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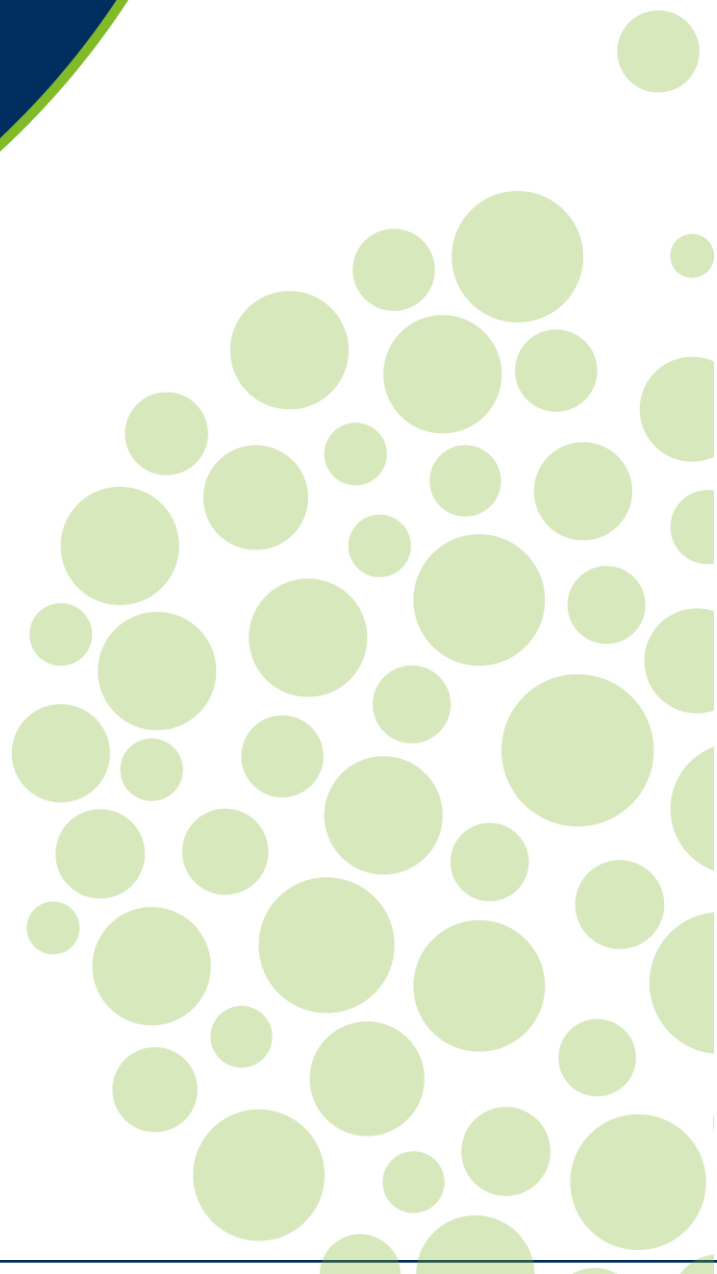
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# The School Health Research Network (SHRN)

## Case Study:

Ysgol Aberconwy: Leading the Way in Sleep and Well-being for Learners

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## Authors

Maria Boffey, Rhydian Jones and Charlotte Wooders.

## Acknowledgements

SHRN would like to acknowledge and thank Rhydian Jones for his invaluable support and contribution to the development of this case study.

Rhydian is the Director of Learning at Ysgol Aberconwy Secondary School, where he is responsible for the health and well-being of both learners and staff. He coordinates the Personal, Social, Health, and Relationship and Sexuality Education (PSHE) curriculum and oversees the school's House charity system. (Please note, while Personal and Social Education (PSE) is the term used in Wales, Ysgol Aberconwy prefers to use the term PSHE to reflect the inclusion of health in their PSE curriculum). With 19 years of experience as a Physical Education teacher, Rhydian is passionate about promoting healthy lifestyle behaviours that enhance the health span of the entire school community.

### Please note:

This case study is a way of sharing school practices. It draws on the experiences of this particular school that they found beneficial in their context. The effectiveness of these approaches may vary, and they have not been independently verified or evaluated by SHRN.



# Ysgol Aberconwy: Leading the Way in Sleep and Well-being for Learners

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## 1. About Ysgol Aberconwy

Ysgol Aberconwy is a dynamic and inclusive 11-18 Comprehensive School located in Conwy. The school, with its 1097 learners, prides itself on fostering a supportive and respectful environment where learning and individual achievement are paramount.

The school offers a broad range of sporting, creative, and cultural activities that contribute to the personal development of its learners. The school combines traditional values of respect, responsibility, and community spirit with the latest technology and teaching methods, ensuring that learners are well-prepared for the future.

## 2. Introduction

At Ysgol Aberconwy, the commitment to using SHRN data has encouraged a proactive and preventative approach to health and well-being, which has been at heart of their efforts to support learners. By assessing key findings and trends, the school identified sleep as a significant priority.

Using SHRN data to inform action planning and collaborating with both learners and external partners, the school has implemented a wide variety of initiatives to improve sleep quantity and quality and, in turn, enhance overall learner health.

This case study outlines the steps they've taken to embed SHRN data into their self-evaluation and development plans and the positive impact it has had on the whole school community.

## 3. The Sleep Struggle: Identifying the Need for Change

Sleep was identified as an area of concern when the school noticed a gradual increasing trend captured in their 2019/20 and 2021/22 SHRN data. The data revealed that a cumulative number of learners were getting significantly fewer hours of sleep than the 7-9 hours a night recommended by the NHS. Lack of sleep can affect learners' physical health, mental well-being, and academic performance, and so this issue became a key area for the school to address.

#### 4. How SHRN Data Helped Identify Sleep as a Priority

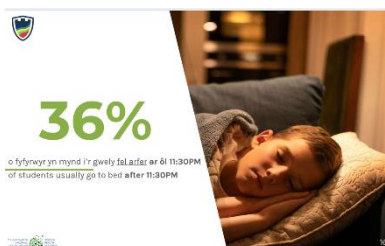
The school turned to their [SHRN Student Health and Well-being](#) report, comparing their school-level, local and national sleep data. From this, Ysgol Aberconwy were able to clearly see the disparity in sleep habits among their learners.

SHRN data was instrumental in prioritising sleep as one of their key areas for improvement, alongside other foundational health behaviours like movement, nutrition, and relaxation supported by NHS and Public Health Wales guidance and advice.

#### 5. Building a Whole School Community Team: Engaging Everyone in the Process

A collaborative approach was vital to tackling the sleep issue. Several key groups played a role in identifying the priority, deciding on actions, and monitoring the impact:

- **Deciding on the Priority:** The school's learner-led iACh<sup>1</sup> health and well-being group, along with staff and learner input, reviewed school-specific SHRN data and shared [infographics](#) (included below) to raise awareness of the issue. The priority was clear: improving sleep habits among learners. By gathering feedback directly from our learners, they gained holistic insights into their health and well-being needs, helping to identify specific areas that require attention. Learner input enabled data-driven decision-making, ensuring that health and well-being initiatives were tailored to the actual needs of the learners. Moreover, when the learners felt valued and heard, their engagement in school activities increased, fostering a more supportive and inclusive school environment. This involvement not only empowered learners but also enhanced the effectiveness of policies and initiatives.



<sup>1</sup> iACh at Ysgol Aberconwy is a learner-led health and well-being group of students who are involved in development and delivery of the school's various health and well-being initiatives. iACh translates to 'health' in Welsh, with the capitalised 'AC' in reference to Aberconwy.

- **Developing the Action Plan:** Once the priority was established, the iACh group examined SHRN data and compared results with those from previous years, as well as SHRN data from Conwy and across Wales using the SHRN data [regional and national dashboard](#). This informed their action plan, which included initiatives aimed at raising awareness and promoting better sleep habits.
- **Monitoring and Evaluating Impact:** The impact of these initiatives is continuously monitored through a 10-week review cycle aligned with the school's learning phases, where progress is assessed, and strategies are refined based on feedback from learners and evaluated outcomes. At the end of each academic year, data is analysed to inform future planning, ensuring that sleep remains a key focus within the school's health and well-being framework. Any significant findings are shared with the Senior Leadership Team to guide future decisions.

## 6. Taking Action: Creative Strategies for Better Sleep

### Innovative Campaigns to Raise Awareness

Ysgol Aberconwy launched a series of awareness campaigns to educate both learners and staff about the importance of sleep. These included:

- **Slogans and Visual Campaigns:** The iACh group created default desktop backgrounds (included below) for all learner and staff computers and the school created catchy, thought-provoking slogans, such as *"This 1/3rd of the day will have the biggest impact on the other 2/3rds,"* to understand the impact of sleep on learners' health and well-being. These messages were displayed throughout the school to keep sleep at the forefront of everyone's minds.



- **Parent and Carer Engagement:** In addition to working with learners and staff, the school recognised the need to involve parents and carers in the conversation. Health and well-being parental and carer engagement sessions, led by learners themselves, offered practical advice on how families could help support better sleep habits at home. These short workshops were arranged and delivered during parent/carers evenings and options evenings, with a letter, text and electronic link sent directly to those that could not attend, to ensure they had the option to be involved.

## 7. Trialing Sleep Strategies with Learners

To help learners put theory into practice, the school's learner-led iACh group trialed various sleep strategies, including:

- **Circadian Rhythm Education:** During assemblies, learners were educated about circadian rhythms (the body's internal clock which follows a pattern based on a 24-hour day) and how behaviours like late-night screen use can disrupt sleep cycles.
- **Sleep Strategies:** The iACh group experimented with various tools to improve sleep quality, such as blue light filtering glasses, sunrise alarm clocks, and early exposure to sunlight. Some learners also committed to avoiding caffeine after midday and tried a "No tech after 9 pm" rule.
- **Tech-free bedrooms:** Learners were encouraged to buy alarm clocks so that phones could be charged outside of their bedrooms.

## 8. Collaborating with Experts for Enhanced Support

Recognising the importance of expert input, Ysgol Aberconwy partnered with local health and well-being organisations to ensure their approach was evidence-based and effective. External agencies provided valuable resources and guidance that helped the school refine their strategies and initiatives.

The school nurse worked closely with learners to reinforce the importance of good quality sleep during the Personal, Social, Health, Relationship & Sexuality Education (PSHE) sessions, as well as during communication with individuals and groups of learners. (Please note, while Personal and Social Education (PSE) is the term used in Wales, Ysgol Aberconwy prefers to use the term PSHE to reflect the inclusion of health in their PSE curriculum).

Huw Evans, [Welsh Network of Health and Well-being Promoting Schools](#) (WNHWPS) Healthy School Co-ordinator for Conwy, was also vital in supporting the identification of this priority area and identified a range of strategies to address this area.

## 9. Transforming Learner Health: Positive Impacts on Well-being

The school began to see clear signs of improvement in learners' health and well-being:

- **Improved Sleep Quality:** Encouraging learners to make their bedrooms “tech-free” spaces and charge phones outside of their rooms had a noticeable impact. Learners reported better sleep quality, which translated into improved concentration, mood, and overall attitude.
- **Increased Engagement and Interaction:** The push to reduce screen time had an extending influence culminating in the successful rollout of the “No mobile phone space” initiative in the 2023-24 academic year. This initiative has helped foster more meaningful interactions among learners, with more children and young people playing and socialising during breaktimes.

**Here's what two learners at the school had to say about the journey they have been on with the new sleep strategies and how they have helped:**

*My sleep was shocking at the start of the year. I would stay up late and feel awful every morning. I would not say I am perfect but getting a more regular routine with going to bed and waking up at the same time (even at weekends!) has really helped me not feel so awful come Monday morning.*

*I used to be obsessed with my phone, and it would be the first thing I would look for in the morning and the last thing I would look at in bed. I would sometimes even check it if I got up in the middle of the night. Since school has been a phone-free zone I realised that I don't need my phone on me at all times. I try and make sure I leave an hour gap between last checking my phone and going to bed. This does not work all the time but when I do this I do think I sleep better.*



### The school also saw significant improvements in their SHRN data:

- **Sleep Habits:** The percentage of learners getting enough sleep increased, with 41% of learners in 2023/24 reporting sufficient sleep, up from 34% in 2021/22.
- **Screen Use:** Efforts to reduce screen time have been equally successful. In 2023/24, 36% of students reported excessive screen use, down from 41% in 2021/22. This is now less than the Wales average (37.7%) and Conwy average (38.1%).
- **Life Satisfaction:** The school also saw a 7% increase in life satisfaction scores since 2021/22. Ysgol Aberconwy now exceeds Conwy's average learners' life satisfaction score, reaching 76.1%.

## 10. Looking Ahead: Sustaining Progress and Expanding Initiatives

While Ysgol Aberconwy is proud of the progress achieved so far, they acknowledge that there is still more work ahead. Their upcoming steps include:

- **Further Reducing Screen Time:** Expanding efforts to limit screen time during evenings and weekends, with additional focus on encouraging good sleep hygiene i.e. a set of habits and practices that promote consistent, restful sleep.
- **Strengthening Parent and Carer Engagement:** Continuing to work with parents and carers, through parent/carers evenings, open evenings and information sharing evenings, to ensure sleep education becomes a consistent message both at school and at home.
- **Ongoing SHRN Data Reviews:** The school will continue to monitor and embed their future SHRN data at a local, regional and national level to track progress and adjust strategies as necessary, ensuring that sleep and well-being remain central to the school's mission.

## 11. Conclusion

Through a strong SHRN data driven, evidence-based approach incorporating targeted initiatives and strong learner involvement, Ysgol Aberconwy has made significant strides in improving sleep habits and overall well-being of their learners. From proactively identifying the problem, to tackling the root causes of sleep deprivation, and applying a whole school approach, the school has created a healthier, more supportive learning environment. With continued focus and collaboration, they are committed to ensuring that their learners can sleep better, learn better, and thrive both in and out of school.

## 12. Learn More

Download additional resources from [Sleep - Public Health Wales](#).

For more information on supporting your learners' health and well, please contact your local [WNHWPS](#) Healthy School Co-ordinator.

## 13. Share Your SHRN Success Story!

Sharing your SHRN story is a powerful way to demonstrate your expertise and the positive impact your initiatives have had on learners' health and health and well-being. SHRN welcomes case studies from both SHRN primary and secondary schools to showcase and share their use of SHRN Student Health and Health and well-being Data and Reports, and the value of evidence informed practice.

Discover how you can inspire others by sharing your SHRN journey with us. Your story could be the spark that ignites change and innovation in our community.

Read more about how you can share your story [here](#).

To read more inspiring case studies, visit our [website](#).

To find out more email our Engagement Manager, [Charlotte Wooders](#).



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THE SCHOOL  
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NETWORK

The School Health Research Network (SHRN)  
SPARK  
Maindy Road  
Cardiff  
CF24 4HQ

[shrn.org.uk](https://shrn.org.uk)

 [SHRN@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:SHRN@cardiff.ac.uk)

 [@SHRNWales](https://twitter.com/SHRNWales)

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