

School Nursing Service Review

Consultation with Children and Young People

Last year, the Scottish Government looked at how it should change the role of school nurses across Scotland. It carried out different activities to find out what would work best.

As part of these activities, it was important for the Scottish Government to find out what children and young people thought about this issue. This was important when they were looking at the overall picture of how school nurses, along with other people, help to support children and their families.

Children in Scotland was asked by the Scottish Government to speak to you to find out your thoughts on how the school nurse works in your school and what you think would work better.

At Children in Scotland we think it is important to gather your thoughts on different issues and to share these with the adults who make decisions that impact on your lives. We also think it is important to let you know what we're doing with the ideas you shared.



“**You have the right to an opinion and for it to be listened to and taken seriously**”

(UNCRC, as summarised by the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland)

Who did we speak to?

We spoke to 34 children and young people in schools from P6 to S6, across Perth and Kinross and Dumfries and Galloway. Our sessions used creative ways to share your thoughts and ideas. We listened to what you told us and shared your views with the Scottish Government.

Children in Scotland
every child - every childhood

Glossary

- **Children in Scotland** - a national children's charity. We think it's important to listen to children, young people and the adults in their lives about issues that impact them. We work with others to make sure that children's voices are heard
- **Scottish Government** - the group of people who make decisions about important things that happen in Scotland
- **UNCRC - United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**. The Convention is an international statement that recognises that children and young people have rights and that they should be respected. Find out more by visiting the website of the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland

What did you tell us?

“**Physical and mental health**”

You told us the main issues the school nurse can help with include your physical health, how you're feeling, your mental health and different types of behaviour. Some of the issues you talked about included things that might affect your family.

You told us that it was very important that children and young people have information and support to help them understand and deal with different issues.

You also told us that you were worried about illnesses and how you would cope if a member of your family was ill. For some of you, worrying about the health of family members was a real concern. Some also said that they would like to have someone to talk to when they lost somebody close to them.

Change was also a worry for lots of you, including moving on to high school. Other important areas you discussed were about feeling confident in the way you look and feel. Some of you also mentioned wanting to know more about life skills, like how to manage living independently, budgets and having good relationships with people.



Seeking help

Most of you said that you felt able to speak to someone if something was worrying you. You were able to identify people that you could go to if you felt you needed help. People you could speak to included the school nurse, family, friends and teaching staff.

Issues you felt you could speak to the school nurse about included different types of medical conditions, smoking, additional support needs and issues linked to caring for someone in your family.

There were some issues that you would speak to family and friends about, but not the school nurse. You felt more comfortable talking to family and friends about smoking and drinking alcohol, exam stress and arguments that happen at home.

Some people even felt there were some issues that you wouldn't want to speak to anyone about, even family. Issues that some of you didn't feel comfortable talking about included sexuality, not having enough money, being clean and hygienic, drugs and alcohol. Worries about friendship, fitting in and other problems about growing up and managing changes were also talked about.

Things that make it difficult to ask for help

You told us that one of the reasons you wouldn't ask someone for help is because you were worried about being seen to go against your family. You were also concerned about other people outside your family becoming aware of difficult issues because of what you spoke about.

Another reason some of you didn't feel able to talk to someone is because you felt nothing would change. One person said they felt that *"nobody can help you"*.

Not knowing the school nurse also meant that you felt nervous when going to speak to them about issues.

Things that make it easier to ask for help

We asked you what's really important about feeling able to talk to someone about your health and how you are feeling. You said that it was easier to talk to someone if they were kind, trustworthy and good at listening. It was also very important for them to be non-judgemental.

For many of you it was important that you knew the school nurse or had met them before talking about a problem. Knowing the types of issues and times when you could speak to the school nurse was also very important. For one young person the person you speak to needs to be *"someone who is available"*.

The future of the school nurse service

We spoke to you about the different places where young people could go to get help from the school nurse. We learned that you would like to have different options available.

Speaking to the nurse at home was helpful for some because the nurse could help you speak to your family. It was also felt that this would help your family to have an understanding of the difficult issues you are dealing with.

However, important concerns were raised around lack of privacy, if the school nurse supported you in your home. Many young people said they would prefer to talk to the school nurse in school because it felt *"more private"* and *"away from family"*. We also heard that you preferred school because you didn't want to worry your family about issues such as bullying.

A few young people said they felt comfortable talking to the nurse in a community centre or online. Talking to the school nurse online was appealing because it could also offer privacy.

The most important thing was feeling that you were in a private and safe space

Based on what you told us, we made a number of suggestions to the Scottish Government. These were:

Children and young people need more information about who the school nurse is and what they can help with. It is also important that school nurses can signpost to other sources of support

School nurses should be familiar to children and young people. The relationship is important for helping to develop trust and encouraging young people to go to them for help

Children and young people should have a choice about where and how they speak to the school nurse. Privacy is key

The school nurse should be clear about what they do next, after they have been told something. This is especially important, when children and young people are talking about issues that involve their families.



We also felt it is important to do some more work to explore the things that get in the way of children and young people feeling able to go to the school nurse for help.