Briefing Paper for SAPHNA Members: #ASchoolNurseInEverySchool

In recent weeks, the team at SAPHNA have been overwhelmed by feedback from school and public health nurses and our supporters who are keen to play a part in the campaign for #ASchoolNurseInEverySchool. This briefing paper brings together the work of the campaign and SAPHNA. We hope this information will help you to continue to 'raise your roar' for school nursing and public health nursing and for school-aged children and young people.

School nurses make a central contribution to the health and wellbeing of children and young people, helping them build firm foundations on which to progress to healthy adulthoods. They are specialist community public health nurses for school-aged children and young people. They are the leaders of the Healthy Child Programme (HCP) 5-19. SAPHNA produced a vision for School Nursing: Creating a healthy world in which children can thrive. A Service Fit for the Future which is supported by the Association of Directors of Public Health (ADPH) and The Local Government Association (LGA) which sets out a blueprint for delivery of high quality, safe services which support our children and young people, improving health outcomes and reducing inequalities. Safeguarding children and young people are a critical part of the role of the school nurse and HCP 5-19. SAPHNA in collaboration with the ADPH and Institute of Heath Visiting (iHV) have set out a policy position which define the school nursing role in safeguarding.

However, the school nursing workforce is experiencing significant challenges. NHS Workforce data shows a 33% fall in the number of school nurses between 2009-2025. In the same period, the Public Health Grant has been cut by £1 Billion in real terms.

The College of Medicine and Integrated Health, the School and Public Health Nurses Association (SAPHNA) and the Queen's Nursing Institute (QNI) have joined forces to draw attention to this issue – and to push for urgent change and call for #ASchoolNurseInEverySchool. Roundtable events in December 23 and July 24 which bought together over 30 strategic partners from across the health and social care systems, including nursing leaders, government, charities and academic institutes. The reports bring together evidence and insights about the decline in school nurse numbers since 2009, summarises the impact on the health and wellbeing of children and young people, and offers a range of solutions. They agreed that:

- There is a clear and worsening crisis in the physical, emotional and mental health of England's children and young people. This is having an impact now but also creating a time bomb, endangering the future success and health of our nation.

- Current services are insufficient to meet need. School nursing roles and services have been eroded in recent years and in many instances, resources are now insufficient to deliver the Government's National Healthy Child Programme.

- Changes to commissioning, a lack of data, and a national failure to prioritise children and young people have all contributed to this problem.

- The specific contribution of school nurses to the nation's health must also be amplified, both within local communities and at a national level.

- More robust data is urgently needed on how the availability of school nurses varies across the country. It is also critical to build an understanding of how these varied services affect outcomes.

- Children and young people's health must be made a societal priority if our nation is to flourish.

As part of the campaign for #ASchoolNurseInEverySchool, SAPHNA surveyed the school nursing workforce across the UK. This inaugural survey was conducted to gain practitioner intelligence about the challenges and realities of school nursing. The report 'The Forgotten Frontline: Public Health School Nursing' revealed the significant increase in job complexity and demand of health needs, the widening inequalities and the stress this is placing on them, their parents, carers, families and educational settings. It showed the postcode lottery of provision and significant gaps in delivery of the Healthy Child Programme 5-19, exposing missed opportunities to promote, prevent, identity problems early and intervene. Recommendations were made to respond to the concerns that were exposed. These recommendations concur with the action points strategic partners committed to as an outcome of the 'A School Nurse in Every School' roundtable events.

Strengthening the school nursing workforce

Governmental and department policy and decision-makers to:

1 Support commissioners, and other system leaders to understand the role and value of the school nurse and work to ensure that the role is fulfilled.

2 Develop a strong workforce plan which takes account of this survey report, which extends beyond training places and makes commitments to funded roles.

3 Develop a robust workforce model including guidance on safe skill mix and ensuring the qualified school nurses lead the HCP 5-19 programme.

4 Build robust data that monitors the capacity of the school nursing workforce and how/where the HCP 5-19 is delivered, holding local areas, local authorities, and Integrated Care Boards to account.

5 Focus data on outcome measures to demonstrate the impact of the workforce on improving health outcomes and reducing inequalities for children and young people.

Re-focus on promotion, prevention, protection, and early intervention.

1 Support children and young people to lead healthy and fulfilling lives by tackling the key public health priorities that pose the greatest threats to our nation's health, thereby preventing ill health in later life which is costly, reduces quality of life and life expectancy.

2 Mandate and fund delivery of all aspects of the HCP 5-19 to end the postcode lottery and improve equity of delivery. Ensure that this extends reach to all children and young people regardless of setting.

3 Reclaim de-commissioned elements of school nursing delivery including the delivery of immunisation programmes, continence care and special schools. This will support a holistic approach to meeting the health needs of children and young people.

4 Fund research and development to explore and share models of best practice which have the greatest impact on improving outcomes and reducing health inequalities, ensuring that the voice of the child is central.

The survey report was launched on the 8th of October 2024, at a House of Lords event hosted by Baroness De Sousa, attended by a wealth of MP's, DHSC, OHID, Royal Colleges, strategists, policy leads and decision-makers. At the same time, a petition was handed into No.10. This petition is still live, SAPHNA continues to call for school nurses, their skill mixed teams, partners across health, education and social care and parents/carers to support the campaign and sign the petition.

As an outcome of the survey launch, the MP for Poole has raised an <u>Early Day Motion</u> which has been gathering support from MPs across the country.

> *"This House recognises the tremendous work being done by public health school nurses; acknowledges they are the only health care professional who offer access to all school-aged children and young people in an evidenced-based programme of health promotion, prevention, protection and early intervention; notes that the number of school nurses has dropped by 31% since 2009; recognises that the average school nurse now cares for an average of 2850 pupils; believes the school nursing service is in crisis with 82% of staff saying there are not enough practitioners to deliver their important duties; and supports the call of the School and Public Health Nurses Association for a school nurse in every school".*

SAPHNA asks that our supporters <u>write to their MP</u> and encourage them to sign the EDM and perhaps also take the opportunity to meet with their local MP, talk through the survey and talk about local needs.

For more information and to access all reports referenced above, please visit our website: <u>www.saphna.co</u>.

The SAPHNA Team