

# PLANET YOUTH FOR FAMILIES

Raising the health and  
wellbeing of our children  
and young people



PLANET  
Youth®

PARTNER West Dunbartonshire

The insights in this booklet have been informed from the latest Planet Youth survey data (Oct 2025), which gathered information on young people's behaviours, attitudes and beliefs from over 765 (S3 and S4) young people in West Dunbartonshire.



In this document, the term “parent/s” refers to any parent, carer or guardian with responsibility for a child. Children are often supported by a wider circle of family members and trusted adults, and we hope the guidance in this booklet is helpful to anyone who plays a role in raising and supporting a young person.

# ABOUT THIS BOOKLET



**This booklet was developed with parents and carers of children and young people. It includes information and practical ideas linked to known protective factors that help children thrive.**

**Taking small positive steps early can strengthen your child's wellbeing, confidence and resilience, helping to prevent worries turning into bigger challenges later on.**

All children grow and develop at different rates. You will know your child best, what they like and if they need any specific or different supports. If you work with children and young people in any role you might also find this information useful.

Families are all different and family life isn't always easy, and that's okay. You don't have to get it right every time. Sometimes simply being there is enough.

It is good to know who to turn to for help. This could be your partner, a friend, or family. If things get too much, look for helplines and services that offer extra help or support. You will find information about different supports at the back of this booklet, or on our local wellbeing site for children, young people and their families [www.wdwellbeing.info](http://www.wdwellbeing.info)

# ABOUT PLANET YOUTH

The Planet Youth Model began in Iceland in the 1990s at a time when communities were concerned about the risk-taking behaviours among young people. By listening to young people, they learned that strong family relationships, feeling supported at school, positive friendships and access to fun, healthy activities were key to helping them thrive. Strengthening these protective factors led to big improvements, with youth smoking, drinking and drug use falling to the lowest levels in Europe.

The Planet Youth Model is an evidence-based prevention approach now used in many countries across the world, including several areas of Scotland such as Angus, Argyll and Bute, Clackmannanshire, Dundee, Highland and West Dunbartonshire. It is led by the charity Winning Scotland and aims to prevent problems before they start, helping children and young people grow up safer, healthier and more confident.

The approach brings together local decision makers, service providers, youth workers, parents and community members to take action, using the results of a confidential survey of 14–16-year-olds to understand young people's lives and guide local solutions. The survey results show the local implementation group what is helping young people and the challenges they are facing. This helps the group make informed changes to local systems and environments to prevent harm.

More family time, safer places for young people to spend time, and better opportunities for fun and connection all help reduce risks. Families can support this by encouraging their child to take part in the survey, being positive role models, and getting involved in their community.

**Together, we can help every young person in West Dunbartonshire grow up feeling supported, valued, and full of potential.**

## **PLANET YOUTH IN WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE**

Planet Youth in West Dunbartonshire that has been in place since 2021, starting with one pilot secondary school and now involving multiple schools and partners.

In West Dunbartonshire, the approach is coordinated through an implementation group. Partners include Education, Health and Social Care partnership (HSCP) Health Improvement, youth providers, third sector organisations, and national support via Winning Scotland, with strategic oversight through Community Planning Partnerships structures.

**FIND MORE INFORMATION ON THE  
PLANET YOUTH SCOTLAND WEBSITE:  
[WWW.PLANETYOUTH.SCOT](http://WWW.PLANETYOUTH.SCOT)**





# CONNECTIONS & FAMILY TIME

Connection doesn't need to be perfect, but it needs to be regular. Small moments build strength and foundations for future conversations. This can help in more difficult times.



Time spent together is one of the most powerful ways we can support the wellbeing of children and young people. It can be five minutes at bedtime, a walk to school, or eating a meal together. Regular moments of connection help children feel secure, valued and understood.

## THE PLANET YOUTH SURVEY TELLS US...

Young people surveyed said they :

- feel safe at home (94%)
- receive care and warmth from their parents (94%)
- spend time with parents together at weekends (67%).



Clear boundaries are also common, with:

- parents setting evening curfews (80%)
- disapprove of drunkenness (83%) and cannabis use (97%).

## **WE KNOW CONNECTION IS A HUGE PROTECTIVE FACTOR AND CAN COME FROM:**

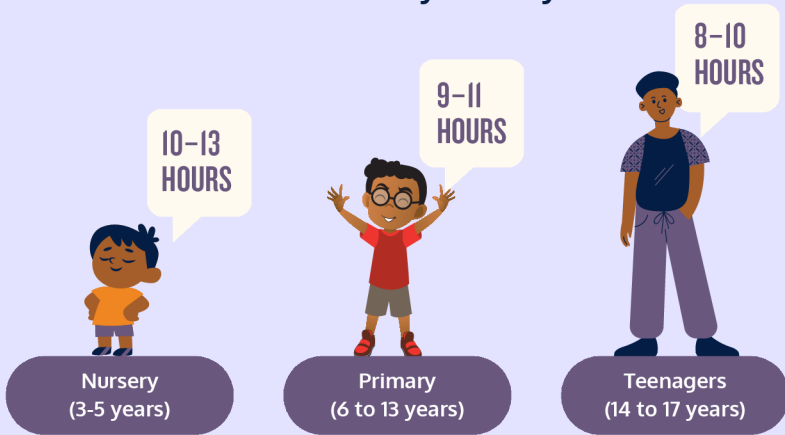
- 1** Taking an interest in your child's day, their friends and feelings.
- 2** Spending time together in simple daily routines.
- 3** Giving your full attention in everyday moments.
- 4** Having fun together and encouraging creativity.
- 5** Letting your child make small choices.
- 6** Keeping clear, consistent and fair boundaries.





# SLEEP & ROUTINES

Regular good quality sleep is vital for your child to grow and develop. It supports their physical growth, brain function, emotional well-being, and helps their immune system. Children and young people who sleep well can learn better, focus, manage their emotions and stay healthy.



Credit: SleepAction

Helping your child get enough sleep as they grow, supports their mood, confidence and overall wellbeing. This can help reduce the risks of experiencing low self-esteem, self-harm, suicidal thoughts.

## THE PLANET YOUTH SURVEY TELLS US...



### Young people surveyed showed:

- Nearly half (47%) reached 8 hours or more sleep per night
- Boys slept better (55%) than girls (39%)
- Over a quarter(26%) managed 6 or less hours of sleep per night.

## TIPS FOR BEDTIME



Build a bedtime routine based on how much sleep your child needs.



Try to avoid daytime naps as this makes sleep more difficult.



Have an hour to unwind with no screens and quiet activities like reading or drawing.



Being active and getting fresh air during the day supports sleep.



Keep routine and bedtimes the same, even at weekends. If you share care of your child, it is a good idea to keep the same routine wherever they are living.



Try to have a no screen rule in the bedroom.



Why not ask around other parents and carers to find out what they do at bedtime and what time their children go to bed? They might have some good ideas, and it can help to know that other children go to bed at the same time.



# ONLINE LIFE

Too much screen time can affect your child's sleep, behaviour, learning, and even their physical health.



Blue light from screens delays the natural sleep rhythm – making it harder to fall asleep and wake up feeling rested.



Make sure there is a balance with play, rest, and connecting in the real world.



Managing children's social media use matters. When they are online they may not recognise harmful and unsafe situations can be influenced by what they see there.



Screen time affects sleep, concentration and emotional wellbeing.



Social media can sometimes increase pressure, comparison and anxiety.

## THE PLANET YOUTH SURVEY TELLS US...



Young people said the greatest influencing factors on their sleep included:

- scrolling social media late at night (46%)
- using phones and other screens late at night (41%)
- playing on-line games late at night (32%)

Every extra hour on screen increases the chance of not getting enough sleep.

## THINK ABOUT SMALL BOUNDARIES, SUCH AS:



No screens an hour  
before bed



Keep phones out  
of bedrooms

## TIPS

- 1 Keep screens in your main living space.** You can keep an eye on how long your child is using them and make sure they take breaks.
- 2 Children learn from adults around them.** Try limiting your own screen time when with them.
- 3 Most phones have digital wellbeing settings.** You can also download apps that help check use or buy a non-digital phone (dumbphone).
- 4 Try regular screen-free family nights.** Play a board game, go for walk together or spend time cooking or baking.
- 5 Remember, not all screen time is bad.** Video editing, music production, creative writing, graphic design, or coding are all great digital hobbies.
- 6 Give your child lots of chances to get off their screens.** Let them try different activities. It helps them learn and grow.



# MENTAL HEALTH

Everyone has mental health: it's how we feel, think, and act every day. Just as we care for our bodies, we need to care of our mind and feelings.



**Positive mental health is important for your child as they grow.** Supporting mental health helps your child manage emotions, learn, and have healthy relationships and wellbeing. It builds resilience and sets the foundation for a healthy thriving future.

## THE PLANET YOUTH SURVEY TELLS US...

Young people surveyed said:

- their mental health is good/very good (49%). Boys rating higher (65%) than girls (34%).
- their mental health is good/very good (69%) if they have 9 or more hours of sleep, whereas only 26% said this if they have 6 or less sleep.

**If young people rate their mental health bad/very bad they have an increased chance of risk taking behaviours : vaping (41%), alcohol (20%), cannabis (11%).**



# TALKING ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

**Normalise feelings and explain mental health in an age-appropriate way.** Feelings like being sad can come and go but if they last, we need to look after them just like we look after our body.

**Come up with ideas together** about how to look after mental health with no pressure. Talk about what you can do together.

**Be calm, supportive and check in with your child.** Let them know it is important to talk about feelings.

**Try to find a time** when you can focus on your child and create space to talk.

**Reassure your child** that you are there for them and it will be okay.



If you are worried about your child's mental health, it is important to seek help. You can speak with a trusted professional, such as a teacher, school nurse, or your GP.




# SPORTS, HOBBIES & PLAY

It is good for children to be moving. This helps their physical and mental health. UK guidelines say they should aim to active for 60 minutes every day. Encourage your child to try out different ways to be active.



There are lots of benefits to sports, hobbies and play. Children can make friends, build confidence, increase self-esteem and have fun. Letting your child play on their own or with others helps their body, mind, social skills and creativity.

## THE PLANET YOUTH SURVEY TELL US...

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- 38% of young people never exercise 60 minutes or more per week.
  - 30% of young people do not take part in any organised out of schools activities.
  - Over 60% of young people said that there are lots of social and leisure opportunities in their area.
  - Taking part in activities (out of school) is linked to better wellbeing and lower risky behaviours.

## ACTIVITIES HELP CHILDREN BUILD CONFIDENCE, FRIENDSHIPS AND BELONGING.

It doesn't need to be expensive; youth clubs, sports, music, walking groups and community events all count. Encourage your child to try different activities until they find what they enjoy. Feeling connected to the community is a protective factor as children grow older.

### SIMPLE THINGS TO GET MOVING MORE



**Doing a little activity is better than nothing.** Try to encourage breaks from sitting down and limit screen time.



**Build exercise into things you can do together** like going to play park or taking the dog for a walk. Walk to school if you can.



**Set challenges** like a daily step count, jumping jacks or simply play outside for ten minutes every day.



**Make it easy to play** by having things like hula hoops, skipping ropes or balls handy.

### WHAT CAN YOU DO IN YOUR AREA?

Visit: [www.wdwellbeing.info/](http://www.wdwellbeing.info/)





# THE GROWING BRAIN

Your child's brain develops rapidly between the ages of 7 and 13 years old. There are big changes related to emotions, thinking and self-control. This is a crucial period as they move from late primary to early teenage years and adolescence.



Children's brains are shaped by routine, safety and connection.



Repetition builds habits that last into teenage years.



Calm boundaries and consistency support emotional development.

## THE PLANET YOUTH SURVEY TELLS US...



The environments around young people matter most; strong family support, good sleep and positive routines are all linked to healthier outcomes.

## KEY BRAIN DEVELOPMENTS BETWEEN AGES 7–13

Your child's brain is under construction during this time. You can find useful information online about what is happening at each stage. Knowing about brain development can help you support your child as they grow.

### IDEAS TO SUPPORT THE GROWING BRAIN

- 1 Help your child talk about their feelings.
- 2 Regular routines e.g. sleep, meal times can help your child feel safe and secure.
- 3 Help your child to take responsibility and make small decisions.
- 4 Involve your child in planning their week or things like meal planning for the family.
- 5 As children grow, they may want more space and privacy.
- 6 Friends become more important. Supporting your child to have a strong peer group is a protective factor. Help them to work out friendships and peer groups.
- 7 Praise effort, even when things don't work out.
- 8 Encourage your child to be curious and questioning.

**Look after yourself:** children learn from you, if you are regulated and able to manage challenges they will learn how to do that too. Be kind to yourself if you get it wrong! You are all learning how to navigate these new dynamics, recognise when to take a breath, apologise if needed, and give yourself a break.



# TALKING TO YOUR CHILD

It is important to keep talking to your child all the way through their life in a way they can understand. By starting early, you will make it easier to talk about harder things as they grow up.

As your child grows up you may need to have difficult conversations. These could be about worries you or your child have on topics that can feel harder to talk about like growing up (puberty), relationships, or making safe choices. Or you may have to talk about challenging or emotional life events.

**It can help to think about how you will do this if the need arises. Remember that difficult conversations are not usually a one-off.**

## THE PLANET YOUTH SURVEY TELLS US...

77% young people say they can discuss personal matter with their parents.

Parental support is linked to lower risk across a wide range of outcomes. This includes being less likely to experience low self-esteem or bullying.

**Children who feel able to turn to their parents are more protected as they grow up.**



## SUPPORTING A DIFFICULT SITUATION



Setting the scene: thinking about where, when and who talks to your child is important. This can help a difficult conversation to go well.

1

**Take a deep breath**, make sure you feel ready to have an open chat, and think about what you would have needed at their age.

2

**Be prepared for emotions**, both theirs and yours. Let them know it is okay to feel sad, confused, angry, or worried.

3

**Be gentle** in how you approach the conversation.

4

**Explain** in a way your child can understand.

5

**Reassure** your child they are loved and supported.

6

**Listen** carefully to what they have to say.

7

**Give them time**. Be open to your child not wanting to talk.

8

**Check in** again later to see how they are feeling.

9

**Stay calm and reassuring**. Your tone and body language matter.



Remember: it's ok if you don't always manage things well. You can always take a break, return to the conversation, apologise and try again.



# ALL WORKING TOGETHER

Getting involved with other families, parents and carers in your community is a great way to feel supported and is a protective factor for children and young people .

- 1 Get to know the other families, parents and carers in your child's class.
- 2 Take opportunities to attend school events and meet your school community.
- 3 Being in a class group on WhatsApp can be a good way to keep in touch with other families, parents and carers.
- 4 Discussing with other families, parents and carers can help you feel less alone when talking to your child and setting boundaries. You can agree on things like screen time and when children should get a phone.

## THE PLANET YOUTH SURVEY TELLS US...

If parents disapprove of substance use it lowers the risk of their children using substances.

When young people often stay out past midnight they are likely to take part in risk-taking behaviours.

**By getting together and having common boundaries, parents and carers can be a strong protective factor.**



## PARENTAL PEER PRESSURE IS REAL



Many parents say they feel pressure too, wondering “Is everyone else allowing this?” or “Will my child feel left out?”



Getting to know your child’s friends’ parents and carers can make tricky conversations at home easier.



When families talk to each other and agree shared boundaries, like screen use or when children get a phone, it helps take the pressure off everyone and gives children clear, consistent messages.



Even small agreements between families can make a big difference.

## OTHER WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

[www.wdwellbeing.info/parents-carers/](http://www.wdwellbeing.info/parents-carers/)

[wd4families](#) information to support yourself or someone in your family

[www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/schools-and-learning](http://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/schools-and-learning)

# HELPFUL LOCAL RESOURCES



[www.wdwellbeing.info](http://www.wdwellbeing.info)

WD Wellbeing is a local website that brings together trusted information, advice and support to help children, young people and families look after their wellbeing and emotional health. It acts as a “one-stop shop” where parents and carers can find practical guidance on topics such as positive wellbeing, parenting and family support, anxiety, sleep, online safety, money worries and mental health. Designed with input from local young people and families, WD Wellbeing aims to make it easier for parents to get the right help, at the right time, in one accessible place.

#### **Other Useful Websites:**

**Planet Youth West Dunbartonshire**

<https://www.wdwellbeing.info/#PlanetYouth>

**West Dunbartonshire Libraries**

[www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/libraries](http://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/libraries)

**West Dunbartonshire Leisure**

[www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/leisure-parks-events/west-dunbartonshire-leisure](http://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/leisure-parks-events/west-dunbartonshire-leisure)





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