



Parent Power

FIRST YEAR PARENT GUIDELINES

PLANET
Youth



ABOUT PLANET YOUTH WICKLOW

Planet Youth is an evidence-based primary prevention project that provides us with the opportunity to improve long-term health and life outcomes of our children in Wicklow'. Every two years, between 2025-2028, we will survey 15 and 16 year olds in participating schools in Wicklow, and this gives us the information we need to make positive changes for the younger children coming behind them. This survey will be repeated in 2026 and 2028.

This booklet has been developed to bring some of that information to parents who have children starting post-primary school and we hope you find it useful.

Over 900 teenagers that participated throughout Wicklow in the November 2024 Planet Youth survey told us that:

89%

Easy to get caring and warmth from parents



64%

Spend 3 hours or more on social media daily



80%

Have a phone in their bedroom at night



36%

Out after midnight



55%

Not getting enough sleep



73%

Report good physical health



85%

Feel safe in their community



31%

Reported self-harm once or more



64%

Exercise 3 times a week or more



30%

Drunk last month



13%

Are daily vapers



15%

Have tried Cannabis



34%

Tried alcohol by 13



FAMILY TIME

This was the first Planet Youth survey in Wicklow and it had some really positive findings related to family life and the relationships that our teenagers have with their parents. 89% stated that it's easy to receive caring and warmth from their parents. Teens also report spending a lot of time with their parents and 78% stated that their parents know where they are in the evenings.

As they get older, it is important to maintain good quality communication with our teens and to stay connected, interested and engaged in what's happening in their lives. The survey showed that we are doing well here too, as 78% of our teens said that it's easy to talk to their parents or carers about personal matters.

Having shared interests, regular family mealtimes, family activities and family meetings creates enjoyable time and space to chat with, and listen to, our teenagers.

As parents, we are the most important role models for our teens so it is important that we set a good example with our own behaviours.

89%

**Easy to get
caring and
warmth from
parents**





SCREEN TIME GUIDELINES

The Planet Youth survey showed us that 64% of our young people are spending 3 hours a day or more on social media. We know that too much screen time impacts upon homework and hobbies and can be detrimental to good mental health. **Screen use should be kept to a maximum of 2 hours per day** after homework and other activities are completed.

Screens should be off at least one hour before bed **and kept out of bedrooms at night.**

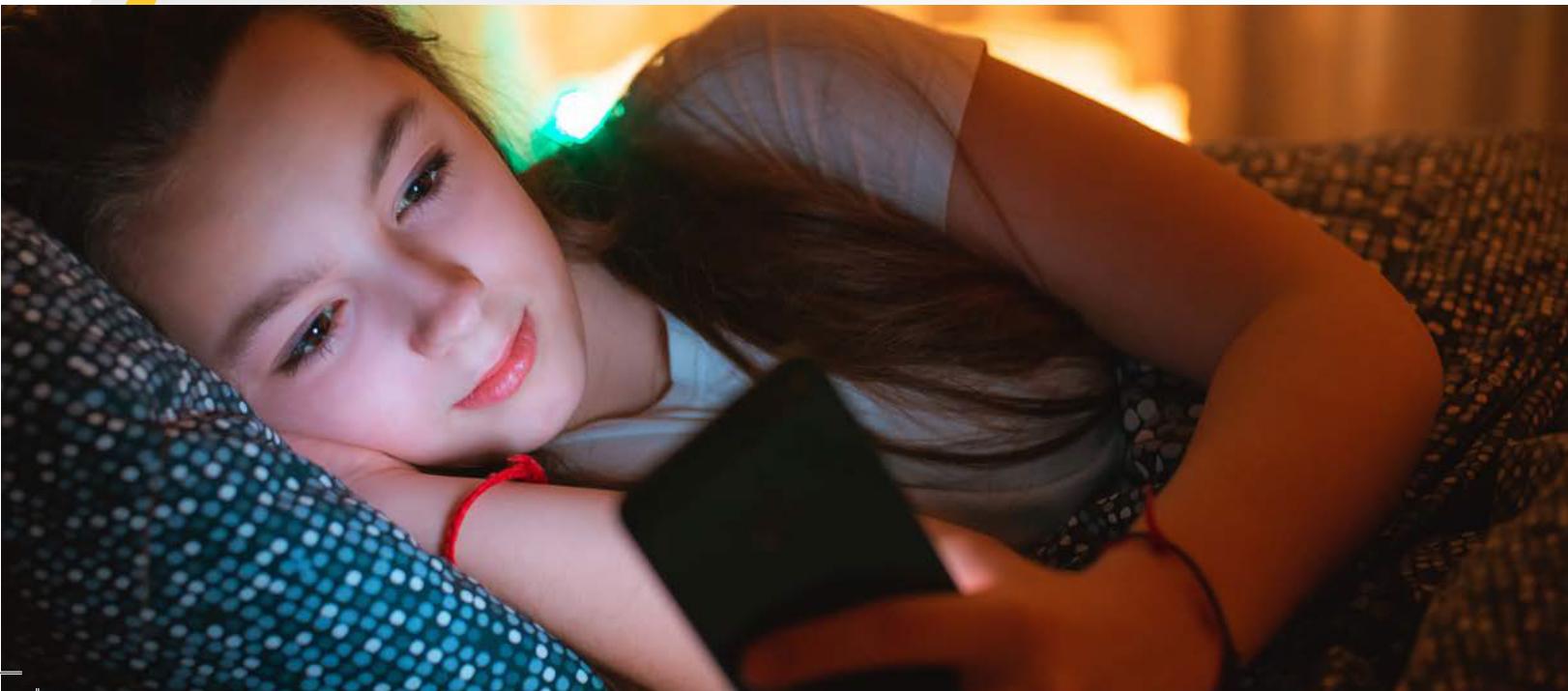
If you can have these guidelines in place from first year they will become increasingly important as your child gets older. Talk to your child about their online life and be a good role model with your own screen use.

64%

**Spend 3 hours
or more on social
media daily**



80% have a
phone in their
bedroom at night





BEDTIME GUIDELINES

55%

Don't get
enough sleep



**FIRST
YEAR**

09:30PM

**SECOND
YEAR**

09:45PM

**THIRD
YEAR**

10:00PM

**TRANSITION
YEAR**

10:15PM

**FIFTH
YEAR**

10:30PM

**LEAVING CERT
YEAR**

10:45PM



It is recommended that teenagers get a minimum **8 to 10 hours** of undisturbed sleep per night. For example; a first year that has to get up at 07:30am should be asleep by 09:30pm in order to get their 10 hours of sleep. No child should have a phone in their bedroom at night, a regular alarm clock is enough.



THE IMPORTANCE OF SLEEP

The Planet Youth survey has shown us just how little sleep our teens are getting. This is a significant problem because sleep plays a critical role in a teenager's development. It is every bit as important as nutrition and physical activity.

Without sufficient quality sleep, every aspect of a teen's life becomes more challenging. Physical health and mental health are affected, school becomes harder, self-esteem, resilience, and emotional development are impacted, and small problems often appear insurmountable.

Don't underestimate the importance of helping your teenager to get sufficient, good quality sleep. That could just be improving their sleep environment, but good sleep hygiene, limited screen time, reduced caffeine, and a consistent sleep routine can help also.

By creating a sleep positive culture in your home, you will be helping your teenager reach their potential in many aspects of their development, health and wellbeing.

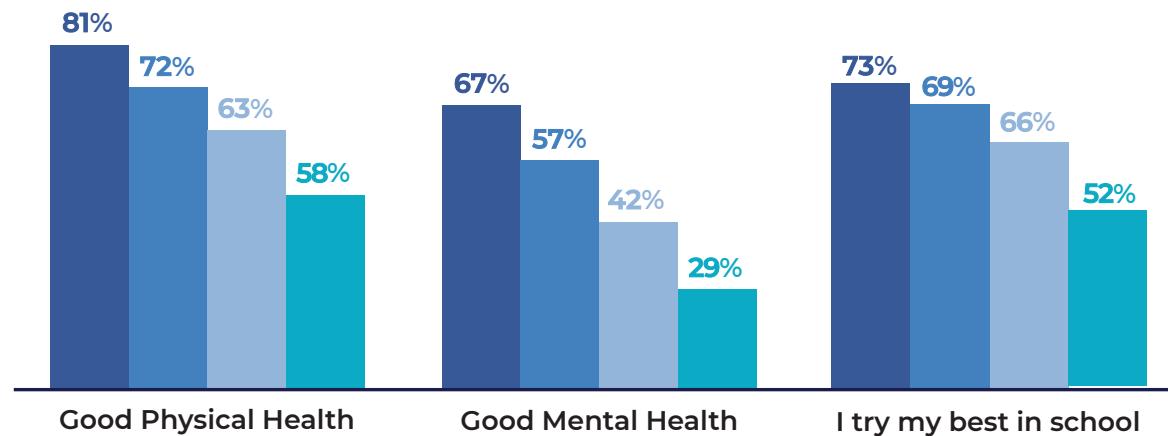
HOW MUCH SLEEP DO OUR TEENS GET?





THE IMPORTANCE OF SLEEP

■ 8 hours or more sleep ■ 7 hours sleep ■ 6 hours sleep ■ Less than 6 hours sleep





INTERESTS, HOBBIES & SPORTS

It is important that young people are encouraged to keep engaging in quality supervised, structured activities that interest them as they get older.

Physical activity is important for good health and wellbeing but not every child is interested in sports. Other hobbies and interests that provide opportunities to get involved in their community outside of school allow our children to further develop their social skills and build emotional resilience.

Good quality supervised and structured activities are also a known protective factor against substance use and anti-social behaviour.

39%

Play team
sports 3 times
a week or
more



64%

Exercise
3 times a
week or
more





VAPING, SMOKING, NICOTINE POUCHES AND CANNABIS

Daily vaping rates amongst our is high at 13% and the use of nicotine pouches has become common also.

The use of nicotine is unsafe for teenagers as it is a substance that is highly addictive and can harm adolescent brain development.

Using nicotine in adolescence can affect the parts of the brain that regulate attention, learning, mood, and impulse control. It may also increase the risk of future addiction to other drugs. Additionally, vaping or inhaling any substance can cause harm to the lungs and respiratory tract.

Experimentation with vapes is not uncommon in first-year, so talk to your teen about why vaping is harmful for them, and set a good example by being nicotine free.

13%

Are daily vapers



2%

Are daily smokers



15%

Have used cannabis in their lifetime



16%

Have tried nicotine pouches





74%

Have
tried
alcohol



30%

Drunk in
the last
month



ALCOHOL AND PARENTS

Alcohol is the most commonly used substance among young people in Ireland. As our teenagers get older, they will increasingly ask parents for access to alcohol to use before or at parties and events. These requests can start as early as second year and become more common by transition year.

Use of alcohol at a young age can impair brain development and will increase the chances of developing a dependency later in life. This is in addition to increasing the risk of other alcohol-related harms. The best thing we can do for our teenagers is to try and defer all alcohol use until they are 18 years of age.

The Planet Youth survey shows us just how important parental attitude and parental alcohol supply is when it comes to adolescent binge drinking. Teenagers that get alcohol from a parent are getting drunk at more than twice the rate of those that don't. Introducing alcohol to teenagers at home, in the pursuit of teaching them to drink responsibly, may have the opposite effect.

The chart opposite clearly shows the importance of parental disapproval. Parents don't have to be at one end of the scale or the other, every conversation and effort made to defer alcohol use is important.

28%

Regularly get
alcohol from
their parent



30%

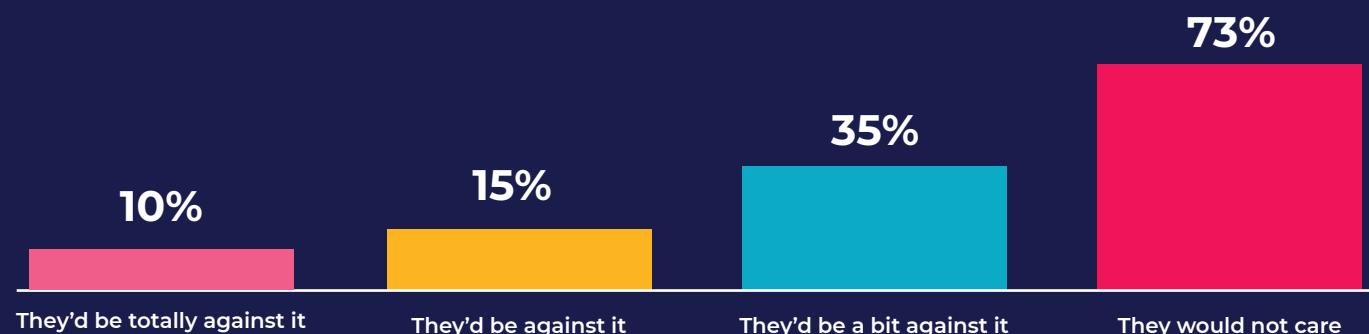
Regularly
drink at a
friend's home





OF THE 30% OF PUPILS THAT WERE DRUNK IN THE LAST MONTH

How would your parents react if you got drunk?





wicklow.planetyouth.ie

