

Supporting school and public health nurses to improve the lives of our future generations

This past year has been, without question, one of the hardest that health and care professionals have faced. For many, responding to relentless work pressures, while balancing caring responsibilities for families, has been far from easy.

In years to come, our children will learn in school about the huge loss of lives, and loss of freedom, as we navigated through more than a year of hardship and uncertainty amidst this devastating pandemic.

I am confident that the history books will write with utter praise and admiration for our nursing profession and I am immensely proud of the critical role we have all played during this challenging time.

With the vaccination programme now well underway, we are finally one step ahead of COVID-19, but this virus has shown that our profession needs to reconsider our model and approach if we are to respond to the public health challenges of our 21st century population. There is clear evidence that health inequalities are widening and there are still too many people dying prematurely or living with preventable ill health. Mental health conditions are increasing, and the impact of the pandemic is likely to have added to this issue affecting children and young people who have been isolated from relatives, friends and school.

Consequently, school and public health nurses play an integral role in challenging the way that we address these issues given that we must take a life course approach from birth through to childhood, adulthood and older age.

To support school and public health nurses, Public Health England has worked with Health Education England e-Learning for Healthcare (HEE e-LfH), to develop a range of bite-sized sessions within the All Our Health e-learning programme focused on different life stages and priority public health issues. During the pandemic, we have seen a significant increase in health and care professionals using these free and trusted resources, with the content being launched more than 180,000 times since November 2020. In January 2021 alone, All Our Health received almost 11,000 hits on the webpage and was the second highest accessed page behind the national vaccination programme on the e-LfH website.

There are several resources in the programme which will be of specific interest to school and public health nurses, including the childhood obesity session which offers advice and guidance for nurses to implement into their daily practice when supporting children living above a healthy weight. The early adolescence and child oral health sessions are also useful resources that can be accessed for free and all sessions feature a brief knowledge check, plus lots of useful links to further advice and guidance to support practice. This learning can also be used to support colleagues' continued professional development and three yearly revalidation process.

There are also three interactive townscapes hosted on our All Our Health platform which signpost health and care professionals to trusted resources. School and public health nurses may find the childhood obesity townscape particularly useful as this resource enables colleagues to take a place-based view of the actions and interventions which need to be scaled if we are to make a difference in preventing illness, protecting health and promoting wellbeing of the public that we serve.

We need to 'build back better and fairer' from the pandemic and I believe that the All Our Health resources play an important role in supporting all health and care professionals to access wider support and care for children and young people, which in turn will lead to better health outcomes for them – during the pandemic and beyond.

All Our Health covers a range of public health issues including obesity, mental health, alcohol, screening and immunisations. They aim to improve health and care professionals' knowledge, confidence and skills in preventing illness, protecting health and promoting wellbeing. Join thousands of health and care professionals, who are using these resources by visiting: <https://www.e-lfh.org.uk/programmes/all-our-health/>.

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