

Association of British Paediatric Nursing Background briefing on School Nursing

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to inform Association of British Paediatric Nurses (ABPN) members about the provision of a school nursing service across the UK

Background

School nurses that have completed a post-registration specialist community public health education programmeⁱ work with children, young people and their families to improve health and wellbeing, reduce inequalities and address vulnerabilities. This includes reducing childhood obesity, under 18 conception rates, the prevalence of chlamydia, and supporting the mental health of children and young people.

School nurses deliver:

Universal services – leading and coordinating evidence-based services and programmes, including drop-in clinics and signposting to other services

Targeted services - providing early help to those children who require additional services such as for emotional health and wellbeing

Specialist services – providing additional services to support vulnerable children and families in partnership with other professionals and agenciesⁱⁱ

Some nurses are employed directly by a schoolⁱⁱⁱ or college, and are responsible for influencing the health provision across the school or college, working with head teachers, teachers, governors, and parents to promote the health and wellbeing of the children and young people.

An overview of the current situation across the UK

England

In 2013 commissioning of school nursing services became the responsibility of local authorities. The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities has produced service specifications for the commissioning of school nursing services that describes high impact areas, supports integrated delivery and co-commissioning^{iv}. This encompasses:

- delivering against the high impact areas for school-aged years such as supporting healthy lifestyles, self-care, health literacy and emotional wellbeing
- supporting transition for school-aged children, for example transition between health visiting and school nursing, and into adult services

- supporting vulnerable children and those not in school, for example, children in care, young carers or young offenders
- supporting children who are home educated
- providing the support offered as part of the Supporting Families Programme refreshed health offer or local equivalent
- contributing to safeguarding

The Royal College of Nursing has raised concerns regarding the decrease in school nurses and funding for public health services since 2013^{v,vi}.

The Independent review of the NHS in England by Lord Darzi (2024)^{vii} highlighted that there was a need for a shift towards more integrated, preventative care closer to home. School nurses have a key role in improving children and young people's health.

Key policy documents to support the need for school nursing services include:

Department of Health and Social Care (2012) Getting it right for children, young people and families: health services (updated in 2015)^{viii}

Department of Health and Social Care (2014) Maximising the school nursing team contribution to the public health of school-aged children^{ix}

Department of Health and Social Care (2014) School nursing: public health services. Guidance for putting in place public health services for children and young people from 5 to 19 years^x

Local Government Association (2022) School nursing – looking after health and wellbeing of school children^{xi}

Local Government Association and School and Public Health Nurses Association (2022) Who are school nurses and what do they do?^{xii}

School and Public Health Nurses Association (2024) The Forgotten Frontline: Public Health Nursing^{xiii}

Scotland

A review of School Nursing in Scotland in 2018, along with a commitment to increase the number of school nurses identified the following key priorities^{xiv}

- emotional health and wellbeing
- substance misuse
- child protection
- domestic abuse
- looked after children
- homelessness
- youth justice
- young carers
- sexual health
- transitions

Key policy documents include:

Scottish Government (2018) Specialist school nursing: priority areas and pathways^{xv}

Scottish Government (2018) The School nursing role in integrated community nursing teams (2018)^{xvi}

Wales

In 2017 a new school nursing framework was developed for primary, secondary and subsequently special needs schools, along with a specific focus on children and young people with medical needs^{xvii}

Key policy documents include:

Welsh Government (2017) School nursing framework for Wales^{xviii}

Welsh Government (2017) Supporting learners with healthcare needs^{xix}

Welsh Government (2018) A school nursing framework for Wales – part 2 Nursing in special schools^{xx}

Welsh Assembly Government (2010) Access to education and support for children and young people with medical needs^{xxi}

Northern Ireland

A review of the important role of health visiting and school nurses within integrated children's services highlighted their contribution in improving the health and reducing inequalities for children and young people^{xxii}.

Key policy documents include:

- Department of Health (2010) Healthy Child Healthy Future programme^{xxiii}
- Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (2015) Healthy Futures 2010-2015 – The contribution of health visitors and school nurses in Northern Ireland^{xxiv}
- Department of Health (2015) Making Life Better - Strategic Framework for Public Health (2013-2023)^{xxv}

Copyright ©2024 Association of British Paediatric Nurses. All rights reserved.

December 2024

References

ⁱ Nursing and Midwifery Council Standards of Proficiency for Specialist Community Public Health Nurses
<https://www.nmc.org.uk/standards/standards-for-post-registration/standards-of-proficiency-for-specialist-community-public-health-nurses2/>

-
- ii Some school nurses are registered children’s nurses and have the knowledge, skills and competencies to deliver hands on clinical care alongside their public health role
- iii Including independent and boarding schools
- iv Commissioning health visitors and school nurses for public health services for children aged 0 to 19
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/healthy-child-programme-0-to-19-health-visitor-and-school-nurse-commissioning/commissioning-health-visitors-and-school-nurses-for-public-health-services-for-children-aged-0-to-19>
- v Royal College of Nursing (2017) The best start: The future of children’s health, London: RCN
- vi Royal College of Nursing (2018) The Best Start: The Future of children’s health – One year on – Valuing school nurses and health visitors in England <https://www.rcn.org.uk/Professional-Development/publications/pdf-007000>
- vii Independent Investigation of the National Health Service in England <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-investigation-of-the-nhs-in-england>
- viii See Getting it right for children, young people and families: health services
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/getting-it-right-for-children-young-people-and-families>
- ix See https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7e4715e5274a2e8ab46faa/Service_specifications.pdf
- x See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-nursing-public-health-services>
- xi <https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/school-nursing-looking-after-health-and-wellbeing-school-children>
- xii https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/WSA1028517%20SAPHNA%20-%20School%20Nurse%20Leaflet%20ok_.pdf
- xiii <https://saphna.co/news/inaugural-survey-of-school-nursing-the-forgotten-frontline/>
- xiv <https://www.gov.scot/policies/maternal-and-child-health/school-nursing/>
- xv <https://www.gov.scot/publications/school-nursing-role-integrated-community-nursing-teams-school-nursing-priority/pages/2/>
- xvi <https://www.gov.scot/publications/school-nursing-role-integrated-community-nursing-teams/>
- xvii <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-03/a-school-nursing-framework-for-wales-may-2017.pdf>
- xviii <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-03/a-school-nursing-framework-for-wales-may-2017.pdf>
- xix <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-12/supporting-learners-with-healthcare-needs.pdf>
- xx <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-03/a-school-nursing-framework-for-wales-part-2-nursing-in-special-schools-november-2018.pdf>
- xxi https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/id/eprint/562/7/100603medguideanceen_Redacted.pdf
- xxii <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/healthy-futures-2010-2015-contribution-health-visitors-and-school-nurses-northern>
- xxiii <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/healthy-child-healthy-future>
- xxiv <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/healthy-futures-2010-2015-contribution-health-visitors-and-school-nurses-northern>
- xxv <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/making-life-better-strategic-framework-public-health>