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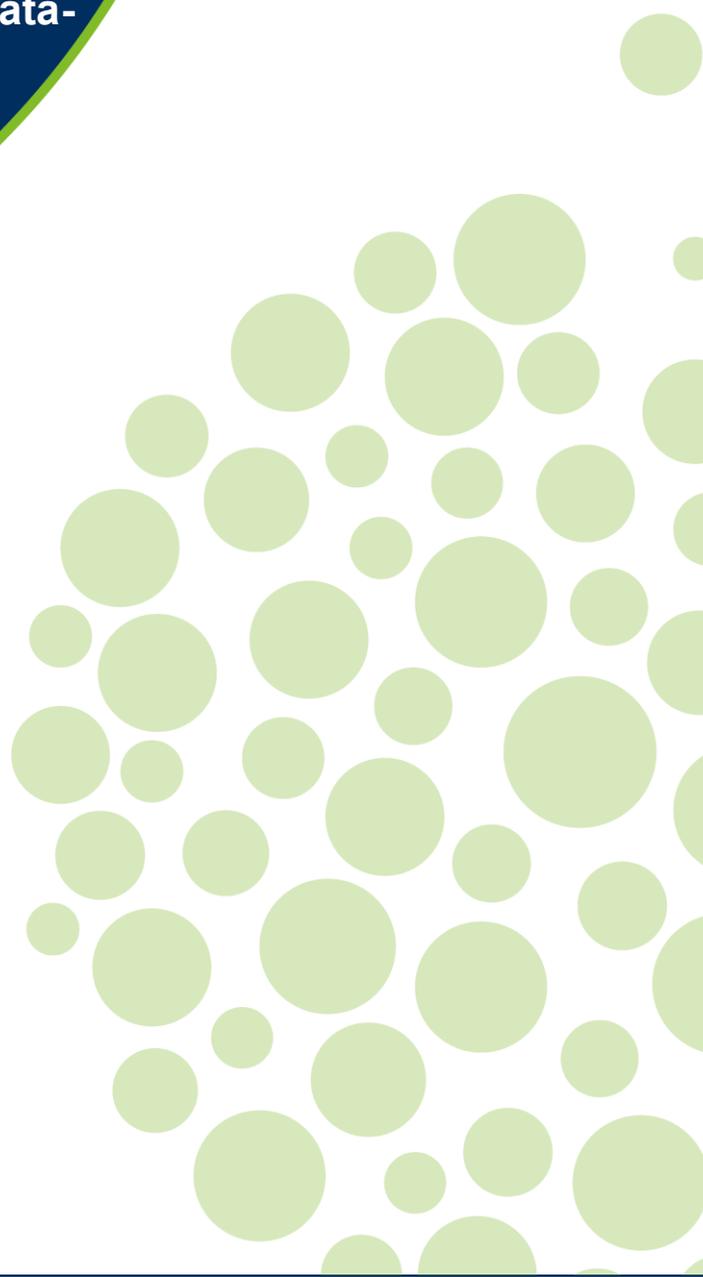
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The School Health Research Network (SHRN)

Case Study: Ysgol Bro Taf

Empowering School Communities: A Data-Informed, Whole-School Approach to Vaping Prevention

September 2025



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Authors

Maria Boffey, Kelly Fleming and Charlotte Wooders

To read author biographies, please refer to the final section of this case study.

Acknowledgments

SHRN would like to acknowledge and thank Kelly Fleming, Head of Health and Well-being at Ysgol Bro Taf, for her invaluable support and contribution to the development and writing of this case study.

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.

Empowering School Communities: A Data-Informed, Whole-School Approach to Vaping Prevention

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1. Case Study Overview

Ysgol Bro Taf has taken a proactive, data-driven approach to tackling the rise in vaping among learners. Using insights from [The School Health Research Network \(SHRN\)](#), the school identified vaping as a growing concern and responded with a comprehensive, whole-school strategy. This included revising existing policies, enhancing curriculum content, and working closely with parents, carers, and public health partners to raise awareness and support informed decision-making.

Central to their success was the use of SHRN data to guide action and evaluate impact. Learners played a key role in shaping and engaging with the initiative, which included project-based learning and critical discussions around vaping's health, social, and environmental effects. Early signs suggest a positive shift in attitudes and behaviours, with Ysgol Bro Taf committed to sustaining this momentum through enhanced use of their SHRN data, continued collaboration, curriculum integration, and learner voice.

2. About Ysgol Bro Taf

Ysgol Bro Taf is a newly established all-through school¹ for learners aged 3 -16 years, located in the Cilfynydd, Rhondda Cynon Taf. The school officially opened in September 2024 following the merger of Pontypridd High School and Cilfynydd Primary School. Built on the existing Pontypridd High School site, [Ysgol Bro Taf](#) welcomed both the former high school learners and those who would have previously attended Cilfynydd Primary School. The [new 3 - 16 school](#) has a capacity of 1,200 learners, including nursery learners.

3. Turning Insight into Action: Using SHRN Data to Drive Support for Learners Health and Well-being

Ysgol Bro Taf has long demonstrated a commitment to learner health and well-being, exemplified by its long standing participation in [The School Health Research Network \(SHRN\)](#) which includes [The SHRN Student Health and Well-being Survey](#) and [The SHRN School Environment Questionnaire \(SEQ\)](#).

¹ In Wales, an all-through school - also known as an all-age school - is an educational institution that combines at least the primary and secondary stages of education within a single school. Some may also include nursery and post-16 (senior phase) education. These schools provide continuous education for learners across multiple key stages, often from ages 3 or 4 up to 16 or 18, all within the same institution.

Through this sustained engagement, the school has tracked, analysed, and responded to trends affecting learner health and well-being with an evidence-based approach, responding to emerging priorities with precision and purpose.

A growing concern identified through their SHRN school-level data was the rise in vaping amongst learners. While rates varied across year groups and between genders, the overall upward trend - particularly among younger learners - prompted further investigation and immediate action. At the same time, behaviour data collected via Class Charts² showed a parallel trend, with rising incidents involving vapes on school grounds. This insight, along with the schools bespoke SHRN data, provided the springboard for a school-wide initiative to address vaping as a key health and well-being priority.

With SHRN data as the foundation, Ysgol Bro Taf embarked on a comprehensive journey to transform information into impact - by enhancing curriculum content, refining school policy, engaging parents and carers, and developing meaningful partnerships with public health organisations such as [The Welsh Network of Health and Well-being Promoting Schools \(WNHWPS\)](#) and [Public Health Wales \(PHW\)](#). The SHRN data served as a catalyst for action, providing the clarity and impetus needed to develop a whole-school strategy and approach.

'SHRN gave us the evidence we needed to make vaping a priority. It wasn't just about what we believed - it was about what the data told us, and how we could use that to support our learners'.

Kelly Fleming

Head of Health and Well-being

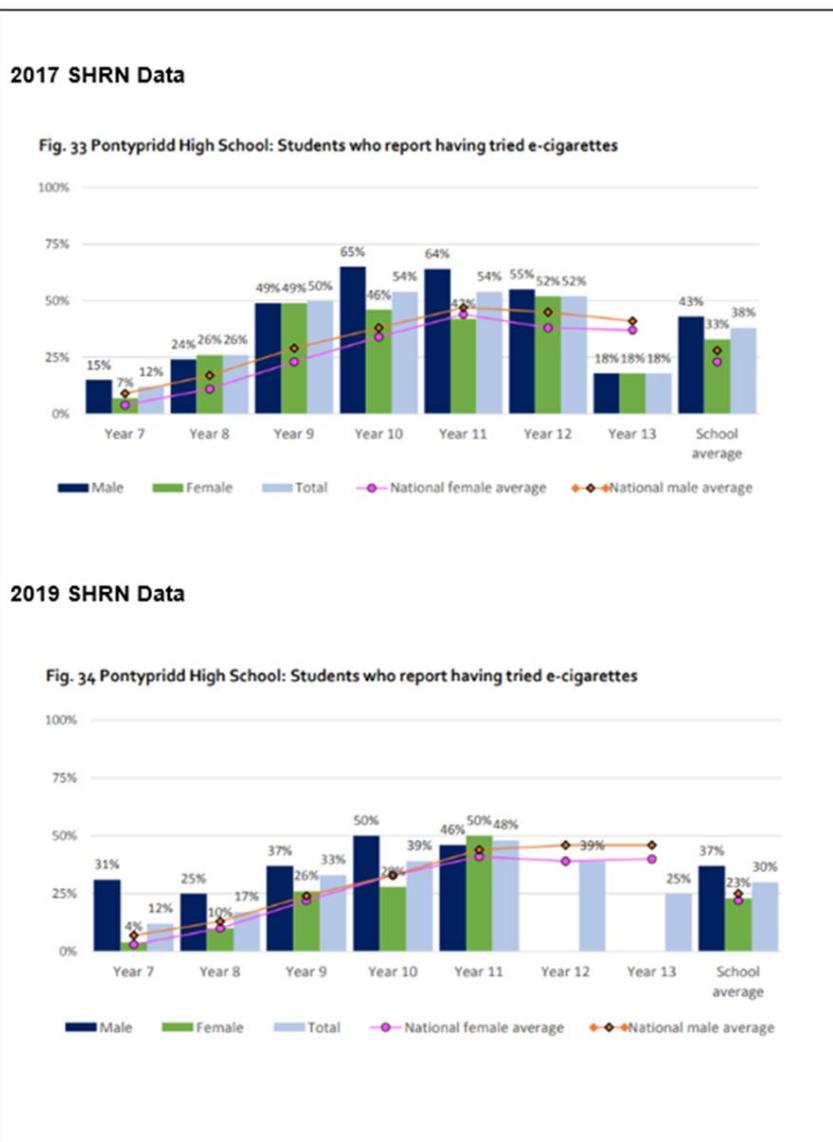
Ysgol Bro Taf

² Class Charts is an online behaviour management and seating chart software primarily used by schools and teachers. It helps educators track and manage student behaviour, attendance, and engagement in real-time, while also allowing them to create and manage classroom seating plans efficiently.

4. Data-Driven Discovery: Using SHRN to Identify Vaping as a Health and Well-being Priority

The decision to prioritise vaping as a key focus emerged from a comprehensive review of the school's SHRN survey findings, over multiple survey cycles (as detailed in section 5 below). The Health and Well-being (HWB) Lead at Ysgol Bro Taf identified concerning increases in vaping among various year groups and gender - particularly among Year 9 learners - highlighting a need to better understand and address the behaviours underpinning this trend.

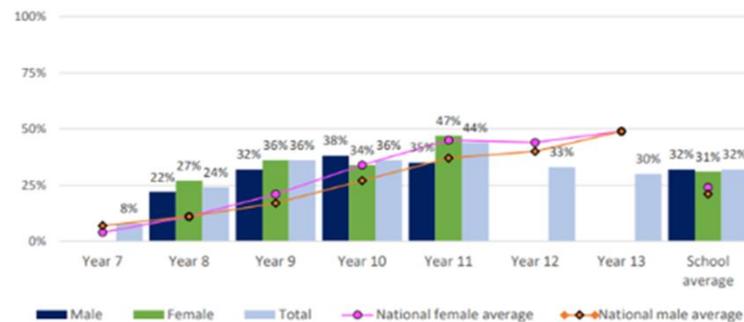
5. Pontypridd High School: Student Health and Well-being Survey Data and Report 2017 - 2023





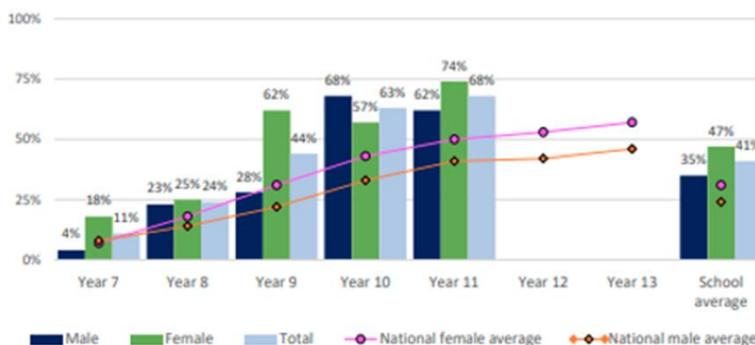
2021 SHRN Data

Fig. 29 Pontypridd High School: Students who report having tried e-cigarettes



2023 SHRN Data

Fig. 28 Pontypridd High School: Students who report having tried e-cigarettes



The data was presented to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and the school governing body, which prompted a constructive dialogue. Drawing on years of longitudinal comparative SHRN data (data collected over time to track changes and trends), the findings highlighted an upward trend in vaping. The evidence was persuasive, with the SHRN data offering strong statistical backing and highlighting the pressing need for a whole-school intervention.

The school's SLT, school governing body, and wider community recognised the importance of addressing vaping as a priority - not only through policy development but also by embedding it into curriculum planning, and health and well-being education.

6. Whole-School Commitment: From SHRN Data to School Policy and Practice

In response to the SHRN findings and internal Class Charts data, the school revised its behaviour policy, introducing a series of changes that included the creation of a learner-friendly vaping policy. This policy clearly outlined the expectations, raised awareness about the risks of vaping, and supported learners in making informed, healthy choices. Clear guidelines were established and communicated to parents and carers via letters and engagement events. These guidelines clearly stated that both vaping and smoking were strictly prohibited on school premises, and parents and carers were encouraged to review and actively support the implementation of the new policy. This reinforced the message that promoting healthy behaviours is a shared responsibility. This aligned with the principles of the Whole School Approach, which emphasises the importance of engaging the entire school community - including families, staff, and learners - in creating a supportive and health-promoting environment.

To reinforce these changes, the school introduced a tracking system via Class Charts, enabling staff to log and monitor instances of vaping. This allowed for real-time trend analysis and supported the evaluation of the effectiveness of new policies and strategies. Alongside the updated guidelines, the school ensured that pastoral support and informative resources from Public Health Wales were made available to learners who vaped. These efforts reflect a commitment to not only enforcing rules but also supporting learner well-being.

Furthermore, the policy changes were designed to reflect the school's broader ethos - focusing not only on discipline but also on education and awareness. They aimed to empower learners to understand the risks associated with vaping and to make informed decisions. In cases where confiscated vapes were suspected to contain substances beyond nicotine, the school collaborated closely with the local police team. Their support included leading assemblies and delivering workshops to educate learners about the dangers of tampered or altered vape devices. This partnership further reinforced the school's commitment to safeguarding and aligned with the Whole School Approach by involving external agencies in promoting learner well-being.



7. Strengthening Health Education: A Whole-School Approach to Vaping Awareness

By placing curriculum-based education at the heart of their response, the school partnered with their WNHWPS Co-ordinator, Public Health Wales, and other local organisations to collaboratively develop and tailor a set of vaping education resources. These resources focused on both essential content and effective teaching strategies. Working alongside their partners, curriculum leads also developed a comprehensive [guide for parents and carers](#), underpinned by reliable, evidence-based information sourced directly from the NHS and Public Health Wales. The guide provided up-to-date information about vaping, offered advice and support for quitting, and explained the social and emotional pressures that may lead young people to vape.

'Working with Ysgol Bro Taf to co-develop vaping resources was a genuinely collaborative and insightful experience. The support we received from the school throughout the organisation of the focus groups was invaluable - their openness and commitment to engaging students in meaningful dialogue made a real difference to the development of the toolkit.'

Kelly, the Health and Well-being Lead was fantastic to work with; her genuine passion for promoting public health messaging around vaping was evident in every interaction. She created a space where learners felt comfortable sharing their thoughts, which led to rich, honest discussions that helped shape the tone and relevance of the materials.

It was inspiring to see such a proactive approach to empowering young people with the knowledge and confidence to make informed decisions about their health. The CTMUHB³ Local Public Health Team is incredibly grateful to the school for their invaluable contributions to this work.'

Emma McGillivray

Senior Public Health Practitioner

Cwm Taf Morgannwg Public Health Team

³ Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board

To strengthen the integration of this work into the school curriculum, Ysgol Bro Taf used the newly developed resources to create a dedicated scheme of learning for Year 8 learners. SHRN data at the school level had highlighted a higher incidence of vaping among Year 9 students, prompting a proactive approach - educating learners before these vaping behaviours became established. This initiative was closely aligned with the [Curriculum for Wales](#), which places learner well-being and informed citizenship at the heart of education.

The new scheme of learning encouraged learners to think critically about key issues such as vaping laws and regulations; marketing tactics used by vaping companies; the environmental impact of single use vapes; and the health effects of nicotine and addiction. Drawing on SHRN data, learners also examined trends in smoking and vaping, presenting their findings through MS PowerPoint presentations (as detailed in section 8 below). This approach not only supported informed decision-making but also helped develop their literacy and digital skills.

In addition, the school has maintained its active involvement with the WNHWPS programme, ensuring its efforts remain aligned with wider health and well-being strategies. This ongoing partnership has played a key role in fostering a supportive environment where learners can better understand the risks associated with vaping and are empowered to make healthier, informed choices.

8. New Scheme of Learning on Vaping Awareness: Learners Presentation Slides

Image 1: Why are people concerned with vapes

Why are people concerned with young vapers

Most vapes have very high levels of nicotine, a chemical that literally rewires your brain and gets you hooked. There is no safe level of nicotine for teens. While vaping might seem like a safer option than smoking, it's definitely not safe.





Image 2: 2023 SHRN data - Vape use in years 7 to 11

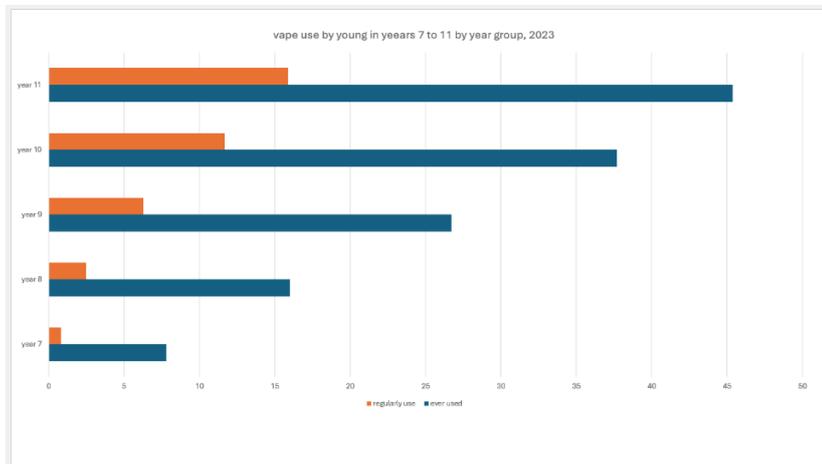


Image 3: How vape packaging looks and how it attracts people



9. Learner Voice and Engagement: Learning That Resonates

Learner voice was central to the success of the initiative. During the collaborative development of the new Public Health Wales [Health and Well-being Toolkits and Resources](#), learners from Ysgol Bro Taf in Years 9 and 10 participated in focus groups to trial the materials. Their feedback led to meaningful revisions, ensuring that the final resources were accessible, age appropriate, relevant, and engaging.

Once the new scheme of learning was in place, learners took part in thoughtful, inquiry-based discussions around the laws, health risks, and wider social impacts of vaping. They explored the environmental effects of disposable vapes and looked closely at how vaping marketing strategies are used to appeal to young people. With support from the school's SHRN data and guided activities, learners were encouraged to form their own evidence-based views. Through project-based tasks and digital storytelling, they created presentations that blended personal insights with researched information (as detailed in section 10 below). This process helped build their critical thinking and persuasive communication skills, while reinforcing key themes around healthy choices and responsible citizenship.

As a result, the school noticed that their learners became more engaged with the topic when they recognised its relevance to their own lives. This increased interest helped foster deeper thinking, strengthened their persuasive writing, and improved their speaking and listening skills.

Here's what some learners had to say about how SHRN has supported their health and well-being⁴:

'I didn't know vaping could be that bad until we learned about it in class. Now I understand how it can hurt my body, and I think more before I do stuff like that.' Will, Year 10

'Learning about vaping really made me stop and think. I didn't realise it could affect me later on, but now I want to take better care of myself.'
Jess, Year 11

⁴ Please note: The learners' names used in this case study has been changed to protect the privacy of individuals.

10. New Scheme of Learning on Vaping Awareness: Learners Presentation Notes

Image 1 and 2: Learners Presentation Notes

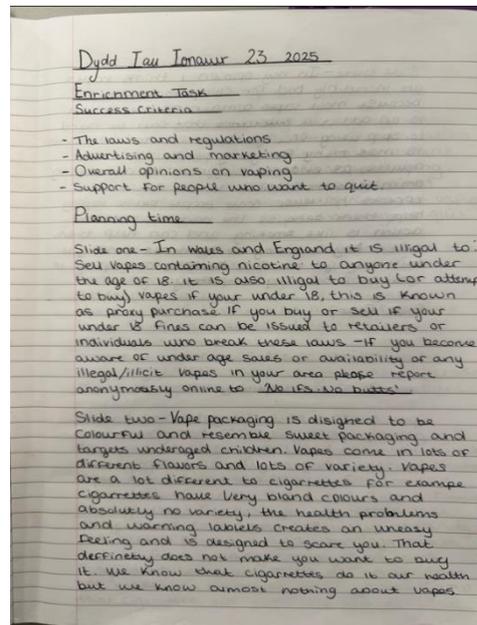
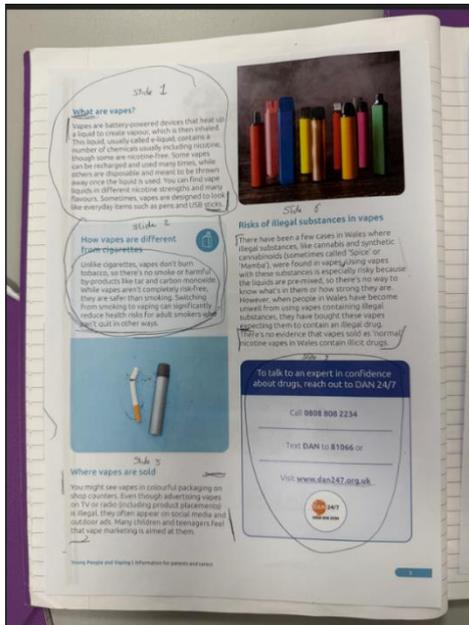
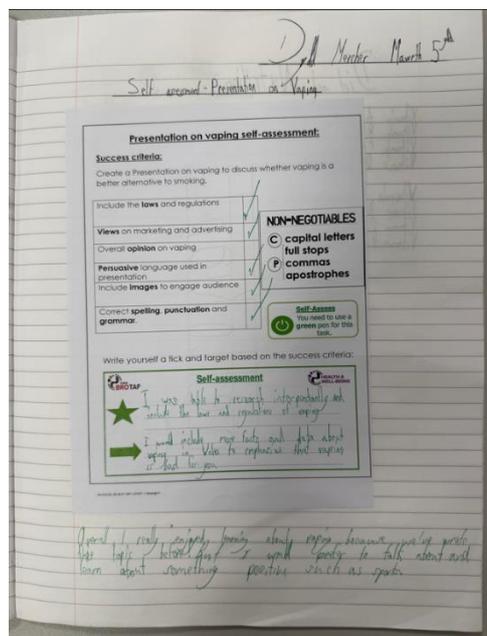


Image 3: Learners Self-assessment Success Criteria for Vaping Presentation



11. Tackling Vaping Together: Lessons learnt from Across the School Community

One of the biggest challenges Ysgol Bro Taf faced in addressing vaping was the widespread misconception among learners that vaping is safe. While vaping is less harmful than smoking, it is not without harms. This limited understanding of the health risks was tackled with support from Public Health Wales, who provided up-to-date information and data. This collaboration enabled the school to enhance its curriculum and deepen staff knowledge. In addition, clear policies were introduced and consistently enforced across the school, reinforcing a unified approach to tackling the issue.

Another significant challenge was the ease with which learners could access vaping products. Many obtained them online or through peers, sometimes using devices disguised as everyday items. To address this, the school worked closely with the wider community to reduce opportunities for learners to purchase vapes. Additionally, parents and carers were actively involved in awareness campaigns, helping to strengthen the message beyond the school gates and reinforce a community-wide approach to prevention.

Peer pressure and the desire to fit in made vaping more appealing to learners. At the same time, limited involvement from parents and carers made early intervention more difficult. In response, the school introduced lessons focused on peer pressure, social influence, and strategies for confidently saying 'no.' Support and counselling were also made available to learners who vaped. Recognising the importance of family engagement, the school strengthened its efforts to involve parents and carers, learning that a united front between schools and families can foster healthier choices both in and out of the classroom.

The school recognised that meaningful progress required a whole-school approach. Strong support from the SLT, the Health and Well-being faculty, and other key staff was essential in driving change. Once priorities were identified, the school engaged with partner organisations such as SHRN, Public Health Wales, and the NHS to ensure that lessons and support materials were accurate, evidence-based, and aligned with best practices. This collaborative effort helped embed a culture of health and well-being throughout the school community.

12. Assessing Impact: Emerging Indicators of Change

As part of their ongoing commitment to using data to shape their approach, Ysgol Bro Taf is looking forward to receiving their 2025 SHRN data. This data will provide a clearer picture of the impact of recent initiatives and help shape future strategies to further support learner health and well-being. The school is confident that the resources it has developed -

designed to engage learners and deliver clear, accurate information about the risks of vaping - will lead to increased awareness and a reduction in vaping.

'If it weren't for SHRN, we wouldn't have the necessary data to identify vaping as a key health concern within our school... Thanks to this bespoke data, we've been able to tailor our approach to ensure that learners understand the real risks associated with vaping.'

Lewis Ryan

Health and Well-being Teacher

Ysgol Bro Taf

Internal evaluation using SHRN data was a key component of Ysgol Bro Taf's strategy to address vaping among learners. Both staff and learners have reflected on the lessons to assess their effectiveness, relevance, and impact. Learners shared insights into what they found most helpful or surprising, while teachers analyzed these responses to gauge shifts in learners' knowledge, perceptions, and attitudes.

Class Charts data added a valuable layer to the school's internal evaluation, which supported and complemented insights from SHRN data. Since implementing the updated curriculum and revised policies, the school has been tracking vaping-related incidents. Although it is still early to draw definitive conclusions, initial observations from staff suggest a promising downward trend.

13. Looking Ahead: Sustaining Momentum and Planning for the Future

Looking ahead, Ysgol Bro Taf remains committed to strengthening and evolving its approach to vaping education. The school plans to continue using SHRN data - particularly focusing on younger year groups - to identify emerging trends early and respond with timely, targeted interventions that support learner health and well-being.

Learner voice will stay at the heart of this work. Future lesson adaptations will be informed by them, helping to keep the content engaging, age-appropriate, and meaningful. This ongoing dialogue not only empowers learners but also supports a culture of shared responsibility and co-production in promoting health and well-being.

A key ambition for the school is to foster a cross-curricular approach to vaping education. Plans are already underway to integrate vaping-related topics into wider subjects outside of PSE - such as data analysis in Math's, the science of nicotine and addiction in Science, and the environmental impact of disposable vapes and recent legislative ban in Geography. By embedding these discussions across the curriculum, the school aims to reinforce healthy decision-making as a shared, school-wide priority.

The school also recognises the vital role of parents and carers in supporting learner well-being. To strengthen this partnership, the school will share information through parent and carer evenings, regular communication channels, and targeted events - ensuring families are well-informed, engaged, and empowered to contribute to a whole-community approach to health and well-being.

'It's been amazing to see how much more aware my child is about vaping since getting involved in the school's lessons - he's even started sharing facts with us at home! Being part of the awareness sessions myself really opened my eyes too; I've learned so much and now feel much more confident talking to him about it and supporting him to make good choices.'

Steph

Parent

Ysgol Bro Taf

14. Learning Through SHRN Data: Reflections on SHRN's Role in School Health Strategy

Ysgol Bro Taf's journey highlights the power of data-informed decision-making. Their engagement with SHRN not only helped identify vaping as a key priority, but also gave the school the evidence, context, and momentum needed to take meaningful action.

This success story shows how SHRN can act as a catalyst for whole-school change. At Ysgol Bro Taf, it led to updated policies, innovative curriculum development, stronger partnerships with public health organisations, and genuine learner involvement.

In a world where young people's health and well-being behaviours are constantly shifting, having access to accurate, up-to-date data is more important than ever.

For Ysgol Bro Taf, SHRN has done more than inform a single initiative - it has helped embed a culture of reflection, adaptability, and evidence-based practice that will continue to support learners for years to come.

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

15. 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 well-being. SHRN welcomes case studies from both SHRN primary and secondary schools to showcase and share their use of SHRN Student 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 school success case studies, visit our [website](#).

16. Additional SHRN Resources

Learn more about [The SHRN Student Health and Well-being Survey in Secondary Schools](#) and [The SHRN School Environment Questionnaire \(SEQ\)](#).

For more insights on SHRN, read the [SHRN Blog](#) and explore the [SHRN webinars](#).

17. Contact Us

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

About the Authors

Kelly Fleming, Head of Health and Well-being, Ysgol Bro Taf

As a dedicated Health and Well-being teacher at Ysgol Bro Taf, Kelly is passionate about delivering engaging and meaningful learning experiences that support the physical, emotional, and social development of all learners. Aligned with the Curriculum for Wales, her teaching empowers learners to explore important health topics and develop lifelong well-being skills. Kelly is particularly committed to addressing current health challenges affecting young people, with a strong focus on raising awareness around vaping - a growing concern within the school community. Through tailored lessons, open discussions, and collaboration with school leadership and external health experts, she educates learners on the risks of vaping and promotes healthier lifestyle choices. Her approach fosters critical thinking, resilience, and informed decision-making, ensuring that the Health and Well-being curriculum remains relevant, up-to-date, and embedded across the school to support the overall well-being of every learner.

Maria Boffey, SHRN Knowledge Exchange and External Affairs Manager

Maria's role in the SHRN Network is to manage its development by way of knowledge exchange, external affairs and communications, ensuring it meets the needs of schools, researchers, and key health and educational stakeholders. She provides support to schools, whilst developing strategic national and regional partnerships. Her passion for supporting the well-being of children has been constant throughout her career, spending over 20 years within the third sector leading on a wide range of national programmes supporting improved practice and policy outcomes for looked after children. She has also been a School Governor since 2007 in special, primary and secondary school settings. Maria has also worked on a number of research studies with [Cardiff University](#), [DECIPHer](#) and [CASCADE](#), as well as being an author of numerous health and well-being publications.

Charlotte Wooders, SHRN Engagement Manager

Charlotte is responsible for supporting the delivery of the SHRN engagement strategy. This involves working collaboratively with SHRN partners, including schools across Wales and WNHWPS. Her role includes organising knowledge exchange activities and supporting the SHRN strategy to ensure partners can share ideas and expertise. She works closely with schools to highlight the impact of SHRN and promote evidence-based practices to enhance learner health and well-being, bridging the gap between research and practical application. Additionally, Charlotte is involved in monitoring and evaluating initiatives by collecting and analysing data to assess the effectiveness of SHRN activities and refine future strategies.



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THE SCHOOL
HEALTH RESEARCH
NETWORK

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



shrn.org.uk



shrn@cardiff.ac.uk



[The School Health Research Network](https://www.linkedin.com/company/the-school-health-research-network)



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