

Transition to the School Nursing Service

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Introduction

This chapter will enable you to reflect on the previous chapters and start to apply what you have learned so far. It is made up mainly of some case scenarios for you to reflect on and discuss with your mentor.

The aim of this Chapter is to:

- Reflect upon the experience of the on-line resource so far
- Review completion of reflective diary
- Re-visit additional skills that you may need to achieve in order to work in the community setting

At this point, think again about your SWOT analysis and compare it with the one that you did earlier. What has changed? What have you learned in practice? What have you learned through using this resource and what can you identify as your ongoing learning needs?

STRENGTHS - what do I already know?	WEAKNESSES - What do I need to find out?
OPPORTUNITIES - where can I find out information?	THREATS - what are my main worries or concerns about safeguarding?

Working in the community requires practitioners at all levels to be resourceful, flexible and adaptable to the various situations you may be confronted with. You will be working within different teams within your role, for example: the school nurse team, the broader school health team, education teams or social care teams. The school nurse team itself may be made up of a number of different practitioners such as: Qualified Specialist Community Public Health Nurses, Community Staff Nurses, Nursery Nurses and Health Care Assistants. In many instances there will be limited resources and so it is important to have the ability to prioritise work and this will depend upon the needs of the children young people and families in the local area. School nursing works best when the individual skills of each practitioner are acknowledged and recognised and utilised effectively.

'Working in the community requires practitioners at all levels to be resourceful, flexible and adaptable.'



Reflection point: how do you prioritise your work? Think about the scenario below and discuss with your mentor.

Case study: Aleem

You are in a high school, it is 2pm and you have an initial child protection conference at 3pm. A teacher comes to talk to you about a pupil who is afraid to go home. Aleem is 17 and she tells you that her mother has found a condom in her bedroom and has told her father and they are furious with her; she is afraid to go home. What are your priorities in this situation? What skills will you need and who could you utilise? Crucially, you will need to think about your competency in making decisions and the decisions that you make may be helped by considering the steps you might need to take.

Facione (2007 p23) suggests that there are six steps to effective thinking and problem solving. Consider Aleem's case and apply these steps to help you decide the best course of action:

Ideals	Five Whats and a Why	Aleem's case
Identify the problem	What is the real problem we are facing here?	
Define the context	What are the facts and circumstances that frame this problem?	
Enumerate choices	What are our most plausible three or four options?	
Analyse options	What is our best course of action, all things considered?	
List reasons explicitly - let's be clear	Why are we making this particular choice?	
Self-correct OK, let's look at it again	What did we miss?	

You can now look at the scenarios below and apply this decision making model as well as other information that you have learned so far to help you.

Scenario 1

You are doing a routine school entry screening at a primary school. You discover a child who is overweight for their height. You also notice that they are rather breathless on exertion.

- What would you do and in which order?
- Would you talk to the class teacher – what questions might you ask?
- Would you ring the parent/carer – and what would you say?
- Would you contact the GP?
- Would you talk to your team leader?
- Would you discuss with the child what their eating habits are?
- Would you check the child's lunch box?

Possible actions:

- Talk to the child as you are doing the screening in a casual way – not drawing too much attention to food.
- Talk to the class teacher about how active the child is in sports activities: ask if they have concerns. Are there any bullying issues?
- Talk to your team leader about speaking to parents/carers. This needs to be done very sensitively and the team leader may be the most appropriate to do this if you are inexperienced with you being present as well.
- If needed, you may want to see the parent/carer to discuss this further, this gives a good opportunity to establish a relationship and possible reasons for the overweight issue and you can give advice.

Scenario 2

You are working in a secondary school drop in and a 15 year old girl comes and discloses that she might be pregnant. What would do?

- Would you establish whether she could be pregnant?
- Would you talk about the partner and when they last had sex or a period.
- Do a pregnancy test
- Talk about how they could talk to a parent/carer/boyfriend about this
- Discuss with your team leader/manager
- Talk to the parent or carer as they are under 16?

Possible action:

- Establishing understanding of why this young



person thinks they are pregnant is really important. This will help you decide if they are Fraser competent (see Chapter 4 for more on Fraser Guidelines).

- You also need to be sure that there is not an abusive situation. How old is the partner, how long have they been together, is she prepared to name the father?
- A pregnancy test will be vital if not already done. You may also need to talk about possible options. If the young person is within 72 hours of sex, then they could have emergency contraception if appropriate. Or if within 5 days referral to GP/Sexual Health clinic for alternative EC such as a coil or 5 day emergency contraceptive pill (Ella One)

Scenario 3

You are undertaking routine immunisations for the school leavers' boosters in a secondary school. You notice that a boy has scars along his forearms and he appears very withdrawn without making eye contact. What would you do?

- Would you ignore it and give him the immunisation?
- Would you leave it at that moment and talk to your team leader about it with a view to returning later?
- Would you try to engage him in conversation and ask if he is unhappy?
- Would ask him directly about the scarring?
- Would you give him information about contacting the school nurse services?
- Would you tell the school about what you have observed?
- Would you inform a parent?

Possible actions:

- Opening up a means of communication is important here. The assessment of immediate risk of harm is crucial. Is he likely to go and harm himself more severely for example? Is he Fraser competent?
- You might need to spend some time talking to him and it would be important for him to know that there is help available and also that you have recognised the injuries. You might need to say that you would like to see him again and make an appointment to do that to give you time to talk to your team leader.
- The school might need to be informed if there is bullying involved. Parents/carers may also be informed too, depending on assessed risk.

Additional scenarios

Look at the additional quotes below and think of what you would do in each situation. What will you do to gain the required knowledge or skills? Where could you find out the information?

'I am unsure what to do if a child/young person refuses an immunisation.'

'I am unsure what to do if a 14 year old wants an immunisation but there is no parental consent.'

'Learning how to react calmly and non-judgementally is vital in order to contain potentially volatile situations.'

'A child fails a hearing check but I think it is more a lack of understanding about the test rather than a hearing problem.'

'A school asks me to do a puberty talk but I have never done it before.'

'A parent complains that a school nurse has withheld information about the sexual activity of their 15 year old teenager.'

'I have been seeing a 13 year old who is self-harming for 6 weeks. They refuse to talk to anyone else as I have built a rapport with them. I don't know how to move this forward.'

'I have been asked by a parent if they should send their child to school with chicken pox.'

'A 6 year old girl has severe eczema and I don't think that her mother is applying the prescribed creams and the school is also reluctant to put the creams on in school.'

The school nurse role is varied and you may be: immunising children and young people, screening for health needs, working with families, supporting emotional needs or identifying more serious mental health problems. The ability to recognise your limitations, know the referral routes and work collaboratively is imperative to ensure safe practice.

Whilst it is very important to be able to recognise your limitations, it is even more important to be confident enough to express them to your colleagues or manager/mentor in an appropriate manner.

The quality of a community service is based on the effective decision making skills of practitioners working in the community. The role of the school nurse also requires sound knowledge of child protection as well the clinical assessment skills needed for managing issues such as self-harming behaviours. Situations can be unpredictable in the community and children and young people could display behaviours that may challenge you.

Being aware of how and why children or teenagers might be behaving in particular ways is important and learning how to react calmly and non-judgementally is vital in order to contain potentially volatile situations. Decisions may have to be made promptly without discussion with other staff that may not be immediately available. Acting in the best interests of the child or young person must remain

at the forefront of your practice at all times and this will be about assessing the level of risk and acting accordingly. It is the duty of all health professionals to be accountable in demonstrating sound judgement and decision making (Standing, 2010).



Chapter Summary

The overall aim of this chapter is to revisit some of the skills that are required for school nursing practice. Whilst it is acknowledged that the skills required for working in the community are multifaceted, it is hoped that this chapter has helped you recognise that not everyone will have all the required skills all of the time. Therefore, it is essential that community teams work together to recognise the various scope and level of expertise within their teams, (and on occasions beyond their teams) and to reach out and utilise those people who have the right skills for the task in hand. In highlighting the importance of this you are encouraged to reflect on those people within your team and other agencies and look at whether the skills each individual has are being used effectively.

Further Reading

Facione, P.A. (2007) *Critical Thinking: What it is and why it counts.*, California Academic Press, California