

School Nurse 121 Campaign



Rosalind Godson

Professional Officer, Unite/CPHVA
rosalind.godson@unitetheunion.org

COMMISSIONING OF SCHOOL NURSING

services continues apace and many teams are finding themselves re-organised and moved around to unfamiliar territory. One of the consequences is a rise in corporate working, in an attempt to distribute available staff evenly across the patch. This is, I hope, a short-term measure, as it must be quite difficult to maintain good partnership working relationships when the school does not know who their school nurse is.

Although some areas have invested in school nursing services and will doubtless reap good results, many bids have one thing in common: to win, they had to be able to offer the service (the Healthy Child Programme) at reduced cost. That in reality means either reducing the number of staff, or down-banding, reducing hours or reducing terms and conditions (such as holiday). Please contact your local reps and your local office when dealing with changes to your contracts and working conditions.

There is plenty of guidance from Public Health England for local authority commissioners, but they also get inundated with commissioning documents from voluntary and not for profit groups and other health professionals. It has been reported that they also get quite confused about all the different job titles staff have, so it is very important that you engage with them and make everything seem more simple. Again, it is coming up to Christmas, so don't forget to invite your commissioners to an open day of your work along with a mince pie.

CPHVA Annual Conference training

The CPHVA Annual Professional Conference from 5–6 November (www.cphvaconference.co.uk)

is preceded by a workforce training programme open to all, on three relevant issues:

- The NHS Pay Campaign (see www.unitetheunion.org/nhspay)
- Strengthen Your Professional Voice
- Black and minority ethnic (BME) Leadership.

Strengthening your professional voice in these challenging times is vital as public health outcomes can only improve with persistent and consistent effort. Practitioners will be working to managed contracts and must be wary of turning into task workers collecting data. Instead, we must strive to maintain our unique contribution to the public health of children and young people. Many staff I meet are confused and stressed, but you aren't on your own; you have all the resources of a professional association to call on. The session on BME leadership follows the report *Snowy White Peaks of the NHS*, which showed that the ethnicity of senior management did not reflect the workforce in many areas. This is obviously something we are concerned about changing. After the conference we hope members will return to work inspired and ready to cope with what will undoubtedly be another year of change.

Department of Health Week of Action

This month, Department of Health England is running a week of action, taking place between 17 and 21 November. The focus of the week will be 'Helping parents, children and young people to have the best start in life'. Do have a look at Viv Bennett's online blog (<https://vivbennett.blog.gov.uk>) and join in the #CPHVAtt Twitter chat on Tuesday 18 November at 7pm. Be sure to contact your local communications department and get your school nurse photo in the local paper.

Children's rights

The Council for Disabled Children (www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk), an umbrella

group of related organisations, is joining the National Children's Bureau, the Children's Commissioner (England) and others (including CPHVA) to lobby for children's rights regarding their health care. There have been various attempts to make services more accessible to children and young people but, overall, the Commissioner's report found that children were still confused and sometimes their concerns were ignored. As school nurses are the health professionals who regularly deal with young people, it is important that we follow this work stream and ensure that all those in school nurse teams are fully trained.

Self-harm in young people

The Royal College of Psychiatrists has published a document entitled *Managing Self-Harm in Young People* (RCP, 2014). Though aimed at CAMHS staff and doctors, there is some useful guidance for school nurses and other frontline staff. It states that 'asking about self-harm does not increase the behaviour' and goes on to suggest things that are helpful and things to avoid. This might be common knowledge to experienced staff but newer staff would like the reassurance. They suggest avoiding strong reactions to the situation, too much questioning and promising to keep things a secret. However, it is helpful to take a non-judgemental approach, take the issue seriously, and offer immediate and longer-term support.

REFERENCES

- Kline R. (2014) *The "snowy white peaks" of the NHS: a survey of discrimination in governance and leadership and the potential impact on patient care in London and England*. Available: www.mdx.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0012/59799/The-snowy-white-peaks-of-the-NHS.pdf
- Royal College of Psychiatrists. (2014) *Managing Self-Harm in Young People*. Available: www.rcpsych.ac.uk/files/pdfversion/CR192.pdf