St. Helens Health and Wellbeing
Pupil Survey 2013
Executive Summary
St. Helens Health and Wellbeing Pupil Survey 2013

Executive Summary

Introduction

Understanding the health and wellbeing of children and young people in St Helens helps schools, commissioners and service providers to improve the health, wellbeing and quality of life of individual children. Data regarding children's health and wellbeing is fundamental to the JSNA. ‘Give every child the best start in life’ and ‘Support for Young People’ are key priorities of the St Helens Health and Wellbeing Strategy. The concept of investment in early years is based on the Marmot Report which describes the life-course process where health, lifestyle and wellbeing in childhood affect health and wellbeing later on in life.

The delivery of Tellus, a national survey that collected children and young people’s views and behaviours of their health, school and local environment, was stopped in 2010. This left a gap in local intelligence on the health and wellbeing of children hence in 2012 it was agreed that a local survey was to be developed.

The Pupil Survey covers a broad range of health and wellbeing issues including diet, physical activity, tobacco, drugs and alcohol, dental health, mental wellbeing and staying safe. Pupils in years 6, 8 and 10 from all primary and secondary schools in St Helens were invited to join the survey. Meetings were held with the specials schools in the borough and the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) to discuss the suitability of participating in the general school survey. It was decided by senior colleagues in the special schools that the survey would not be appropriate for their learners. Therefore, the intention is to work closely with these schools to explore a suitable methodology in order for their pupils to complete a health and wellbeing survey.

Methodology

The survey collected data through a self-reported online questionnaire that was launched in March 2013. Schools were provided with an example parent/carer letter which explained the process and content of the questionnaire and schools were encouraged to take an opt-out approach to ensure high levels of participation. The pupils independently and anonymously filled out the survey during school hours, with a teacher present to answer any questions if required, and materials were produced to explain the survey to the children beforehand.

Key partners, including head teachers, were involved in the design of the survey and questions deemed suitable were taken from the Tellus Survey. A pilot survey took place on a small group of pupils.

44 primary and 7 secondary schools took part in the survey with 3774 pupils responding. It is intended to repeat the survey annually so that we can be both mindful of changes to Children’s Health & Wellbeing behaviour over time and utilise the data to monitor the impact of health improvement interventions.
Main Findings

Profile of the pupils

- Slightly more boys completed the survey in both primary and secondary schools.
- 5% of all pupils identified themselves as one of the Black and Minority Ethnic groups.
- Around 4% of all pupils described themselves as disabled, with a higher proportion (7%) stating they didn’t know.
- 46% of primary school and 15% of secondary school pupils received some form of additional help whilst at school. Support with school work and learning was the most common form of additional help with 40% of primary school pupils stating they received it.
- 74% of secondary school pupils reported they do not receive any extra help with additional needs.
- Over half of primary school pupils and over a third of secondary school pupils surveyed cared for a member of their family either every day or sometimes.
- Nearly 60% of pupils live with mum and dad in the same house.

Diet

- Only 22% of primary school pupils and 13% of secondary school pupils eat 5 or more fruit and vegetables portions per day.
- Nearly 60% of all pupils ate 3 or more fruit and vegetable portions per day.
- More than half the children have semi-skimmed milk or skimmed milk rather than full fat milk.
- White bread was more common than brown bread.
- Over 60% of all pupils drank water on most days.
- Three quarters of all pupils regularly eat sweets and chocolate.
- The consumption of full sugar fizzy drinks on most days was high (almost a third of all pupils).
- 18% of secondary and 14% of primary school pupils drank an energy drink on most days; in addition similar numbers drank an energy drink 2-3 times a week.

Physical Activity

- 40% of pupils from primary schools either walked or cycled to work, this drops to 30% in secondary school pupils.
- Over half of the primary school pupils surveyed participate in a lunch-time or after school activity at least once a week.
- 44% of secondary school and a quarter of primary school pupils do not partake in any activities at lunchtime or after school.

Dental Health

- Over 90% of all pupils stated they brushed their teeth the day before the survey with nearly 80% stating they had brushed their teeth twice. Very few had never been to the dentist.
Emotional Health and Friendship

- On the whole, pupils demonstrated a high level of confidence and self-esteem.
- Few stated they felt they were being bullied. Of those that did, secondary school girls were most likely to feel they were being bullied, with the highest reason due to their size or weight.
- Over 40% of pupils have experienced other pupils saying something nasty about them.
- Exams and tests, body changes as you grow up, and the way you look were more common concerns for primary school pupils than secondary.
- Over half of primary school pupils had stated that their parents had discussed body changes with them.
- They felt that advice from teachers on certain issues such as lifestyle, smoking and staying safe was helpful whereas fewer secondary school pupils thought this advice helpful.
- The pupil’s mother was the most likely person that secondary school children would talk to about a range of issues although for many topics pupils stated they would keep it to themselves.

Smoking, Alcohol and drugs

- 95% of primary school children and 73% of secondary school pupils stated they had not consumed alcohol in the previous week.
- More secondary boys drank alcohol compared to girls.
- 79% of all pupils surveyed had never smoked a cigarette.
- 5% of secondary school and less than 1% of primary school pupils report that they currently smoke.
- Secondary school girls were more likely than boys to have tried smoking or currently smoke than boys (20% compared to 14%).
- Half of all pupils had at least one person who regularly smoked in the home.
- A small percentage (9%) of secondary school pupils admitted to ever taking drugs, with 18% of these ticking all of the listed drugs.
- 84% of secondary school pupils reported never having used cannabis, with 7% of pupils reporting to have ever tried cannabis (9% not stated).
Staying Safe

- Few pupils indicated that they felt unsafe during the day in their neighbourhood or on their journey to and from school.
- For primary school pupils, girls stated that they felt less safe at night than boys (15% compared to 12%), whereas it was the same for boys and girls in secondary school pupils (13%).
- The majority of pupils stated they had not been the victim of violence or aggression where they lived.
- 9% of secondary school pupils said they were certain or fairly certain that they or their friends did carry a weapon.
- Half of primary school pupils and just over three-quarters of secondary pupils indicated that they used a social networking site.
- The majority (72%) of pupils rated their on-line safety as 7 or above (with 10 being the safest).
- Cyber bullying, being contacted by strangers and personal details being secure were all concerns amongst pupils in both school settings.
- 13% percentage of pupils indicated that they had experienced cyber bullying.
- 40% of secondary school pupils had stated there had been cyber bullying incidents in their school.
Conclusion

The survey reveals some positive health and wellbeing attributes of children and young people in St Helens, such as the high proportion of pupils demonstrating a high level of confidence and self-esteem with few stating that they felt they were being bullied. It is also encouraging that a significant proportion of pupils eat at least 3 portions of fruit and vegetables per day and drink water on most days. Dental health also emerged positively with nearly all pupils stating that they brushed their teeth at least once per day and very few had never been to the dentist. Other positive results in respect of safety include self-reported drug use, with the vast majority of secondary school pupils reporting never having used cannabis, the majority of primary and secondary school pupils reporting that they felt safe online and a high proportion of secondary school pupils stating that they had not been the victim of violence or aggression where they lived.

However, the survey also revealed some challenges, such as the high proportion of pupils who lived in homes where smoking was prevalent and the number of secondary school pupils who keep worries and concerns to themselves. Additionally, caring responsibilities came out notable for primary school pupils although caution may be needed on how the younger children interpreted this question. A large percentage of secondary school pupils report that cyber bullying had occurred in their school. Consideration also needs to be given to the high consumption of full sugar fizzy drinks and to the number of pupils not partaking in activities at lunchtime or after school.

The results of the survey will be shared with Head Teachers and key stakeholders, schools will also receive a report specific to their school. Schools will be encouraged to utilise the findings within their own school settings. The findings will form contextual data for the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and will be utilised to ensure services and interventions are developed to fit with local need.

St. Helens Council
Public Health
Atlas House
St. Helens WA9 1LD

Chief Officer – Liz Gaulton, Director of Public Health
Contact Officer – Julie Dunning, Principal Officer – Health & Wellbeing in Schools

July 2013