

Promoting the use of research evidence in school decision-making to improve health and wellbeing

Insights from a multi-sector partnership in Wales

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DECIPHer

Development and Evaluation of Complex Interventions for Public Health Improvement
A UKCRC Public Health Research Centre of Excellence

Overview

- Wales context for school health and wellbeing
- The School Health Research Network (SHRN)
- Some thoughts on evidence-informed decision making (EIDM) in schools

Acknowledgements

School Health Research Network

SHRN is managed by DECIPHer staff: Professor Simon Murphy (director); Joan Roberts (manager); Dr Gillian Hewitt (research associate); Cheryl Briscoe (administrator)

SHRN has previously received funding from the Medical Research Council and is currently funded by Health and Social Care Research Wales as part of the National Centre for Population Health and Wellbeing Research (NCPHWBR)

My programme of research

Co-authors include Professor Simon Murphy, Dr Adam Fletcher, Dr Rhiannon Evans & Dr Rebecca Armstrong. The project is jointly funded by ESRC and MRC PhD stipend



Population 3 million

- Health and education powers devolved to Welsh Assembly Government (WG)
- Public Health Wales (PHW)
- 22 local authorities (LAs)
- 1330 primary and 207 secondary schools (LA-controlled)



Policy recognition of schools as critical sites for health and wellbeing improvement

Welsh Network of Healthy School Schemes (WNHSS)

- Accreditation scheme, supported by coordinators who assist schools
- Built on the WHO Health Promoting Schools model

New Curriculum (2015)

- Key purpose includes helping children become healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives
- Delivered through seven areas of learning and experience including health and wellbeing

Welsh Network of Healthy School Schemes



Cynlluniau Ysgolion Iach - Rhwydwaith Cymru

Successful Futures

Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales

Professor Graham Donaldson CB
February 2015



Health and wellbeing decisions made centrally and at school level

Great! So what's the problem?

- Evidence of how best to help young people be healthy and happy, is rarely generated and used by schools in Wales
- Growing international and UK evidence base and investment
- Good intentions and received wisdoms aren't enough (Macintyre & Petticrew 2000 *JECH*)
 - Risk failure to maximise the potential of our evidence base, or worse cause harm
- Urgent need to promote evidence-informed practice within schools

The solution...



Y RHWYDWAITH YMCHWIL
IECHYD MEWN YSGOLION

SCHOOL HEALTH
RESEARCH NETWORK

www.shrn.org.uk

- Brings together key partners and initiatives that support and incentivise health and wellbeing in secondary schools (age 11 to 18)
- Aims to improve the health and wellbeing of young people by increasing the quality, quantity and relevance of school-based health improvement research in Wales.

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Multi-sector partnership



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



115 Secondary schools



CANCER
RESEARCH
UK



GIG
CYMRU
NHS
WALES

Iechyd Cyhoeddus
Cymru
Public Health
Wales

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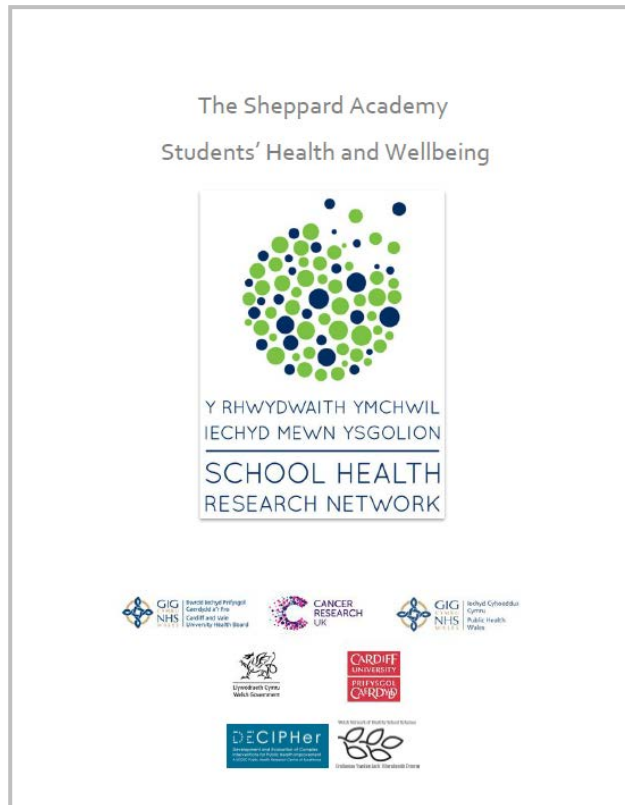
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Purpose and activities

Collaboratively **generate** research evidence on school-based health improvement and **facilitate** knowledge translation (KT)

- Data collection from schools two-yearly
 - o Self-administered student health and wellbeing reports; based on HBSC survey; tailored and fed-back
 - o Plus school environment survey
- Research-ready schools for study recruitment
- Co-producing research through ‘research idea development groups’
- Knowledge exchange activities

Student health and wellbeing reports

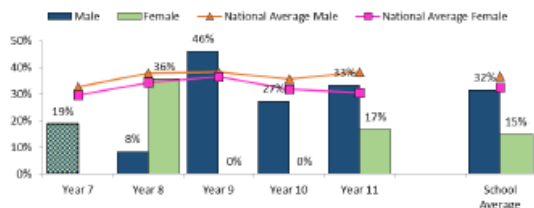


- Tailored reports of student health and wellbeing provided for each Network school
- Incentives for schools; assist health and wellbeing action planning
- Inspired by the Canadian reports produced for the School Health Action, Planning and Evaluation System (SHAPES, Propel Centre)
- Together with school environment survey they provide population data for original research

Report content

Sugary soft drinks

Fig.4 The Sheppard Academy: Students who drink sugary soft drinks once a day or more



Did you know?

A snack of a 500 ml bottle of a sugary soft drink and a chocolate bar provides over 20 teaspoons of sugar; the World Health Organization recommends that young people should eat less than 6 teaspoons a day.

Your school can make a difference...

Secondary schools in England made changes to the foods they offered, how they offered them, and their dining environments. After 15 weeks, independent observers found that year 7 and 9 students showed significantly more 'on task' behaviour in the classroom¹⁴.

Quick Facts

Research in America has found that adolescents who perceive themselves to be overweight are more than twice as likely to be overweight or obese six years later than their peers who perceive themselves to be an average weight. This was the case even if they were actually a healthy weight at baseline¹⁵.

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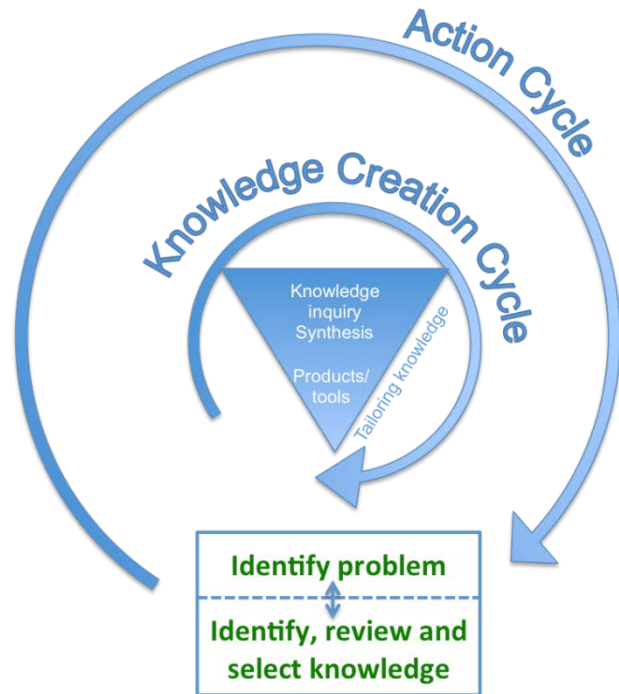
- Local data by gender and year group:
 - o Food and physical activity
 - o Wellbeing and emotional health
 - o Substance use
 - o Sex and relationships
- National averages
- Snippets of research findings
- Resources and ideas

Forums for knowledge exchange

- Advisory board
- Webinars for WNHSS staff and schools
- Annual school events



Problem solved?



Huge step forward - useful knowledge creation and problem identification

But engagement with research knowledge is a complex, multi-level problem (Dagenais et al 2012, Evi Pol)

Little known about successful knowledge translation (KT) strategies in schools to promote EIDM

Ongoing programme of research to explore these issues

What counts as real

Gut feeling, resonance and professional judgement rule

“ ‘well that feels like it helped’ ...it’s kind of what you feel about it” (Maras et al 2013, Child Youth Serv Rev)

“when I read ...I put it through the filter of my teaching experience...and if it makes sense to me from my own point, background of experience. I would put quite a bit of faith in that” (Ratcliffe et al 2004, EPSE report)

Meaning attached to research

Robotic, colonizing, nebulous, subject to misuse

” A lot of times, research is done by people who don’t spend time in classrooms and who don’t know students... I’m living in it. I have a better sense of what students need and what works with students than someone who is just looking at a bunch of numbers on a piece of paper” (Behrstock-Sherratt et al 2011, AIR)

“When I read something like this it just puts on the “boring” tapes, the eyes start to go closed because I know that they are going to talk about minutia ever more fine” (Bartels 2003, Teaching & Teacher Ed)

“My principal uses it to try to convince us...his way of telling us that what we’re doing isn’t good enough....I feel like someone is trying to force me to believe... I’m stopped from any deliberation; someone is trying to justify or rationalize a stance or perspective....lies, more lies”

(Nicholson-Goodman & Garman 2007, IJLE)

School practitioner role-identity

Intuitive ‘art’; absence of identity as evidence informed practitioner or teacher-researcher; innovativeness varies

“More than general research techniques, teaching was also an art”
(Nicholson-Goodman & Garman 2007, IJLE)

“But it's not my job, it's not part and parcel of what I'm paid to do”
(Williams 2003, Robert Gordon University)

“We [teachers] need to think its important enough to insert ourselves [into the research community]’...the first question I got was ‘What university are you affiliated with?...I felt instantly like, am I not good enough to be here?”

(Miretsky 2007, Theory Prac)

Social interactions shape meaning of research and role

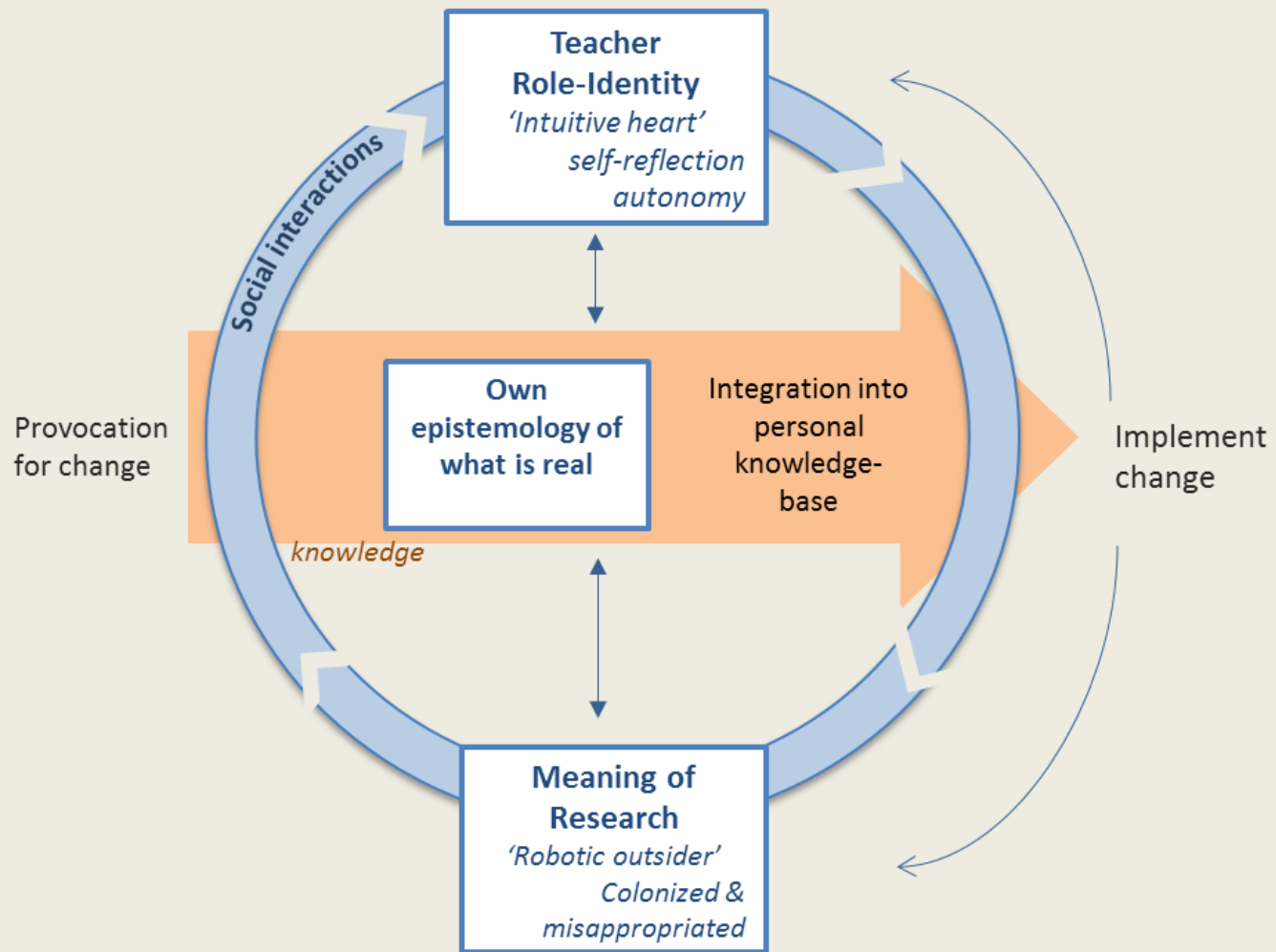
“Tell me you’re a teacher and I’ve instantly got an affinity with you and I’ve more chance of trusting in what you say. Tell me you’re an academic and I’ll need more convincing”
(Judkins et al 2014, NFER)

Teachers found opportunity to work with researchers rewarding... *“ They spent time here, they offered practical suggestions, they validated the stuff that we’d been doing as opposed to just talking at us”* (Miretsky 2007, Theory Prac)

School and wider socio-political conditions underpin everything!

- Disconnect between research and practice communities
- Time, competing priorities, and accountability limit innovation & risk taking
- Evidence-informed culture at CPD and policy level
- Researcher context – e.g. publish or perish; expert ego

]Connection between professional discourses-[



School and socio-political context

Insights from a multi-sector partnership

SHRN builds a critical infrastructure for school-based EIDM:

- Proactive and reactive to meet knowledge needs at multiple levels
- Helps to close gap between communities
- Dedicated and 'legitimate' network manager vital
- Its challenging – e.g. school capacity to engage, own capacity to support evaluation of home grown ideas

Some thoughts & provocations

What should we be translating, for what purpose and impact?

And if evidence goes against experiential knowledge & norms?

How can we address challenges and harness existing properties of the school system? Who needs to change?

Theorised knowledge translation interventions are needed

- Meaningful research exchange, recognising experiential knowledge and values
- 'Legitimate' knowledge brokers
- Positive experiences
- Focus on translation into classroom reality or research literacy?

KT intervention development research underway (PROSPERO 2016:CRD42016025316)