

Lewisham School Aged Nursing Service
Background Information for Lewisham HCSC

18 March 2014

Introduction

In March 2012, the Department of Health launched a major new national strategy for the development of school aged nursing services in England and Wales¹.

The national school nursing development programme is a contribution to the government's intention to focus on public health and to improve the life chances of children and young people through effective preventative services and the provision of early help. The Department of Health has developed the programme in partnership with the Department for Education, professional organisations, school nurses and most importantly young people themselves.

The vision of this national programme is that delivering public health services to children and young people should be led by specialist community public health nurses, working in schools and other environments, and supported by a team with an appropriate skill mix to reflect local need. The new service will improve children and young people's health and wellbeing by:

- Leading, delivering and evaluating universal Public Health programmes for school-aged children and young people, both within school and community settings.
- Taking an evidence based approach to delivering cost effective programmes or interventions which contribute to children and young people's health and wellbeing e.g. reductions in childhood obesity and under 18 year old conception rates.
- Referring and delegating within the team to maximise resources and utilise expertise of other skilled professionals.
- Supporting seamless transition into school, from primary to secondary school and transition into adulthood.
- Leading support for children and young people with complex and/or additional health needs including education, training and support for families, carers and school staff.
- Identifying children and young people in need of early help and where appropriate providing support to improve their life chances and prevent abuse and neglect. This includes working with children and young people at risk of becoming involved in gangs or youth violence.
- Contributing as part of a multi-agency team, to support children, young people and families, particularly those with multiple needs.
- Supporting vulnerable children including children in care and support for their carers (including young people in contact with Youth Justice system).

Though the vision is ambitious, unlike the national Health Visitor Expansion Programme, no additional funding has been provided nationally for this programme. The onus is, therefore, on local commissioners to ensure funding is available for appropriate development of this service at local level.

School Aged Nursing Services in Lewisham

The existing School Aged Nursing Service (SANS) in Lewisham is well-established, fully recruited and has a high level of advanced skills; many of the nurses are qualified Public Health Practitioners and hold additional qualifications in sexual and reproductive health.

Since April 2013, funding for SANS, in common with the rest of the country, has been from the local Public Health Budget. The current cost of commissioning of the service from Lewisham and Greenwich Healthcare Trust is £1,629,000, which includes the costs of implementing the National Child Measurement Programme locally.

In response to the launch of the national programme, Lewisham's Public Health, Children and Young People's Commissioning and School Aged Nursing Service (SANS) worked together to review SANS locally, looking in particular at gaps in provision and how these should be prioritised in terms of which were the most important to address first. The review also looked at the costs of addressing the gaps identified.

The results of this review were presented to the Children and Young People's Joint Commissioning Group (JCG) in March 2013. Significant elements of the programme require no new investment but rather different ways of working and these elements are being progressed. However, the total additional resources that would be required to meet national expectations of the programme and to meet the locally agreed priorities were estimated at over £400, 000.

The recommendations of the review, and the priorities identified were agreed by the Children and Young People's JCG and the Children and Young People's Directorate identified the development of SANS locally as the most important priority for any additional Public Health investment in children in Lewisham.

In preparing the Public Health Budget Plan for 2014/2015, the priority of developing SANS was accepted, but funding of only £200, 000 will be possible. This should, however, allow for the development of the greatest priorities identified in the review presented to the Children and Young People's JCG, as follows:

1. Developing school based Healthy Child teams
 - A virtual team of all who are supporting the health and well being of children and young people in a school, informed by school health profiles with the school nurse co-ordinating their actions in a single plan
2. Developing early intervention support for emotional health and well-being
 - Ensuring that all Band 6/7 School Nurses are trained and equipped to identify and respond to children and young people's emotional needs.
3. Support for children and young people with increased vulnerability
 - Following up on CYP with short and long term vulnerabilities offering support around healthy lifestyle and ensuring access to health checks immunisations etc. This will include children who, for whatever

reason, are not in a mainstream school. This group has been identified as being extremely vulnerable, and there is little or no provision for some of these groups of children. The need for a service for home schooled children has been identified as a major gap by a recent serious case review.

4. Increasing access to support (in school)
 - Increasing the availability of open access drop in within the school day
5. Increasing access to support (out of school)
 - Providing “one stop” open access drop-ins based in youth centres and other appropriate venues, offer to include Sexual Health service access, Smoking Drugs and Alcohol support and Tier 1 mental health support.

Conclusion

Development of school aged nursing services is a major priority for Lewisham’s Public Health team and for the Children and Young People’s Directorate. This is in line with an important national strategy. The additional £200,000 investment planned from the Public Health budget for 2014/2015 will help address the most important unmet needs, as well as addressing gaps between what is currently provided and what is required as part of the national development programme.

Donal O’Sullivan, Consultant in Public Health Medicine

1. Dept of Health, 2012. Getting it right for Children, Young People and Families; Maximising the contribution of the school nursing team: Vision and call to action