National Unit Specification

General information

Unit title: The Impact of the Digital Society and the Information Age on Mental Health and Wellbeing (SCQF level 6)

Unit code: J77K 46

Superclass:	PH
Publication date:	March 2023
Source:	Scottish Qualifications Authority
Version:	01

Unit purpose

This unit is a mandatory unit of the level 6 Mental Health and Wellbeing award and is also available as a free-standing unit. It may provide progression for those learners who have successfully completed the National 5 Mental Health and Wellbeing Award. It is also suitable for learners who have not previously studied mental health and wellbeing at level 4 and 5.

This unit is suitable for anyone who wishes to work in the service industry or health and social care. It may also be of interest to those who wish to study information technology, occupational health and human resources.

This unit will enable learners to study the evolution of the digital society and consider the impact this has had on how we think, feel, and behave. The technological revolution has not only significantly affected how we communicate with one another, but it permeates all aspects of how we live and function in western society. Technological advances and social media have enabled humans to access information, learn and achieve more efficiently and effectively than ever before. On an individual level, these changes also have costs and benefits to our physical and mental wellbeing, as our lifestyles change in response to an ever-increasing reliance on the use of technology and social media for daily life.

Outcomes

On successful completion of the unit the learner will be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of how technology and social media impact on mental health and wellbeing.
2. Investigate how mental health and wellbeing is portrayed within the media.

National Unit Specification: General information (continued)

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Credit points and level

1 National Unit credit at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 6: (6 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 6).

Recommended entry to the unit

While entry is at the discretion of the centre, learners would benefit from completing one of the following, or equivalent:

♦ The level 5 award in Mental Health and Wellbeing.
♦ The level 5 Influences on Mental Health and Wellbeing unit.
♦ The skills, knowledge and understanding required for successful completion of level 5 units.

Core Skills

Opportunities to develop aspects of Core Skills are highlighted in the support notes for this unit specification.

There is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skill components in this unit.

Context for delivery

If this unit is delivered as part of a group award, it is recommended that it should be taught and assessed within the subject area of the group award to which it contributes.

The Assessment Support Pack (ASP) for this unit provides assessment and marking guidelines that exemplify the national standard for achievement. It is a valid, reliable and practicable assessment. Centres wishing to develop their own assessments should refer to the ASP to ensure a comparable standard. A list of existing ASPs is available to download from SQA's website **(http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/46233.2769.html)**.

Equality and inclusion

This unit specification has been designed to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment. The individual needs of learners should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods or considering alternative evidence.

Further advice can be found on our website **www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements**.

National Unit Specification: Statement of standards

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Acceptable performance in this unit will be the satisfactory achievement of the standards set out in this part of the unit specification. All sections of the statement of standards are mandatory and cannot be altered without reference to SQA.

Outcome 1

Demonstrate an understanding of how technology and social media impact on mental health and wellbeing.

Performance criteria

(a)   Describe how technology and social media has changed how we live.
(b)   Evaluate the impact of technology and social media on mental health and wellbeing.
(c)   Explain the impact of the 'Digital Divide' on mental health and wellbeing.
(d)   Demonstrate an understanding of safety and self-care in relation to the use of technology and social media.

Outcome 2

Investigate how mental health and wellbeing is portrayed within the media.

Performance criteria

(a)   Describe a range of mass media outlets which are used for communication of information in society.
(b)   Demonstrate an understanding of the influence of the media on mental health and wellbeing.
(c)   Describe the importance of responsible communication of mental health and wellbeing issues in the media.

Evidence requirements for this unit

Evidence is required to demonstrate that learners have achieved all outcomes and performance criteria.

Evidence can be gathered in a range of ways which will assess learners' knowledge, understanding and application across the outcomes and performance criteria.

Where learners have worked in a group, there should be evidence of their individual contribution.

National Unit Specification: Statement of standards (continued)

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Outcome 1

Learners must:

♦ Define the terms **technology and social media** and provide **five examples, across the decades,** which describe how technology and social media has changed how we live.
♦ Provide **two** examples which evaluate mental health consequences of technology and social media.
♦ Provide a definition of what is meant by the term '**digital divide'** and provide **four examples** which explain the impact this can have on mental health and wellbeing.
♦ Describe **three ways of staying safe from criminal activity** when online and **three ways to promote self-care and healthy use of social media and technology.**

Outcome 2

Learners must:

♦ Describe what is meant by the term **'mass media'** including **four** examples of mass media outlets which are used for communication of information in society.
♦ From the four mass media outlets provided, use **two outlets** as context to describe **two positive** and **two negative** influences mass media can have on mental health and wellbeing.
♦ Describe the importance for responsible reporting within the mass media and how this relates to mental health and wellbeing.
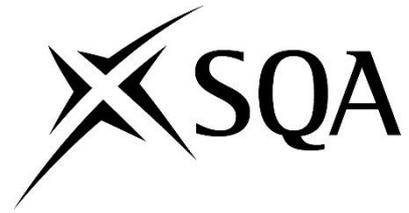
National Unit Support Notes

Unit title: The Impact of the Digital Society and the Information Age on Mental Health and Wellbeing (SCQF level 6)

Unit support notes are offered as guidance and are not mandatory.

While the exact time allocated to this unit is at the discretion of the centre, the notional design length is 40 hours.

Guidance on the content and context for this unit

Those involved in the delivery of this unit should be aware of the potentially sensitive nature of some of the issues to be discussed and investigated in this unit, particularly in relation to individual learner's circumstances.

The content of this unit follows on from the level 4 and 5 influences on mental health and wellbeing units. It is important to re-emphasise that these awards are not an exploration of mental illness but designed to support learners to consider the knowledge which informs a much broader understanding of mental health and wellbeing and what that looks like for the individual and for wider society.

The learning outcomes provide the facilitator with an opportunity to design a learning experience which is personalised to the learners. There is scope to study a wide range of topics specific to each learner's interests.

The content will provide the learner with an introduction to different aspects of the mass media and social media. This will enable the learner to develop critical thinking skills and begin to understand the complexity of the issues which have an influence on mental health and wellbeing.

Outcome 1

This outcome provides learners with the opportunity to understand the historical development of technology and social media. We now live in a 'digital age' and most young people in society are 'digital natives'. They have never known what it is like to live in an age without the internet, social media and communication technology that offers 24/7 access to the world. The speed of changes brought by the evolution of digital technology has been incredible and changed life in so many ways. People now live longer due to technological advances in health care. We have access to all the information we need at the touch of a keyboard, or the swipe of a screen and we can talk to family and friends at the other side of the world in an instant.

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With the development of new technologies there are unintentional consequences. For example, following the invention of the car, safety measures such a seat belts, lights, parking sensors, pedestrian crossings and road safety campaigns were implemented to mitigate the risks to drivers, passengers and pedestrians and ensure we could all enjoy the benefits of driving. The changes in technology and social media, have been so rapid that it has meant many of the safeguards do not yet exist, are still being considered, have been overlooked, or are quickly outdated as technology moves on. This has created some challenges for society.

Learners will get the opportunity to map the digital/technological changes in society to appreciate the speed at which these changes have occurred and consider how life has changed. They will investigate a range of sources which present evidence of the benefits and the risks these changes have had in relation mental health and wellbeing. Learners must be able to present their arguments coherently and make reference to research which supports their understanding. Facilitators may wish to explore topics such as 'fake news' and encourage learners to consider how they can ensure the information they are using is credible and informed.

The topic areas for discussion are wide ranging and could include:

♦ activism online.
♦ learning communities.
♦ connecting with friends and family.
♦ creative spaces — podcasting, YouTube, creating reels, visual arts and video.
♦ accessing support and help.
♦ social inclusion.
♦ cyber bullying.
♦ pornography.
♦ addiction.
♦ gaming.
♦ impact on interpersonal skills.
♦ social isolation.
♦ body image.
♦ Grooming — sexual exploitation or extremism.
♦ Fear of Missing Out (FOMO).

This is not intended to be a prescribed list but suggestions based on current research. As research in this area continues and technology advances these topics will vary. Facilitators are encouraged to explore learners' specific areas of interest in the context of their life or occupation but should consider appropriateness of content based on age, maturity and lived experience of the learner group.

National Unit Support Notes (continued)

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Learners will reflect on the digital divide and what is meant by digital exclusion. In recent years it has been acknowledged that a lack of access to appropriate digital equipment, reliable broadband and an increasing divide in digital literacy skills is significantly impacting on work, education, access to health, welfare and social care and daily living activities, as we edge towards a fully digital society. There are a range of factors which influence this, including socio-economic status, geographical location, age, and education. For many, this creates significant disadvantage leading to exclusion, increased vulnerability, a sense of worthlessness, lack of control and a significant barrier to enabling people to meet their basic needs. Learners will have the opportunity to learn more about why this is an increasingly important issue today.

Safeguarding and self-care are key life skills for the digital age. The more we live our lives online the greater the propensity for exposure online. Learners will study how to keep themselves and others safe when engaging in online activities. Social media and other technologies can also be addictive so learners will explore strategies to reduce their reliance on things such as Facebook and Instagram.

Understanding the etiquette of online platforms and social media is also extremely important for self-care and recognising what information should and shouldn't be shared. Self-care in relation to social media is also about recognising self-worth and not relying on validation from others, letting go of the false narratives and, ensuring that the time spent on social media is balanced with a healthy social life and interactions with family and friends.

Outcome 2

Mass media is the generic term to describe the main means of mass communication used to communicate information to the general public. Some of these technologies include:

♦ newspapers.
♦ magazines.
♦ books.
♦ journals.
♦ posters.
♦ leaflets.
♦ film.
♦ advertisements.
♦ radio.
♦ podcasts.
♦ television.
♦ public relations.
♦ social media.

Learners will have the freedom to study a range of media outlets and consider how they communicate to the public and their impact they have on the views and attitudes of society.

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Many myths and stereotypes are often perpetuated in the media which can often be detrimental to the mental health and wellbeing of various sections of the population. It can lead to negative attitudes, stigma and discrimination. Learners will be able to research and investigate both positive and negative representations of groups in society and reflect on the impact this has had on their mental health and wellbeing. Celebrities are often used as vehicles to raise the profile of particular topics or, films, and television programmes attempt to tackle issues which are taboo, such as issues of sexuality or addiction. Advertisers are more interested in capital gain and have successfully commercialised lifestyle and even childhood. Sometimes information is communicated sensitively, but alternatively it can also be pervasive, specific, and targeted which has led to public outcry or further denigration of individuals and groups.

The opportunities for study are wide ranging and could include the following topics/groups:

♦ people with a diagnosed mental illness.
♦ domestic violence.
♦ lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender and queer (LGBTQ)+ community.
♦ suicide.
♦ refugees.
♦ immigration.
♦ disability.
♦ poverty
♦ drug and alcohol use.
♦ care experienced young people.
♦ homelessness.
♦ people with criminal convictions.
♦ long term health conditions.
♦ lone parents.
♦ racism.
♦ sexism.
♦ children and young people.

This is not a prescriptive list but offers some suggestions of topic areas which could be covered. Where possible, the facilitator should consider the interests, needs and maturity of the learner.

Learners should consider the importance of responsible reporting and key factors which should be considered when tackling public issues in public forums and the consequences on individuals and groups.

National Unit Support Notes (continued)

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Guidance on approaches to delivery of this unit

It may be helpful to cover the content of this unit on an outcome by outcome basis, in the order presented in the unit. The person delivering this unit should have experience or knowledge of safeguarding individuals as some of the course content may directly relate to individual learners.

Learners should be made aware of the various sources of support available to them, the institution and local supports and recommended online supports. Other sources of support include:

Information Sources:

NHS Inform - https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/mental-health

Clear Your Head —https://clearyourhead.scot/
Aye Feel — Young Scot https://young.scot/campaigns/national/aye-fee

Helplines and text services:

Childline: 0800 1111.

YoungMinds Crisis Messenger text service:
Text YM to 85258.
Text SHOUT to 85258 https://giveusashout.org/

Samaritans:
Call 116 123.
Chat online.
Email jo@samaritans.org

Use of social media such as YouTube and podcast materials, documentaries and online resources could form part of the delivery along with guest speakers, classroom discussions and research activities.

Guidance on approaches to assessment of this unit

To achieve this unit, learners must meet all learning outcomes and evidence requirements. Where possible centres should ensure assessments are integrated into learning and generated naturally through the teaching and learning experience. When learners experience a range of assessment methods it helps them to develop different skills that should be transferable to work or further and higher education.

Assessment evidence can be drawn from a variety of sources and presented in a variety of formats. The evidence does not need to be gathered in one activity but can be assembled from a variety of tasks and assessments carried out throughout the unit. Evidence may be presented for individual outcomes or gathered for the unit or alongside other units in the award.

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Those delivering the unit should use their professional judgement, subject knowledge and experience, and understanding of their learners, to determine the most appropriate ways to generate evidence.

Evidence can be generated using different types of assessment. There may be other methods that would be more suitable to learners. The following are suggestions only:

♦   information leaflet.
♦   poster.
♦   report.
♦   a presentation or a filmed interview or documentary.
♦   wiki report/blog.
♦   podcast.
♦   or any other appropriate method agreed by the learner and assessor.

Centres are encouraged to submit centre-devised assessment for prior verification to ensure that the national standard is being met.

Opportunities for e-assessment

E-assessment may be appropriate for some assessments in this unit. By e-assessment we mean assessment which is supported by Information and Communication Technology (ICT), such as e-testing or the use of e-portfolios or social software. Centres which wish to use e-assessment must ensure that the national standard is applied to all learner evidence and that conditions of assessment as specified in the evidence requirements are met, regardless of the mode of gathering evidence. The most up-to-date guidance on the use of e-assessment to support SQA's qualifications is available at www.sqa.org.uk/e-assessment.

Opportunities for developing Core and other essential skills

Opportunities for developing aspects of Core Skills should be incorporated where they arise naturally in the teaching and learning process. Teaching methods such as class discussion will develop **Communication skills.** There may also be opportunity for debate and presenting arguments depending on the facilitation of the learning activities. Learners may also have the opportunity to develop **Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and presentation skills** through research and presentation. It may be possible to undertake group work as part of the research for this unit in which case learners could develop skills relating to **Working with Others**. Learners will also have the opportunity to develop problem solving skills as they develop the ability to think critically about mental health and wellbeing. As learners investigate evidence to support their investigations on perspectives, theories and models they will have the opportunity to develop **Numeracy skills** as they may come across statistical data and graphs.

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Consideration of their own 'digital footprint' may provide opportunity for development of **employability and citizenship skills** and developing a deeper more informed understanding of mental health and wellbeing will enable learners to proactively manage their own mental health and wellbeing and more effectively support colleagues and peers.

History of changes to unit

Version	Description of change	Date

General information for learners

Unit title: The Impact of the Digital Society and the Information Age on Mental Health and Wellbeing (SCQF level 6)

This section will help you decide whether this is the unit for you by explaining what the unit is about, what you should know or be able to do before you start, what you will need to do during the unit and opportunities for further learning and employment.

This unit will enable you to study the evolution of the digital society and consider the impact this has had on how we think, feel, and behave. The technological revolution has not only significantly affected how we communicate but it permeates all aspects of how we live and function in western society. Technological advances and social media have enabled humans to access information, learn and achieve more efficiently and effectively than ever before. On an individual level, these changes to how we live also have costs and benefits to our physical and mental wellbeing, as our lifestyles change in response to an ever-increasing reliance on the use of technology and social media for daily life.

This unit is suitable for anyone who has interest in developing a deeper understanding of mental health and wellbeing. It may be of particular interest to anyone wishing to work in human resources, community development, public policy and public health, public sector and frontline services, such as health and social care, medicine or emergency services.

While entry is at the discretion of the centre, you would benefit from having one of the following, or equivalent:

♦ The level 5 award in Mental Health and Wellbeing.
♦ The level 5 Influences on Mental Health and Wellbeing unit.
♦ The skills, knowledge and understanding required for successful completion of level 5 units.

The content of the level 6 award follows on from the level 4 and 5 Mental Health and Wellbeing awards. It is important to re-emphasise that these awards are not an exploration of mental illness but designed to provide you with the knowledge which informs a much broader understanding of mental health and wellbeing and what that looks like for the individual and for wider society.

On successful completion of the unit the learner will be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of how technology and social media impact on mental health and wellbeing.
2. Investigate how mental health and wellbeing is portrayed within the media.

You will consider wider media and the continual stream of messages received from multiple spaces in our environment and over the course of our life. You will also consider the wider impact on particular groups and learn about the importance of responsible reporting of information about public issues.

General information for learners (continued)

Unit title: The Impact of the Digital Society and the Information Age on Mental Health and Wellbeing (SCQF level 6)

You will consider the most recent research and publications which informs the debate about the benefits and harms of technology and social media use. You will also develop the skills to curate information and consider what is credible and informed. This is an important life skill to acquire as we are increasingly passive consumers of information that continually influences us both consciously and unconsciously.

Assessment evidence can be drawn from a variety of sources and presented in a variety of formats. The evidence does not require to be achieved in one activity but can be assembled from a variety of tasks and assessments carried out throughout the course. Evidence may be presented for individual outcomes or gathered for the unit or alongside other units in the award.

You must meet **all learning outcomes and evidence requirements** to fully achieve this unit. You could demonstrate your knowledge using a range of methods which could include:

♦ information leaflet.
♦ poster.
♦ report.
♦ presentation, filmed interview or documentary.
♦ wiki blog/report.
♦ podcast.
♦ or any other appropriate method.