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## David Regis

### School nurses still do it in schools!

**K**ay Fletcher, of the Amalgamated School Nurses Association, worked with the Schools Health Education Unit [SHEU] to produce the 1987 report, *School Nurses: A Professional Enquiry*, based on a membership survey. This was followed up in 1992 with another survey, published with the sprightly title of *School Nurses do it in Schools!* The original working title was *School Nurses do it in the corridor*, a signal of the marginal status and facilities with which some nurses found themselves.

Thirty years on, the nature of school nursing has changed more than once. In some parts of the country, we know school nursing services are changing rapidly, being re-branded (e.g. school health advisors), re-focused (fewer nit searches, more concern about emotional wellbeing and safety, developing a school health profile) or even over-stretched. SHEU questionnaires are used to give schools (and local authorities) a picture of the young people in their care, and are sometimes used to get feedback about their school nursing services.

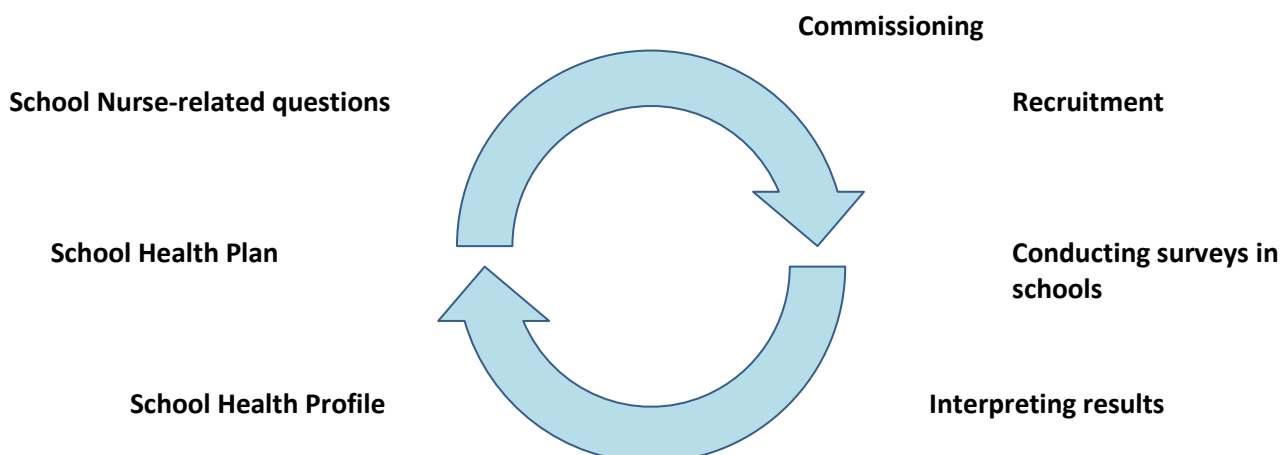
How has school nursing been seen in and around our surveys?

#### School Nurse support for surveys

In the Bradford surveys in 2010 and 2013, school nurses took a very active part in recruiting and managing the surveys in schools. Isabelle MacDougall and her colleagues from the School Nursing Service of Bradford District Care Trust attended Council planning meetings, led parts of the seminars for teachers and made sure that schools subsequently both signed up to the surveys and then carried them out.

#### School Nursing service monitoring

The nature of SHEU surveys has changed so that, when previously we ran a standard questionnaire in many local authorities, now we have a slightly different questionnaire in each local authority. Many questions may be used in identical or very similar forms across the country, but sad to say this is not true for any questions relating to school nurses. So, the figures below are not so much a snapshot as a glimpse into what is happening in a few parts of the country – which may, nonetheless, be quite representative of what is going on generally.



Some examples:

- 21% of primary pupils from 2 local authorities said they knew how to get to see their school nurse, while 47% of secondary school pupils from 3 local authorities said the same.
- In another local authority, 50% of secondary pupils said either that they knew how to use their school nursing service or they had actually used it (23%).
- 5% of secondary school pupils from 4 local authorities said they had spoken with their school nurse about body changes and growing up (puberty).
- 15% of pupils in one local authority said that they would turn to the school nurse for help with a health problem, and around 5% said the same for a number of other issues.

One local authority asked a lot of detailed questions about their school nursing service. About a quarter of over 3000 secondary school pupils said they would go to the school nurse if they wanted support, information or advice.

Among this 26%, pupils said when and how they would like to see their school nurse:

Before school	5%
During school time	15%
After school	8%
During the school holidays	1%
Don't know	4%

This adds up to more than 26%, because pupils could choose more than one option.

### School Nurses acting on results

The results from a survey can go towards making a School Health Profile and from that a School Health Plan (RCN, 2014). Last year in Doncaster, the individual schools' results informed the School Health Plan that each school made with their School Nurse.

### School Nurse commissioning based on surveys

School surveys are used to make judgements about the needs of the young people, and have been used to influence service commissioning. This was one of the purposes of the surveys conducted in Norfolk in 2015, and other previous surveys. The School Nursing service was re-commissioned as part of a substantial 0-19 years

Healthy Child Programme procurement. The plan was that the survey would provide baseline data and then every two years we could measure what impact the new contract had had, specifically around school nurse profile but also around outcomes for children and young people.

### School Nurses do it on social media

With young people turning their attention online, and school nurses often finding their services spread thinly over many schools, text and Internet messaging has been seen as a useful way of providing contact and advice.

Among the 26% of 3000+ secondary pupils in one local authority who would consult their school nurse, pupils said how they would like to do this:

In person	22%
Over the phone	3%
By text	3%
By email	4%
Via an online forum/social media	1%
Other	1%

This adds up to more than 26%, because pupils could choose more than one option. Some pupils are happy to consider messaging services, but there is a marked preference here for face-to-face contact.

Among the many school nurses that have a vigorous presence on social media, SHEU [@sheuexeter](https://twitter.com/sheuexeter) follow on Twitter :

Wendy Nicholson [@WendyNicholson](https://twitter.com/WendyNicholson)

Sharon White [@SAPHNAsharonOBE](https://twitter.com/SAPHNAsharonOBE)

and [@WeSchoolNurses](https://twitter.com/WeSchoolNurses)

Thanks to our many school nurse Twitter followers for their favourites and retweets!

#### References

Fletcher, K (1991). School nurses do it in schools!. *Education and Health* 9(5),74-75. (Accessed: 15/03/2016) Available at: <http://sheu.org.uk/x/eh95kf.pdf>

Fletcher, K & Shelley, C (1988). School nurses and the health curriculum. *Education and Health* 6(4),76-82. (Accessed: 15/03/2016) Available at: <http://sheu.org.uk/x/eh64kf.pdf>

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Royal College of Nursing (2014). *An RCN toolkit for school nurses*. Accessed: 15/03/2016) Available at: [https://www2.rcn.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0012/.../003223.pdf](https://www2.rcn.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0012/.../003223.pdf)

Education and Health articles about School nursing:

<http://sheu.org.uk/category/eharticles/school-nurse>

Research links about School nurses/health advisors:

[http://sheu.org.uk/research-news-archive-search?body\\_op=allwords&body=school+nurse](http://sheu.org.uk/research-news-archive-search?body_op=allwords&body=school+nurse)