

What is the unique contribution of the modern school nurse to the health and well-being of school aged children and young people?

- School nurses are recognised as public health practitioners in the four countries of the United Kingdom. The term 'school nurse' is generic, as the job title varies locally. The modern qualified school nurse has trained as a nurse, and then completed further education at degree or masters level to become a specialist community public health nurse.
- School nurses work at the interface between education and health. Appreciating the culture, developments and pressures of both organisations enables them to work effectively in partnership to facilitate children and young people achieving their full potential. It is this knowledge and ability which makes the service unique.
- The school nursing role is similar in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland, but slightly different in Wales where school nurses have an extended role working with the whole family.
- In many areas, school nurses lead multi-skilled teams working in schools.
- School nurses have an important role in delivering improved public health outcomes to children and young people, particularly the 'Every Child Matters' targets and the healthy child programme for 5-19 year olds.
- School nurses are valued by schools as they offer a professional service, and are trusted by young people as they offer a confidential service.
- The shift from a 'school only' focus, to the complete health needs of the school aged population has seen many school nurses developing specialist roles outside the school environment. They often take on lead public health coordinating roles in areas such as: healthy schools, looked after children, childhood obesity, teenage pregnancy or immunisation.

- School nurses help teaching staff to deliver effective personal, social and health education (PHSE) on topics such as smoking, puberty, hygiene, sexually transmitted diseases, contraception, healthy eating, oral health, accident prevention, alcohol consumption etc. to help children and young people to make healthy choices.
- School nurses help schools to develop and monitor their health policies such as asthma, dental, bullying and sex and relationships education, and advise on the safe storage of medicines.
- School nurses have a key role in responding to the needs of vulnerable children and young people, as they have the clinical knowledge and psychological skill to understand the interplay of complex contextual issues which affect the health of individuals. They liaise with GPs, hospital departments, child and adolescent mental health services and social care to interpret the young person's health status to school staff. School nurses are the key health professional working with social care and school staff on child protection issues.
- Children and young people with chronic or complex health issues may be in mainstream school, or special school. School nurses bring their expert knowledge to ensure that care plans are drawn up and implemented so that they receive appropriate care. They enable school staff to understand and recognise problems, and they may train support staff to carry out their role.
- Up to 20% school aged children and teenagers suffer from mental and emotional health problems such as stress, eating disorders and self harm. Many school nurses offer self referral clinics, both at school and in high street youth centres, where any health issue can be discussed in confidence, and young people can be referred to specialist help where necessary.

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