

Data Explained

HAPPEN

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This Data Explained summarises experiences and learning from working with the HAPPEN (Health and Attainment of Pupils in Primary Education) dataset while producing research into children's health and wellbeing in Wales. It intends to guide future researchers using this data and feedback into dataset development and documentation.

The data discussed in this Data Explained was made securely available through the HAPPEN research team, the National Centre for Population Health and Wellbeing Research, and ADR Wales. This data came from schools across Wales and can be accessed through the SAIL Databank.

Introduction

HAPPEN is a primary school network which brings together education, health, and research in line with the new curriculum proposals for health and wellbeing. Schools can take part in the HAPPEN survey throughout the academic year to provide snapshots, track change, and evaluate practice. Having completed the survey, schools receive an individual school report aligned with the new curriculum showing the overall picture of health and wellbeing in the school. HAPPEN was co-developed following interviews with headteachers who called for a better understanding

of school needs in the development of health interventions and advocated for a more collaborative approach to improving child health through schools.

All pupils in years 4, 5, and 6 can complete the HAPPEN survey: a health and wellbeing questionnaire focused on physical and mental health. By taking part in the survey, teachers and pupils are empowered to make meaningful changes by gaining a better understanding of pupils' physical, psychological, emotional, and social health. HAPPEN presents the opportunity for pupils to learn and make informed decisions about different aspects of their health and wellbeing. The report can be used in school programmes such as Pupil Voice to allow children to be ambitious and creative in improving their health.

HAPPEN was co-developed following interviews with headteachers who called for a better understanding of school needs in the development of health interventions. They also advocated for a more collaborative approach to improving child health through schools. This process of consultation, engagement, and collaboration has enabled the networks' success to date. This continued partnership between schools, health professionals, and researchers will help provide a more unified approach to improving child health and wellbeing.

How is the data collected?

The HAPPEN survey is a health and wellbeing questionnaire focused on physical and mental health completed by pupils in years 4, 5, and 6. The survey asks children about their physical activity and sedentary behaviour (activity levels, motivation active travel, physical literacy, sleep, and concentration), diet and dental health (portions of fruit and veg, fizzy drinks, teeth brushing), mental health (titled "Me and My Feelings"), general wellbeing (autonomy and competency, happiness), and the local community (happiness with area, walkability to spaces). This is self-reported.

The survey is conducted in schools whereby all pupils in the year group can take part, operating via opt-out consent. Parents will receive the information sheets and opt-out forms prior to the school taking part and can opt their child out of taking part. The school is notified as soon as this happens. The survey takes 20–30 minutes to complete independently. Schools can complete the survey at any time during the academic year. Schools can also repeat the survey at different time points should they wish to evaluate practice. Where possible, we ask schools to deliver the survey between Tuesday and Friday, as some questions relate to the previous day and we aim to capture typical school behaviours. We ask that pupils fill in the survey questions without assistance to make sure they are answering as honestly as possible. If a pupil needs help with reading, a teacher or teaching assistant may read through the question and explain its meaning, but they are asked not to guide the pupil with their answer.

HAPPEN has been collecting data since 2016 and has more than 35,000 responses from children across Wales. Of this number, 35% are duplicate entries from children at different time points. There are more than 500 schools registered to take part in HAPPEN.

What can the data be used for?

Use of HAPPEN data is broad and far reaching. It can be used for longitudinal tracking, cohort studies, evaluations of interventions, and natural experiments. With the roll-out of the new Curriculum for Wales and legislation such as the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, there is a multitude of ways that HAPPEN can contribute to the evaluation and implementation of current practice.

The HAPPEN dataset can be linked in the SAIL Databank to many datasets including GP and hospital data, national community child health data, education data, ONS births and deaths data, and social care and court data such as Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) family court data.

If you have a research proposal or question you can ask the HAPPEN research team (happen-wales@swansea.ac.uk) for advice.

Existing research or examples of previous research

- James M, Marchant E, Defeyter MA, Woodside J, Brophy S. Impact of school closures on the health and well-being of primary school children in Wales UK: a routine data linkage study using the HAPPEN Survey (2018-2020). *BMJ Open*. 2021 Oct 8;11(10):e051574. doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2021-051574. PMID: 34625414; PMCID: PMC8503919.
- Marchant E, Lowthian E, Crick T, et al. Pre-COVID-19 pandemic health-related behaviours in children (2018–2020) and association with being tested for SARS-CoV-2 and testing positive for SARS-CoV-2 (2020–2021): a retrospective cohort study using survey data linked with routine health data in Wales, UK. *BMJ Open* 2022;12:e061344. doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2022-061344

Data limitations encountered

The HAPPEN Network was rolled out across Wales in 2018/2019 and therefore data prior to this point is limited in coverage.

Suggested improvements

Due to the nature of HAPPEN being co-produced with schools, the HAPPEN team is always open to suggestions, improvements, and new developments. The caveat is that developments need to be driven by schools, teachers, and pupils' best interests to help empower and advocate for their wants and needs – and not solely for research of interest to academia or government.

Suggested future data linkages

- Census 2021
- Income and benefits data (especially as free school meals will be universally rolled out in Wales).

Disclaimer

This work was produced using administrative data accessed through the SAIL Databank. The use of the data in this work does not imply the endorsement of the SAIL Databank or data owners in relation to the interpretation or analysis.

Acknowledgements

This Data Explained has been produced by the ADR Wales Early Years research team. It provides a snapshot of informative work currently underway at ADR Wales but is not intended to provide a complete picture of work undertaken within this field or the ADR Wales programme of work. The information presented in this Data Explained have been reviewed by ADR Wales colleagues with expertise within this thematic area and are accepted to be accurate at the point of publication. Views expressed in this Data Explained are those of the researchers and not necessarily those of ADR Wales partner organisations.

This research has been carried out as part of the ADR Wales programme of work, as part of the Early Years thematic research area. The thematic research areas are aligned to the priority themes as identified in the Welsh Government's Programme for Government. ADR Wales brings together data science experts at Swansea University Medical School, staff from the Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research, Data and Methods (WISERD) at Cardiff University, and specialist teams within the Welsh Government. This partnership uses the SAIL Databank at Swansea University to link and analyse anonymised data, developing evidence which supports the Programme for Government.

ADR Wales is part of ADR UK (Administrative Data Research UK). ADR UK is a partnership transforming the way researchers access the UK's wealth of public sector data to enable better informed policy decisions that improve people's lives. ADR UK is an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) investment (part of UK Research and Innovation). Grant number: ES/W012227/1



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HAPPEN

Health & Attainment of
Pupils in a Primary
Education Network

Canolfan Iechyd y Boblogaeth
Centre for Population Health



Canolfan Genedlaethol ar gyfer Ymchwil ar Iechyd a Llesiant y Boblogaeth
National Centre for Population Health & Wellbeing Research

