The role of research in the promotion of student health and well being in Wales

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Aims

• Challenges in generating evidence for policy and practice to improve student health
• Innovation in Wales: Public Health Improvement Research Network
• PHIRN research studies in HE and FE and limitations
• Education research network development and future opportunities for HE and FE
Can we generate and translate useful evidence?

- Separation of research community from policy/practice
- Practice vs. research timelines
- Access, use, impact of research evidence limited
- Pre-existing beliefs and underlying values
- Competing priorities
- Multidisciplinary, multi-sectoral and outside NHS
- Compare to clinical research practice infrastructure (Pettigrew et al 2004)

**Solution = Transdisciplinary action research networks (HCRW)**

- School Health Research Network (2013)
  - “Engages policy, practice and public partners through cycle of problem identification, development, research, implementation” (Stokols, 2006)
Strategies and systems

• Strategic engagement and partnerships with key organisations
• Transdisciplinary capacity development
• Evidence for Policy Seminar Series
• PHIRN Website
  – Membership
  – Database of members, fortnightly email (473 members)

• Research Development Group management and support
Knowledge Exchange Cycle

- Front line innovation
- Coproduction
- Context understanding
- Implementation and sustainability

Practice / Policy

Evidence gaps
Research questions

Synthesis and translation

Evidence generation
Research

Research funding
Intervention development
Piloting and evaluation
Evidence generation
Case-study 1: Pilot trial a smoking prevention intervention in further education settings (Filter)

- **Aim:** to prevent smoking uptake by restricting the sale of tobacco to under-18s in local shops, implementing tobacco-free campus policies, training FE staff to deliver smoke-free messages, publicising The Filter youth project’s online advice and support services, and providing educational youth work activities.
- **Results:** Not delivered as planned with no implementation of some community- and college-level components,
- **Staff training and youth work reached** (< 10% of all eligible staff and students), with low levels of acceptability reported.
- **Conclusion:** FE settings were not a supportive environment for smoking prevention activities because of their non-interventionist institutional cultures promoting personal responsibility.
- **Weaknesses** in intervention management and staff turnover also limited implementation. (Fletcher et al, 2017 NIHR)
Case-study 3: A social norms campaign to reduce alcohol consumption in 4 Welsh Universities

- **Aim:** Welsh Government/Drinkaware intervention and university toolkit in universities in Wales 2011. Premise that perceptions of social norms influences behaviour. Seeks to correct misperceptions through the dissemination of information on the actual norms in a population.
- **50 residence halls in 4 universities in Wales in pilot trial**
- **Results:** Intervention messages were rated as credible and relevant by half of students, though few felt they would influence their behaviour, with lighter drinkers more likely to perceive messages as credible.
- **Conclusion:** Intervention homeopathic. Need for a more complex phased intervention addressing wider levels of influence identified in intervention mapping. Moore et al (2013) *Substance Abuse Treatment*, Prevention and Policy
Current study: SaFE (Safe Sex and Healthy Relationships in Further Education) Intervention development

• Initial results: Cross-sectional self-report data were collected from 1751 students aged 16–19 at six FE settings in England and Wales.
• Among females, 46.1% experienced controlling behaviours and 31.6% threatening behaviours; 49.9% of males experienced controlling behaviours, 27.1% threatening behaviours and 5.8% online sexual violence.
• The high prevalence, absence of gender differences suggests dating relationship violence may be becoming normalized

• Current analysis of focus group data on intervention approaches to (1) a student-led action group to lead institutional-level change; (2) sexual health services delivered on site; (3) staff training; and (4) sex and relationships education (SRE).

Hewitt et al (2017) *Research for All*

http://www.shrn.org.uk/
Enhanced Transdisciplinary network

- Formal partnership – Welsh Government (Health/Education), PHW WNHSS. Strategic relationships with Estyn, Children's Commissioner, Curriculum Review leads
- Investment from Cabinet Secretaries for Education and Health
- Data infrastructure to provide timely and robust health and wellbeing data for national, regional and local stakeholders. Linked to school routine data (health to attainment outcomes)
- Every secondary school a member (120,000 pupils) biannual pupil/school survey and routine data
- Co-produce high quality school-based health improvement research for Wales and beyond – 38 studies supported
- Build capacity for evidence-informed practice to facilitate translation
- Increase the quality, quantity and relevance of research
School and Regional level data to inform local action/evaluation and generate research ideas

Infrastructure to support natural experiments (Future Generations, Violence and Women, Curriculum Review)

Population level data on trends, health need planning and international comparison

Practice level data to support WNHSS

Infrastructure to support new studies (recruitment, sampling, baseline/context data)

Pupil Survey

School Survey
System integration and adoption

‘It is enormously beneficial for us to get a raft of data which can be considered by staff, pupils and external agencies to analyse and organise programmes accordingly.’

*Headteacher*

‘Privileged – glad that the school is on board and supportive. Priority to see/hear about new initiatives and ideas that will fit into healthy schools.’ *In-school Healthy Schools Coordinator*

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‘Being a member of SHRN gives us as a school, access to up to date and relevant research, support and information.’ *Assistant Head*

When working within a system that has become so data driven it is great to be part of a like-minded network with wellbeing at the forefront.’ *Assistant Head*
Future opportunities

• Educational network development and life course perspective
• Integration and standardisation of HE and FE routine data
• Comparative institutional context data collection
• Infrastructure for identification of needs and context influences
• Institutional feedback reports
• Policy planning, implementation and monitoring infrastructure
• Infrastructure for low cost research studies and natural experiments
• Strengthening of research/practice partnerships through reciprocal outputs