Health and Wellbeing Survey of Secondary School Age Young People in Renfrewshire

SUMMARY REPORT – JUNE 2009
Introduction

In October 2008 Renfrewshire Community Health Partnership worked in partnership with Renfrewshire Council to carry out a health and wellbeing survey of secondary school age young people in Renfrewshire. The majority of funding for the survey was accessed through the Fairer Scotland Fund.

The aim of the survey was to provide a baseline of the health and wellbeing of Secondary 1 (S1) to Secondary 6 (S6) pupils across Renfrewshire and within individual schools. This information will enable all agencies in the area to work together to improve the health and wellbeing of the next generation of adults.

How was the survey conducted?

A steering group with representatives from Renfrewshire Community Health Partnership, Renfrewshire Council and the Public Health Resource Unit commissioned a research agency to administer a health and wellbeing questionnaire to 50% of all S1 to S6 pupils attending Renfrewshire schools.

Most schools opted to administer the survey in Personal and Social Education classes which are organised by mixed ability groups; by using this approach a broad range of pupils were included in the survey. Some schools opted to complete the survey using on-line methods, whereas, others opted to complete the survey using a pen and paper method. Schools, parents and pupils were informed about the purpose of the survey and assured of confidentiality.
Who participated in the survey?

All 11 Renfrewshire mainstream secondary schools plus one special educational needs school (SEN) and one alternative provision unit took part in the survey.

A total of 5,557 pupils completed the questionnaire. The data provides a valuable resource for describing the picture of health and wellbeing amongst Renfrewshire’s young people in October/November 2008.

What did the survey find?

The survey was extensive and covered many health and wellbeing issues. This summary report focuses on key findings in the following areas:

- Family life
- Health and illness
- Self esteem
- Health behaviours
- Bullying and discrimination
- Someone to talk to
- Computer use and awareness of services
- Pupils aspirations for the future

The results for the survey can be examined by looking for patterns in health and wellbeing across gender group; age group; deprivation (by comparing low deprivation schools with high deprivation schools)\(^1\); those with a long term limiting illness compared to those without such conditions; young carers compared to those without caring responsibilities.

While the survey asked pupils which ethnic group they belonged to and also which sexual orientation they identified with, the numbers of pupils in some groups were so small that meaningful comparisons between groups cannot be drawn and are therefore not reported.

\(^1\)The proportion of pupils receiving free school meals in each school was used as a proxy measure for deprivation. The two schools with the highest proportion of pupils receiving free school meals were selected as the high deprivation schools and the two schools with the lowest proportion of pupils receiving free school meals were selected as the low deprivation schools.
This is a summary report which includes a selection of interesting findings. A copy of the full report which includes the full range of analysis can be found at www.chps.org.uk/Renfrewshire, www.renfrewshire.gov.uk and www.phru.net

Family Life

Two thirds of the pupils lived in families with two parents, as the graph below illustrates:

![Family Composition Chart]

Notes:
1 “Living with one parent” includes those living part-time with one parent and part-time with the other as well as those living full-time with either their mother or their father.

2 “Re-partnered families” includes those living with their father and their father’s new partner or their mother and their mother’s new partner.

Almost a quarter of pupils (24%) have someone in their family with a disability, long term illness, drug or alcohol problem. Of these pupils, 3 out of 5 spent time caring for their family member. The average number of hours spent caring a week was 11.5 hours. Half of carers felt their caring duties had an effect upon them such as tiredness, difficulties completing homework or difficulties finding time to socialise with friends.
Health and illness

It is encouraging that over three quarters of pupils were positive about their general health. However, almost two fifths of responding pupils reported having either a long term illness or disability; the most common of which was asthma or eczema. Of those pupils with a long term illness or disability, 70% indicated that it did not affect them in their daily lives.

![Health Indicator chart]

Self Esteem

The questionnaire asked pupils a series of questions related to self esteem. Six statements were positive:

- I am pretty sure about myself
- I am easy to like
- I am able to do things well
- Most of the time I am satisfied with myself
- I have a number of good qualities
- I like myself

Nearly all pupils (99%) agreed with at least one of these. Two in three (67%) agreed with all six of these statements.
A second series of statements were negative and included:

- I often wish I was someone else
- I have a low opinion of myself
- I am a failure
- There are lots of things about myself that I would like to change

Just over half of pupils (56%) agreed with at least one of these negative statements, but just 4% agreed with all four.

**Health Behaviours**

**Oral Health** - It is encouraging that 83% of pupils reported brushing their teeth at least twice a day.

**Fruit and Vegetable Consumption** - Only 41% of pupils reported eating at least 5 portions of fruit or vegetables in the previous day (with 9% reporting they had not eaten any fruit or vegetables in the previous day).

**Physical Activity** - The national target for physical activity is for children to have at least 60 minutes of moderate physical activity on most days of the week. Just 15% of pupils met this target. However, 83% of children reported participating in a sport outwith school hours.

**Tobacco** - Use of tobacco, alcohol and drugs increases with age. Overall, 10% of pupils report smoking, while 16% of upper school pupils report smoking. 64% of pupils had never tried smoking.

**Alcohol** - Overall, 40% of pupils had never drunk alcohol, whereas 14% drank once a week or more. However, 25% of upper school pupils drank once a week or more.

**Drugs** - Overall, 83% of pupils had never taken illegal drugs. 4% of lower school pupils had taken an illegal drug in the last year and 24% of upper school pupils reported taking drugs in the last year.
It is encouraging that tobacco use is relatively low compared to adults, but use of alcohol and drugs appears relatively widespread, particularly in the upper school age group.

**Breastfeeding**

Pupils were asked a series of questions about their attitudes to breastfeeding. 69% of pupils felt that a woman should feel comfortable breastfeeding her child in public; 46% agreed that a woman should only breastfeed her child at home or in private; 44% agreed they would feel embarrassed if they saw a woman breastfeeding her child in public. Young people’s attitudes to breastfeeding are worthy of further study.

**Bullying and Discrimination**

While the majority of pupils (89%) had not been bullied in the previous year, 27% had experienced some form of discrimination. The most common form of discrimination was on the grounds of age.

Pupils with a long term illness or disability and pupils with caring responsibilities were more likely to experience discrimination than other pupils.

**Someone to talk to**

94% of the pupils felt they had someone they could talk to. For the majority of pupils, friends and parents were their chosen confidant. However, 6% of pupils felt they had no-one to confide in.
**Computer Use and Awareness of Services**

A high proportion of pupils had access to a computer (95%) at home. Pupils were asked how long they spent on screen based activities on a school night. Over half of pupils (52%) reported spending more than an hour a day on social networking sites. Almost a quarter (24%) spent more than an hour a day using the computer for homework.

Around three quarters of pupils knew they could contact a range of services such as Childline; social work or teachers if they were experiencing abuse. However, 5% did not know of any agency to contact for support.

**Future Aspirations**

The majority of pupils had positive aspirations for life after school. 69% of pupils hoped to go onto further education after leaving school. An additional 20% hoped to get a job after leaving school.

**Conclusions**

The survey reveals some positive attributes of Renfrewshire’s young people, such as the high proportion of pupils agreeing with all the positive statements about self esteem and the low proportion of pupils agreeing with all the negative statements. It is also encouraging that a high proportion of pupils were meeting the tooth brushing target; had someone to talk to and knew where to get help if needed. However, the survey also reveals some challenges, such as the relatively low proportion of pupils meeting the fruit and vegetables target and physical activity target. Increases in health damaging behaviours of smoking, drinking alcohol and taking illegal drugs with increasing age also give cause for concern.

The results of the survey will be shared with young people at an event at St Mirren Football Stadium in June 2009. The views of young people will be pivotal in how the results of the survey are taken forward within schools and across Renfrewshire as a whole.
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