



Net4health information sheet

An invitation to participate in a SHINE affiliate project: Net4Health

Between 1987 and 2006, researchers studied the factors that best accounted for declining adolescent mental health in 20 schools in the West of Scotland. From those studies, [findings](#) revealed that arguments with parents, school disengagement, worry about school, and for young women, worry about family relationships were significant factors. Now, 16 years later, **Net4Health** will extend these earlier studies to explore which factors are most strongly related to adolescent mental health today.

School closures during lockdown highlighted how essential social relationships are for individual wellbeing. Net4Health is a study of how social relationships influence health and wellbeing in secondary schools. Loss of social interaction can affect feelings of loneliness, wellbeing, positive social development, and experience of learning. In the post-pandemic context of a return to school; this project will look more closely at the various ways social connections influence health in schools.

There are many different mechanisms through which friendships, emotional support, and strained relationships may affect wellbeing, social development, health risk behaviours and educational aspirations. Some peer groups may act to promote healthy or unhealthy behaviours among others in the group, and some peer groups may respond positively to health promotion efforts while others do not.

The whole school approach to health improvement can be enhanced with a better understanding of the relational mechanisms influencing health (e.g. peer influence, social learning, or social exclusion) combined with better data on structure and collective behaviour within and between peer friendship groups (e.g. the “sporty crowd”, the “rebels”, and the extent of inter-group conflict).

The Net4Health project aims to recruit over 6,000 young people from 22 schools in Scotland’s central belt. The study will involve:

- An online survey for all pupils in S2 and S4 in Autumn 2022
- A second survey for the same pupils in Autumn 2023
- Two schools can also volunteer for additional sub-studies.
 - Online or in person interviews focussing on social and emotional support and wellbeing. 20 pupils from S2 and 20 from S4.
 - A movement study: pupils wear physical activity, movement, and sleep monitors for a week after the survey.

All participating schools will receive a report containing an overview of key health indicators, as well as information on how health varies between peer groups and the implications for health improvement initiatives in the school.

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Schools will be selected to participate according to school size, free school meal eligibility and urbanicity-rurality of the schools. We will be contacting schools to invite them to take part, or you can register your interest as a potential recruitment site.

To support school participation, we will attend with a fieldwork team to help with administering the survey, getting pupils logged on and answering questions, so a single teacher for the exam hall would be sufficient to cover the activity. The survey can be completed in a single period, so the fieldwork team would attend for one day to survey S2 before lunch and S4 after lunch. Template power point slides can be provided to teachers in advance to facilitate the explanation to young people and preparation for the fieldwork visit. These could be delivered in a PSE lesson.

To find out more about the study, contact the SHINE team or the Net4Health Principal Investigator Mark McCann Mark.McCann@Glasgow.ac.uk

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