



The school nurse rucksack

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Project background

The school nursing team at Hywel Dda University Health Board is managed through the three constituent counties of Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire and Ceredigion; Carmarthenshire is the third largest county in Wales. Each Band 6 school nurse is a named nurse for one secondary school and its feeder primary schools. The age range of the pupils is five to 18 years, with an average caseload of around 2,000. The project leader, as part of a specialist community public health nurse degree, developed the idea of a school rucksack, carried by the nurse, as a teaching aid. The rucksack would contain items to instigate conversations about subjects such as bullying, alcohol and healthy eating, enabling the school nurse to ask young people 'what's in the rucksack that's bothering you?' The aim of this project was to build on this initial work and to raise the profile of the school nurse by engaging the participation of key stakeholders including pupils.

Aims and objectives

To work within one secondary school, listening to pupils and staff to help make the school nursing service more visible, accessible and relevant to young people. To achieve this, the objectives identified were to:

- Set up an advisory group made up of senior nurses, teachers and school management to get sign-up for the project
- Describe and analyse the current school nursing service
- Gain the views of young people about what they would like from their school nursing service
- Engage with the nursing team to identify the gaps between the service that is provided and the service the young people think would be beneficial to them
- Work with the nursing team to develop a shared vision for a revised service
- Facilitate the identified changes through future work

Implications for practice

- When working across organisational boundaries it is vital to spend time getting to know and listening to key stakeholders
- Spending time talking with the team about values and beliefs and identifying the purpose of the team is important to ensure engagement
- Getting feedback from pupils via a focus group is an effective way of hearing pupils' experiences
- Moving from directive to facilitative leadership involves the development of new skills and knowledge to use in practice

This project was supported by the FoNS Patients First Programme in partnership with the Burdett Trust for Nursing

Online

Further information about the project can be accessed from: fons.org/library/report-details?nstdid=72255

Key activities and outcomes

• The school nurse checklist

The school nurse checklist was developed by the project leader and used to identify current practice in school at that time and record a baseline of how the service was delivered. Using the checklist revealed that there were no visual aids to identify who the school nurse was or any details of their availability in school, their role or how they could be contacted.

• Literature review

A literature review was carried out to assess what had already been published to support the benefits of raising the school nurse profile in school and promoting 'drop-in' sessions. The Welsh Government's *Framework for a School Nursing Service in Wales* places a specific demand on the school nurse to be visible, present and a facilitator in meeting the physical, emotional and mental health needs of children and their families.

• School nursing team workshop

In February 2015, the FoNS practice development facilitator was invited to facilitate a workshop. After introductions, a talk about the background to the project and a creative 'ice breaker' exercise using Evoke cards, the facilitator carried out a values and beliefs exercise in relation to the role of the school nurse. Collectively, the team shared the common themes that emerged from their session: nurturing children and families; protecting and safeguarding children; and providing support for families and each other.

• Year 9 pupil questionnaires

A questionnaire was developed by the project team to identify whether pupils knew who their school nurse was and how they would prefer to access the nurse, whether they had accessed the service and, if so, what their experience had been, and their views on how the service could be improved.

• Pupil focus groups

Three focus groups were held between September 2015 and May 2016. Each meeting involved the same seven Year 9 pupils, three boys and four girls, and three members of the project team. Each focus group session covered the following topics:

1. What does your School Nurse do?
2. How would you like to contact your School Nurse?
3. School Nurse Rucksack

Feedback from these sessions was used to develop the project further.

• Outcomes

The project has seen the introduction of a new referral process and a school nurse poster. The project has given the larger school nursing team the 'school nurse rucksack' to pilot as a visual aid – as a vehicle to help pupils to identify the school nurse and facilitate a discussion on health promotion subjects. This is now being introduced across the whole health board.