

**HEALTH RELATED BEHAVIOUR SURVEY FINDINGS – ACADEMIC YEAR  
2022/23**

**Report of the Executive Director of Health, Housing and Communities**

**1.0 Purpose of the Report**

1.1 The purpose of the report is to share an overview of the findings of the recent Health Related Behaviour Survey conducted in the summer term of 2023 and consider actions in response to the findings.

**2.0 Background**

2.1 The Health Related Behaviour Survey (HRBS) provides an excellent baseline about the health-related behaviour of children and young people (Appendix 1).

2.2 The information at school level is useful in demonstrating the effectiveness and impact of health and wellbeing programmes. Additionally, this data supports in providing a needs analysis.

2.3 For the Council and wider partners - like the School Nursing Service, Together for Children and Integrated Sexual Health Service - the Sunderland and ward level data will be used to inform service planning and delivery.

2.4 In 2022/23 we had the highest number of schools and pupils participate in the survey since it commenced in Sunderland in 2006, with 5970 young people participating. 33 primary schools and 15 secondary schools took part in the survey.

2.5 The survey methodology is a school-based questionnaire developed by the Schools Health Education Unit (SHEU) at Exeter University, which has over 30 years' experience in this field of work. The quality of the data collected is considered very robust and the history of its use by individual schools, local authorities and health bodies is extensive.

2.6 The survey is targeted at specific year groups, providing a rich source of data at key points of development for children and young people across a range of themes. Trend data analysis from the local sample and comparison with the wider SHEU sample is also provided for core questions.

2.7 In 2021/22, Public Health included Covid related questions to understand the impact Covid-19 had on children and young people, as well as inform any planning and delivery around Covid recovery. In 2022/23, public health adapted Covid-19 questions to understand how children and young people's views have shifted following the pandemic.

**2.8** All pupils in Year 4 and Year 6 are surveyed across the following themes:

- personal background
- healthy eating
- physical activity
- drugs (Y6)
- alcohol (Y6)
- smoking and vaping (Y6)
- worries
- staying safe
- emotional health and wellbeing
- feelings
- bullying
- healthy eating
- growing up
- hygiene
- school experience
- covid-19

**2.9** Approximately 100 pupils (4 classes/forms) from each of Year 8 and Year 10 are asked to complete the questionnaire. Themes covered in the survey are:

- personal background
- healthy eating and nutrition
- physical activity
- drugs
- alcohol
- smoking
- vaping
- school experience
- staying safe, including bullying
- relationships
- sexual health
- school experience
- health
- worries
- emotional health and wellbeing
- life since Covid-19

**2.10** The survey results are processed by SHEU and each school participating in the survey will receive an individual report (free of charge):

- their own school results in tabular form
- a report containing a summary of key aspects of the data; and
- guidance on using the data

**2.11** The Council receive the combined results of all schools, with national comparisons for core questions which are shared with other teams and services as appropriate to support a greater understanding of local health needs, influence commissioning intentions and inform service planning.

**2.12** Where school and pupil participation is at a sufficient level, additional ward level analysis is available on some of the themes covered in the survey, to provide further insight in relation to health inequalities. This academic year ward level analysis was available for both primary and secondary schools.

### **3.0 Summary of Primary School Key Findings**

Below is a brief summary of key Primary School findings, while more comprehensive details can be accessed in the Health Related Behaviour Survey 2023 summary report.

**Growing up:** In a survey of Year 6 pupils, 95% reported that teachers, school nurses, or visitors in school lessons have discussed with them how their bodies change as they grow up, which represents an increase of 23% from the 72% recorded in 2021.

### **Physical Activity:**

- The percentage of pupils who go swimming at least "once a week" has increased by 19%, rising from 24% in 2021 to 43% in 2023.
- More pupils engaged in sports or physical activities after school, increasing from 49% in 2021 to 57% in 2023.

### **Healthy Eating and Nutrition:**

- There was a slight decrease in pupils eating vegetables 'on most days,' dropping from 33% in 2021 to 30% in 2023.
- The percentage of pupils who drank at least a litre of water on the day before the survey increased slightly, from 27% in 2021 to 31% in 2023.

**Hygiene:** A significant decrease in the percentage of pupils who washed their hands before lunch on the day before the survey, dropping from 81% in 2021 to 52% in 2023.

**Drug Education:** There was an increase in Y6 pupils receiving education about illegal drugs, rising from 67% in 2021 to 84% in 2023.

**Accidents and Injuries:** A notable increase in the proportion of pupils reporting accidents treated by a doctor or at a hospital, going from 27% in 2021 to 35% in 2023.

**Bullying Reporting:** Pupils' willingness to report bullying to parents/carers improved, with the percentage increasing from 82% in 2021 to 86% in 2023.

### **School:**

- The perception that schools care about pupils' happiness declined slightly, from 75% in 2021 to 71% in 2023.
- Pupils' perception of teachers actively listening to them at school also decreased, from 80% in 2021 to 76% in 2023.
- Pupils' perception of how their work is marked for improvement decreased slightly, from 91% in 2021 to 88% in 2023.

**Worries:** Pupils worrying 'quite a lot' or 'a lot' about family problems also increased, from 29% in 2021 to 33% in 2023.

## 4.0 Summary of Secondary School Key Findings

Below is a brief summary of key Secondary School findings, while more comprehensive details can be accessed in the Health Related Behaviour Survey 2023 summary report.

**Doctor Visits:** The percentage of secondary pupils who visited the doctor in the last 6 months increased significantly from 47% in 2021 to 64% in 2023, indicating higher health awareness.

### **Smoking, Alcohol, Drugs and Vaping:**

- The proportion of pupils who have at least tried vaping increased significantly from 21% in 2021 to 35% in 2023.
- Pupils also found school lessons about drugs (including alcohol and tobacco) more useful, rising from 36% in 2021 to 40% in 2023.
- The percentage of pupils who drink alcohol at least 'occasionally' decreased from 23% in 2021 to 19% in 2023.

### **Relationships and Sexual Health:**

- More pupils knew where they could get condoms free of charge, with a rise from 30% in 2021 to 40% in 2023.
- There was a significant decrease in pupils who didn't want anyone to talk to them about puberty and growing up, dropping from 39% in 2021 to 21% in 2023.
- An increase in the percentage of pupils finding school lessons about sex and relationships education useful, from 31% in 2021 to 37% in 2023.
- Pupils experiencing at least one of the negative behaviours listed in a relationship with a past or current boyfriend/girlfriend slightly increased, from 28% in 2021 to 31% in 2023.

### **School:**

- An increase was observed in pupils being away from school due to illness or injury, rising from 56% in 2021 to 72% in 2023.
- A decrease in pupils worrying 'quite a lot' or 'a lot' about exams, declining from 51% in 2021 to 42% in 2023.
- An increase in pupils traveling to school by car/van on the day of the survey, rising from 38% in 2021 to 41% in 2023.

### **Wellbeing**

- More pupils reported being 'quite' or 'very' happy with their life at the moment, increasing from 50% in 2021 to 56% in 2023.

- An increase in pupils having a high self-esteem score (15 or more), from 28% in 2021 to 31% in 2023.
- A decrease in pupils worrying 'quite a lot' or 'a lot' about the way they look, declining from 47% in 2021 to 43% in 2023.

**Safety:** A decrease in pupils rating their safety when going out after dark as 'poor' or 'very poor,' dropping from 31% in 2021 to 25% in 2023.

#### **Bullying:**

- Pupils who experienced teasing or being made fun of in the last month increased, from 43% in 2021 to 46% in 2023.
- The perception of being picked on or bullied because of their appearance increased, from 37% in 2021 to 39% in 2023.

#### **Online Safety:**

- A decrease in pupils who have been told how to stay safe while online, declining from 81% in 2021 to 76% in 2023.
- A decrease in the percentage of pupils who received hurtful, nasty, or scary messages or pictures online, dropping from 28% in 2021 to 26% in 2023.

#### **Healthy Eating:**

- More pupils had school food for lunch on the day before the survey, increasing from 50% in 2021 to 59% in 2023.
- Pupils who 'never' or 'only sometimes' considered their health when choosing what to eat decreased slightly, from 64% in 2021 to 61% in 2023.

#### **Physical Activity:**

- 67% of pupils reported that they enjoyed physical activities 'quite a lot' or 'a lot,' compared to 64% in 2021.
- The percentage of pupils having a bicycle and using it declined from 42% in 2021 to 38% in 2023.

## **5.0 Actions to date**

**5.1** Participating schools have received their individual reports.

**5.2** The report has been shared with relevant stakeholders and the roadshow communicating the results to key groups has commenced. The intention is to gather any identified key actions from each group, following discussion about the findings of the survey.

#### **Roadshow – delivered (before report submission):**

Health Housing and Communities Directorate - November (various)

Starting Well Delivery Board, 9<sup>th</sup> November  
Active Sunderland Board, 17<sup>th</sup> November

**Roadshow – planned:**

Children, Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee, 30<sup>th</sup> November  
Smoke Free Partnership, 4<sup>th</sup> December  
Healthy Weight Steering Group – 6<sup>th</sup> December  
Health and Wellbeing Board, 7<sup>th</sup> December  
Drug and Alcohol Harms Reduction Group, 9<sup>th</sup> January  
Sexual Health Partnership, 17<sup>th</sup> January  
Suicide Prevention Action Group, TBC  
Primary School Heads meeting, TBC  
Secondary School Heads meeting, TBC  
Teenage Pregnancy Group, TBC  
Early Help, TBC  
0-19 Public Health Service, TBC

**6.0 Priorities**

- 6.1** Develop a communication toolkit that will support the professional audience, children and young people and parents/carers. Following dissemination of the toolkit feedback will be sought to understand usefulness and inform plans for the next survey.
- 6.2** Communicate the results and intelligence gathered with relevant groups and through discussion identify key priorities to improve outcomes for children and young people. Some emerging priorities already identified through this process include emotional wellbeing / worries, healthy diet and handwashing for primary school pupils and vaping and bullying for secondary school pupils.
- 6.3** Gather learning and insights to improve future HRB surveys. Consolidate and synthesise the feedback acquired from various channels, including previous sources and the input collected during the roadshow to inform the development of the 2025 survey.
- 6.4** Revisit special educational needs survey for 2025. Previously we have not had any special schools participating in the HRBS. In 2023 one school expressed an interest and collaborated with us to adopt the survey design but was then not able to undertake the survey during the time period allocated. Will seek to engage further to understand how participation could be supported in the future.
- 6.5** To update relevant Joint Strategic Needs Assessments to include the appropriate data.
- 6.6** Ensure the school health profiles are updated.

## **7.0 Recommendations**

**7.1** The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to:

- (i) receive the update and published report on the findings of the health related behaviour survey;
- (ii) endorse the key priorities identified;
- (iii) endorse the ongoing work of sharing information with key stakeholders to inform and influence our approaches and plans to improve the health and wellbeing of children and young people in Sunderland; and
- (iv) receive updates on progress in relation to the agreed actions via the Starting Well Delivery Board assurance report.

Appendix 1: Sunderland Health Related Behaviour Survey 2023 – summary report

