



SCHOOL AND PUBLIC HEALTH NURSES ASSOCIATION

Independent investigation of NHS performance: submission of evidence



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SAPHNA is presenting evidence to the enquiry in the following areas:

- Access to the community services – public health nursing;
- Pathway - Staying physically and mentally well, children and young people’s physical and mental health, long term conditions and infectious diseases
- Workforce

Context of Evidence. School nurses are the only health professional with a reach extending to all school aged children and young people, providing a public health service which is crucial to improving the health and wellbeing of children and young people and reducing inequalities. School nurses are registered nurses with additional post graduate qualifications in specialist community public health nursing (SCPHN). They lead the 5-19 element of the Healthy Child Programme (HCP), ‘universal in-reach’ and ‘personalised in-response’, designed to offer every child and young person an evidence-based schedule of interventions. The HCP includes screening, immunisations, assessment, developmental reviews, information, and guidance which together support children and young people to achieve optimum health and wellbeing. School nurses take over care from the health visitor when a child enters full time education and are available to support them until they reach 19yrs. The guidance for England suggests that local authorities may wish to consider provision of services for young people up to the age of 25 who might be vulnerable or who have additional needs. They support children and young people in schools, other education settings including alternative provision, the secure estate, those who are electively home educated and those more vulnerable children who are missing their education¹.

1. Sutton S, White S. The role of the school nurse in the UK: where are we now? Paediatrics and Child Health [Internet]. 2024 Mar [cited 2024 Jun 29];34(3):99–103. Available from:

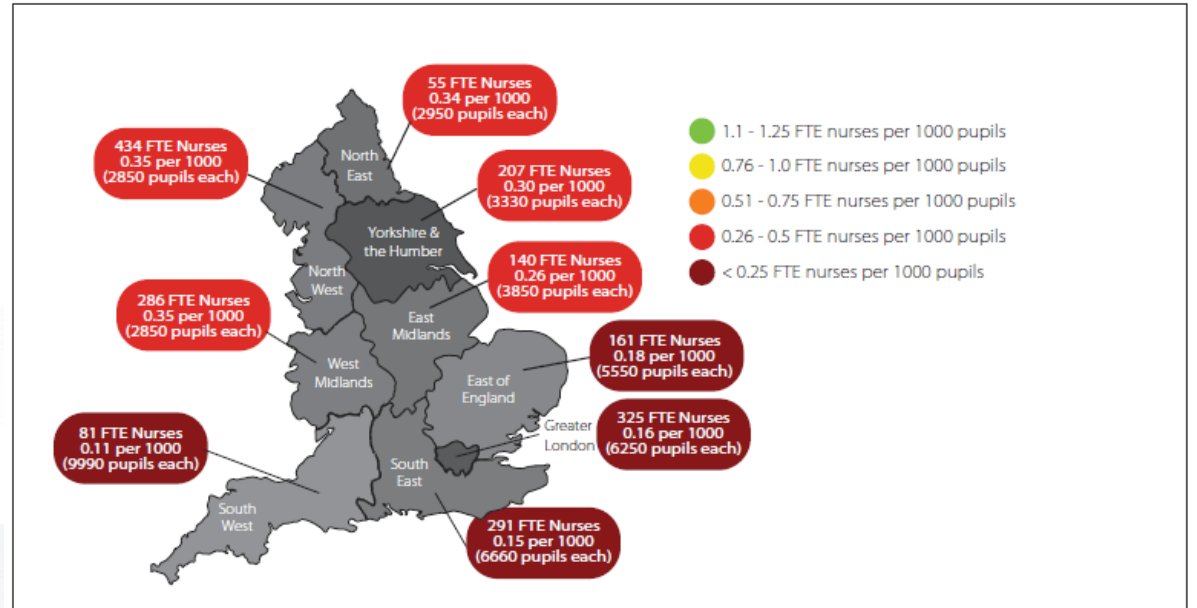
<https://linkinghub.elsevier.com/retrieve/pii/S1751722223002135>

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School Nursing Workforce

- The NHS workforce data shows a worrying decline in the number of qualified school nurses. Workforce data for February 2023 indicates that there are only 867 WTE qualified school nurses in England. The school nursing service has been eroded by around 35% since 2009 ^{2,3}.
- Data gathered in the survey shows that we have an ageing workforce, over a third of qualified school nurses responding reported to be aged 51 years and over. Almost half of those school nurses plan to retire in the next 3 years with a loss of expertise and experience ⁴.

Number of school nurses caring for children in WTE in England.



2. NHS England. NHS England Digital. 2023 [cited 2024 Jun 29]. NHS Workforce Statistics - February 2023 (Including selected provisional statistics for March 2023). Available from: <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/nhs-workforce-statistics/february-2023>

3. College of Medicine and Integrated Health, School And Public Health Nurses Association, The Queens Nursing Institute. A school nurse in Every School Report from a Round Table discussion held on 15 December 2023 [Internet]. London: The Queens Nursing Institute; 2024 [cited 2024 Jun 29] p. 12. Available from: <https://qni.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Round-Table-Report-A-School-Nurse-in-every-School-December-2023.pdf>

4. School and Public Health Nurses Association, 2024 (unpublished). Unveiling the realities of school nursing. A UK survey report.

School Nursing Workforce

School nurses responding to the survey³ tell us.....

The nature of the work is changing with the service dealing with increasingly acute and complex issues: ***'the capacity of staff is low and demand for support has increased with more complex issues of children and young people'***. Concerns over staff health were apparent: ***'since our funding cuts there are not enough staff to deliver the service as the waiting list is increasing rapidly, putting staff under further stress, which is really worrying'***.

For many of the participants this has led to the sense that they were not achieving what they would wish in their role: ***'The feeling of job satisfaction has reduced with an increase of feeling like we are failing our children and young people'***.

In some areas reductions in commissioning of school nursing services, is having a detrimental impact on the school nurses and school health teams. This is evident in the comments made by those responding to the survey. The offer was still ***'excellent, but at the detriment of staff wellbeing'***. Due to reduced workforce, remaining staff are working harder and longer to respond to children and young people's needs ***'the numbers of school nurses are inadequate, and this is impacting on staff who are working beyond their hours to continue to meet local need'***.

4. School and Public Health Nurses Association, 2024 (unpublished). Unveiling the realities of school nursing. A UK survey report.

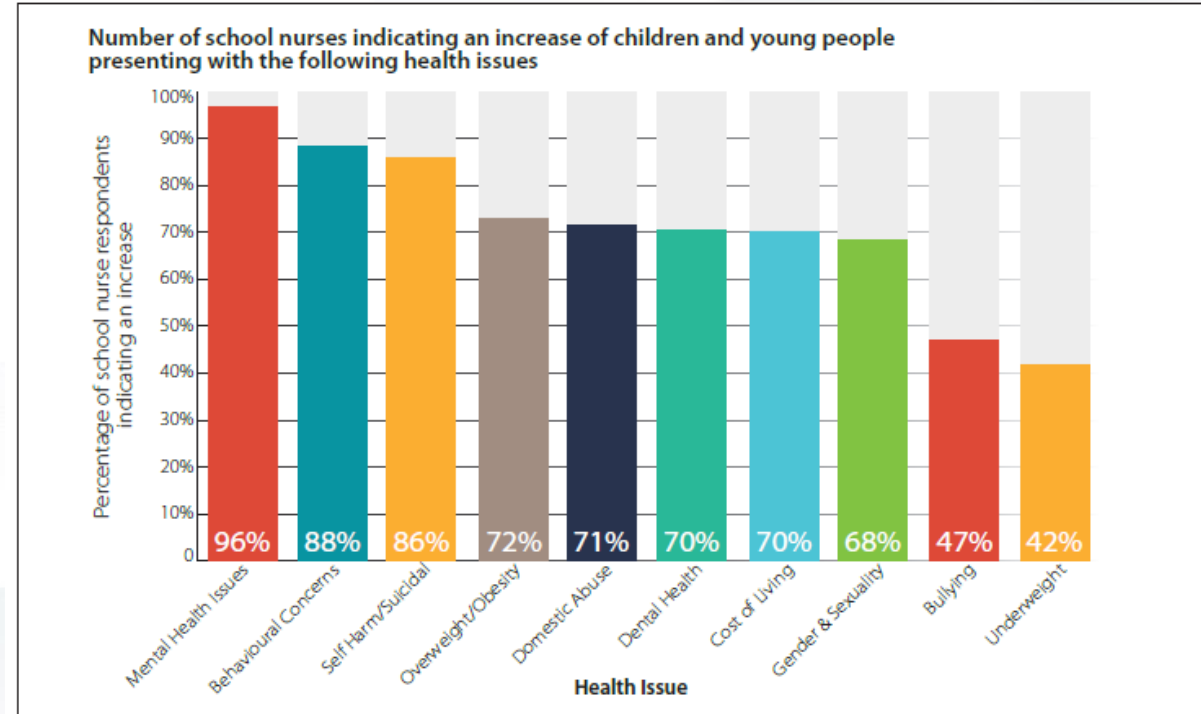


Health Needs of Children & Young People (5-19 years)

In the SAPHNA survey³ of school nurses the key Health findings of respondents indicated that:

- 96% had seen an increase in **Mental Health Issues** in their children & young people.
- 88% had seen an increase in **Behavioural** concerns in their children & young people.
- 86% had seen an increase in **Self Harm & Suicidal Behaviour** Issues in their children & young people.
- 72% had seen an increase in **Overweight & Obesity** Issues in their children & young people.
- 71% had seen an increase in **Domestic Abuse** Issues in their children & young people.
- 70% had seen an increase in **Dental Health** Issues in their children & young people.
- 70% had seen an increase in supporting children where **Cost of Living** was an Issue for their children & young people.
- 68% had seen an increase in worries around **Gender and Sexuality** Issues in their children & young people.
- 47% had seen an increase in **Bullying** Issues in their children & young people.
- 42% had seen an increase in **Underweight** Issues in their children & young people.

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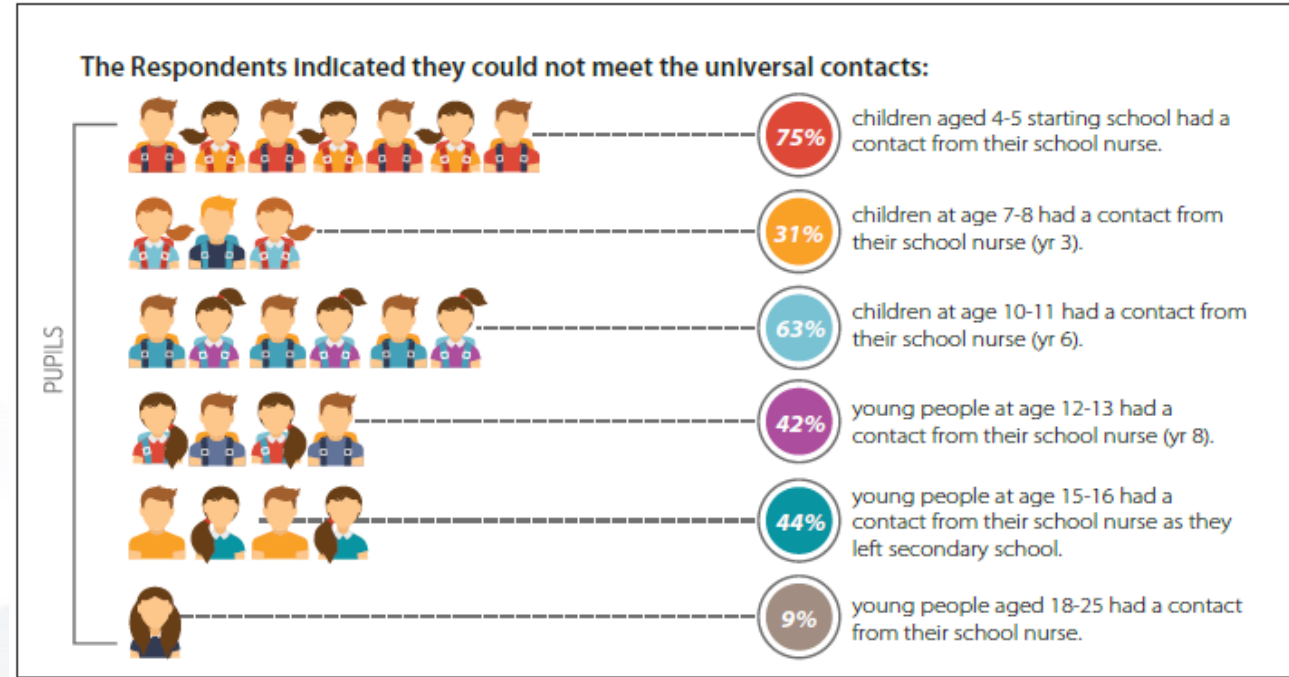
4. School and Public Health Nurses Association, 2024 (unpublished). Unveiling the realities of school nursing. A UK survey report.

Gaps in service delivery of the Healthy Child Programme 5-19

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The report³ reveals that school nursing is not able to fully deliver the universal contacts within the Healthy Child Programme due to lack of capacity or the because elements of the programme are not commissioned in the area that they work.

Three quarters of 4-5 year olds received a contact when they start full time school. However, at the remaining contact points delivery is extremely poor. As a result, a significant number of children and young people are likely to be missing an opportunity to have health issues identified early and receive timely intervention in order to prevent escalation of problems late, leading to poorer outcomes.



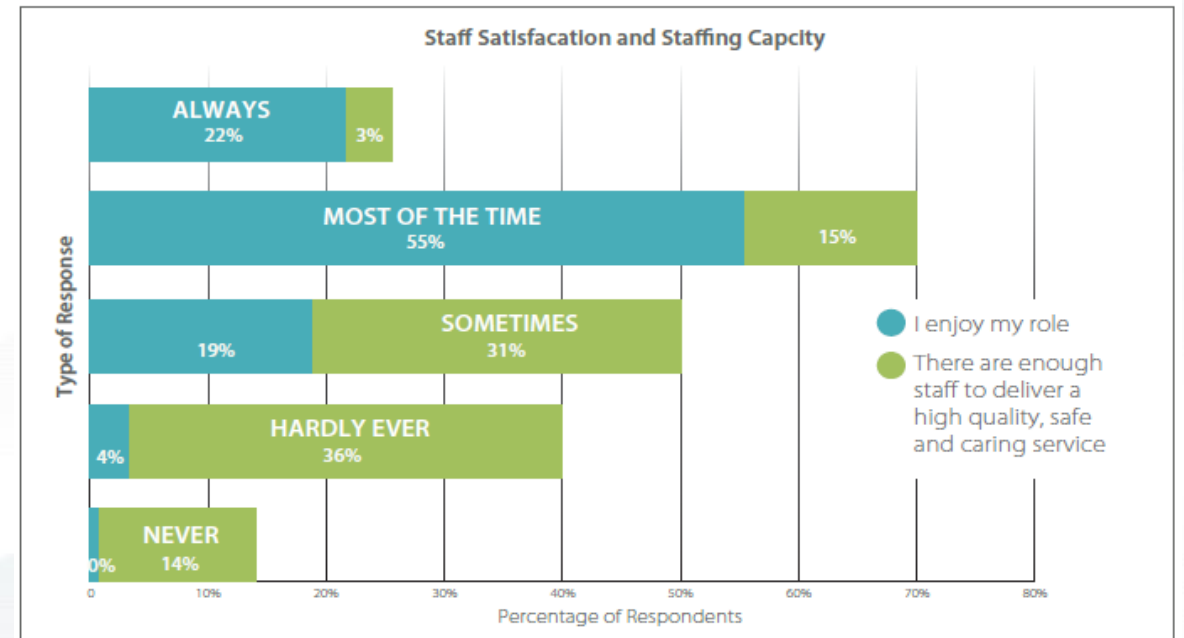
4. School and Public Health Nurses Association, 2024 (unpublished). Unveiling the realities of school nursing. A UK survey report.

Gaps in service delivery of the HCP 5-19

School nurses provided targeted and specialist interventions include offering individual/group-based interventions for 'at risk' or more vulnerable groups of children and young people, individual health reviews and brief interventions¹.

The survey⁴ shows that school nurses are unable to meet demand. Staffing capacity correlated with the reports about whether children and young people have timely access to the service and gain the level of support that they need. Less than half of respondents indicated that access was timely, and the support offered effectively meets need. This lack of provision for key public health issues at a universal and targeted level identified in the survey is a cause for concern and reveals further missed opportunities to improve outcomes for children and young people.

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1. Sutton S, White S. The role of the school nurse in the UK: where are we now? Paediatrics and Child Health [Internet]. 2024 Mar [cited 2024 Jun 29];34(3):99–103. Available from: <https://linkinghub.elsevier.com/retrieve/pii/S175172223002135>

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Vision and Aspiration for School Nursing

SAPHNA launched its vision⁵ for school nursing in October 2021. Children and young people contributed to the development of the vision and spoke at the launch event

“One of the best forms of prevention has been around since 1902....And that’s the best form of prevention in my opinion, the school nurse. We need to go back to the very basics. School nurses prevent and we need to invest so much more in school nursing”

Haris Sultan Youth Representative on Leeds CCG – Chair of the National Network of Youth Forums – Member of the NHS Youth Forum – Trustee at Leeds Hospitals Charity

We have since had engagement and commitment from a range of strategic partners in our roundtable ‘a school nurse in every school’. A campaign⁶ jointly led by SAPHNA, The Queen’s Nursing Institute and College of Medicine

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COLLEGE OF MEDICINE
AND INTEGRATED HEALTH



A School Nurse in Every School

Report from a Round Table discussion held on 15 December 2023



5. School Nursing: Creating a healthy world in which children can thrive. A Service Fit for the Future [SAPHNA Vision for School Nursing successfully launched!! | SAPHNA – School And Public Health Nurses Association](#)

6. A school Nurse in every school [A school nurse in every school campaign | SAPHNA – School And Public Health Nurses Association](#)

