

School nurses keep on shining during the pandemic

There have been great examples of school nursing practice so far during the pandemic, which in turn have led to increase in workforce commissions. However, to truly effect change we need to grow the body of school nursing research and evidence, Sharon White explains

Sharon White OBE, CEO SAPHNA

Sitting in my humble, though very busy, home-based office, I have the privileged position of sharing in some of the fabulous work consistently being churned out by the amazing school nursing workforce. This work is being nationally recognised through awards (Bolton NHS Foundation Trust, 2020; SAPHNA, 2020) and showcased by the Local Government Association who have kindly funded four case study videos from health visiting and school nursing to showcase your exemplary work during the COVID-19 pandemic. These are to be published soon (See www.saphna.co).

Recognising the unique and invaluable public health role of school nursing, schools, local authorities, NHSEi and others are, in many areas, now funding additional commissions from our workforce to address the demands of the coronavirus and its impact on our children young people, families and partners; this is heartening to see and, reportedly, thus far, with great results!

Not content with these achievements, rapidly redesigned services including advancing and maximising digital offers, active in-reach to our most vulnerable, drive-through immunisations, etc., our workforce continues to march on, constantly evolving to meet current need in responding to the ever-changing (global pandemic) sands.

However, while turning that hamster wheel as rapidly as is humanly possible, it is important to remember that an equally essential part of our role is also to stand back, reflect, audit, evaluate and adjust,



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and, as you will all be too aware, that takes some doing in times such as these!

When it comes to school nursing services we often hear 'the evidence is weak...', or 'on what do you base that', and yet we know that there is a plethora of untapped evidence out there. Our SCPHN SN students alongside those of us who have undertaken additional studies, many at Masters level and beyond, have produced some amazing proposals, dissertations and theses. Yet, sadly, many remain hidden from view.

As a professional organisation we have been giving some thought and attention as to why that might be, recognising that, without the evidence on which to base our intelligent conversations/negotiations, we are, in many cases on a hiding to nothing. Of course, that is not to say that on a local level you do not still do some great work – you do – however,

we firmly believe that we need to be bigger and bolder than that if we are to truly effect change and have the right workforce capacity with which to do it!

To help us better understand and to support you to advance our school nursing research footprint and its impact, we have recently recruited two academic advisors to our board as well as strengthened our partnerships with experienced researchers. We have also developed a dedicated area of our website in hope that we will soon develop a repository for all your great works.

Over the years, you have developed amazing evidence-based proposals, research and recommendations; we now need to usefully use this alongside influencing future research. Our children, young people, families and partners are singing your praises; let's use this as the platform and springboard on which to

build renewed services fit for the future. See our 'research call to arms' for more information and to get involved. We're starting with small steps through a webinar, date to be announced soon; you are all very welcome! See <https://saphna.co/research/>

Bolton NHS Foundation Trust. 2020. School nurse is top student too. Online. Available at: <https://www.boltonft.nhs.uk/2020/10/school-nurse-is-top-student-too/> (accessed 16 November 2020)
SAPHNA. 2020. Award winning public health nursing service; digital offer COVID 19. Online. Available at: <https://saphna.co/news/award-winning-public-health-nursing-service-digital-offer-covid-19> (accessed 16 November 2020)

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