Exploring the role of specialist school nurses to support the mental health of young people in secondary schools

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Executive Summary

The focus of this project was developed through partnership working with Reading’s Youth Cabinet on their mental health campaign work and a national review of the role of specialist school nurses.

Local young people in Reading told Healthwatch Reading that they were unsure about the role of school nurses in providing support for mental health in secondary schools in Reading.

This report summarises feedback from 170 young people living in Reading, attending a range of state secondary schools in the Reading area. Healthwatch Reading collected the feedback via an anonymous survey asking questions about the accessibility and quality of the current school nursing service in Reading.

Key Findings:

- 47% of young people did not know when the school nurse was available in their school.
- 58% did not know or were unsure how to contact their school nurse
- 52% of young people wanted to be able to contact their school nurse via email. This method of contact is not currently offered by the school nursing service in Reading.
- 50% of respondents would consider talking to a school nurse about their mental health.
- 32% of young people said they would definitely consider talking to a youth counsellor. However, young people have concerns about the confidentiality of youth counselling services.

Key recommendations

- Raise the visibility of the specialist school nursing service amongst young people and secondary school communities by distributing information and contact details about the service.
- Specialist school nurses to have more of a presence and to be more involved in the life of Reading secondary schools so that they are known and trusted by students.
- Offer more choices in how young people can access the specialist school nursing service, in particular offering email and phone access.
- Youth counselling services to review the information promoting youth counselling services to ensure it addresses young people’s concerns about confidentiality of the service.
- Review the existing specialist school nursing workforce to ensure that the service can become more visible and more accessible within all Reading secondary schools.
Introduction
Healthwatch Reading has been working in partnership with Reading Youth Cabinet since 2012. At the annual Reading Youth Cabinet event in 2012, young people spoke about how they felt there was a lack of mental health support available in schools. Alongside this there was a national review being conducted on the role of specialist school nurses. Therefore based on the feedback received from young people and the scope to inform the development of the role of specialist school nurses Healthwatch Reading initiated a special project to look further into this area.

Background
At the 2012 annual Youth Cabinet event, Healthwatch Reading collected a number of issues from young people with regards to access to mental health support in schools. Young people in Reading were unsure about the role of school nurses in providing support for emotional wellbeing and mental health for school aged children and young people in Reading.

“There is no one at school who I can talk to or tell my friends to talk to regarding self-harm. The nurse that is sometimes at my school is good at helping the girls when they felt sick or had a headache but not about anything to do with mental health.”

“It is not right that there is no one that me or my girlfriends can talk to about issues with their weight and body image. I am worried that some of my friends think they are overweight and so don’t eat lunch and so on and I think the school should have a mental health person who understands, because teachers sometimes just tell us we are being silly.”

Many mental health problems start in childhood. Current research shows that one in ten school children aged between 5 and 16 has a mental health problem. Half of those with lifetime mental health problems experience symptoms by the age of 14. There are currently 7,260 young people living in Reading and attending state secondary schools. 5,394 are attending state secondary schools within Reading borough and 1,866 are attending state secondary schools in neighbouring local authorities. Based on the research, at least 539 young people living in Reading and attending a Reading state secondary school are likely to be suffering from a mental health problem. The Royal College of Nursing and the Department of Health have recently published reports recommending that specialist school nurses are well placed to identify mental health issues at an early stage. School nurses can provide support to ensure problems do not escalate to crisis point. Where appropriate school nurses can refer to counselling services or specialist mental health services.

Specialist school nurses
Specialist school nurses are health professionals who are trained to support and improve the health of children and young people aged 5 to 19. This includes responsibility for ensuring good mental health outcomes1. Specialist school nurses, sometimes called

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1 Department of Health – Maximising the contribution of the school nursing team – Getting it right for children, young people and families.
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/getting-it-right-for-children-young-people-
specialist community public health nurses are qualified nurses or midwives with additional degree or masters level qualifications in the health needs of school-aged children and young people. They are equipped to work at community, family and individual levels. These specialist nurses are supported by school nursing teams (registered nurses, nursery nurses, healthcare assistants). Some secondary schools, particularly independent schools, employ their own nurse within school, for medical room and first aid duties. These nurses have not usually undertaken specialist school nursing qualifications.

The Royal College of Nursing have recently raised concerns that the value of specialist school nurses has not been fully recognised in many areas of the UK. Therefore specialist school nursing teams are not delivering potential health outcomes for children and young people.

National review of school nursing
In 2011/12, the Department of Health commissioned a national review of specialist school nursing in the UK. It made four key recommendations. Specialist school nurses need to:

1. Be more visible and well known amongst young people
2. Offer early help to support young people before health issues reached ‘crisis point’.
3. Offer more choice in how young people access school nursing services
4. Listen to young people’s views about the services they have received from school nurses

At the end of the review, the Department of Health developed a new model for the delivery of school nursing, to be implemented in 2013-2016. This new model includes the requirement for early identification and support for emotional wellbeing and mental health by school nursing teams.

However, the national review demonstrated that most young people did not know that school nurses can offer advice and support on key mental health issues for young people. Or that school nurses can signpost young people to youth counselling services or refer them to specialist mental health services e.g. Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services. Only a very small proportion of young people reported that they had sought advice or support from school nurses on these types of issues.

Specialist School Nursing Teams in Reading
The school nursing service for schools in Reading is provided by Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust, commissioned by the Reading Borough Council Public Health Team. It comprises of 5 specialist school nurses, community staff nurses and nursery nurses. Most of the posts are part-time, term time only roles.

The 5 specialist nurses provide appointment and drop-in services for the 7 state secondary schools and 2 pupil referral units (PRUs) within Reading Borough. The community staff

and-families

2 The RCN’s Position on School Nursing in the UK
https://www.rcn.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/433282/School_nursing_position_statemen
t_V5FINAL.pdf
nurses and nursery nurses work within the primary schools, mostly providing universal services such as screening of all pupils in Foundation and Year 6. The nursery nurses also work with a very small number of very vulnerable families of primary school pupils, requiring intensive levels of support.

Specialist school nurses offer three levels of service:

**Universal** - universal school nursing services such as immunisations and prearranged appointments to see young people as required - nurse will come in to school. Two secondary schools and one pupil referral unit receive this service.

**Enhanced Universal** - universal school nursing services, with a specialist school nurse in school one day every two weeks for drop in sessions and pre-arranged appointments. Two secondary schools and one pupil referral unit receive this service.

**Enhanced Universal Plus** - universal school nursing services, with a specialist school nurse in school one day every week for drop in sessions and prearranged appointments. Three secondary schools receive this level of service. One of these also funds their allocated specialist school nurse for an additional day a week.

The level of school nursing service which each secondary school receives, is dependent on a number of factors:

- Level of need of students in the school.
- Attitude and understanding of the Senior Management Team at each school regarding school nursing e.g. we received feedback that the grammar schools may be reluctant to have their students leave classes to see the school nurse. Or the school does not promote the school nursing service to their pupils.
- Level of take up of drop-ins by the students. In several schools and PRUs the drop in sessions were stopped due to very low take up.
- Capacity of the school nurses team.

In Reading, much of the specialist school nurses’ time involves child protection case work. Healthwatch Reading were informed that the average child protection caseload is 30-35 per specialist school nurse. This work takes precedence over other school nurses’ work e.g. a school’s drop-in session may be cancelled if the nurse has to attend a child protection meeting for a child in that school or another school. Service managers are currently piloting changes within the service to reduce the time that specialist school nurses are spending on child protection work. They suggested that the ‘gold standard’ is one full time specialist school nurse to be allocated to a secondary school, and its feeder primary schools. Most Reading schools are some way off receiving this level of provision.

Service managers informed Healthwatch Reading about the current arrangements for young people’s access to the specialist school nursing services:

- Young person can book an appointment with school staff to contact a school nurse.
- Young person can attend a school nurse drop in session at their school.
- The school nursing service are piloting a new phone texting scheme, where young people can text the school nursing service with a query or to book an appointment. However, young people are not able to text an individual school nurse, i.e. the nurse allocated to their school. Service managers reported that take up of this pilot texting scheme is fairly low.
Feedback from local service providers suggests that there is not enough capacity for school nurses to fully undertake this role in all secondary schools in Reading. Currently most secondary schools and pupil referral units in Reading have a specialist school nurse coming into school once every two weeks for a day’s session. Three schools have a specialist school nurse in school one day a week. One of these schools funds the specialist nurse to come into school for an additional day a week.

Further feedback also highlighted that some schools may not fully understand the role of the specialist school nurse and are not being very accommodating to the specialist school nurses e.g. not giving the nurse a suitable room to use or promoting their service to students.

School nurses told us that most of the young people who are attending their drop-in sessions have emotional wellbeing or mental health issues. School nurses can support them if the mental health difficulty is within the remit of universal Tier 1\(^3\) mental health support. Specialist school nurses are authorised, when required, to refer young people to youth counselling services and specialist mental health services e.g. Primary mental health workers and Children and Adult Mental Health Services.

Discussions with stakeholders, including parent/carers, highlighted that children in years 5/6 of primary schools, particularly those with special educational needs, would benefit from the mental health support offered by school nurses.

### Counselling services available for young people in Reading

There are two youth counselling services available free of charge to young people of secondary school age in Reading, regardless of which secondary school they attend. These services are provided by Connexions-Time to Talk (primary provider contract with Reading Borough Council) and No 5 Counselling. Both services have offices in Reading which offer afternoon and early evening appointments.

School nurses and teaching staff can refer young people to these services and young people can self-refer. The average waiting times for these services varies between four weeks and three months.

Time to talk and No 5 counselling services are available for schools to buy in and offer counselling sessions at school. Healthwatch Reading are aware that three secondary schools in Reading do this.

Schools can also employ an independent counsellor onsite. Healthwatch Reading were informed that one secondary school in Reading has independent young people’s counsellors on site.

\(^3\) Tier 1 - provides treatment for less severe mental health conditions, such as mild depression, while also offering an assessment service for young people who would benefit from referral to more specialist services. Services at this level are provided by GPs, school nurses, teachers, social workers, youth workers, and voluntary agencies.
Project Aims
1. To better understand the role of specialist school nurses to support young people’s mental health in Reading secondary schools.
2. To have a better picture of the youth counselling services available to young people in Reading secondary schools.
3. Seek feedback from young people on the accessibility and quality of the current school nursing service in Reading secondary schools.
4. Seek feedback from young people on the accessibility of youth counselling services for young people attending secondary schools in Reading.
5. Highlight good practice and make recommendations for service delivery for school nursing and mental health support for school aged children and young people.

Methodology
In the first instance Healthwatch Reading undertook some research to understand the role of specialist school nurses, through discussions with key stakeholders and a review of what work had been conducted nationally.

Healthwatch Reading involved local young people in the planning and delivery of the project and in particular worked with Reading Youth Cabinet on how best to engage with young people. We agreed the most effective way to gather the views of young people would be through a paper-based survey and members of the Youth cabinet and young Healthwatch Reading volunteers designed the survey, ensuring the language used was appropriate to local young people. In addition to the survey Healthwatch Reading met with local stakeholders to discuss the local picture regarding the role of school nurses and the current capacity of the school nursing service for secondary schools in Reading.

Once the survey had been compiled it was distributed to young people from a variety of schools in Reading. They were distributed in the following ways:
- Via the Youth Cabinet who engaged with young people in schools
- Surveys were distributed to local youth groups, including Reach Out and the LGBT youth group.
- Healthwatch Reading staff attended the Youth Cabinet event, where 53 young people completed the survey.
- A focus group was held with a youth group in West Reading
- Workshops were carried out with Health and Social Care students at the John Madejski Academy.

In order to gather the views of young people with special educational needs, discussions were also held with stakeholders from Reading Families Forum and a special educational needs school governor. The survey was completed by 170 young people from 13 schools in the Reading area, receiving different levels of school nursing provision. Responses from a small number of young people who access Reading youth services, but attend secondary schools just outside the Reading borough area, were included. The schools they attend have a large number of students from Reading.
In addition to Healthwatch Reading’s usual reporting channels, the project findings will be shared directly with the organisations that assisted Healthwatch Reading in distributing the survey to young people.
Findings
The findings from the survey covered four key themes as broken down in the survey:
1. Accessibility of the school nursing service
2. Concerns about confidentiality
3. Quality of the school nursing service
4. The accessibility of youth counselling services for young people

Accessibility of the school nursing service
Respondents to the survey highlighted a lack of knowledge about when and how young people could talk to a school nurse in Reading schools. 47% of young people did not know, or were unsure, when the school nurse was available in their school.

“Need to be more aware that they are there.”
“Make it clearer when you can see them.”

58% did not know, or were unsure, how to contact their school nurse

“Tell us where school nurses are, we need more info.”

Healthwatch Reading asked young people about their preferred way to contact their school nurse. (The survey limited them to two choices from a list of: phone, text, Facebook, email or drop in session). Young people told Healthwatch that they wanted more choice about how to contact their school nurse:

59% preferred to have a drop in service
52% wanted to be able to contact their school nurse via email
21% wanted to be able to phone their school nurse
18% wanted to be able to text their school nurse
0% wanted to contact the school via Facebook

Respondents said there was a need for better promotion of school nursing services amongst young people. Young people made suggestions about how to improve awareness of the school nursing service:

“They could actually advertise their services.”
“Give out leaflets around school/community.”
“Have posters advertising their services.”
“Be more public.”

Having a school nurse who was more available was suggested by some young people in their free text responses to the survey:

“Comes in more frequently.”
“Being in school more than once a week.”
“They can come in more often.”
Concerns about confidentiality
Many young people described their concerns about the confidentiality of the school nursing service:

“Might tell other people at school.”
“Might tell my parents.”
“Not knowing if they will let out my info.”
“Work at a better system to make it more anonymous.”
“Meetings with a nurse might not stay confidential.”

A small number of young people told us about their concerns regarding a lack of privacy of the room or space that the school nurse used:

“Use better rooms or offices that offer more privacy for young people”
“People might see me going into the room”
“There are often lots of other people there. They could have private sessions in her office to talk about more mental issues.”

Quality of the school nursing service
Healthwatch asked young people if they would consider talking to their school nurse if they were worried about their own mental health, or that of a friend. Half of the respondents (50%) reported that they would consider talking to a school nurse about their mental health. Some respondents said they would prefer to talk to a professional counsellor or a doctor instead of a school nurse.

Some young people told Healthwatch Reading that they did not have the opportunity to get to know their school nurse. Therefore, they would not feel “comfortable” talking to them about their emotional wellbeing or mental health:

“I don’t know her”.
“I didn’t know we had a school nurse.”
“Don’t know her that well and do not feel comfortable with them.”
“I am not familiar with them.”
“I don’t know them. She doesn’t know me.”

Young people gave some possible solutions to address this barrier to talking to the school nurse. They highlighted the importance of meeting the school nurse in a group situation first, before talking to the nurse one-to-one. Their specific suggestions included:

“More talking in assemblies and things.”
“They can come into class.”
Not feeling able to approach the school nurse was another barrier identified by respondents. Young people suggested this would be improved if they perceived that the school nurse was:

“More open and a good listener”
“Kind, caring, friendly”
“More sympathetic”
“More welcoming”
“Better about how they tell you about things”
“Appears more advising and supportive.”
“Helped you to trust them in any way possible.”

Healthwatch Reading is aware that some of the above perceptions may have been about the “in-house” or medical room nurses employed by some schools, rather than the specialist school nurses who come in to school.

A few young people who attended the school where the specialist school nurse is onsite two days a week (see Good Practice example) had a more positive view. These young people told Healthwatch Reading that they were comfortable talking to the school nurse about their mental health:

“I would be fine talking to the school nurse.”
“I am comfortable talking to her.”

The accessibility of youth counselling services for young people
Healthwatch Reading asked young people about their awareness of youth counselling services. The feedback suggests a high level of awareness of these services amongst young people. In schools where counselling services are provided at the school, 71% responded that they were aware of the service. However the majority of young people were not aware who provided this service in their schools e.g. Connexions or No 5.

Take up of onsite counselling services appears to be good. Respondents to the survey were asked whether they had ever talked with a counsellor at their school. 23% of young people who attended a school with a counsellor onsite reported that they had accessed the onsite counselling services. However, Healthwatch did hear from some young people at one school that they did not “like” the onsite school counsellor and were not aware of alternatives.

All respondents were asked if they would consider talking to a youth counsellor about their mental health if their school provided youth counselling onsite. 32% of young people said they would definitely consider talking to a youth counsellor at their school, about a mental health concern. 41% were unsure whether they would consider talking to a counsellor.
Young people described a number of reasons why they would not talk to a counsellor about their emotional wellbeing or mental health. The barriers were similar to those that young people described about talking to a school nurse:

Concerns about confidentiality:

“\textit{They'd tell the school.}”
“\textit{I'd be unsure about trust}”
“\textit{They might spread stuff or judge you}”

Feeling uncomfortable talking to someone with whom they did not know:

“\textit{I'd be scared.}”
“\textit{It is saying your worries with someone that you don’t even know.}”
Good Practice
Healthwatch Reading throughout the project was able to identify some good practice examples in Reading.

Example 1
At John Madejski Academy the specialist school nurse is at the school two days a week, including school holidays. Her time at the school is funded jointly by the Public Health contract and by the Academy. The service manager has reported that this extra day a week has enabled the school nursing service to become well established within school and in the local community.

Example 2
The specialist nurse recently allocated to Prospect School has additional training, enabling her to offer more intensive mental health support. This practitioner worked hard to establish herself within this school. Over time, she has built good working relationships with school staff.

Example 3
One of the specialist school nurses in the Reading team is currently on secondment to CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service). She will bring back expertise in mental health to the school nursing team. Service managers told Healthwatch Reading about an innovative idea to establish a new role of school nurse specialist in mental health to the school nursing team. The service managers are currently exploring options to fund this post.
Recommendations
These recommendations are based on the feedback that Healthwatch received from 170 local young people who completed the survey. In making these recommendations, consideration has also been given to the findings of the national consultation and policy documents on school nursing.

Recommendations for the specialist school nursing service and for secondary schools in Reading:
1. Raise the visibility of the specialist school nursing service amongst young people and secondary school communities by distributing information including contact details about the service, via leaflets, posters, school induction packs and school websites.
2. Raise awareness of the role and skills of specialist school nurses in supporting young people’s emotional wellbeing and mental health within Reading secondary schools and the wider community.
3. Specialist school nurses to have more of a presence and be more involved in the life of Reading secondary schools so that they are known and trusted by students.
4. Offer more choices in how young people can access the specialist school nursing service, in particular offering email or phone access.
5. The rooms that the specialist school nurses use in Reading schools should ensure, as far as possible, the privacy of students who are attending drop-ins or appointments.

Recommendation for the specialist school nursing service and for the public health team at Reading Borough Council:
6. Review the existing specialist school nursing workforce to ensure that the service can become more visible and more accessible within all Reading secondary schools.

Recommendation for the patient experience and engagement team at Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust:
7. Young people should be able to feedback their experiences of the specialist school nursing service provided in Reading schools, focusing on the accessibility and quality of the service.

Recommendation for the youth counselling services (No 5 and Connexions Time to Talk):
8. Youth counselling services to review the information promoting youth counselling services to ensure that it addresses young people’s concerns about confidentiality of the service.

Summary
This report has highlighted the important role specialist school nurses play in our local health economy and the key role in supporting the mental health development of young people. These recommendations are based on feedback received from young people and it is hoped that service improvement and acknowledgement of the scope of this role will help move the work being undertaken about specialist school nurses forward.
Responses received to the report recommendations

Asmat Nisa, Consultant in Public Health, Reading Borough Council

"Healthwatch’s findings and recommendations are timely as health and social care commissioners are currently working together to review Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) across Berkshire and determine what further analysis may be needed to inform future commissioning. A joint approach to supporting the Mental Health of Children and Young People across the health and care system is a key component of Reading’s plans for School Nursing, as set out in the Department of Health guidance, ‘Maximising the School Nursing Team contribution to the Public Health of School Aged Children’ and ‘Promoting Emotional Wellbeing and Positive Mental Health of Children and Young People’, published on 31st March 2014.

In April 2013, under national legislation the Commissioning responsibility for School Nursing was transferred from the NHS to Public Health Departments within Local Authorities. In March 2014 the Department of Health published guidance for Local Authorities - ‘Maximising the School Nursing Team contribution to the Public Health of School Aged Children’ and ‘Promoting Emotional Wellbeing and Positive Mental Health of Children and Young People’. The guidance is key to reviewing our current services in line with the implementation of the new regulations. We will be considering how we can improve young people’s Mental Health awareness, referral and signposting between the various professionals which young people come into contact with. We note the expressed needs of young people interviewed which showed the importance to them of having clear access to emotional and psychological support through their school. We will therefore be issuing a strong message about the importance of meeting these needs and a young person centered approach to care in future.”

1) Raise the visibility of the specialist school nursing service amongst young people and secondary school communities by distributing information and contact details about the service.

“We are pleased to have an independent evaluation of the value placed on Specialist School Nursing Services. The Special School Nurses have been seen as a priority by both health and social care commissioners, and work is underway to review the School Nursing Service Specification against new guidance for this Published on 31st March 2014. It is within the function of Public Health to promote health and services which contribute to the prevention of illness, including promoting Wellbeing and the findings of the Healthwatch report will be taken on board in the School Nursing Review. In this respect a leaflet has been produced to help raise awareness about school nurses and improvements to the website have been implemented.

“Healthwatch’s findings and recommendations are timely as health and social care commissioners are currently working together to review Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) across Berkshire and determine what further analysis may be needed to inform future commissioning. A joint approach to supporting the Mental Health of Children and Young People across the health and care system is a key component of Reading’s plans for School Nursing, as set out in the Department of Health guidance, ‘Maximising the School Nursing Team contribution to the Public Health of School Aged Children’ and ‘Promoting Emotional Wellbeing and Positive Mental Health of Children and Young People’, published on 31st March 2014. In April 2013, under national legislation the Commissioning responsibility for School Nursing was transferred from the
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3) Specialist school nurses to have more of a presence and be more involved in the life of Reading secondary schools so that they are known and trusted by students. “The current school nurse contract for this area has been renewed, however the Public Health Shared team is to commence a review of the current arrangements which will shape a new service specification. The Public Health Shared team will liaise with the Children’s Services teams and young people to identify ways that young peoples’ access to school nurses could be improved, and how other support to stay well could be offered. The service is beginning to train its staff in delivering first line support on evidence based interventions such as motivational interviewing.”

4) Offer more choices in how young people can access the specialist school nursing service, in particular offering email and phone access. “The Public Health team takes responsibility for overseeing the production of a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) for Reading, which then underpins health and social care commissioning. The current JSNA includes a module on Child and adolescent Mental Health, which sets out some key findings from evidence reviews:

‘Effective mental health commissioning will need to ensure interventions and services work to reach young people at a level that is appropriate to their need. The range of services on offer varies from mental health promotion and primary prevention to specialist care for those with more complex and severe psychiatric needs. It is recognised that within this there are some gaps in service provision at present.’

Choice will be key to providing a future service which meets young people’s needs. The JSNA data when available will be refreshed during 2014 and we will take this opportunity to improve our understanding of young people’s needs and service gaps in the Reading area. The service has recently updated and improved its website.”

8) Youth counselling services to review the information promoting youth counselling services to ensure it addresses young people’s concerns about confidentiality of the service.

“The Healthwatch report on Young People’s Mental Health will be taken into account in the current ongoing Specialist CAMHS Review across Berkshire. This forum gives an opportunity to include issues such as confidentiality in commissioned services and to recommend the design of contracts with providers and statutory body strategies which respond to needs such as this.”
Penny Cooper, Head of Children’s Universal Services-Reading, Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust:

“What a great piece of work that clearly recognises the work the school nurses are doing and could do more if the capacity allowed. Having just undertaken an audit with the schools I am not surprised that the young people do not know that nurse, as in many cases neither does the school. I would agree that the service needs to reinvent itself so that is better able to meet the needs of the school populations as well as achieve the outcomes in the 5-19 healthy child programme.

1) Raise the visibility of the specialist school nursing service amongst young people and secondary school communities by distributing information and contact details about the service.

“I totally agree. The service needs to ensure that sessions are advertised and they are committed to offering the secondary school fixed times. This will be taken on by the school nurse service improvement group. It would be great for the nurses and the young people to work together on how this could look.”

3) Specialist school nurses to have more of a presence and be more involved in the life of Reading secondary schools so that they are known and trusted by students.

“In the past this has not be possible due to the overwhelming CP responsibility of the nurses; however due to a change in focus the nurses have been working to increase their commitment to their school. It is fantastic that JMA are funding a day a week post which clearly shows that that school population has a better idea of the nurses’ role and how to contact her. As she has become more embedded in the school both children and staff have come to value her advice and support. For me this would be best practice for every senior school and also some of the more needy primary school.

4) Offer more choices in how young people can access the specialist school nursing service, in particular offering email and phone access.

“The school nurses now have a mobile texting service as well as a team email address that young people could use to support greater accessibility. Both of these are in their infancy and still at the advertising stage, but in the long term could support the need to be more available; however the main thing I take from this document is that young people need to develop a relationship with their nurse before they will feel comfortable in using other methods of communication.”

6) Review the existing specialist school nursing workforce to ensure that the service can become more visible and more accessible within all Reading secondary schools.

“BHFT are passionate about making the greatest use of this service to ensure that they are reaching the children of most need.”

“Overall this is a very positive report which clearly shows that the school nursing service needs to work with young people to enable them to achieve their potential. We need to be more visible, more available and more approachable for young people.”
Viv Allison, Health Lead for Children and Families School Nursing, Reading and Wokingham, Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust:

“It's a good report and it would be great if more resources were put into school nursing following its recommendations. All the comments are very fair and there is probably not much we are not aware of and the frustrations this brings!

“On a positive note, when we met we discussed that one of our practitioners was seconded to the CPE, Lorna will be returning on the 1st July, working 3 days a week within school nursing and 2 days a week with CPE. This will be a brilliant link for the Reading School Nurses with the Mental Health services, and will give the team a specialist who can support them with Mental Health Issues.”

1) Raise the visibility of the specialist school nursing service amongst young people and secondary school communities by distributing information including contact details about the service, via leaflets, posters, school induction packs and school websites.

“I will definitely take forward the ‘visibility’ and contact issues- posters would be a quick win here with picture and contact details of the school nurse.”

3) Specialist school nurses to have more of a presence and be more involved in the life of Reading secondary schools so that they are known and trusted by students.

“As you know we would love to be able to follow recommendations and have a school nurse for every secondary school and the feeder with a highly visible presence, interestingly Oxford have put a substantial amount of money into school nursing and are having that model!”

4) Offer more choices in how young people can access the specialist school nursing service, in particular offering email or phone access.

“The texting is being rolled out to the Reading Schools, but anecdotal evidence from Newbury where it has been piloted seems to find that the texting works better where the pupils know the school nurse personally!
In the days when we were commissioned to deliver Health promotion, particularly sexual health in secondary schools, the numbers seen at drop-ins increased.”

6) Review the existing specialist school nursing workforce to ensure that the service can become more visible and more accessible within all Reading secondary schools.

“My team would love to be able to put into practice the recommendations on page 14, and some are a quick win and we can look at that now, but school nurse capacity needs to increase before we can give the examples of good practice highlighted to all the secondary school and pupil referral units in Reading!”
Beverley Wheeler, Specialist School Nurse (Student Practitioner), Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

“Your recent report into exploring the role of Specialist School Nurses with regard to early intervention in relation to Mental Health issues is most welcome. As a practitioner within the School Nursing service I am very aware that I are not as visible and accessible to Young People as they need me to be and this is far from my own ideals as well as theirs. As a service we are relatively small compared to the numbers of Young People in our localities but would welcome any opportunities to enhance our service provision in this area. I am delighted that your report has recognised our potential and our position as being best placed to make early interventions in Health and Emotional well-being. Indeed the new School Nurse pathway launched by the Department of Health in March 2014, ‘Promoting Emotional Well-being and Positive Mental Health in Children and Young People’ identifies the activities and interventions that we as a service are able to deliver across all four levels of our service model. I have included a link to this document. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/299268/Emotional_Health_and_Wellbeing_pathway_Interactive_FINAL.pdf
As a school nurse who is currently about to finish their Specialist Practitioner Qualification and prior to that has completed training on the psycho-social care of children, adolescents and their families in order to better support young people with their emotional and mental health needs I would welcome any support to enhance our service provision in this area and should you require any input from our service would also be happy to help in any way I can to enable us to deliver better health outcomes for our young people.”

Helen Snell, Specialist Nurse Practitioner, Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

“What a great report. It is great that the young people generally are happy to engage with a school nurse, and we are always wanting to make ourselves more accessible. It is a shame we are not in the primary schools as often as we would like to be as this is particularly important that the little ones also know we are available to help them. Interesting to see what more you have to say on the matter.”

Kate Carroll, Team leader, Connexions Time to talk youth counselling service

“All our promotional material clearly states that young people will be listened to; taken seriously; respected; encouraged and will not be judged.
We now deliver a counselling service in 3 Reading secondary schools. In school, we use the room which the Personal Adviser uses so that other students in school will not necessarily know that the young person is attending for counseling.

In the first session, counselors cover data protection and the young person is asked to sign a form saying that they understand what data protection is. Counselors also explain confidentiality. They explain that if they think that the young person is at risk or is a risk to others, then they are obliged to pass this on. Counselors will always try to involve the young person in this process. When this happens in school, the counselor will talk to the school’s safeguarding lead and report this to a counseling co-ordinator at Time to Talk Reading.”
Mrs Angus, Headteacher, Reading Girls School

“Thank you for this comprehensive report and Reading Girls School will take time to review and evaluate the service we offer to our students to ensure sufficient support, guidance and necessary referrals are enhanced.“

Mrs Tracy Harrison, Welfare and Attendance Officer, on behalf of Ms Christine Kattirtzi, Headteacher Kendrick School

“Thank you for your report which we have read. We would like to make the following comments:

We have both a School nurse and a No 5 Counsellor who visit Kendrick on a regular basis. There are posters up around school with details of how to book an appointment with both our school nurse and the No. 5 Counsellor. These appointments are booked discreetly and confidentially through our Welfare Officer.

The students seem happy with this arrangement and have not indicated that they would wish to contact either of these professionals directly.

The students are allowed to leave lessons as long as they will not be missing a vital lesson e.g. a test.

We have had a very long and fruitful association with the School Nurse system over 25 years and have been very happy with the nurses we have dealt with and that they have involved themselves in individual cases as well as contributing to our PSHEE programme. We wish they could do more.”
Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Reading would like to thank all the stakeholders who contributed to this project. We would particularly like to thank:

- the young people who volunteered their time to work on the project: Vishnu Shivanand and Ellie Barnett
- Reading Youth Cabinet
- All the young people who completed the survey.

Bibliography

1. Department of Health - Maximising the contribution of the school nursing team - Getting it right for children, young people and families. 
2. The RCN’s Position on School Nursing in the UK 
3. British Youth Council - Our school nurse - Young people’s views on the role of the school nurse. (National Consultation with Young people) 
4. NHS Mental Health Services for Young People 
   http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/AboutNHSservices/mentalhealthservices/Pages/Availableservices.aspx
Appendix 1 - Profile of respondents to the survey
Total number = 170

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School attended</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Maiden Erleigh</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Blessed Hugh Faringdon</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
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<td>Chiltern Edge</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Denefield</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Little Heath</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kendrick</td>
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<td>Waingels</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theale Green</td>
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Healthwatch Reading wrote to all schools and pupil Referral Units in Reading to inform them about the project. Distribution of the surveys was done through the Youth Cabinet and the Youth Service. Healthwatch Reading did not receive any survey responses from young people attending Reading Boys School or Phoenix College.

<table>
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<th>Year Group</th>
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<td>Year 10</td>
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<td>Year 11</td>
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<td>6th Form</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Bangladeshi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pakistani</td>
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<td>Any other Asian Background</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black or Black British</td>
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<tr>
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</table>

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Appendix 2 - Survey Data

Total number of respondents = 170

1. Do you know when the school nurse is available to see students at your school?
- Yes = 53%
- No = 26%
- Unsure = 21%

2. Do you know how to contact the school nurse?
- Yes = 42%
- No = 35%
- Unsure = 23%

3. What would be your preferred way to contact the school nurse? (tick 2 boxes only)
- Drop in at school = 59%
- Email = 52%
- Phone = 21%
- Text = 18%
- Facebook = 0%

4. Have you seen the school nurse for anything other than immunisations?
- Yes = 33%
- No = 77%

5. Would you consider talking to the school nurse if you were worried about your emotional wellbeing (mental health), or that of a friend?
- Yes = 50%
- No = 50%

6. Is there any reason why you might not talk to a school nurse about problems that could affect your emotional wellbeing (mental health)?
- Not knowing the nurse well enough to feel comfortable talking to her - 12%
- Concerns about confidentiality of the school nursing service - 10%
- Concerns about the perceived quality of the school nursing service - 5%
- Not knowing who the school nurse is - 3%
- Not knowing when the school nurse is in school - 3%

7. Do you have any suggestions on how school nurses in Reading can better support young people’s emotional wellbeing (mental health)?
- More opportunities for students to meet and get to know the school nurse in a group setting e.g. in a lesson or at assembly - 12%
- Raise awareness about the school nursing service e.g. leaflets & posters - 12%
- Improve students’ perceptions about the quality of the support that school nurses can offer - 7%
- Improve privacy for students who want to talk to a school nurse - 2%

8. Is there a youth counselling service provided at your school, or is there a counselling service off-site, that students can be referred to?
- Yes = 71%
- No = 29%

   If yes - which counselling service? Able to identify service provider = 59%
   Don’t know = 41%

9. If your school does offer a counselling service, have you ever talked with a counsellor at your school?
- Yes = 23%
- No = 77%

10. Would you consider talking to a youth counsellor at school, if you were worried about your emotional wellbeing (mental health)?
- Yes = 32%
- No = 27%
- Don’t know = 41%

11. Is there any reason why you might not talk to a counsellor at your school?
- Not knowing the counsellor well enough to feel comfortable talking to him/her - 12%
- Concerns about confidentiality of the counselling service - 8%
- Concerns about the perceived quality of the counselling service in meeting the needs of students - 2%