

# School Health Nursing

Get it Right - RIGHT NUMBERS

updated 2009

**School health nursing is a policy priority for the Royal College of Nursing because of its potential contribution to the public health agenda.**

In 2005-06 the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children Survey found that **21%** of girls and **19%** of boys in Wales were obese or overweight at age 11. At the same age **21%** of girls and **35%** of boys exercised for an hour a day.

**34%** of girls and **26%** of boys in Wales reported starting smoking at age 13 or younger and indeed **12%** of girls and **6%** of boys reported smoking weekly by age 13. **20%** of girls and **23%** of boys in Wales are drinking alcohol weekly by age 13.

The School Nurse can contribute to policy development based on health need profiles of the school-aged population. Examples might be a need to address sexual health or smoking cessation. School Nurses also educate children collectively and individually on issues such as mental and emotional wellbeing, parenting and dental health.

School Nurses also provide early interventions or act as an advocate, referral agent or signpost to other resources for individual children. Where they are working with children who have multiple needs they can act as a co-ordinator of health plans. They offer a range of complex skills in holistic assessment and interpersonal communication, including information sharing and enabling others.

RCN Wales believes that School Health Nurses should be employed by the NHS and deployed as a Team to assess and respond to the needs of the school-aged population over the full calendar year rather than being employed only during school term-times.

There is an opportunity in Wales to use Health Visiting and School Nursing to contribute to health need profiling of all children and young people in the country, via the child health data system. At present data is collected only on numbers of contact, a system which ended in England in 2004.

The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to providing one full-time school nurse per secondary school in Wales. This is an ambitious target that RCN Wales fully endorses. Wales has few school nurses at present - only 150 whole-time equivalent and these are distributed very unevenly throughout Wales.

## KEY POLICY ACTIONS

- The Royal College of Nursing believes that every child in Wales should have meaningful access to a specifically qualified school health nurse across the full calendar year.

