

School nurse

School nurses are specialist community public health nurses (SCPHN) who work with school-aged children and young people and their families to improve health and wellbeing outcomes and reduce inequalities and vulnerabilities.

School nurses are NMC [1]-registered nurses or midwives who have undertaken additional training and qualifications to become specialist community public health nurses (SCPHN - SN). School nurses lead the Healthy Child Programme: 5-19 [2] and are fundamental in ensuring every child has the best start in life.

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Working life

You will work year-round to support children and young people both in schools and other settings such as their home or local health centre, often using digital technology to support their needs. You will lead a team including community staff nurses and nursery nurses to make sure services are delivered efficiently.

School nurses use their clinical judgement and public health expertise to identify health needs early, determining risk and protective factors, and providing early intervention to prevent issues escalating. You'll work in partnership with schools, children's social care professionals, GPs, health visitors, allied health professionals, and voluntary services to meet the needs of children and young people.

The school nurse's day-to-day role varies from area to area, but will typically, include:

- working with other professionals to keep children safe, support local safeguarding arrangements, and ensure that the voice of the child is considered
- supporting holistic [6] assessment of children and young people's mental health and wellbeing needs, and providing mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention approaches
- carrying out health assessments to identify risk-taking behaviours and supporting children to keep safe
- supporting development and delivery of relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) in education, schools and other settings
- offering individual support to children, young people and families to manage lifestyle concerns and change behaviours, for example related to healthy weight

- early identification of vulnerability that may impact on the child or young person's education or school attendance. This may include being a young carer, being a child in care, experiencing domestic or emotional abuse or parental substance misuse
- supporting children and young people who have complex and long-term health needs
- helping children and young people to develop a knowledge of self-care, autonomy and decision making, including how to access health services

Philip Wells

Lead professional school nursing/practice teacher

Young people get a lot of negative press but they never fail to impress and inspire me with their resilience and creativity.

Read Philip's story [7]

Entry requirements and training

The school nurse training programme is known as Specialist Community Public Health Nursing – School Nursing (SCPHN - SN). It is offered at degree or master's level. You need to be a registered midwife, adult, child, mental health or learning disability nurse to apply.

The full-time programme is run over 52 weeks, but you may be able to train part time over a longer period. In some areas training may also be offered as a master's level apprenticeship.

You will need to apply to be sponsored or seconded by a health provider organisation who will provide your clinical placement and a community practice assessor and supervisor. The course is 50% theory with a university and 50% practice on placement with a health provider organisation under supervision from a range of specialised practitioners working with children and families.

Must-have skills

To be a school nurse, you need:

- an interest in children and public health
- excellent communication skills
- to be well organised
- confidence
- to be able to demonstrate leadership skills

You will need to be able to cope with potentially challenging situations such as child safeguarding.

You need to be able to work both independently and as part of a team and will be flexible, observant and able to prioritise effectively.

Where your career can take you

You will have opportunities to progress into operational or management roles, leading teams, specialising in quality and governance, service transformation or commissioning.

You could go into teaching within the community, working as a practice assessor or supporting clinical

academic research. Or you could move into an academic position as a lecturer or researcher at a university.

Pay and conditions

Some school nurses are now employed outside of the NHS, for example in local authorities, private healthcare providers, charities or Community Interest Companies (CICs), where terms and conditions can vary.

If working for the NHS, you'll usually work a standard 37.5 hours per week and be paid under Agenda for Change (AfC) [8] pay system, typically starting at band 6. You'll also have access to our generous pension scheme and health service discounts, as well as at least 27 days of annual leave plus bank holidays.

Want to come back?

If your registration has lapsed then you may need to complete a return to practice programme. Email us [9] so that we can put you in touch with someone in your local area who can offer tailored advice.

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- Children's nurse [10]
- Mental health nurse [11]
- Health visitor [12]
- Learning disability nurse [13]

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Links

[1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#NMC> [2]

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/healthy-child-programme-5-to-19-years-old>

[3] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/privacy-and-cookies/#CookieDeclarationChangeConsentChange>

[4] <https://www.youtube.com/NHSCareers> [5] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/we-are-the-nhs/registration?career=nursing-guide> [6] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Holistic>

[7] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/public-health/roles-public-health/school-nurse/real-life-story-phillip-wells> [8] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/careers-nhs/nhs-pay-and-benefits>

[9] <mailto:returntopractice.wm@hee.nhs.uk?subject=SCPHN%20return%20to%20practice%20query>

[10] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing/roles-nursing/childrens-nurse>

[11] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing/roles-nursing/mental-health-nurse>

[12] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/public-health/roles-public-health/health-visitor>

[13] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing/roles-nursing/learning-disability-nurse>