School Nurse Messaging Service: Information for staff in schools
Equitable Access

Students will still be able to see their NHS school nurse face-to-face in clinic. Additionally our new messaging service will give them the opportunity to contact a nurse by mobile message.

Students can send SMS text messages from any kind of mobile phone.
Ensuring Safety

This service has been widely tested in other areas to ensure its safety. The approach to safeguarding young people and their personal information is robustly governed. ChatHealth staff liaised with school staff, parents, governors, clinical leads, school nurses and safeguarding colleagues to develop guidance for nurses using messaging – particularly in relation to young people at risk of significant harm. Other organisations were also extensively consulted, including the Police, NSPCC, Royal College of Nursing and some sexual health message-based helplines. The safety procedures we are using help to inform national guidance for school nurses using messaging with young people.

Our nurses are using a unique NHS online message management system which has inbuilt safety features ...

- Out of hours bounce-backs
- Automated fail-safes
- Availability management
- Unread-message alerts
- Auditable transcripts
Case Study

“The school nurse messaging service has been viewed very positively by our students and supports our safeguarding strategy in the college. Implementing the system has been issue free and I would recommend its use. It’s convenient for our students to have access to healthcare in this way and use of the school nurse has increased.”

Rob Summers
Headteacher
Judgemeadow Community College

“Young people in our school have benefited greatly. They have been able to send messages day or night and at weekends - they know they will get a reply the next school day and this has helped some through tough times. It’s been great for young male students as they are less likely to meet face-to-face with the school nurse and messaging breaks the ice.”

Heather Foster
Lead First Aider and Personal Care Assistant
Judgemeadow Community College

“Our new messaging system helps to safeguard students. We can even handle anonymous enquiries more safely which is useful because confidentiality is so important to young people.”

Dawn Batson
School Nurse
Judgemeadow Community College

“Some things are so embarrassing that you can’t talk about them. If you send a message first, the nurse already knows what you’re going to talk about when you get there.”

Zeinab Mohammed
Student
Judgemeadow Community College

Students on roll: 1,200 aged 11-16. College Location: Leicester, UK
Feedback from Students

Young people said they like using messaging because it is:
- Less embarrassing.
- Quick and easy.
- Anonymous.
- Non-judgemental.

Pilot Outcomes

- Increase in episodes of care delivered after messaging service introduced.
- Service continued to be provided throughout school holidays.
- More students accessed the school nurse, particularly young males.
- Some students accessed the school nurse for the first time.
- Nurses using messaging saved time, to invest back into delivering care.

Staff and managers peer reviewed messaging conversations conducted during the pilot and described a thorough, timely, instant, informative, succinct, safe, non-judgmental, sensitive and reassuring service which was offering the option of face to face care to young people where required.
**Promotion**

To promote the service, each school will be provided with:
- Posters.
- Business card flyers.
- Slides for TV screens.
- Text for inclusion in student publications.
- Text for inclusion in staff and governor publications.
- Slides for assembly presentations which can be delivered by yourselves or School Nurses where possible.

Promotional materials will arrive via your School Nursing Team.

Young people helped to design our promotional materials.

Alternative promotional materials which do not refer to “sex” and “contraception” are available.
National Recognition

This service has been highly acclaimed by the Department of Health which encourages the use of mobile and social media to improve access to healthcare – particularly for young people. ChatHealth has been awarded an Innovation Challenge Prize from NHS England and multiple other awards for innovative use of communication in healthcare and improving patient experiences.
FAQs: School Nurse Messaging Service

“Our school has a ‘no phones’ policy. Can our students use the service?”
Yes, our marketing materials encourage young people to respect school phone use policies and many students use the service outside of school hours and lesson times.

“What ages does the service cater for?”
We are currently making the service available to all mainstream schools for young people aged 11-19. This will involve making the service available in some schools where secondary education starts at Year 7.

“Can young people use the service if they aren’t in mainstream school?”
Plots of providing a messaging service in special schools are underway. This will include us examining what adaptations might need to be made for young people with additional needs. We also plan to examine how messaging can help improve access to care for young people who aren’t in education, who are home educated, or who are in non-mainstream educational settings such as PRUs and free schools.

“In what languages is the service available?”
The service is available in English and work plans are in place to examine what needs to be done to improve access to school nursing by messaging for young people who don’t speak English as a first language.

“How quickly are messages responded to?”
Messages are responded to within one working day at most, although much more quickly than this in most cases. Young people who start a new conversation with the messaging service get an immediate bounce-back to confirm their message is received, it explains when to expect a reply. Alternative sources of help are provided by bounce-back message to all users who send messages out of office hours.

“Is the service free?”
Yes, we provide the service free of charge. Any SMS messages sent whilst using the service may incur the usual network provider charges.

“Is the service compatible with all mobile phones?”
SMS text messages can be sent to the service from any kind of mobile phone which has sufficient credit and network signal.

“Is the service confidential?”
We do not usually inform parents, teachers or anyone else if a young person contacts the school nurse. If we are concerned about safety we might escalate our concerns and would attempt to consult with the young person first before doing so. Under these circumstances, we might also reveal an app user’s hidden identity. The confidentiality terms of the service are explained on promotional materials.

“Is information stored?”
All messages are securely recorded and can be seen by other healthcare staff who follow NHS confidentiality rules.

“Who provides the service?”
The school nurse messaging service is provided by Dorset HealthCare NHS Foundation Trust and is a registered trademark of Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust which is the operating body.