Launch of SAPHNA School Nursing Report at House of Lords

Tuesday 8 October, 2024

London, UK - The School and Public Health Nurses Association (SAPHNA) is proud to announce the official launch of its significant report, 'The Forgotten Frontline', at the prestigious House of Lords later today, October 8th, 2024. This critical event will be hosted by Baroness Frances D'Souza, Honorary President of the Children's Alliance, in partnership with SAPHNA. The launch will focus on raising awareness of the increasingly urgent challenges faced by school nurses in the UK, as outlined in the newly released report.

Following the event at the House of Lords, SAPHNA will hand-deliver their petition, 'A School Nurse in Every School', to 10 Downing Street. The petition, which has garnered widespread public support, calls on the government to ensure that every school in the UK is staffed with a qualified school nurse to meet the growing health needs of children and young people. The petition highlights the severe shortages in school nursing staff and the critical role that these professionals play in supporting the health and wellbeing of pupils.

This forms part of a wider joint campaign for 'A School Nurse in Every School' alongside the College of Medicine and the Queens Nursing Institute. Roundtable reports showing further commitment and pledges to this work are available here: https://saphna.co/news/.

Sharon White OBE, CEO of SAPHNA, will lead a delegation to Downing Street to present the petition, which represents the voices of thousands of concerned citizens, healthcare professionals, and educators who believe in the necessity of universal access to school nurses.

"This petition, and our findings in the report 'The Forgotten Frontline', reflects the urgent need for government action. Every child deserves access to a school nurse for ongoing support in mental, physical, and emotional health. Today, we bring this call directly to Downing Street."

'The Forgotten Frontline' reports the findings of SAPHNA's inaugural survey of school nurses and their teams across the UK and Crown Dependencies. It highlights the growing health needs of school-aged children, and the severe workforce shortages that have left the school nursing sector struggling to meet demand. The average English school nurse now cares for over 4,000 pupils, underscoring the alarming disinvestment and budget cuts that have diminished the capacity of these vital healthcare professionals.

Key Findings:

- 82% of survey respondents report insufficient staffing to deliver critical health services.
- Mental health concerns in young people have surged, with a 96% increase in cases reported.
- The growing postcode lottery of school nursing services is leaving many children without access to timely care.
- Significant workforce reductions - the survey report indicated that 37% of school nurse respondents plan to retire with most not planning to return to the profession.

Baroness D'Souza will deliver an opening address, followed by a panel discussion led by SAPHNA's CEO, Sharon White OBE, and key contributors to the report, including Dr Sarah Bekaert of Oxford Brookes University. The event will also feature testimonies from frontline school nurses, who will share their personal experiences of the growing demands and pressures within the system.

Sharon White OBE, CEO of SAPHNA, commented:

"This report paints a stark picture of the current state of school nursing in the UK. School nurses are critical to the health and wellbeing of our children, but they are being stretched to the breaking point. We urgently need to invest in this workforce to address the growing health inequalities faced by our young people. Our children deserve better, and the time for action is now."

The event at the House of Lords aims to engage policymakers, healthcare leaders, and the public, urging them to take swift action to address the growing crisis in school nursing. SAPHNA is calling for a renewed focus on prevention, early intervention, and adequate funding to support school nurses in their vital public health role.

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NHS :: School Nurse For Every School :: Public Health :: School Nursing :: Early Intervention :: Healthcare :: Petition :: Government ::

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The full report will be available to download on SAPHNA's website after the launch event: https://www.saphna.co/news

For more information, or to request interviews, please contact:

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About SAPHNA

SAPHNA is a professional organisation representing school and public health nurses across the UK. Established in 2006, SAPHNA is dedicated to promoting excellence in school nursing practice, improving health outcomes, and reducing health inequalities for children, young people, and their communities. Visit our website for more information: https://www.saphna.co

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