

## Health and Wellbeing Census Topics:

### Contents

1. Why are we having a survey?.....	1
2. Alcohol: .....	3
3. Area factors:.....	3
4. Aspirations and career planning:.....	3
5. Attitudes to school:.....	4
6. Bullying others: .....	4
7. Caring Responsibilities:.....	5
8. Drug Use.....	5
9. Eating Behaviours: .....	5
10. Experience of Bullying.....	6
11. Family relationships.....	6
12. Feeling Hungry: .....	7
13. Gambling.....	7
14. General health and Long term health conditions .....	7
15. General wellbeing (Life Satisfaction):.....	8
16. Involvement in Decision-making: .....	8
17. Mental health: .....	8
18. Peer Relationships:.....	9
19. Physical activity: .....	9
20. Play.....	10
21. Positive attitudes.....	10
22. Pressure of schoolwork:.....	10
23. Resilience: .....	10
24. Sedentary behaviour:.....	11
25. Self-perception (body image) .....	11
26. Sexual health and relationships.....	11
27. Sleep.....	12
28. Smoking .....	12
29. Social media and online experience:.....	12

### 1. Why are we having a survey?

Children and young people's wellbeing is important for their healthy development and long-term outcomes into adulthood. Schools have a central role to play in enabling their pupils to be resilient and to support good mental health and wellbeing. The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, which includes key parts of the

Getting it Right for Every Child approach (GIRFEC), defines Child Wellbeing in terms of 8 indicators of wellbeing: Safe, Healthy, Active, Nurtured, Achieving, Respected, Responsible and Included (known as SHANARRI ). This recognises that children's well-being is multi-faceted and that it is important to measure it holistically across all the various domains that are relevant to a child's life. Different wellbeing outcomes may also act as drivers of other aspects of wellbeing, either at the same time or in the longer term. Not only is positive wellbeing an important outcome in and of itself, it also increases children and young people's resilience, enabling them to achieve and maintain positive wellbeing even in adverse conditions or circumstances.

Evidence reviews into drivers of child health and wellbeing distinguish between 'protective factors' that eliminate risk or facilitate resilience, and have a positive impact on outcomes; and 'risk factors' that cause negative outcomes. Many outcomes are interrelated and will also be risk factors or contributors to other outcomes. Additionally, young people who experience one negative outcome are more likely to experience others, and these often compound each other.

The Scottish Government use the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as a framework to ensure that children's rights are considered whenever decisions are taken, and to help provide every child with a good start in life and a safe, healthy and happy childhood. It forms the basis of the GIRFEC national approach for supporting children.

The Scottish Government and COSLA, working with a range of partners and stakeholders, developed a set of public health priorities for the whole system. Scotland's Public Health Priorities (2018) set out six key priorities, which are inter-related and interdependent, reflecting the complexity of Scotland's health challenges and the effort needed nationally, regionally and locally to make a difference. The priorities are consistent with local community planning priorities and Local Outcome Improvement Plans ( LOIPs). Priority 2: A Scotland where we flourish in our early years addresses the health and wellbeing issues of children and young people, and recognising, respecting and promoting their rights is essential to achieving this outcome. This priority places particular emphasis on our early years, recognising the impact that early childhood poverty, disability and adverse childhood experiences can have on health outcomes throughout a person's life.

As part of the Getting it Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) approach, services working with children and young people, and those who care for them, must play a part in promoting, supporting and safeguarding child wellbeing; this also includes schools. Health and wellbeing is one of the eight curricular areas in the Curriculum for Excellence and is one of the three core areas which are the responsibility of all staff. Educational settings provide opportunities for sustained participation in activities that develop mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing. It is the Scottish Government's aspiration that at school all children and young people learn about health and wellbeing to ensure they acquire the skills to live healthy, happy lives.

## **2. Alcohol:**

Children and young people are particularly vulnerable to the effects of alcohol. The earlier a young person begins to drink alcohol, the more likely they are to drink in ways that can be risky later in life. Underage drinking can cause short and long term harm to health. It is also linked to undertaking risky behaviour such as unsafe sex, anti-social behaviour, getting in trouble with the police, criminal behaviour as well as poorer educational outcomes.

Central to all Scottish Government policies is to protect children from harm. The Scottish Government Alcohol Framework (2018) aims to prevent underage drinking by providing education in schools and calling for restrictions on marketing and advertising on television.

We are asking questions on alcohol consumption to inform progress towards local and national policies to reduce the harms from drinking among children and young people. It will inform policy and practice by providing information on patterns of behaviour in relation to drinking; sources of alcohol; and contextual information on the relationship between alcohol use and other lifestyle, health and social factors.

## **3. Area factors:**

The neighbourhood where we live has been linked to a range of health issues and health behaviours including diet, physical activity, quality of life, and wellbeing. Neighbourhood-level factors have also been shown to be important to children's mental health and development.

The Scottish Government recognises the importance of the neighbourhood environment on the health of young people, including both the social and the physical environment. Living in "vibrant, healthy and safe places and communities" is the first of six public health priorities in Scotland. This encompasses aspirations to improve local greenspace and create safe places that nurture health. The Scottish Government's Active Scotland Outcomes Framework also contains outcomes relating to the neighbourhood including improving the infrastructure of both the built and natural environment to enable physical activity. It also includes indicators on measuring the perceived safety of the community for play and walking around.

## **4. Aspirations and career planning:**

Academic attainment is an important educational outcome and is strongly linked to health and wellbeing. Research shows that adolescents who aspire to go to university are significantly more likely to adopt healthy behaviours such as exercise and eating well and less likely to be involved in risk behaviours such as smoking, taking drugs or drinking alcohol, regardless of their social background.

Educational settings provide opportunities for sustained participation in activities that develop mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing. It is the Scottish Government's aspiration that at school all children and young people learn about health and wellbeing to ensure they acquire the skills to live healthy, happy lives.

As part of the Getting it Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) approach, services working with children and young people, and those who care for them, must play a part in promoting, supporting and safeguarding child wellbeing; this also includes schools.

## **5. Attitudes to school:**

Children and young people spend a significant amount of time in school and the school environment can positively influence adolescent health and wellbeing, and potentially mitigate some negative effects of other social factors.

The extent to which pupils feel accepted, respected, included, cared for and supported by people in the school environment, both as an individual and in terms of their learning, is an important determinant of adolescent mental health. Various aspects of school life impact on children's overall life satisfaction. A sense of belonging to school has also been associated with increased academic motivation, participation and school engagement.

School can also be a source of stress, worry and unhappiness for children and young people. For example, young people who feel under pressure to perform well academically are more likely to report depressive symptoms and lower life satisfaction.

Health and wellbeing is one of the eight curricular areas in the Curriculum for Excellence and is one of the three core areas which are the responsibility of all staff. Educational settings provide opportunities for sustained participation in activities that develop mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing. It is the Scottish Government's aspiration that at school all children and young people learn about health and wellbeing to ensure they acquire the skills to live healthy, happy lives.

Schools have an important role to play in promoting mental wellbeing and in identifying and providing initial support for children and young people who are experiencing mental ill-health. The Curriculum for Excellence states it is important that children and young people feel that they can share their anxieties with an appropriate individual who has the skills, rapport, responsibility and the time to listen and to help, or can identify appropriate sources of support.

## **6. Bullying others** (there is a separate section covering Experiences of Being Bullied):

Bullying can occur across all life-stages but it can be particularly problematic for children and adolescents affected. It has been linked to many short and long-term negative outcomes: for example, adolescent victims of bullying show reduced attendance and performance at school, poor social adjustment, increased medicine use, increased physical injury and higher levels of both physical and psychological health problems. Both bullies and victims tend to report low levels of attachment to, and engagement with, their school.

For children and young people to thrive and achieve their full potential, they need environments that are safe, nurturing, respectful and free from fear, abuse and discrimination. The Scottish Government is committed to tackling and eradicating bullying for children and adolescents in Scotland. The Scottish Government National

Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People, "Respect for All" provides a holistic framework for adults working with children and adolescents to address all aspects of bullying. Schools are an important place to address bullying and discrimination through anti-bullying and equality policies as well as wider whole school approaches.

### **7. Caring Responsibilities:**

Being a young carer tends to be associated with poorer health and well-being. This is true for self-reported health, long term conditions or disabilities and mental health conditions. Caring may adversely affect a young person's education. Schools therefore have an important role in helping to support young carers, and are a potentially valuable avenue for support.

### **8. Substance Use**

It is a Scottish public health priority to reduce the harm from drugs. The Scottish Government strategy, "Rights, Respect and Recovery" (2018), is aimed at improving the nation's health by preventing and reducing alcohol and drug use, harm and related deaths. It emphasises prevention and early intervention for young people and for those most at risk of becoming addicted to alcohol or drugs. The strategy is delivered in partnership with Scotland's 31 Alcohol and Drug Partnerships (ADPs), including health boards, local authorities, police and voluntary agencies.

There is an ambitious programme for alcohol and drug education currently in place to ensure that all children and young people in Scotland have credible and accessible information and advice on drugs. The Scottish Government has implemented health and wellbeing learning outcomes through Curriculum for Excellence, which includes specific emphasis on substance use. Learning in this area is aimed at promoting confidence, independent thinking and positive attitudes. It also aims to promote risk and resilience management skills in children and young people that equip them to make positive lifestyle choices.

### **9. Eating Behaviours:**

Healthy eating is essential for good health and wellbeing. Adolescence is a key period because many healthy eating habits that are established during the adolescent years are maintained into adulthood.

Specifically within diet measures, fruit and vegetable consumption has been identified as a protective measure against a large number of health issues including cancer, heart disease and diabetes. Breakfast consumption is widely seen as an important component of a healthy diet and lifestyle, and can positively impact on children's health and well-being and their educational outcomes, while skipping breakfast is associated with increased snacking. Common snack foods amongst children include sugary drinks, crisps and sweets, which in turn are associated with increased risk of dental cavities and excess body weight. Unhealthy eating behaviour has also been shown to be associated with low mood, depression, anxiety and stress in adolescents.

Regularly eating together as a family during childhood has been linked to many benefits related to eating habits and emotional well-being in childhood and later in life. Family meals encourage regularity in eating patterns, which is associated with

both better health and wellbeing, and also reduced risk of unhealthy weight control methods.

A number of national initiatives have been developed to support the promotion of healthy eating across Scotland:

- The 'Supporting Healthy Choices' framework works with partners to create a healthier food environment for consumers to encourage healthier choices and support sustained health behaviour change.
- 'Beyond the School Gate' provides information and guidance for local authorities, schools, retailers and caterers to help them improve the food environment around schools.
- The Scottish Government 'A Healthier Future: Scotland's Diet & Healthy Weight Delivery Plan' promotes healthy weight and physical wellbeing in the Scottish population. The delivery plan is committed to encouraging young people to lead change and action on healthy eating in line with their rights and ambitions to lead healthy and active lives.

## **10. Experience of Bullying**

Bullying can occur across all life-stages but it can be particularly problematic for children and adolescents affected. It has been linked to many short and long-term negative outcomes: for example, adolescent victims of bullying show reduced attendance and performance at school, poor social adjustment, increased medicine use, increased physical injury and higher levels of both physical and psychological health problems. Both bullies and victims tend to report low levels of attachment to, and engagement with, their school.

Schools are an important place to address bullying and discrimination through anti-bullying and equality policies as well as wider whole school approaches.

The Scottish Government is committed to tackling and eradicating bullying for children and adolescents in Scotland. In 2017, the Scottish Government introduced "Respect for All", a national approach to anti-bullying. It provides a holistic framework for adults working with children and adolescents to address all aspects of bullying and recognises that for adolescents to thrive and achieve their full potential, they need environments that are safe, nurturing, respectful and free from fear, abuse and discrimination.

## **11. Family relationships**

The home life of children and young people has a major influence on their health and health behaviours. Family relationships are critical to children's health and development and can affect their future wellbeing.

Scottish Government focus on promoting positive relationships between parents and adolescents is set out in:

- The Scottish Action Framework: Delivering a Healthy Future emphasises the important role the family plays in the healthy development of adolescents.

- The National Parenting Strategy reiterates the importance of the family on adolescent health and health outcomes and focuses on promoting positive parent-child relationships.
- The Scottish Government has committed to supporting families through the Learning Together: National Action Plan on Parental Involvement, Engagement, Family Learning and Learning at Home 2018–2021 which sets out a vision for parental involvement and engagement and advocates for strategies that encourage active engagement in adolescents' learning and daily activities.

## **12. Feeling Hungry:**

Healthy eating is essential for good health and wellbeing. Where young people live and their socio-economic status can affect eating behaviours. For example, research has shown that children living in rural areas have healthier eating habits compared to those living in urban centres, and adolescents from more affluent families also tend to report better eating habits.

The Scottish Government have committed to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals which include Ending Hunger. Scottish Government takes a human rights approach to tackling food insecurity founded on principles of dignity and respect as part of the overall approach to tackle inequalities and poverty. Scottish Government recognise that some households are impacted disproportionately by barriers to accessing food and that different households have different food needs and are clear that no one should go hungry or have to rely on emergency food aid in Scotland.

## **13. Gambling**

Gambling behaviour is increasingly a subject of public health and policy interest. Adolescent risk behaviours often cluster - there is an association between behaviours such as anti-social behaviour, substance use and risky sexual behaviour. Risk taking in early adolescence is linked to greater risk-taking behaviours in later adolescence.

The Gambling Act 2005 is underpinned by three licensing objectives, including protecting children and other vulnerable people from being harmed or exploited by gambling.

## **14. General health and Long term health conditions**

Numerous factors across different areas of children and young people's lives contribute to mental health and wellbeing, including good general health. Self-assessed general health is often a reflection of the presence or absence of long-term conditions, both physical and mental.

As well as potentially having a negative impact on their educational outcomes, long-term medical conditions can also affect young people's social behaviour at school. Evidence shows those with a long term illness or disability had lower levels of wellbeing than those who did not. COVID-19 related evidence highlights declines in mental health and wellbeing of range of equalities groups, including children with a long-term condition or disability.

The Scottish Government public health priorities (June 2018) includes initiatives to improve outcomes and reduce inequalities for long-term health conditions as well as addressing inequities in access to treatment across the country.

### **15. General wellbeing (Life Satisfaction):**

Mental wellbeing is one of the Scottish Government's six public health priorities and is defined as: "... both feeling good and functioning effectively, maintaining positive relationships and living a life that has a sense of purpose". Poor mental wellbeing during adolescence can lead to difficulties in relationships with others, poorer engagement with school and lower confidence. High life satisfaction amongst children and young people has been linked to enhanced coping, self-esteem, positive self-concept and purpose in life as well as reduced risk of harmful behaviours such as drug or alcohol use. Young people with high subjective wellbeing have more favourable academic, social and physical health outcomes. Measures of life satisfaction are a more general indicator of young people's mental wellbeing.

One of the four key areas of the Scottish Government Mental Health Strategy (2017–2027) is to focus on prevention and early intervention. The strategy recognises the role that education plays in this and the link between educational attainment and achievement and wellbeing. A Children and Young People's Mental Health Taskforce published a series of recommendations for the Scottish Government and COSLA to improve how children's mental health services are organised, commissioned and provided. Amongst other aspects, it focuses on a whole system approach as well as early intervention.

### **16. Involvement in Decision-making:**

Positive relationships between young people and their families, as well as their teachers, are a crucial for young people's health and wellbeing. Relationships with any services young people use are also important. Putting children at the centre is fundamental to the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child - when adults are making decisions that affect children, children have the right to say what they think should happen and have their opinions taken into account. Consultation with children and young people has highlighted the importance of being respected and seen as individuals, within the home, schools, the community and by government. However, children and young people report often feeling looked down on or stigmatised, and say that this is one of the major issues affecting their confidence, wellbeing and potentially life outcomes.

One aspect of a positive relationship is that the young person feels listened to and recognises that their views are valued, through involvement in decisions about their lives. Where young people feel like they aren't listened to this can lead to disaffection and potentially withdrawal from personal relationships, school and services, which affects their wider health and wellbeing.

### **17. Mental health:**

Mental wellbeing is one of the Scottish Government's six public health priorities and is defined as: "... both feeling good and functioning effectively, maintaining positive relationships and living a life that has a sense of purpose". Together with physical health, mental wellbeing is a central aspect of overall wellbeing.



Many factors influence mental health and wellbeing, such as diet, physical activity, sleep, substance use, social relationships and school experience. In terms of promoting wellbeing, positive relationships with family, friends and school staff are linked with health and wellbeing during adolescence. Research has also found that sleep and eating behaviours are linked to adolescent wellbeing. Poor mental wellbeing during adolescence can lead to difficulties in relationships with others, poorer engagement with school and lower confidence.

The Scottish Government Mental Health Strategy sets out the vision to improve mental health in Scotland. One of the four key areas of the strategy is on prevention and early intervention, which outlines the ambition that every child and young person should have appropriate access to emotional and mental wellbeing support in school. The strategy recognises the role that education plays in this and the link between educational attainment and achievement and wellbeing. A Children and Young People's Mental Health Taskforce published a series of recommendations for the Scottish Government and COSLA to improve how children's mental health services are organised, commissioned and provided. It includes a focus on a whole system approach as well as early intervention.

#### **18. Peer Relationships:**

Peer relationships become increasingly important during adolescence and support from peers can help young people cope with changes in their bodies, emotions, social relationships and school environment. Social support from peers has been linked with fewer negative mental health outcomes. School friendships, including those developed through extracurricular activities, may also increase educational engagement and lead to higher educational aspirations.

Peers may also have a negative influence in terms of spreading negative attitudes towards school and school work. Some peer groups may also encourage risky health behaviours, such as early onset of alcohol consumption and binge-drinking, smoking, drug use, risky sexual behaviour, eating disorders and snacking and sugary drink consumption.

An important aspect of school is the support provided by peers and friends. Greater connections with school peers is associated with better subjective wellbeing and mental health. In addition, peer acceptance is related to liking school and school engagement while being rejected by one's peers is related to disengagement from school, lower school achievement, aspiration and social participation.

#### **19. Physical activity:**

Physical activity is an important part of a healthy lifestyle. Young people's participation in physical activity is associated with improved physical and mental health. Being active improves psychological wellbeing, boosts self-esteem, plays an important role in maintaining a healthy weight and improves mood and sleep quality. There is strong evidence that intervention in the early years, including through play, improves health and cognitive development. Exercise and participation in sport can have the additional benefits of increasing resilience, feelings of achievement and belonging to a group and may prevent young people from participating in risky behaviours.

The Scottish Government's Active Scotland Outcomes Framework sets out a vision for a more active Scotland. A key outcome is to ensure that all children and young people in Scotland develop the physical confidence and competence required for a foundation of lifelong participation in physical activity and sport. The Framework is supported by Scotland's Physical Activity Delivery Plan 'A More Active Scotland' along with other national strategies including 'Let's Get Scotland Walking' and 'Raising the Bar'. Scottish Government also support initiatives like Active Schools and the Daily Mile.

## **20. Play**

One important link between neighbourhood environment and health outcomes is the availability of play areas and greenspace, which provide opportunities to be physically active. Young people themselves have indicated that open spaces for leisure are a prerequisite for health and wellbeing.

Evidence demonstrates a favourable association between children's use of greenspace and their emotional and behavioural wellbeing. The Scottish Government recognises the importance of the neighbourhood environment on the health of young people, including both the social and the physical environment. Living in "vibrant, healthy and safe places and communities" is the first of six public health priorities in Scotland. The Scottish Government's Active Scotland Outcomes Framework includes indicators on measuring the perceived safety of the community for play and walking around.

## **21. Positive attitudes**

Participation in activities such as clubs, groups and volunteering can have positive benefits for young people such as new experiences, improved peer relationships, exposure to role models and a feeling of belonging to a community. Participation in positive activities has been shown to improve psychological wellbeing; self-perception and self-esteem; and skills development. Volunteering in particular also has wider benefits, strengthening community cohesion and public services, which in turn act as protective factors for young people's health and wellbeing.

## **22. Pressure of schoolwork:**

Consultation with young people has shown that time to relax and participate in hobbies is an important factor for them, and that in some cases pressures from homework can cause stress and worry. Young people who feel under pressure to perform well academically are more likely to report depressive symptoms and lower life satisfaction. For younger adolescents experiencing high stress school environments, increased academic expectations have been associated with increased school-related stress which in turn may impede academic achievement later on.

As part of the Getting it Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) approach, services working with children and young people, and those who care for them, must play a part in promoting, supporting and safeguarding child wellbeing; this also includes schools.

## **23. Resilience:**

Children and young people develop resilience through having a stable and committed relationship with a supportive trusted adult (who may or may not be a

parent). Children and young people with greater levels of resilience are better able to manage stress. When children and young people are supported to find ways to navigate these stressors, it helps to facilitate good mental health and wellbeing. Having a trusted adult outside the home they can talk to about problems and feelings, and feeling optimistic and believing things will turn out alright are factors which enhance children and young people's resilience.

Resilience has been associated with better academic performance and behaviour and, longer-term, is associated with greater life opportunities (including employment and satisfying relationships).

#### **24. Sedentary behaviour:**

Sedentary behaviour refers to participation in low energy activities requiring minimal physical movement. Contrary to what might be expected, levels of sedentary behaviour are not strongly correlated with how active a young person is, and time spent being sedentary ( e.g. watching television or playing computer games) does not necessarily displace time spent engaging in physical activity. Sedentary behaviours, independently of lack of participation in physical activity, are associated with higher levels of obesity, as well as negative dietary behaviours such as consumption of sugary drinks and energy-dense snacks. They are also associated with poorer mental health.

The Scottish Government's vision for a more active Scotland is set out in the Active Scotland Outcomes Framework. A key outcome is to ensure that all children and young people in Scotland develop the physical confidence and competence required for a foundation of lifelong participation in physical activity and sport. The Framework is supported by Scotland's Physical Activity Delivery Plan 'A More Active Scotland' along with other national strategies including 'Let's Get Scotland Walking' and 'Raising the Bar'.

#### **25. Self-perception (body image)**

In young people, body dissatisfaction has been linked to risk-taking behaviours and mental health problems. Poor body image may also prevent young people from engaging in healthy behaviours, and may also be less likely to take part in physical activity. Among adolescents, research has found that those with greater body appreciation are less likely to diet or use alcohol or cigarettes.

The National Framework and Improvement plan is designed to help deliver both excellence and equity in education and one of the four key priorities of this framework is to improve children and young people's health and wellbeing. This work is anchored in the long-standing national approach of Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) which promotes the eight SHANARRI wellbeing outcomes (Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible, Included). All services working with children and young people, and those who care for them, must play their part to promote, support and safeguard children and young people's wellbeing.

#### **26. Sexual health and relationships**

Sexual health and wellbeing is an important aspect of the physical and emotional wellbeing of individuals. While teenage relationships can be positive and healthy, it is

important that adolescents understand the concept of fully informed consent as a basis for any sexual relationship in order to reduce vulnerability to sexual exploitation.

In September 2015, the Scottish Government published the Sexual Health and Blood Borne Virus Framework 2015–2020 update. It reported on the progress made since the original Framework published in 2011 which brought together policy on sexual health and wellbeing, HIV and viral hepatitis for the first time. The Scottish Government strategy “Pregnancy and Parenthood in Young People (2016–2026)” sets out actions on pregnancy information and advice, and on mental health of teenage mothers.

## **27. Sleep**

Sleep is crucial to both physical and mental health and wellbeing. Sleep is now widely recognised as fundamental to the general health and wellbeing of everyone. But it’s especially important for children and teenagers – research has linked lack of sleep and poor sleep-quality to impaired learning, obesity, depression and many other mental health conditions. There are strong indications that sleep deprivation affects memory consolidation and, as a result, the ability to retain information, which affects children and young people’s learning outcomes.

NHS guidelines recommend adolescents get a minimum of 8 to 9 hours of good sleep on a school night. Sleep Scotland is a national charity which provides schools with the Sound Sleep education programme. This programme aims to raise awareness in schools of the importance of sleep for health and wellbeing, and helps pupils implement positive sleep habits in their routines

## **28. Smoking**

Tobacco smoking is a major public health problem. The short-term health consequences to young people of smoking include respiratory and non-respiratory effects, nicotine addiction and associated risk of other drug use. There are concerns that vaping may undermine recent declines in smoking behaviour and act as a gateway to cigarette smoking. The Scottish Government policy is that e-cigarettes should not be used by children since they are highly addictive and they are only recommended for adults as a way to assist smoking cessation. The Scottish Government has therefore banned the sale of vaping devices to those under the age of 18 and, for other people, the purchase of them for under 18s.

Despite recent declines in smoking in Scotland, it is still a priority area for public health action. In 2018, the Scottish Government published, “Raising Scotland’s tobacco-free generation: our tobacco control action plan 2018”. This plan builds on The Tobacco Control Strategy published in 2013 that aims to reduce overall smoking prevalence to 5% by 2034 with the aim that those born in 2013 will be part of the first tobacco free generation when they turn 21 years old. Since 2013, the Scottish Government has also implemented a number of tobacco control measures, including, reducing the visibility of cigarettes and tobacco products from retail, ending the sale of cigarettes from vending machines, banning smoking in a car with a child under the age of 18, and introducing plain packaging for all cigarettes on sale.

## **29. Social media and online experience:**

Digital technology now plays an increasingly important role in children and young people's lives. Using social media can create a sense of social support, connectedness and positive interaction, which can boost mental health. It can provide easier access to informal and formal support that is available at different times of the day, and it provides a platform on which to be creative and have fun.

But for others, using social media can become compulsive and fuel unhealthy comparisons. It can expose them to bullying and see them becoming more isolated, which can lead to their mental health deteriorating. Excessive use of digital media has been associated with negative behaviours, disrupted sleep, and some studies that suggest time spent on social media is linked to frequency of appearance-related comparisons and peer competition, which may be linked to body dissatisfaction and mental health.

In 2013, the Scottish Government set out a strategy to provide schools and local authorities with advice on how to develop policies to encourage safe and responsible use of personal mobile technology in schools. It reiterated that policies should be designed to protect staff, children and young people from harassment and abuse which can arise from the misuse of technology. The strategy encouraged the promotion of digital citizenship, moving beyond compliant behaviour and involving a commitment to responsible behaviour. It suggested that engaging the whole school community – staff, pupils and parents – in policy development was the most effective means of ensuring engagement with, and commitment to, the policy. To date, action has been taken across a number of programmes and settings to support safe and responsible use of personal mobile technology in school and beyond including; 360 Degree Safe, Respectme, Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre, Think U Know, Childline, and Positive Relationships and Behaviour.