




|   |   |
|---|---|
|  <p>Iechyd Cyhoeddus Cymru<br/>Public Health Wales</p> | <p><b>Name of Meeting</b><br/>Quality, Safety and Improvement Committee<br/><b>Date of Meeting</b><br/>24/7/2024<br/><b>Agenda item:</b><br/>3a</p> |
|---|---|

## Quality and Impact Report – The Welsh Network of Health and Well-being Promoting Schools (WNHWPS) Programme

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| <b>Executive lead:</b> | Dr Jim McManus  |
| <b>Author:</b>         | Dr Julie Bishop, Director of Health Improvement<br>Mrs Lorna Bennett, Consultant in Public Health |

|                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| <b>Approval/Scrutiny route:</b> | Quality, Safety and Improvement Committee |
|---------------------------------|---|

**Purpose**

This paper outlines work undertaken by the Health Improvement Division to ensure that the Welsh Network of Health and Well-being Promoting Schools Programme remains fit for purpose in an evolving policy environment; is able to demonstrate impact and that mechanisms are in place to minimise variation in quality of delivery.

The Committee is asked to receive assurance that the programme remains evidence-based, adheres to Health and Care Quality Standards for Wales and relevant in a developing education and health policy context.

|                                     |                                      |                                       |                                   |  |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| <b>Recommendation:</b>              |                                      |                                       |                                   |  |
| APPROVE<br><input type="checkbox"/> | CONSIDER<br><input type="checkbox"/> | RECOMMEND<br><input type="checkbox"/> | ADOPT<br><input type="checkbox"/> | ASSURANCE<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

The Quality, Safety and Improvement Committee is asked to:

- **Receive assurance** that progress has been made in demonstrating the quality and impact of the Welsh Network of Health and Well-being Promoting Schools programme and that an improvement plan continues to be implemented.

**Link to Public Health Wales [Strategic Plan](#)**



Public Health Wales has an agreed strategic plan, which has identified seven strategic priorities and well-being objectives.

This report contributes to the following:

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Strategic Priority/Well-being Objective</b> | 3 - Promoting healthy behaviours                 |
| <b>Strategic Priority/Well-being Objective</b> | 2 - Promoting mental and social wellbeing        |
| <b>Strategic Priority/Well-being Objective</b> | 1 - Influencing the wider determinants of health |

#### Summary impact analysis

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Equality and Health Impact Assessment</b>                       | n/a   |
| <b>Risk and Assurance</b>  | n/a   |
| <b>Health and Social Care (Quality and Engagement) (Wales) Act</b> | The paper sets out how the Welsh Network of Health and Well-being Promoting Schools programme addresses the six domains of quality, as set out in the Health and Care Quality Standards |
| <b>Financial implications</b>                                      | n/a   |
| <b>People implications</b>   | n/a   |



## 1. Purpose / situation

This paper outlines progress in implementing an improvement plan for demonstrating the quality and impact of the Welsh Network of Health and Well-being Promoting Schools Programme (formerly known as the Welsh Network of Healthy School Schemes, WNHSS) in Wales. Following a previous submission to the Committee in 2019, the paper seeks to provide an update on actions taken and key milestones achieved since the last report so that the programme remains evidence-based and relevant in a developing education and health policy context.

## 2. Background

Health Promoting Schools emerged as a strategic approach during the 1990's and have been recognised as a strategic vehicle to promote positive development and healthy behaviours such as physical activity, physical fitness, recreation and play, balanced nutrition, prevent tobacco use, and preventing being bullied. Despite the fact that the concept of Health Promoting Schools was articulated by WHO, UNESCO and UNICEF back in 1992, only few countries have successfully implemented Health Promoting Schools at scale.

WHO and UNESCO launched a new initiative "Making Every School a Health Promoting School" through the development and promotion of Global Standards for Health Promoting Schools in 2021. A range of international guidance documents and standards were produced and we have been able to draw on these in our refresh and improvement programme in Wales.

## 3. An evidence-based, complex intervention

The Welsh Network of Health and Well-being Promoting Schools (WNHWPS) programme (formerly known as the Welsh Network of Healthy School Schemes, WHNSS) is an example of a 'settings' based approach to health promotion. This approach reflects the recognition in the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion that 'health is created in the places that people live, love, learn and play'. 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 WNHWPS is a complex intervention and therefore it is difficult to attribute child health outcomes to this intervention alone, while Schools do have an impact on outcomes, wider family and community factors are also significant. Whole school approaches reflect an ethos and way of working rather than a specific highly controlled intervention. Context is important and local schemes and individual



schools take action appropriate to their context, the needs of their school and priorities. This makes evaluation very challenging. However, there have been a number of studies and evaluations of whole school approaches and these have repeatedly advocated for a whole school approach using the model adopted by WNHWPS.<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>

A Cochrane<sup>5</sup> review in 2014 found positive effects of the approach for body mass index (BMI), physical activity, physical fitness, fruit and vegetable intake, tobacco use, and being bullied. Intervention effects were generally small but have the potential to produce public health benefits at the population level. The review found insufficient data to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of the HPS approach for sexual health, hand-washing, cycle-helmet use, eating disorders, sun protection, oral health or academic outcomes.

A more recent cluster randomised controlled trial<sup>6</sup> on an intervention on bullying and aggression in English secondary schools indicated that interventions to promote student health by modifying the whole-school environment are likely to be one of the most feasible and efficient ways of addressing closely related risk and health outcomes in children and young people. There are many others which provide evidence that School Environment Interventions are effective.

As part of the improvement programme Public Health Wales has been developing a logic model/theory of change for the programme and a monitoring and evaluation framework. This will strengthen our ability to evidence change occurring as a result of the programme intervention.

The WNHWPS is supported by a partnership with the **School Health Research Network (SHRN)** which enables schools and systems to use data to understand the health and well-being needs of school-aged children in Wales as well as take evidence-based action to promote health and well-being through local practices and national policy. Collectively the two programmes work jointly to maximise the opportunities of schools to promote and protect the health and well-being of the whole school community using a whole school approach.

#### 4. Safety and Clinical Governance

As part of the Improvement Programme we have embarked on a programme of workforce development to ensure that those delivering the programme across Wales are confident to provide advice and guidance in both a new policy context and

---

<sup>1</sup> O'Reilly, M et al (2018) Review of mental health promotion in schools. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*. 53:647-662

<sup>2</sup> Thomas, F and Aggleton P (2016) A confluence of evidence: What lies behind a 'whole school approach to health education in schools?', *Health Education*, vol 116, Issue 2 154-176

<sup>3</sup> <http://ppi.w.org.uk/ppiw-report-publication-promoting-emotional-health-well-being-and-resilience-in-primary-schools/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/projects/improving-public-health/healthy-schools-and-pupils>

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.cochrane.org/CD008958/BEHAV\\_the-who-health-promoting-school-framework-for-improving-the-health-and-well-being-of-students-and-their-academic-achievement](https://www.cochrane.org/CD008958/BEHAV_the-who-health-promoting-school-framework-for-improving-the-health-and-well-being-of-students-and-their-academic-achievement)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S0140-6736%2818%2931782-3>



reflecting and using available evidence. Research undertaken by Cardiff University highlighted the critical role that the Healthy Schools workforce play in supporting schools in implementing the new curriculum and particularly in relation to complex and sensitive issues such as Relationship and Sex Education. A new training package has been developed in partnership with SHRN and this is currently being delivered across Wales. This work is being evaluated by SHRN.

As part of the improvement work a new suite of national guidance documentation will be produced to strengthen the alignment to the available evidence and reduce local variation. This includes the work done in support of the Whole School Approach to Mental and Emotional Wellbeing on a What Works Toolkit.

## **5. Improvement Programme**

Public Health Wales review of the Healthy Schools Scheme identified a number of improvements that when implemented should improve the impact and efficiency of the programme. The Improvement Plan (Annex 1) is overseen by a Health Promoting Schools Programme Board (Annex 2) comprised of multi-agency senior partners. In the interests of efficiency this Board also oversees the Whole School Approach to Mental and Emotional Wellbeing and supports the School Health Research Network.

Previously, the scheme operated as a Network of Local Schemes each operating independently. This generated a lot of duplication in addition to variation and there was widespread system support for a single national framework.

A key aspect of the changes would be to replace the NQA indicators with a set of Minimum Standards for Health Promoting Schools and that these should be set at a level we would expect all schools to reasonably reach. These minimum standards have now been developed following an extensive period of evidence reviewing, consultation, engagement and refinement. They emphasise core components or conditions for a whole school approach rather than a set of health topics or outcomes. Following Cabinet Secretary for Education and Minister for Mental Health and Early Years approval to proceed with implementation of the new Minimum Standards, we plan to proceed to the next phase of engagement which will socialise and refine the Minimum Standards with the education workforce, work with the existing Healthy Schools Workforce to familiarise and apply the Minimum Standards in practice with schools and develop a range of supporting resources including guidance and 'deep-dive' topic specific tools.

Alongside the implementation on new Minimum Standards, the National Quality Award, which had been achieved by 19% of schools, will be replaced by a new accreditation process that will routinely recognise excellent practice undertaken by schools in embedding minimum standards. Schools who have achieved the National Quality Award will automatically be accredited as a health promoting school for a period of two years following their latest NQA assessment.

Figure 1: Summary of Key Proposed Changes to WNHSS Delivery Model

| Current   | Future  | Benefits   |
|---|---|--|
| Welsh Network of Healthy School Schemes   | Whole School Approach to Health and Wellbeing   | Provides greater clarity about what it is  |
| 22 Separate Local Schemes   | A single all Wales framework  | Reduced duplication of effort; unwarranted variation; clear national policy goals  |
| Multi-year process based on phases  | No minimum time period  | Schools progress at different rates; focus on outcomes not processes; option to set goal by which all schools can evidence achievement   |
| National Quality Award  | National Healthy School Standard (minimum standard for all schools) plus recognition of excellence/ sector leading practice | Clear statement of intent that this is a goal all schools should aspire to and will enable delivery of other objectives; provides opportunity to recognise and reward excellence as a means to drive improvement |
| End point   | Continuous improvement model  | Recognises health and wellbeing needs change over time; new issues emerge; improvement is always possible  |
| Nationally determined priorities  | Needs-led model at school level informed by regional and national priorities  | Schools do not need to invest significant effort in areas which are not a priority for their school  |
| Separate programme  | Enables achievement of wider policy goals   | Recognises the contribution of the scheme to other educational and health outcomes – not an add on   |
| Process based monitoring measures   | National indicators and pupil outcomes  | Transparent set of measures that can be tracked at school, local authority, regional and national level  |
| Separate schemes across wellbeing policy areas e.g. Sport and Physical Activity; Eco-Schools; Active Travel | Shared frameworks and guidance co-produced across policy areas  | Reduces the burden on schools of multiple schemes and frameworks in the wellbeing arena  |
| Health policy led   | Shared health and education policy  | Ensures maximum benefit and goals; ensures connectivity to and oversight within education and health policy  |

## 6. Engagement and Involvement

The development of the new delivery model and wider improvement programme actions have been developed through extensive engagement and consultation with strategic partners; schools and included work with young people themselves.

A Roundtable held in October 2022 engaged a wide range of senior strategic partners in reviewing and agreeing the strategic direction of the programme (Annex 3). There was clear consensus that the programme was still relevant and increasingly so in the context of the ongoing education reform programme. The outcome of the Roundtable was reported to the Minister who agreed to the next phase of the programme.

A separate programme of engagement was undertaken to consider the replacement of the National Quality Award. This work focused on Schools and Young People and resulted in a recommendation to the then Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing that the National Quality Award should end (Annex 4).

We have also engaged directly with the public through the Time to Talk Public Health Survey which included a series of questions on the role of schools in



promoting health. The survey confirmed widespread support for the role of schools in this area<sup>7</sup>.

## 7. Description/Assessment

There has been considerable progress in implementing the new programme approach as set out in the improvement programme and strong partnerships have been built with system partners in support of this work.

There have however, been a number of challenges to date, which has impacted on implementation.

Firstly, the introduction of the Whole School Approach to Emotional and Mental Wellbeing working in parallel with the WNHSS has been challenging and continues to be the priority for the Cabinet Secretary. As a result we have been able to direct the WNHWPS staff resource to supporting this implementation.

In addition we were formally requested to work to integrate/harmonise the two programmes, however, this process has been slower than anticipated and we are working closely with Welsh Government policy leads in both Education and Health to navigate this process.

The development of the Minimum Standards has been impacted by this work. We are still awaiting formal sign off from the Cabinet Secretary and Minister to progress which we understand is imminent. This is important as the previous National Quality Award was an Award of Government not Public Health Wales and therefore agreement of a replacement requires Government sign off. We are seeking further engagement with officials to map out a timeline for implementation.

We have also sought to ensure that our work compliments the new inspection framework developed by Estyn and there were some delays earlier this year while we waited for this work to be published.

Finally, we have provided regular updates on progress to the Directors of Public Health group to ensure that there remains close and aligned working on this programme moving forward.

In summary, the actions undertaken as part of the improvement plan for the WNHWPS will:

- Make it easier for schools to embed a whole school approach to health and well-being and identify the excellent work they are already doing
- Empower schools, and communities to identify and address the health and well-being needs that are a priority for them

---

<sup>7</sup> [phw.nhs.wales/topics/time-to-talk-public-health-panel/time-to-talk-public-health-panel-publications/publications/time-to-talk-public-health-february-2024-panel-survey-findings/](https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/time-to-talk-public-health-panel/time-to-talk-public-health-panel-publications/publications/time-to-talk-public-health-february-2024-panel-survey-findings/)



- Support self-evaluation and continuous improvement

### 3.1 Recommendation

The Welsh Network of Health and Well-being Promoting Schools programme is well established and has a high level of participation among primary and secondary schools in Wales. The Network is well placed to support schools in delivering on the ambitions set out in the Education Reform programme and the increased priority given to Health and Wellbeing within the new Curriculum for Wales. Having been significantly impacted by the pandemic and recovery period, progress has been made in developing and implementing an improvement plan which will ensure the WNHWPS programme is sustainable, accessible and evidence-based for the future.

The committee is asked to receive assurance that work is ongoing to ensure that the programme remains relevant in the context of emerging Education Policy and supports Public Health Wales in the delivery of its Long Term Strategy.

The Committee is asked to:

- **Receive assurance** that progress has been made in demonstrating the quality and impact of the Welsh Network of Health and Well-being Promoting Schools programme and that an improvement plan continues to be implemented.