
Symposium 5.1: School nursing: a solution focused response to the current escalating child health crisis

Thursday, 12th September - 09:10

Overview

School nurses (SN) play a crucial role in promoting the health of children and young people. With widening health inequalities and increases in prevalence of illness and mental health problems, the SN is essential. This panel showcases research evidencing the vital role of the SN. Starting with key messages from a study with SNs during the pandemic to capture the creative and responsive practice to emergent need during, and beyond, the pandemic; the development of two resources identified as needed by SN in this study will then be presented: a new modes of practice teaching tool, and a restorative reflective resource. The panel concludes with an overview of findings from the inaugural national School and Public Health Nurses survey; and developments from the School and Public Health Nurses Association, Queen's Nursing Institute and College of Medicine's joint evidence-based proposition on the impact of SN in improving school aged children's health.

Paper1: Key findings from the inaugural School and Public Health Nurses' Association (SAPHNA) 'School nursing: where are we now?' Survey Report 2024

Abstract ID 358

Authors

Ms. Sallyann Sutton (School and Public Health Nurses Association)

Abstract

The final section will present key findings from the inaugural School and Public Health Nurses' Association (SAPHNA) 'School nursing: where are we now?' Survey Report 2024 and developments from the SAPHNA, Queen's Nursing Institute, and College of Medicine's joint evidence-based proposition on the impact of school nursing in improving school aged children's health.

The key findings from this first UK wide survey of school nursing teams undertaken by SAPHNA, will give a picture of school nursing in the UK from a practitioner intelligence perspective. This will include an overview of: what school nurses are doing, what services they are providing, the innovative approaches undertaken to delivery, and also the challenges in practice.

There were just under 300 responses from across all four UK countries to the survey. The data is currently being analysed in partnership with Oxford Brookes University and prepared into a report which will be available to delegates of the RCN research conference. Early findings highlight the dramatic increase in health challenges for children and young people, and how the school nurse is key to supporting children and families across emotional, physical and social issues.

The presentation will link the key messages from the survey to how this evidence is being used to underpin policy and partnership work. The work of the joint evidence based proposition between SAPHNA, the QNI and the College of Medicine will be presented. Links will be made between the growing evidence based surrounding the school nurse role, and the need for the school nurse role for optimising children and young people's health and well-being. The survey evidence, and wider evidence relating to

the role of the school nurse will be presented will be discussed in relation to parliamentary lobbying to embed the role of the school nurse, and specific remits within this role, into policy.

References

White, S., 2022. 'These are the hands': The future of the school nursing workforce. *British Journal of Child Health*, 3(1), pp.49-50.

Sutton, S. and White, S., 2024. The role of the school nurse in the UK: where are we now?. *Paediatrics and Child Health*.

White, S., 2021. How will you raise your school nursing roar?. *British Journal of Child Health*, 2(3), pp.153-154.

Lead presenter biography

Sallyann Sutton

I have worked in school nursing for almost 32 years, qualifying as a SCPHN in 2003. I have been part of the SAPHNA committee for several years and was appointed to the role of Professional Officer in February 2023. I am proud to hold the title of Queen's Nurse. I hold a MSC in Child and Family Mental Health in 2009 and a PGD in Public Mental Health and worked in a Primary Mental Health team developing pathway across School Nursing Services and CAMHS. I hold the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson NHS Senior Healthcare Leadership Award and MSc in Healthcare Leadership.

Paper 2: Developing training and restorative resources to support student and practicing school nurses

Abstract ID 357

Authors

Dr. Georgia Cook (Oxford Brookes University)

Abstract

The second presentation will detail two resources under development in response to needs identified by SNs in the original School Nursing in the Time of Covid study.

The first is the co-production of training materials with and for School and Public Health Nursing (SCPHN) students, focused around the practice modes available to work with children and young people. These will comprise self-contained materials and practical activities to encourage critical reflective practice in a format that can be provided to SCPHN educators nationwide to implement with their cohorts.

These training materials will equip school nurses to deploy a range of different modes of practice to engage with, assess, and support children and young people in a post-pandemic landscape with increased public health needs.

The second is to develop a restorative reflective resource for SN. This resource, offers guidance through a restorative process for SN teams who have been exposed to emotional stress and trauma, focusing on the impact of practicing both during and in a post Covid landscape. There is a need to 'pause and reflect', acknowledging the impact on school health teams and consider the way forward in a climate that continues to evolve and challenge. These resources will be available online and can be used as part of regular team clinical supervision, or self-directed as part of the reflective exercise for nurse revalidation.

Both resources are being co-produced - school nurses and organisations that represent school nurses (the Community Practitioner and Health Visitor Association - CPHVA, and the School and Public Health Nurses Association - SAPHNA) are involved in the design and content.

We anticipate presenting early findings from the evaluation stage of both resources, before national launch.

References

(under review) Bekaert, S., Rawlings, M., Sharrif, D., Sammut, D., & Cook, G. 2024. Developing a learning and practice resource on new and accelerated modes of working for school nurses: a framework analysis of school nurses' accounts of working with children and young people during Covid-19. *Journal of School Nursing*.

Sammut, D., Cook, G., Taylor, J., Harrold, T., Appleton, J. and Bekaert, S., 2022. School nurse perspectives of working with children and young people in the United Kingdom during the COVID-19 pandemic: An online survey study. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 20(1), p.481.

Bekaert, S., Sammut, D., Appleton, J.V., Taylor, J., Harrold, T. and Cook, G., 2023. Learning from school nursing practices and new ways of working during the COVID-19 pandemic: A qualitative study. *British Journal of Child Health*, 4(2), pp.71-77.

Lead presenter biography

@GeorgiaC_sleep

Georgia is a Research Fellow at Oxford Brookes University. Her research interests focus around work with children and families, and has expertise in both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. She has experience across a range of research projects including a multisite randomised control trial, looking to improve sleep and quality of life in children with epilepsy (and their families); and evaluation work, for example the efficacy of a scheme designed to reduce risk of violence in young people. She has conducted work with healthcare professionals to explore their experiences and perspectives and to develop practical tools to benefit their professional practice.

Paper 3: School Nursing in the Time of Covid: a mixed methods study

Abstract ID 356

Authors

Dr. Sarah Bekaert (Oxford Brookes University)

Abstract

COVID-19 had unprecedented effects on children's health and wellbeing. During the pandemic, school nurses across the world swiftly adapted their practice, demonstrating flexibility and creativity to mitigate negative health outcomes for children. However, COVID-19-related restrictions meant that they faced significant challenges in accessing and supporting children.

This presentation will showcase the findings of two phases of research: an e-survey of SNs across England and Wales to identify innovative practice in front-line SN work with vulnerable children and young people; and a qualitative study to examine SN's views about new practices used with vulnerable children and young people, and work with partner agencies.

A cross-sectional survey was administered to school nurses across the United Kingdom. Quantitative data were analysed descriptively. Qualitative data (free-text responses to open-ended questions) were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis. Seventy-eight participant responses were included in the analysis. In the qualitative study A purposive sample of 20 school nurses participated across ten virtual focus groups and one-to-one interviews. Data were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis.

Findings show swift adaptation of practice; increased challenges in accessing, supporting and representing children and families; benefits for multidisciplinary working; reduced opportunity for preventative work, resulting in more complex issues later on; variability in SNs reporting of the usefulness of different methods used to engage with children and their families - with concerns about an increasing reliance on virtual platforms for service provision.

Recommendations: considered use of virtual modes to enhance rather than replace in-person practice, building a robust evidence base that can inform future commissioning, clear guidance regarding the boundaries of school nursing practice in the context of increasing workloads, investing in the school nurse workforce going forwards.

The following specific needs for SN were identified: to explore new practices that have been beneficial and how these be could be continued post-pandemic, and for restorative work with the SN workforce.

References

Bekaert, S., Sammut, D., Appleton, J.V., Taylor, J., Harrold, T. and Cook, G., 2023. Learning from school nursing practices and new ways of working during the COVID-19 pandemic: A qualitative study. *British Journal of Child Health*, 4(2), pp.71-77.

Sammut, D., Cook, G., Taylor, J., Harrold, T., Appleton, J.V. and Bekaert, S., 2022. School Nurse Perspectives of Working with Children and Young People in the United Kingdom during the COVID-19 Pandemic: An Online Survey Study. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 20(1), p.481.

Cook, G., Appleton, J.V., Bekaert, S., Harrold, T., Taylor, J. and Sammut, D., 2023. School nursing: New ways of working with children and young people during the Covid-19 pandemic: A scoping review. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 79(2), pp.471-501.

Lead presenter biography

Sarah Bekaert

Sarah is a senior lecturer in child health at Oxford Brookes University, UK. She is a children's nurse with experience in school nursing, child protection, and sexual health. Her research focuses on public health issues related to teenagers. These include teenage pregnancy and parenting, intimate partner violence in teen relationships, interpersonal violence. She is currently working with Thames Valley Police on public health approaches to tackle violent crime, specifically focusing on early intervention in childhood and the teen years. She is Reviews Editor for the British Journal of Child Health and Affiliate Lecturer at Kristianstad University, Sweden.