

| Bath & North East Somerset Council | | |
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| MEETING/ DECISION MAKER: | Children, Adults, Health & Wellbeing Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel | |
| MEETING/ DECISION DATE: | 15 th September 2025 | EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE: |
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| TITLE: | School’s Health and Wellbeing Survey Update | |
| WARD: | All | |
| AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM | | |
| List of attachments to this report: | | |
| None | | |

1 THE ISSUE

Bath & North East Somerset (B&NES) places a strong emphasis on understanding and addressing the health needs of children and young people. Central to this approach is a commitment to capturing their voices, and a key mechanism for this is the biennial Schools Health and Wellbeing Survey (SH&WS), which has used the "Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire" (HRBQ) since 2011.

This established online survey provides robust data and insights into the health, wellbeing, and behaviours of children and young people, supporting evidence-based service planning and targeted interventions. The Council holds a contract with the Schools Health Education Unit (SHEU) to deliver this service, ensuring consistent and high-quality data collection and analysis across participating schools. Pupils are surveyed in Years 4, 6, 8, 10, and 12.

This work is supported by St John's Foundation, which has provided grant funding to B&NES Council to enable the continuation of the SH&WS for five survey rounds on a biennial basis, through to 2030.

The ability to generate comparative data over time is particularly valuable in identifying evolving needs and trends, especially in the context of the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The SH&WS continues to be a vital tool in shaping local priorities and

ensuring that services are responsive to the lived experiences of children and young people.

The data is primarily used by individual schools to identify and respond to the specific needs of their pupils, enabling them to prioritise actions that improve health and wellbeing outcomes. At a strategic level, the findings inform the Children & Young People's Plan which reports to the Health and Wellbeing Board and supports the work of the B&NES Community Safety and Safeguarding Partnership.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Panel is asked to;

Promote and refer to the survey results when considering the needs of our local children and young people.

3 THE REPORT

3.1 The latest survey results available are from 2024. 2036 primary-aged children in years 4 and 6 took part across 32 (58%) primary schools (55 state-funded mainstream primary schools were invited to take part in the survey, having the required number of pupils on roll in the necessary year groups).

3,299 pupils in Years 8 and 10 took part across all secondary schools (100% of the secondary schools) and 267 pupils from Year 12 across 4 sixth forms. One independent school took part in the secondary and sixth form survey. No SEND schools took part in 2024, and 1 independent school chose to self-fund participation.

3.2 Funding from St John's Foundation supports voluntary participation from state-funded primary, junior, secondary (including academies), and SEND schools. It also covers participation from Bath College's City Centre and Somer Valley campuses. Independent schools may choose to self-fund their involvement in the survey.

Whilst many schools sample the majority of pupils in each eligible year group (Years 4, 6, 8, 10, and 12), they are asked, where possible, to select a cohort that reflects the academic profile of the year group and includes an equal number of male and female pupils. Participation is voluntary, and both parents/carers and children and young people have the option to opt out.

As part of their contract, SHEU is responsible for recruiting schools to participate in the survey, this includes sending initial invitation letters, co-signed by the Director of Public Health and Prevention, to Headteachers. Recruitment will begin in September 2025, starting with secondary schools, who will be invited to complete the survey during March and April. Primary school recruitment will begin in January, with survey completion scheduled for June and July. SHEU will contact schools individually and follow up with phone calls to support participation. For further details, please see section 5.1.

3.3 The survey questions cover a wide range of themes including healthy weight, school travel, school engagement and aspirations, dental health, sexual health, substance use, emotional health, personal safety and injuries.

3.4 The results show that the majority of those who took part are living physically and mentally healthy lives.

3.5 Positive trends since the previous survey in 2022 were found in the following

- life satisfaction (67% of primary, 68% of secondary and 72% of sixth form students reported being satisfied with life),
- dental health, more pupils reported visiting the dentist (increased from 66% to 73% in primary and 73% to 80% in secondary,
- drinking alcohol in the 4 weeks before the survey had decreased among secondary pupils from 25% to 22%,
- higher self-esteem, has improved slightly for secondary pupils (62% - 68%)
- on-line searching for adults only/ pornographic films or games decreased from 10% - 8% in primary and 25% to 19% in secondary.
- Electronic cigarette/vaping has decreased amongst year 6 primary pupils from 7% to 5%

3.6 Areas of concern are:

- Vaping remains high with 27% of secondary and 54% of FE students having tried e-cigarettes at least once. This is a slight but not significant increase from 2022 – (26% in secondary and 53% for FE)
- Worry and anxiety are prevalent with 40% of primary and 50% of secondary pupils who worry “quite a lot”, or “a lot” about five or more of the issues listed
- Problem solving – self harm has increased from 14% to 17% in primary and 11% to 12% of secondary pupils. 5% of FE students said if they had a problem, they would deal with it by hurting themselves in some way “often” or “always”
- Nutrition – only 30% of secondary and 37% of primary pupils meet the “5 a day” fruit, vegetables and beans/pulses recommendation
- Body image – 29% of boys and 33% of girls in year 6 said they would like to lose weight. 53% of years 8 and 10 girls wanted to lose weight compared with 27% of year 8 and 10 boys. Boys were more likely to want to put weight on than girls and this increased with age.
- Sexual health knowledge among secondary age pupils has declined with awareness of how to prevent chlamydia reducing from 39% to 34% and HIV/AIDS prevention knowledge reducing from 48% to 43%.

3.7 The survey highlights persistent inequalities affecting vulnerable groups, including pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) either now or in the past six years, those with s SEND, young carers, children looked after and those

identifying as LGBTQ+, pupils living with just one parent or from BAME backgrounds. These groups consistently report:

- Lower self-esteem and life satisfaction
- Higher levels of worry and hurting themselves in some way (self-harm)
- Greater exposure to risky behaviours (e.g. vaping and illegal drugs)
- Lower engagement and enjoyment in physical activity
- Less likely to have visited the dentist and cleaned their teeth
- More difficulty concentrating due to hunger or tiredness
- Increased fear of going to school due to bullying

These findings are routinely shared with key stakeholders and relevant strategy groups including the Children and Young People's Sub-Group, the Drug and Alcohol Partnership and Head Teachers Briefings.

Information is also used to inform resources and support such as utilising the opportunity from the DfE Holiday Activity Programme to use 15% of the allocation for those for those from under resourced communities who may not be in receipt of free school meals. Similarly, the Affordable Schools Programme promotes awareness of these findings and work is undertaken with both schools and commissioned services to ensure awareness of these inequalities.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 Whilst undertaking the School's Health and Wellbeing Survey is not a statutory requirement, it adheres to the corporate policy to improve people's lives and specifically giving children a voice to shape policy and practice.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 5.1 Recruitment of schools will begin in September 2025, starting with secondary schools. Methods include raising awareness through the Head Teachers Forum, writing to schools individually, promoting the opportunity to engage via the Hub and engaging with key partnerships including the St John's Foundation. Recruitment is led and implemented by the provider with support from the Public Health team.
- 5.2 Contract management meetings are scheduled with the provider and led by Public Health with representatives from St John's Foundation.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision-making risk management guidance.

7 EQUALITIES -

7.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken and there are no adverse effects related to undertaking the survey. The Survey includes age-appropriate questions and support is available if needed to help pupils complete it. The survey addresses protected characteristics and vulnerable groups and has specific questions tailored to capture relevant data to monitor inequalities and inform reports produced for schools to inform targeted interventions and support.

8. CLIMATE CHANGE

6.2 The survey is completed online (although a paper copy can be made available if requested) and is undertaken during the school day so children and young people are not making any additional journeys to participate.

9. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

a. N/A

10. CONSULTATION

- a. Shortly after the start of the 2021 contract, consultation was carried out with the B&NES Youth Forum regarding the survey content and question design. This led to minor wording changes in a few questions. Young people also provided feedback on how they would like to be involved in sharing school-level results related to social norms, which is now reflected in the schools' briefing materials.

Furthermore, feedback from children and young people is undertaken as part of the survey delivery and is collated by SHEU. We also consider the feedback from schools, health & education professionals in the planning and implementation of the forthcoming survey.

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| Contact person | Marcia Burgham, Public Health Principal marcia_burgham@bathnes.gov.uk |
| Background papers | The latest 2024 Health and Wellbeing Survey results are available here: https://thehub.bathnes.gov.uk/Page/11031 |
| Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format | |