

‘Someone You Know and Can Trust’

November 2012

Introduction

School nurses¹ are specialist public health nurses, who deliver effective, evidence based public health interventions to school-aged children and young people. Together with their team, they deliver the Healthy Child Programme (HCP)² for all children and young people aged 5-19, taking over smoothly from health visitors who provide services covering pregnancy and the first five years of life. As such, school nurses play a crucial role in ensuring that children, young people and families get good, joined-up support and access to available services at the earliest point, from a child’s transition into school and continuing through their school-aged years.

School nursing service: how it improves the health of our communities

School nurses assess the school-aged (5-19) population health and wellbeing needs and lead, influence and champion health promotion activities both in and out of school settings. School nurses and their teams work and collaborate with other professionals to ensure there is seamless support to children, young people and families.

The stark facts

- 22.6% of all school absences were for over 25 days (2010)
- 9.6% of children aged 5-16 years had a clinically recognisable mental disorder (2005)
- 11% of boys and 8% of girls reported current asthma symptoms (2010)
- There are 139,000 young carers aged under 18 in England (2001)
- 16% of children aged 2-15 were classified as obese (2010)
- Around one third of children have at least one decayed, missing or filled tooth (30.9% at 5 years old and 33.4% at 12 years old)
- 173,416 new cases of chlamydia in the 15-24 age group (2010)
- 4% of boys and 5% of girls attending school described themselves as regular smokers (2011)
- 12% of 11-15 year olds reported having had alcoholic drink in the past week (2011)
- 7,400 under 18 preanancies (first quarter of 2011)

What is the Healthy Child Programme (5-19)?

- A national public health programme for children and young people from 5-19
- Provides a robust evidence based framework and sets out good practice for prevention and early intervention services
- Identifies the school nursing service as crucial to the effective delivery of the HCP
- Assists local areas to ensure services:
 - Are based on robust needs assessment
 - Utilise effective practice and prioritise evidence based programmes
 - Make best use of their workforce

What are school nurses?

- Qualified nurses with specialist training in the health needs of school aged children
- Lead and deliver the **Healthy Child Programme 5-19**
- Equipped to work at community, family and individual levels
- Skilled in identifying issues and risks early, providing early intervention
- Work in a range of settings including mainstream education, faith schools, specialist services for looked after children, and special schools
- Support children with illness and disability to enable them to access education and recreation

¹ School nurses are qualified nurses or midwives with specialist graduate level education in community health and the health needs of school aged children and young people leading to registration as a Specialist Community Public Health Nurse (SCPHN) with the Nursing and Midwifery Council

² http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/@dh/@en/@ps/documents/digitalasset/dh_118525.pdf

Through the delivery of effective evidence based public health programmes and by implementing the Healthy Child Programme, school nurses enable a number of health outcomes including:

- Improving school readiness and a reduction in school absences
- Fewer children and young people requiring formal safeguarding arrangements – achieved through earlier identification and intervention;
- Improved mental health and emotional wellbeing among larger numbers of school-aged children;
- Greater numbers of children and young people living healthy lifestyles, including good diet and nutrition with reduced incidence of obesity and related health dangers that can affect later life;
- Reduction in teenage pregnancies and reduction in the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases;
- Reduction in health inequalities via tailored work with communities of children, young people and families;
- Signposting and guidance to local specialised services that can address specific and identified needs.

‘See a school nurse before it gets worse’

Recent consultation with children, young people and parents

According to recent consultation by The National Children’s Bureau (NCB), indicators suggest the **need for school nurses to provide support and assistance to children at times of emotional and physical distress** – as well as acting as a source of information and advice to help them understand how they change physically as they grow up. A school nurse can, for example, provide clinical intervention to a depressed child struggling with school or with bullying, or identify a child’s speech or language problem that would benefit from early help.

However, despite this, when asked about their child’s knowledge of the school nursing

Recognising the importance of this consultation and the crucial role of school nurses in supporting children and young people, the Government’s new vision for the school nursing service includes:

- a commitment to create a strengthened, rejuvenated workforce;
- quality improvements in the school nursing service; and
- improved health outcomes for children, young people and families.

The school nursing service: what it can offer children, young people and parents

Under the new school nursing model, school nurses and their teams offer four levels of service to children and young people between 5-19. Below outlines the service which should be offered for children and young people.

■ Your Community	All communities have a range of health services (including GP and community services) for children and young people and their families. School nurses develop and provide these and make sure you know about them.
■ Universal services	School nurses and their team provide the Healthy Child Programme to ensure a healthy start for every child (e.g. immunisations, health checks). They support children and parents to ensure access to a range of community services
■ Universal plus	Gives children, young people and parents a swift response from your school nurse service when you need specific expert help (e.g. with sexual health, mental health concerns, long-term conditions and additional health needs).
■ Universal partnership plus	Provides ongoing support by your school nurse team from a range of local services working together and with you, to deal with more complex issues over a period of time (e.g. complex health needs alongside charities and your local authority).

'To provide support in times of need to help avoid crisis'

The service will be available in convenient local settings, including schools, youth centres and health centres, as well as through home visits. You may expect school nurses to cover the following³:

- Lead and deliver the Public Health Programmes and Healthy Child Programme 5-19;
- Use evidence from neuro-science to inform practice in supporting children and young people;
- Build capacity e.g. supporting healthy schools;
- Promote good mental health and wellbeing;
- Support early intervention in mental ill health, and identify and help children and young people, and their families, who need support with their emotional or mental health;
- Improve readiness for school;
- Reduce school absences;
- Increase population vaccination cover;
- Monitor tooth decay in children aged 5;
- Monitor excess weight in 4-5 and 10-11 year olds;
- Reduce hospital admissions due to unintentional or deliberate injuries in under 18 year olds;
- Promote emotional wellbeing of Looked after children;
- Reduce under 18 conception rates;
- Support diagnosis of chlamydia in 15-24 year olds;
- Reduce smoking prevalence in 15 year olds;
- Reduce alcohol and drug mis-use.

What does this mean for you?

This vision for the future of school nursing in England will help local areas to build on their existing service and strengthen the school nursing service that all children, young people and families can expect to access, as part of a range of local services to support families.

Excellent, well-resourced school nurse services work best in partnership with other health and education professionals, both within schools, but also with social care and other wider services aimed at school-aged children.

³ http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/@dh/@en/documents/digitalasset/dh_133352.pdf

Not only is it important to work collaboratively with the school nursing service behind the scenes, all services aimed at school-aged children need to work together to raise the profile of the school nurse. This will ensure children and young people understand what services are on offer to them, and how they might access and feedback on them. The suite of fact sheets and professional partnership pathways will support implementation of the service offer.

Checklist for Health and Social Care Professionals

- ✓ Do you know what your school nursing service provides?
- ✓ Do you know how to contact the School Nursing service?
- ✓ Are you providing coordinated packages of support in partnership with the lead school nursing service?
- ✓ Are you promoting and signposting the school nursing service to young people?
- ✓ Are you able to articulate the School Nurse Offer?
- ✓ Are you and other staff sufficiently briefed to understand the role of the school nursing service?
- ✓ Are there systems in place to review and provide feedback to the school nursing services and public health delivery in local schools?
- ✓ Are there adequate mechanisms in place to get the views of children and young people about general health and wellbeing?

RESOURCES. –

Department of Health (2012). *Getting it Right for Children, Young People and Families*. London: Department of Health http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/@dh/@en/documents/digitalasset/dh_133352.pdf

Department of Health and Department for Children, Schools and Families (2009). *Healthy Child Programme (From 5 –19 years old)*. London: Department of Health. http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/documents/digitalasset/dh_108866.pdf

British Youth Council (2011). *Our school nurse. Young people's views on the role of the school nurse*. London: British Youth Council. http://www.byc.org.uk/resource-download-log.aspx?doc=/media/75447/byc_school_nurse_report_web.pdf

Local authority child health profiles (published by the Child and Maternal Health Observatory Chi Mat): www.chimat.org.uk/profiles

Additional Information

ⁱ In November 2011, the NCB successfully recruited eight schools to participate in a survey of children from ages 6 to

11 to seek the views of young children about School Nursing services. The schools were located across the country from London to the Midlands and the Northwest. In total, 293 pupils participated in answering questions on a written survey (45% male and 55% female).

In December 2011, Netmums used similar questions to those included the surveys conducted by BYC and NCB to illicit the views of parents about School Nursing services. In total, 564 parents participated in the on-line survey; the majority of respondents (86%) were parents of children in primary school, with remaining 11% being parents of children in secondary schools.

The British Youth Council (BYC), provided access to consultation with almost 2000 secondary school-aged young people during the summer of 2011 via an online survey, which gained responses from 1599 young people ages 11 to 18 from across England (July 2011). The British Youth Council also arranged focus groups at BYC Convention events with 202 young people in August 2011.
