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Improving pupils' health in Central Bedfordshire

Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) commissioned the Schools Health Education Unit (SHEU) to run a survey in 2014 on children and young people's perceptions of their health and lifestyles.

A sample of 3099 pupils from years 6, 8 and 10 years took part in the survey and results were compared to the CBC 2008 survey data as well as with wider SHEU data. These data helped to inform and drive projects in 2014/15 aimed at improving pupils' health in Central Bedfordshire.

Results

The results of the CBC survey were discussed at an open event for PSHE leads and teachers who were given the opportunity to meet the children's Public Health team, consider individual school data and discuss the implications for pupils. The summary data were also shared with key partners to inform their own policy decisions and priorities. For example, the survey was shared with the Bedfordshire Police Strategic Children and Young People Group which gave senior officers an opportunity to look at the results and determine if the Force's education work was covering the needs of young people in Central Bedfordshire, The Force's Children and Young People Development Officer and Schools Coordinator was tasked to promote the range of educational inputs on offer to schools to support them with a range of topics such as personal safety, online safety and bullying.

The good news stories

Compared to the wider SHEU data, more Central Bedfordshire pupils:

- Eat five or more portions of fruit and vegetables each day

- Report they do not smoke (an increase on 2008 data)
- Say they never drink alcohol in year 6 and 8 (an increase on 2008 data)
- Report they exercise hard during last week

The challenges ahead

Comparisons of Central Bedfordshire Year 6, Year 8 and Year 10 results with wider SHEU data showed that Central Bedfordshire pupils are more likely to:

- Worry about more than one matter listed in the survey
- Have low self esteem scores
- Feel their views are not listened to in school
- Sometimes feel afraid of going to school due to bullying
- Feel less satisfied with their lives

It is known that adolescents (particularly young women) have higher rates of anxiety and depression than younger children, however when compared with the Central Bedfordshire 2008 survey results, pupils in 2014 are less likely to report they are satisfied with their lives. This downward trend is also reflected in wider SHEU data.

"The rising trend of self-esteem from 1997-2007 stopped in 2008, and the figures we are seeing for high self-esteem in 2013 are generally lower now."

SHEU 2014

Development

As a result of the 2014 survey data and in response to other health drivers, Public Health implemented a number of new initiatives in

addition to existing programmes to improve the health and wellbeing of pupils in Central Bedfordshire. These are outlined below.

PSHE/ SRE Partnership Network

The Central Bedfordshire PSHE/ SRE Partnership network has been developed by Central Bedfordshire Public Health in collaboration with The Teaching School, service providers and commissioners to offer support and information to schools for their PSHE and SRE provision. Good quality PSHE and SRE are essential to developing the qualities and attributes pupils need to thrive as healthy individuals, enabling them to fulfil their potential in life.

The PSHE/SRE partnership network, which to date has over 130 members, was launched at an event on 16th October 2014 and was attended by over 60 PSHE leads and head teachers. The room buzzed as teaching professionals shared experience and ideas and took full advantage of the opportunity to engage with the 14 service providers who attended the event.

"I was really enthused by the pro-active approach being taken in Central Beds regarding the welfare of young people and their education in areas that are so important but not so high profile on the national curriculum."

Chris Lee @ Ormiston Families

Attendees also heard talks from the School Nursing Service about the support they can provide to schools. Such support includes offering general support with school's PSHE curriculum and running weekly drop in sessions for years 7. Drop in sessions provide advice and support on issues such as emotional health and wellbeing; sexual health; reducing and stopping smoking; healthy weight; reducing misuse of drugs and alcohol and managing stress and anxiety at exam times. PSHE members also heard from the National PSHE Association offering a reduced membership rate exclusively for CB schools and from CBC's Access and Referral Hub about the 'one front door' simplified referral pathway for individual children. Teaching professionals also

participated in workshop sessions and were asked about the barriers to delivery of the PSHE curriculum, the ways in which the PSHE/SRE network could best support schools and the topic areas of most concern. Feedback enabled the network to be shaped according to members' needs, for example by responding to the need for support around pupils' emotional wellbeing.

In February 2015, the Network received the first of a series of half termly PSHE/ SRE news letters providing further information and resources for schools. [This issue](#) focused on emotional wellbeing in children and young people and provided links to providers, as well as information, lesson plans and websites for further advice and guidance.

The Aspire Programme

'Aspire' is an evidence-based, early intervention programme commissioned by CBC that offers young people at risk of poor outcomes, including teenage pregnancy, small group support and individual coaching, with an emphasis on raising future aspirations. In the academic year 2012/13, the programme was delivered across 13 schools (both middle and upper) in high teenage pregnancy areas in Central Bedfordshire. All those who joined the programme were closely monitored over the year to measure the impact and outcomes of the intervention. Evaluation has shown that the Aspire programme has successfully reduced the risk factors for teenage pregnancy among those taking part in the programme.

New Sexual Health Website

Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire Public Health teams launched a new sexual health [website](#) across Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire.

The website has been developed for all ages to ensure that there is one point of contact for up to date information on local sexual health services, including: Brook, Terence Higgins Trust, Sphere Clinics (delivered by a number of GP Practices), Genito Urinary Medicine (GUM), Pharmacies and outreach workers within the local community. There is a clinic finder function which provides up to date detail on clinics running on every day of the week. Other

features include information on contraception, Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), HIV, sexual dysfunction, pregnancy and sexual assault.

Tattoo and Piercing Safety Campaign

In January of this year, all schools and colleges with pupils aged 10 and above received a teaching resource pack on tattoo and piercing safety. The teaching pack was put together by the Public Health and Environmental Health departments of Luton, Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire Councils to assist teachers with their PSHE provision and specifically to explore the range of issues associated with [tattooing and piercing](#), including health risks, safe choices and body image. As the resource is delivered, the return of prepaid feedback forms will evaluate its success and will inform future projects. A poster and media campaign has also supported the educational packs and has communicated the messages to a wider audience.

Excess weight resource pack for schools

As part of the work with the School Nursing Service and the National Child Measurement Programme, Public Health has developed a resource pack which was sent to all PSHE leads in schools and the School Nurses. The packs are intended to be used by teaching staff in PSHE lessons focusing on body image, bullying and self-esteem, and also by School Nurses in their weekly drop-in sessions if pupils require support and information around weight issues. The packs are being sent to schools to coincide with the weighing and measuring of Year 6 and Year R pupils and can be used with parents as well as individual pupils or groups. The excess weight packs support the work of the tattoo and piercing packs tackling body image and teachers' highlighted issue of poor self-esteem.

Change4life Sugar Swaps Campaign

The Children's Public Health team support 'Change4life' [C4L] and promote all campaigns that are publicised across the year. Through co-operative working, our schools and Children's Centres are encouraged to sign up to C4L and promotions/information is also sent to the School Nursing Service and Health Visiting

Service. New community initiatives such as the new 'Sugar Swaps' campaign was supported for the first two weeks in January 2015 developing a display in a showcase shop window in one of the Council's most deprived areas to raise awareness of the benefits of small changes.

Kick Ash Initiative

The Public Health Team in CBC have begun to deliver a prevention programme called 'Kick Ash'. This programme is a Peer-led stop smoking programme for young people, with the aim of reducing their smoking prevalence.

The Programme has a 3 Tier format:

Tier 1: All Schools commit and sign up to the Kick Ash Stop Smoking Policy, which extends from the national stop smoking policy.

Tier 2: Middle and Upper Schools deliver the Operation Smoke Storm Programme, which is a web-based learning package demonstrating the harms of smoking, with interactive sessions targeting year 7 and 8 students.

Tier 3: Upper Schools participate in the full Kick Ash Programme, which includes training volunteer Kick Ash Mentors on Smoking Cessation, Trading Standards and Communications. Once Mentors have been trained, they lead on activities within schools and academies in promoting Kick Ash Stop Smoking, and work with both PSHE leads and School Nurses to support students who may wish to quit, and also prevent younger students to begin smoking.

Several Upper Schools have signed up to the full Tier 3 Kick Ash Programme and Kick Ash Mentors are successfully delivering the Operation Smoke Storm sessions to younger students, benefiting both tutor and student.

"You would be mad not to support this exciting and worthwhile initiative"

PSHE Lead

As the Kick Ash Programme progresses, evaluation data will demonstrate the outcomes achieved.

Smokefree Homes and Cars Project

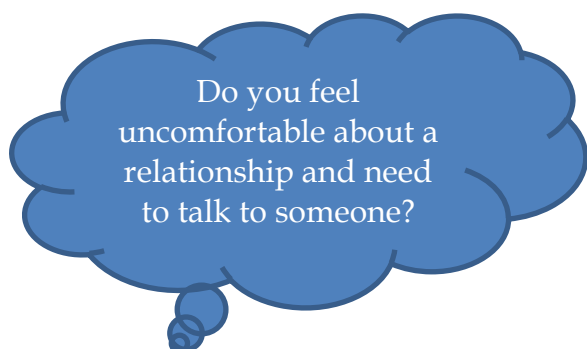
The Smokefree Homes and Cars Programme has been nationally recognised since 2007 following the introduction of the smokefree regulations and in the run up to new legislation

prohibiting smoking in cars. In Central Bedfordshire, the programme is currently being delivered by Public Health, working closely with Children Centres, Health Visitors and Community Health Assistants. All partners are trained to enable them to deliver the programme to young families, communicating the dangers of exposure and promoting the benefits of reducing exposure to second hand smoke. Families are encouraged to sign up to a promise of being smokefree at home or in the car. [New rules will come into force on 1 October 2015 making smoking in cars carrying children illegal.]

Young parents can also register online via the Central Bedfordshire website and commit to either a 3-month or 6-month pledge not to smoke in their home or car, with the aim of encouraging parents to quit smoking in the longer term.

Health and wellbeing information resource for vulnerable children and young people

Pocket health guides have been designed and distributed to all looked after children and young carers in Central Bedfordshire. The age specific key rings are designed with 5 leaves each delivering a different health message with relevant web links and telephone numbers providing appropriate information, help and support at any time. The messages cover a range of issues, including emotional wellbeing, healthy eating, smoking, alcohol and drugs, sexual health and safeguarding and are worded appropriately for the targeted age range. As an example, young people aged 16+ are prompted to access support and advice about relationship issues using specialist helplines and websites detailed on the reverse of the message.



Later in 2015, posters delivering the same age specific health messages will also be sent to

schools, colleges and community settings. Evaluations of the effectiveness and impact of the key rings will be carried out later this year.

Support for the NSPCC Childline Schools Service

Public Health are supporting the NSPCC Childline Schools Service in their delivery of an initiative for years 5/6 which aims to ensure children have an understanding of abuse in all its forms, including bullying, how to protect themselves and how to get help. Several schools have signed up for the service and with continued and wider promotion it is hoped that more schools will engage in the coming months.

Future Plans

As the new projects are implemented further plans to improve the health of CB pupils are underway.

Children's Workforce Conference

A one day partnership conference (Children's Services and Public Health) on promoting emotional wellbeing and building resilience in children and young people is planned for March 2015. Attendees from the wider children's workforce will hear presentations from academic and clinical professionals outlining the scale and importance of the issue. Specific topic areas such as drug and alcohol abuse in children, domestic violence and mental health issues in parents, online safety and teaching resilience will be covered in afternoon workshops, which will also be made available as stand alone sessions later in 2015/16.

Partnership working on Health and Educational Attainment

Research evidence shows that education and health are closely linked. So promoting the health and wellbeing of pupils and students within schools and colleges has the potential to improve their educational outcomes and their health and wellbeing outcomes.

In response to the 2014 Public Health England publication, *The Link Between Pupil Health and Wellbeing and Attainment*, and utilising data from the Central Bedfordshire SHEU survey, Public Health will be working collaboratively with the CBC School Improvement team and the School

Nursing Service to promote the document's key themes and develop a clear plan for future joint working to raise levels of attainment:

"Pupils with better health and wellbeing are likely to achieve better academically"

Public Health England 2014

The 2016 Health Related Behaviour and Perception Survey

Central Bedfordshire Public Health intends to commission the SHEU to undertake a more extensive survey in October 2015 with a focus on mental health and wellbeing. Work is underway in partnership with SHEU and local providers of mental health services to develop a targeted questionnaire with a robust promotional campaign to encourage a large number of schools to participate.

2015/16 Year 5 project

From Easter 2015, Public Health will be developing a programme in partnership with the School Nursing teams to be delivered in local schools to highlight issues around puberty, weight, self-image and self-esteem with Year 5 pupils. This is in response to the results of the health related behaviour survey and to guidelines from the National Child Measurement Programme recommending a more pro-active inclusive approach. The programme will begin in the summer term with Year 5 pupils, explaining why the NCMP takes place, how it works and what to expect after the weighing and measuring is completed and how the results will be communicated to parents. In the Autumn Term, when these pupils have moved up to Year 6, and before the weighing and measuring begins, Public Health plans to meet with parents at open evenings to explain the same process. The aim is to improve uptake of the programme, address parental concerns and provide support to families of under or

overweight children through their School Nurse and commissioned programmes.

A similar programme is also being planned for Reception year pupils and parents in 2016.

Reduction in self-harm and suicide prevention project

In response to growing concern around the number of young people self-harming, believed to be linked with an increase in cyber-bullying, Central Bedfordshire Public Health is working in partnership with Bedfordshire Police to develop a training package to be delivered in Middle and Upper schools. The training will include internet safety, advice/support and legislation aspect of self-generated images (sexting). The training will be promoted via the PHSE/SRE websites and is hoped to increase knowledge for professionals as well as for young people.

Conclusion

Schools are important settings for health promotion and prevention including their wider role in promoting pupil wellbeing. This can be achieved through an effective and high-quality PSHE and SRE programme and by ensuring that every child and young person has the right level of support to help them to maximise their full potential. When local services are informed by sound local data and can work in partnership with schools to meet needs of pupils in a holistic way, they are more effective and it is with this in mind that the project outlines above have been developed.

References

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SHEU

Schools and Students Health Education Unit

The specialist provider of reliable local survey data for schools and colleges and recognised nationally since 1977.

For more details please visit <http://sheu.org.uk>