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THE SCHOOL  
HEALTH  
RESEARCH  
NETWORK

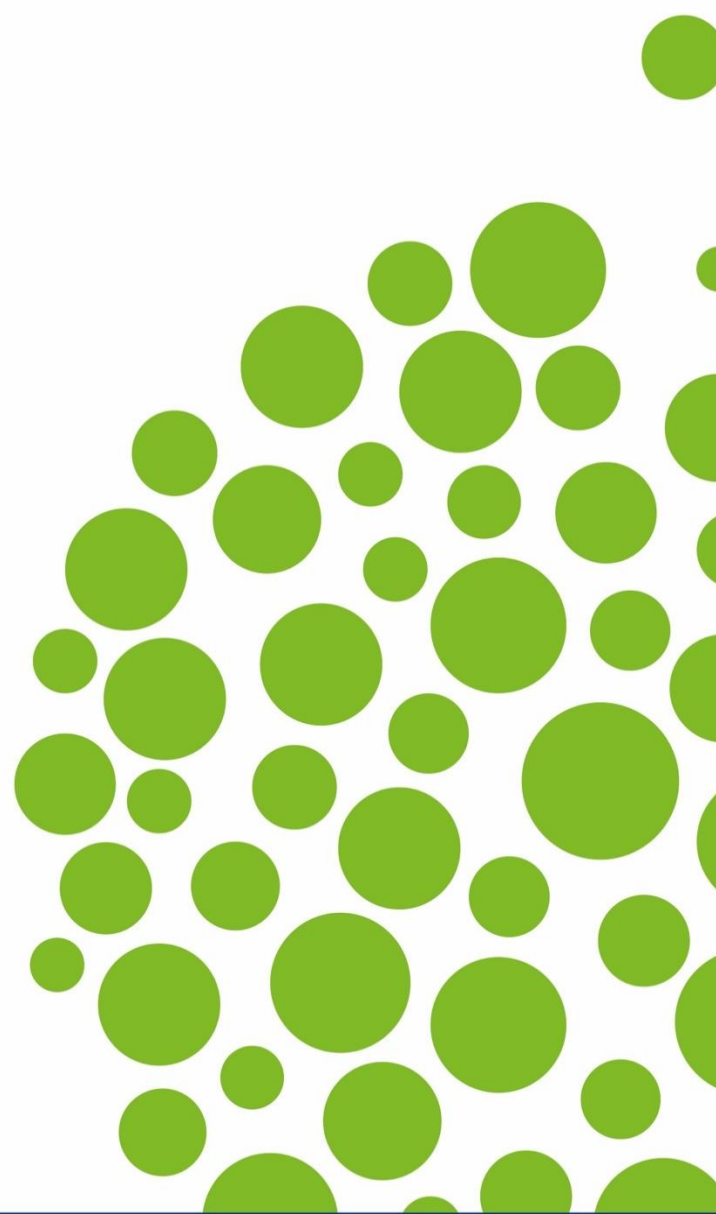
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## The School Health Research Network (SHRN)

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**A research and evidence-based approach to improving young people's health and well-being in school settings.**

**Recent examples of our success stories and impact.**



RhwYdwaith Ysgolion Cymru  
sy'n Hybu Iechyd a Lles  
Welsh Network of Health and  
Well-being Promoting Schools



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## **1. About The School Health Research Network (SHRN)**

Since 2013, The School Health Research Network (SHRN) has brought together schools in Wales with academic researchers, policymakers and practitioners from health, education, and social care to promote evidence informed approaches to improving children's and young people's health and well-being in school settings.

SHRN, has become a unique and invaluable part of the education health and well-being infrastructure in Wales. It has recruited 100% of maintained secondary schools with 95% of schools and over 70% of pupils participating in data collection in 2023. More than 90% of Senior Leadership Teams also returned The SHRN School Environment Questionnaire (SEQ). SHRN has also piloted expansion into primary schools, with 29% of primary schools and 23% pupils participating in 2022/23. In 2024, all mainstream primary schools will be invited to join the network.

Our strategic partnership with Public Health Wales and integration with The Welsh Network of Health and Well-being Promoting Schools (WNHWPS), along with substantive and ongoing investment from Welsh Government, has enabled SHRN to grow into a national network of research and evaluation.

SHRN is cited in over thirty Welsh Government policies and strategies as providing support for the delivery and evaluation of health and well-being policy agendas and interventions. These include the Whole-School Approach to Mental Health and Well-being (2021) and Estyn's Healthy and Happy Report (2019).

## **2. More than a decade of excellence**

SHRN has led the way in enabling the translation of school health and well-being research evidence into practice.

We work with schools to ensure they have information and support to make a real difference to the health and well-being of their learners. Schools from across Wales have embedded SHRN into their school development plans and implemented a range of improvements initiatives.

These include:

- Improving the PSE curriculum by providing a targeted approach to meet learners' needs.
- Widening extracurricular activities to improve physical activity.
- Enhancing the nutritional value of food and drink provision.
- Strengthening school connectedness.
- and much more!

We are extremely proud of the work we do, and our achievements.

### 3. Our success stories and impact

We are grateful for to the following schools for sharing their experiences:

- **Bassaleg High School, Newport** - A whole school, evidence-based and learner-voice led approach to develop new teaching practices that prioritise mental health and well-being.
- **Cantonian High School, Cardiff** - Meeting the needs of learners based on their SHRN data and pupil voice.
- **Whitchurch High School, Cardiff** - Utilising their SHRN data to ensure that the well-being needs of their learners are at its core.
- **Willows High School, Cardiff** - Using SHRN data to Improve health and well-being through exercise and physical activity.
- **Ysgol Maes y Gwendraeth, Llanelli** - A tailored personal and social education (PSE) programme as highlighted in their 2024 Estyn Report.

Read the following section to find out more about how these schools used their SHRN data to celebrate their strengths and work on their challenges...





### **3.1 Bassaleg High School, Newport - A whole school, evidence-based and learner-voice led approach to develop new teaching practices that prioritise mental health and well-being.**

In response to the new curriculum, Bassaleg High School have used a whole school, evidence-based and learner-voice led approach to develop new teaching practices that prioritise mental health and well-being. This involved a distributed leadership approach which included staff and learners using their 2017 Student Health and Well-being report to audit their curriculum and revise teaching practices.

Their revised Tutor Programme was described by Estyn as 'outstanding,' 'transformational' and 'well-being-driven.' The Director of Standards for Health and Well-being and Assistant Headteacher asked all form supervisors to develop a bespoke Tutor Programme provision plan based on the needs identified in their SHRN report. For example, they identified as an area of concern the proportion of students in Year 10 that engaged in sexting; thus, as a preventative measure, this topic is now considered with Year 9 learners. The present Tutor Programme that takes place every morning for 25 minutes now functions as an extension of the Personal and Social Education (PSE) programme by covering topics such as mental health, resilience, and LGBT diversity.

Bassaleg High School also established a Health and Well-being Area of Learning and Experience programme for Year 7 learners, again planned as a result of the data in their school level report. Lessons cover three main topic areas, including Nutrition, Fitness and Well-being, which are delivered at least once every fortnight and include an assessment at the end of each term. Assessments are based on the National Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Competence Framework. The numeracy assessment of these projects includes the use of Bassaleg's SHW (Student Health and Wellbeing) data, e.g. a graph depicting the proportion of students who usually eat breakfast every weekday is used to encourage students to discuss the importance of breakfast. These tasks not only raise students' awareness of different health and well-being topics, but also help develop their data analysis and interpretation skills.

As a self-evaluation tool to measure whether the changes they have implemented throughout the school have had a positive effect, Bassaleg are now comparing their 2017 and 2019 SHW survey results to measure the impact the different interventions have had. This information will be used to update and tailor the existing Form Tutor programme as well as shaping the new Year 8 Health and Well-being curriculum.

**Read more about Bassaleg High School's approach in the [Estyn Effective Practice case study](#).**



**CANTONIAN HIGH SCHOOL**

THE BEST FROM EACH, SUCCESS FOR ALL  
Y GORAU O BOB UN, LLWYDDIANT I BAWB

### **3.2 Cantonian High School, Cardiff - Meeting the needs of learners based on their SHRN data and pupil voice.**

#### **How has taking part in the SHRN survey helped your school?**

Before SHRN, we previously used a PSE focussed package used which covered topics in a brief fashion, with an aim of covering all aspects of health and well-being. However, by utilising our SHRN data, we saw that our provision needed to be more focused to address the key issues being raised by the survey. We saw that we needed to focus on vaping; support our learners to become more physically active; provide more information about sexual health; raise awareness of the dangers of energy drinks and further improve our mental health and well-being support.

#### **What actions did you take in response to the SHRN data?**

Following receipt of our SHRN data in the summer of 2023, our senior leadership team, pastoral leaders and health and well-being team met to identify our key priority areas. In response, we developed a plan to ensure that we were providing resources and information to learners in the key areas of concern. We secured external outside support through our connections with our regional consortia and Cardiff Commitment to help support us. We also engaged pupil voice to help shape and plan the curriculum, and to further identify their needs.

#### **How has SHRN data helped you to develop your curriculum?**

Analysing our SHRN data has enabled us to adapt our curriculum to meet the needs of our learners. We reviewed our health and well-being lessons to focus on getting everyone active, encouraging the participation of all learners, regardless of their fitness levels and skills. Our PSE programme and curriculum have been significantly modified to ensure that we are addressing the key priorities identified by our SHRN data. The data revealed that our well-being provision had only catered for a small section of learners. SHRN data revealed that many of our learners did not identify, nor discuss any mental health concerns until they were higher up in the school, and as a result, had not received support around their well-being. We also found that our well-being provision had previously catered for only a small section of learners.

All our learners now have well-being lessons from the start of year 7, where they are encouraged to recognise and talk about their emotions. They are also provided with a tool kit of strategies to help support their mental health and well-being. A range of lunchtime clubs have also been established to support learners around the issues highlighted by SHRN data so they can access further support.



Ysgol Uwchradd Yr Eglwys Newydd  
**Whitchurch  
High School**

### **3.3 Whitchurch High School, Cardiff - Utilising SHRN data to ensure that the well-being needs of their learners are at its core.**

#### **How has taking part in the SHRN survey helped your school?**

SHRN data, along with feedback from student and colleague voice, has resulted in a curriculum that is responsive to the needs of our learners, in which colleagues feel supported in delivering topic content. This approach has enabled us to develop a learner led, age-appropriate health and well-being curriculum that ensures the well-being needs of our learners is at its core.

#### **How have you used your SHRN data?**

We used our data in a wide variety of ways:

- Sharing SHRN data in food and nutrition lessons to address low breakfast consumption, and the low intake of fruit and vegetables. The aim here was to educate and encourage learners to consume a greater variety of fruits and vegetables through recipe modifications whilst also considering the relationship between eating breakfast and performing well in tests.
- Sharing SHRN data with our GSCE Health and Social Care and Childcare learners when considering issues within our local communities.
- Referencing our SHRN vaping and smoking data in our GSCE Non- exam Assessment (NEA) work. The data has been used as a catalyst to develop a wide range of health promotion materials and resources that have been shared at open evenings and with other learners.
- Using SHRN data to further develop colleagues' understanding of Relationships and Sexuality Education during training, and to create a developmentally appropriate RSE curriculum bespoke to the needs of our school community.
- Using SHRN Data at our whole school INSETS to raise the profile of developing belonging, equity, and the value of relationships. This has helped to develop our whole- school vision of a restorative learning behaviour policy, reinforced by rebranding our learning behaviours.

**What has been the impact of these improvements using SHRN data?**

We are proud of our achievements, and these have been celebrated in our 2023 Estyn school inspection report:

“ The school implements a helpful range of strategies to help pupils keep themselves safe when online, and when making healthy lifestyle choices.

Pupils’ views are canvassed widely and as a result, pupils have a positive impact on aspects of the support and guidance offered by the school, such as identifying pertinent topics to explore within the wellbeing programme. This ensures that pupils benefit from learning about topics most relevant to their age group and those causing them most concern.

”







### **3.4 Willows High School, Cardiff - Using SHRN data to Improve health and well-being through exercise and physical activity.**

#### **What did you find in your SHRN data?**

Our school has a high free school meal uptake, and many learners are from disadvantaged backgrounds. We were very aware that opportunity and means played a large part in our SHRN data.

Our SHRN data showed that our learners were below the national average in terms of the time spent engaging in physical activity. Although, we did do well, in relation to the number of our learners who walked or cycled to school.

#### **What actions did you take in response to your SHRN data findings?**

Our aim was clear- to actively encourage and provide opportunities for our learners to be more physically active and support them to explore diverse ways of exercising whilst establishing new and sustainable passions and interests.

To enable this, we expanded the number of sports in which they could participate. We also increased our efforts to enable our school teams to compete with other schools and take part in wider sports tournaments and leagues. We had more trips to sporting centres and events, and new gym equipment also freshened up our lessons.

We included a wide range of physical activities in our new fortnightly enrichment sessions, where learners gained extended learning opportunities alongside typical academic schooling. These activities included MMA; indoor climbing; training with armed forces instructors; Jiu Jitsu; gardening; No Fit State Circus experiences; yoga; self- defence training and cycling.

We also wanted to continue our positive trend with the journey to school. Our student council have been working with Active Travel Schools. Together they have mapped the routes to our new school site and walked them to identify any potential challenges for active travel. We will continue to work with them over the coming years.

**What impact have you seen following these actions?**

The response to our enrichment sessions has been overwhelmingly positive. The breaks from typical academic study have been beneficial for all learners, especially those who find day-to-day mainstream schooling challenging. Those learners who have chosen physical activities have enjoyed them immensely, and we want to continue encouraging them.

By giving our learners the opportunity to explore different forms of physical exercise, we have increased the likelihood of them continuing to exercise as a hobby.

Allowing more time for extra physical activity in the school week has provided many learners with a greater ability to focus and increased motivation in their normal lessons. And the uptake in team sports has led to a much more inclusive atmosphere of school spirit.

**BELONG, *believe*, ACHIEVE**  
**PERTHYN, CREDU, LLWYDDO**





### 3.5 Ysgol Maes y Gwendraeth, Llanelli - A tailored personal and social (PSE) programme)

A highlight from their 2024 Estyn Report...



The tailored personal and social education (PSE) programme is a notable strength.

Health and well-being lessons, morning sessions and assemblies support and enrich learners' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development highly effectively through themes such as healthy relationships, energy drinks, sleep, and vaping. As a result, learners discuss these issues maturely.

The school makes very good use of external agencies, such as the health service, to strengthen provision further. To plan for PSE, the school uses data from the School Health Research Network, listens to parents and learners and works closely with the community. This means that it plans coherently for a relevant curriculum that responds to issues that arise within learners' experiences.

Work with the local police enables the school to respond to important local issues and take part in social campaigns, for example organising a food bank within the school. Teachers have also been given useful training in terms of suitable pedagogy to develop learners' social and emotional skills.



#### 4. The impact of using SHRN data as evidence for Estyn school inspections.

Increasingly, Estyn has highlighted the use of SHRN data in the school inspection system. A brief review of available reports on the [Estyn website](#) indicates that inspectors are routinely reporting the use of SHRN data in, for example, the planning of personal and social education programmes. It is also highly likely, when not mentioned explicitly, that general references to the use of survey data in inspection reports will include SHRN, given the number of schools participating in our research.

Recent Estyn inspection report examples include:



To plan for PSE, the school uses data from the School Health Research Network, listens to parents and pupils and works closely with the community. This means that it plans coherently for a relevant curriculum that responds to issues that arise within pupils' experiences.



**Ysgol Maes y Gwendraeth, November 2023**



Pupils in all year groups benefit from a well-planned PSE programme that is adapted in light of evidence such as that from the School Health Research Network survey.



**Pen-Y-Dre High School, January 2024**



PSE sessions are planned to involve pupils in group discussion and individual reflection using a range of stimulating resources, such as dummy pregnancy vests. Leaders carry out helpful pupil surveys, staff evaluations and an analysis of Schools Health Research Network data to make adaptations to the PSE provision to meet the needs of the current school population.



**Newbridge School, January 2024**

## 5. Our impact in making measurable and positive change

Since 2013, SHRN has made a significant contribution in providing robust health and well-being data for local, regional, and national stakeholders, whilst working with policymakers and practitioners from health, education, and social care to co-produce high quality school-based health and well-being research.

We have innovated and led the way in facilitating the translation of school health and well-being research evidence into practice across Wales.

We are extremely proud of what the impact we have achieved so far....



## 6. Celebrate the difference you make to the learners in your school

If you are proud of the difference you have made to your learners' health and wellbeing by using SHRN, our [Knowledge Exchange and External Affairs Manager](#), would love to hear from you. Your story could support our projects and development.

## 7. Contact us

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