



Selecting Actions and Carrying Out Baseline Surveys

Once your school has identified its priorities and school healthier behaviour outcomes, you will then decide what actions to take to bring about change. It is extremely important that these actions are carefully selected, to meet the needs of your school.

This information sheet provides advice on how to select an action. It also focuses on baseline surveys, which will show whether an action is having an impact.

Before selecting an action, you should check whether there is evidence that the action has worked elsewhere. You should check the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) which reviews and recommends actions.

There are two acceptable types of actions:

(1) Actions that have been tried and tested and proven to work. This is known as **evidence based practice**.

(2) Actions that have not been proven to work but follow a clear rationale for why they have been chosen. These actions are said to follow **good practice principles**.

What is Evidence Based Practice?

Evidence based practice is a term which is widely used in many scientific fields. It refers to the practice of only using actions which have evidence to show they work.

Wherever possible, South West Healthy Schools Plus schools should select actions which have been proven to work and with evidence available to show that they work. Where evidence based practice is available, it is highlighted in the South West Healthy Schools Plus information sheets.

What does following good practice principles mean?

It isn't always possible to use an evidence based approach. Sometimes research does not exist, or is at an early stage. One example of this is obesity, where it will take time to find out what works.

Where evidence based actions don't exist schools can develop their own actions. In such cases a rationale for why the proposed action can be expected to work must be developed. This simply means you should think through carefully why a particular action is likely to work and give reasons why it will lead to achieving healthier behaviour outcomes. This approach is referred to as following **good practice principles**. It is important that the results of the action are evaluated carefully. If successful the action will be added to the evidence base of what works.

School Prompts

1. If possible choose an action with evidence that it works.

- Refer to NICE Guidance
- Look at the literature
- Talk to people working on the issue
- Check resources in the South West Healthy Schools Plus information sheets.

In time examples of actions that have worked will be placed on the National Healthy Schools Programme Website.

2. If there is no evidence based practice, use an action that follows good practice principles.

- Develop a rationale which clearly shows the steps from action to behaviour change, leading to a healthier behaviour outcome.

An example of a rationale for non-evidence based work?

Outcome:

Better relationships and sexual well-being at Key Stage 3 and 4 through improved provision of SRE.

Action:

Develop, with young people, an appropriate SRE curriculum.

Rationale (demonstrating how an action will achieve its outcomes):

Involving young people fully in the development of the SRE programme will allow barriers to good SRE to be identified and addressed. Full involvement will improve acceptance of healthy behaviour messages and encourage better information uptake leading to improved intentions around healthy behaviour and, eventually, better health outcomes in relationships and sexual well-being.

Note:

When following an action that follows good practice led principles it is important that it is evaluated carefully. If successful the action will be added to the evidence base of what works.

Will the action suit your school?

Whether actions are evidence based or follow good practice principles, you will also need to make a judgement on whether they are suitable for your particular school. The following checklist will help you check for quality and fit, when planning an action.

Examples of Process Indicators:

- New SRE programme developed and implemented
- Young people report that they were involved in its development.

Examples of Impact Indicators:

- Young people report they have better knowledge of sexual health issues such as sexually transmitted infections
- Young people report they have better knowledge of sexual health services
- Young people say they are better at managing their relationships and will use contraception if and when appropriate.

Important:

If you are implementing an action which is not evidence based it is essential that you evaluate its success in meeting the intended healthier behaviour outcomes.

(1) Fit

- Does the action fit with the ethos, ideology and culture of the school?
- How will the action be integrated across the curriculum?
- Do your actions work across the school or do they need to be tailored for targeted groups or learning styles?

(2) Costs

- Can you assess the likely financial and non financial costs?
- How does this compare to alternatives?

(3) Is the action communicated and supported?

- Were children, young people and their parents/carers involved in planning the specific action?
- Have senior management, staff, governors, children and their parents/carers been consulted about the action?
- Have concerns been addressed?
- How will staff development needs be met?
- Do you need to bring in outside agencies?

The Baseline Survey

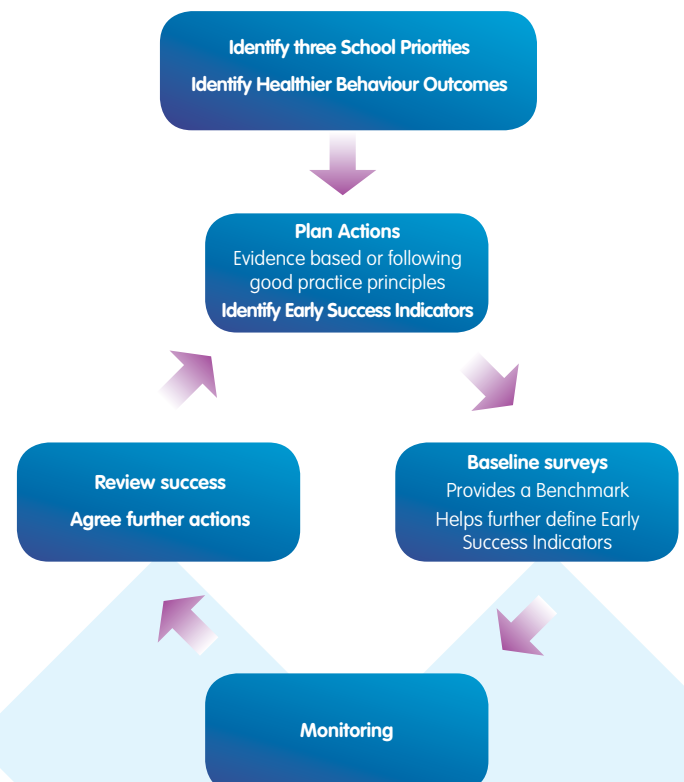
Before taking any action, your school will carry out a baseline survey to establish current levels of behaviour. This will be the starting point from which to plot progress. After an action has been completed, a follow up survey will take place to show how well the action has worked. This will enable your school to build up its own evidence base. Over a period of time, this approach will provide your school with a clearer picture of what actions are most successful.

When you plan a baseline survey, remember that you are not starting from scratch. Try to use any information already available in your school, such as data from the Ofsted reporting system or from your previous Healthy Schools work. You can supplement this by asking questions in a written format (questionnaires) and/or by talking to groups to hear their views (interviews or focus groups).

Keep in mind that a baseline survey has two main purposes. Firstly, the information you collect will help further refine how and what you select as your school healthier behaviour outcomes and early success indicators, by providing a clearer picture of specific issues. Secondly, the baseline survey will mark a 'line

in the sand' from which your school can plot progress and demonstrate impact. This is an essential part of South West Healthy Schools Plus and it is important for schools to get this right if they are going to achieve South West Healthy School Plus Status.

The Whole Picture





What types of data should be collated in Baseline Surveys?

There are two types of data, primary and secondary. Both are acceptable for a baseline survey. If possible, you should use secondary data. This is data which has already been collected by the school for different purposes (e.g. attendance figures or behaviour incidents, such as the racist incident log).

If secondary data is not available you should collect new primary data. This is data gained directly from children and young people, staff and other people associated with the school, specifically for South West Healthy Schools Plus.

Data may be both quantitative (numbers) or qualitative (first person reports).

Quantitative data will allow clear numerical outcomes to be set, for example:

- We will increase uptake of school lunches by x%
- We will increase number of children taking part in after school clubs by x%
- We will increase number of young people who know where sexual health services are available by x%.

Qualitative data will allow your school to probe sometimes difficult areas. For example:

- What do you eat for lunch and why?
- What physical activity clubs would you be interested in attending?
- Where in the school are you concerned about your personal safety?

The National Healthy Schools Programme¹ has guidance on developing outcomes. This can be used as a possible source of ideas regarding behaviour change and for looking at the relationship between attitudes, skills and healthy behaviour. It also contains examples of the types of data you may want to collect.

The South West Healthy Schools Plus information sheets also contain specific examples and signposts schools to the South West Public Health Observatory (SWPHO)². This will help schools understand the health needs of their local populations by using a set of indicators, highlighting inequalities and areas of need. It includes an interactive mapping tool which enables users to view the location of their school in relation to the indicator being viewed.

Resources

National Healthy Schools Programme Resources

Outcomes (2007) –
www.healthyschools.gov.uk/Resources

Government Resources

An evaluation Resource to Support the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy (Meyrick 2002) -
www.library.nhs.uk/childHealth/viewResource.aspx?resID=31122

Ofsted TellUs 3 (2008) -
[www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Documents-by-type/Statistics/TellUs3-National-Report/\(language\)/eng-GB](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Documents-by-type/Statistics/TellUs3-National-Report/(language)/eng-GB)

¹ NHSP (2007) Outcomes – www.healthyschools.gov.uk

² South West Public Health Observatory, Mapping Tool www.swpho.nhs.uk/resource/view.aspx?RID=35469