief-on-vaping-February-2023-Final.pdf?v=1676063818</p> <p>Whole School Approach to Emotional and Mental Wellbeing framework https://gov.wales/framework-embedding-whole-school-approach-emotional-and-mental-wellbeing.</p>

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	<p>Contact Officer: Claire Sinnott, Learning Advisor – Health, Wellbeing & Safeguarding</p> <p>Telephone: 01352 704054</p> <p>E-mail: Claire.h.sinnott@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
	<p>Public Health Wales (PHW): Public Health Wales is the national public health agency in Wales and exists to protect and improve health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities for people in Wales.</p> <p>Whole School Approach to Emotional and Mental Wellbeing (WSAEMWB) Framework Guidance: Welsh Government Framework on embedding a whole-school approach to emotional and mental wellbeing Guidance to support the delivery and evaluation of the framework.</p> <p>School Health Research Network (SHRN): The School Health Research Network is a network of schools in Wales who have joined together with researchers, the Welsh Government and other organisations to support young people’s health.</p> <p>Welsh Network of Healthy School Schemes (WNHSS): The Welsh Network of Healthy School Schemes is part of the Schools for Health in Europe (SHE) Network and reflects the SHE approach. It also addresses the Welsh Assembly Government’s seven core aims and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.</p> <p>Action on Smoking and Health (ASH): Action on Smoking and Health (ASH): is a public health charity set up by the Royal College of Physicians to end the harm caused by tobacco.</p> <p>National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE): The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) provides national guidance and advice to improve health and social care. NICE is an executive non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Department of Health and Social Care.</p> <p>Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA): The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency regulates medicines, medical devices and blood components for transfusion in the UK. MHRA is an executive agency, sponsored by the Department of Health and Social Care.</p> <p>Healthy & Sustainable Pre-school Scheme (HSPSS): Launched nationally in 2011, the Healthy and Sustainable Pre-School Scheme was developed as an extension of the Welsh Network of Healthy Schools Scheme (WNHSS) and the criteria have clear parallels with the WNHSS National Quality Award.</p>

	<p>Designed to Smile: Designed to Smile (D2S) is a national programme to improve the oral health of children in Wales.</p>
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