

School Nurse 121 Campaign



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This week I had a very interesting meeting with the Healthy Schools co-ordinator for London, where they are trying to roll out a slimmed down programme as they recognise the strength of such an approach. As you may know, the Health Promoting Schools programme is originally a World Health Organization initiative (www.who.int/school_youth_health/gshi/en/) and it is frustrating that this excellent scheme has become party political in England – although Scotland and Wales have continued to see the benefits. We are organising a meeting for all London school nurses to promote this, so please do attend.

The *Workforce Plan for England* (Health Education England, 2013), which was published just before Christmas, is disappointing as there are only 198 proposed commissions for school nursing training courses in 2014/2015. Obviously, the message about the need for one qualified school nurse per secondary school and one further for each cluster of primaries, is not getting through to local authority commissioners. Equally obviously, you will each need to do something about this.

Action

Download the *Public Health England information sheet for lead members on the 121 page of the Unite/CPHVA website* (www.unitetheunion.org/cphva), then make an appointment to go and discuss this with them. You will probably need to do this in the evening, as many councillors are at work in the daytime.

Commissioning services

There was another meeting this week at NHS England to find out how commissioning of school nursing services is faring from a provider perspective, and to see whether there are lessons to be learnt. It is evident that the excellent information

and pathways published by Public Health England have not been appreciated by some local council commissioners, and that they do need actual school nurses to go and explain why they should employ SCPHN school nurses rather than health trainers (who are a lot cheaper). One argument we put forward was that school-aged children already have the benefit of parents and teachers, but to make changes, they need qualified health professionals to guide their individual choices, and change the school health culture (see Healthy Schools).

The King's Fund is an independent charity working to improve healthcare policy and practice in England through research, analysis and publications. They produced a document just before Christmas, *Improving the Public's Health: a resource for local authorities* (King's Fund, 2013). This may be a useful document to bring to the attention of your commissioners, as it is from a reputable source.

The focus is on nine areas in which there is strong and clear evidence that local authorities can have a major impact on improving public health and reducing inequalities, and gives practical advice on this. First on the list is 'the best start in life' and second is 'healthy schools and pupils'; so there we have it!

Specifically, it states, 'School is also an important setting for forming or changing behaviours, but interventions need to be well targeted, and achieving improvements in behaviour among more deprived pupils may be more difficult and costly.' Although not mentioning school nurses (or anyone else), where the advice is relevant to school nursing practice, or activities which you are doing in your area, you should be able to persuade people that you should take the lead on this. I will put it up on the online 121 page with suggestions.

As I have mentioned before, commissioners need you to 'tell the story', and bring the various pathways to life. You should outline how a qualified school nurse could use your knowledge and skills to solve their problem. One of the main concerns coming from schools is mental and emotional health, and

this is an area where a school nurse should be able to offer Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) Tier 1 advice and support, and hopefully prevent the problem from escalating.

Local authorities' problems are often around overweight and obese children and young people, and GPs problems may be related to attendance at A&E for uncontrolled asthma. Consequently, it is important for you to find out what are the local problems, who are the local decision makers, and where can you best lever school nurses to promote better outcomes.

Action

Find out three local priorities for action from health, education and local authority and develop a presentation for commissioners about how you could improve these health outcomes. Make sure you do this in conjunction with your manager.

The Children and Young People's Health Outcomes Framework (Public Health England, 2014) has been published as an online tool. I recommend that you have a look at it and see where the data could be useful to you locally to improve your service. Meanwhile, do make sure that all your relevant service data (questionnaires, for example) are covering the local health needs.

By the way, we usually put any interesting documents onto our Facebook page. If you are signed up to Facebook (www.facebook.com) go to your 'Find friends' box, type in Unite_cphva, then click 'Like'.

References

King's Fund. (2013) *Improving the Public's Health: a resource for local authorities*. London: King's Fund.

Health Education England (HEE) (2013). *Workforce Plan for England*. Available from: <http://hee.nhs.uk/wp-content/blogs.dir/321/files/2013/12/Workforce-plan-interactive1.pdf> [Accessed January 2014].

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