

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**Report by Laura Mason, Chief Education Officer****Educational Services Committee: 13th December 2023**

Subject: Delivery of Health and Wellbeing (HWB) Survey**1. Purpose****1.1** The purpose of this report is:

- a) to inform Educational Services Committee of changes made to the original pupil Health and Wellbeing Survey and
- b) to seek approval to proceed.

2. Recommendations**2.1** Members of the Educational Services Committee are asked to:

- reconsider the Health and Wellbeing (HWB) survey being completed by Primary 5 to S6 pupils now that it has been adapted to take account of the concerns raised Council following the Scottish Government Census being rejected in December 2021.

3. Background

- 3.1** The HWB Census was a new local authority data collection developed by the Scottish Government. The timing of distribution was delegated to local authorities with the aim of completion by the end of academic session 2021/22. Local authorities had the ability to remove questions from the census as they saw fit. Scottish Government worked collaboratively with local authorities to ensure they each conducted their own census lawfully and legally, to share learning and best practice.
- 3.2** The HWB Census was voluntary, both for local authorities to undertake and for parents/carers and pupils to take part in. It included a range of topics covering all aspects of wellbeing using the GIRFEC indicators of Child Wellbeing domains (Safe, Healthy, Active, Nurtured, Achieving, Responsible, Respected and Included).
- 3.3** The evidence provided by the census would ensure local and national priorities could continue to be aligned. It would also support schools and education authorities to identify issues children and young people are concerned about and to tailor their learning in health and wellbeing; and their advice and support services accordingly.

3.4 Children and young people have been engaged in national data surveys for a number of years:

- SALSUS had been running since 2002, following joint surveys with England started in 1982, to provide a national picture of young peoples' behaviours regarding smoking (from 1982), drinking (from 1990) and drug use (from 1998) within the context of other lifestyle, health and social factors.
- The Health Behaviour in School aged Children (HBSC) survey has included questions on sexual health and wellbeing; alcohol consumption; smoking; and, substance use (as well as a wide range of health and wellbeing topics) since 1990. The next round of HBSC will take place between January and March 2022.

3.5 The original census contains a set of separate questionnaires, for children and young people in P5 to S6, asking age appropriate questions relevant to each stage. These questions have been developed by representatives and experts from across academia, public health, local authorities and schools. These questionnaires have also been ethically approved by independent researchers within the Scottish Government

3.6 The census includes topics that are considered to be potentially sensitive: in the S4 to S6 questions about relationships, sexual health, and substance use; from S2 onwards questions about alcohol and tobacco use; from S3 onwards questions about gambling experience.

3.7 Public reaction to the HWB Census has seen some concerns raised about the age appropriateness of some of the more probing questions, particularly around sexual activity of older school pupils.

3.8 However, although the census is a new survey there is content included which is already used in longstanding pupil health and wellbeing surveys highlighted above.

4. Main Issues

4.1 In December 2021 West Dunbartonshire Council agreed the motion that the Council was concerned with the controversial content of the Scottish Government's Health and Well Being Census. It was agreed that the school census asked our children to give details of their experience of explicit sexual acts. The Scottish Government's census was deemed to be overly intrusive and unsuitable for our children. Due to this, the Council rejected the Scottish Government's census in its current form and agreed that it was not fit for purpose. The Council agreed that pupils in West Dunbartonshire would not be issued with the survey.

4.2 The proposed new survey we are hoping to deliver in West Dunbartonshire has already been executed by some other local authorities within the West Partnership and has been adapted from the Scottish Government Census. This updated survey has been amended and the number of questions

regarding relationships and sexual health has been reduced. These questions around relationships and sexual health will be completed by children and young people in S4 to S6 only using a separate questionnaire. In addition, parents or young people themselves can choose not to participate in these separate questions but could choose to respond to the other topics. (App.1 Health and Wellbeing Survey)

4.3 Issues raised by Council in 2021 are listed below and have been addressed accordingly.

- Young people are presently compelled to enter their pupil's Scottish Candidate Number allowing them to be personally identifiable. Council respects young people's rights as established by Article 16 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as well the right to privacy and family life as laid out in Article 8 of the Human Rights Act 1998

The new survey is completely anonymous, asking for no personal information. The only information it will ask is the gender of the pupil completing the survey.

- The survey's publicly available privacy notice states information may be shared with unnamed third parties for unspecified purposes

The privacy notice will belong to WDC and will not state the above

- Once a child has participated in the survey they will have surrendered any right to access or control over their data, including asking for their data to be deleted.

The data collected will be anonymous, so the above statement will no longer be applicable.

- Concerns have been raised around teachers having to deal with any distressing reactions from pupils as a result of this census being delivered at school yet they may not have the necessary expertise and knowledge to deal with such sensitive matters.

Pupils will be given contact details of organisations that can support them if they need to following completion of the survey. There will be no analysis at individual child level and consequently there is no expectation that any members of staff will address any responses made by any child or young person. Pupils will have access to Pastoral Care staff during and following the completion of the survey if they require further support.

- All questions should be disclosed to parents/carers and young people prior to participation in order to secure and evidence their informed consent

Before the survey is completed, parents and carers will be issued with a letter explaining the purpose of the survey along with a link to access the questions. At this time, they will be asked to opt out of the survey if they do not wish their child to participate. If no response is received, it will be assumed consent has been granted. Young people over the age of 16 will be able to give their own consent. If after a parent has given consent and a pupil does not wish to participate, this will be respected and there will be no expectation for the survey to be completed.

- 4.4 Officers are of the view that the adapted survey is of value as it will provide an opportunity for our young people to reflect on and provide information about their health wellbeing and issues that are affecting them. It will also allow the best use of resources and supports to address trends in needs identified.

5. People Implications

- 5.1 There are no people implications as a direct result of this report. The proposed findings will help inform a positive impact on the wellbeing of children and young people.

6. Financial and Procurement Implications

- 6.1 There are no financial and procurement implications as a result of the implementation of the survey.

7. Risk Analysis

- 7.1 If the Council decides not to undertake this survey, we will have no local data on our children and young people's health and wellbeing and related services may not meet the needs of our children and young people.

8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 8.1 Data gathered as the result of the HWB survey would allow our children and young people to have a voice and express what issues they are concerned about in relation to their own health and wellbeing.

9. Consultation

- 9.1 We consult and engage regularly with a short life working group of education staff, West Partnership colleagues and via pupil surveys with our children and young people.
- 9.2 The Section 95 Officer and Legal Services have been consulted.

10. Strategic Assessment

- 10.1** The data gathered would be used to inform local health and wellbeing plans for our young people and local communities.

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Appendices:

App.1 Health and Wellbeing Survey

Background Papers:

Committee Paper December 2021

Wards Affected:

All Wards

