



# Suffolk County Council School Nurse messaging service



## The school nurse messaging service

With more and more young people using handheld mobile devices to administrate their daily lives, Suffolk County Council introduced a school nurse messaging service for secondary school aged pupils in November 2015. This service is now being expanded to allow parents to access school nurses in this way. Our aim is to continue providing the most timely and convenient access to confidential health advice.

The number to text is 07507333356

### Equitable access

Parents will still be able to see their school nursing team face-to-face in 'drop in' clinics or by appointment. Additionally our new messaging service will give them the opportunity to contact a nurse by mobile message. SMS text messages can be sent from any kind of mobile phone, and will soon be able to download the free ChatHealth smartphone app to send instant messages after logging-in securely with a password.



## Feedback

Users said they like using messaging because it is:

- Confidential
- 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.
- School Nurse service used by those who had not previously used it.
- 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 where required.

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## 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.



NHS Innovation  
Challenge Prizes



Encourage, recognise and reward...

DH Department  
of Health

BBC  
RADIO



95-106  
CAPITAL  
FM  
THE UK'S NO.1 HIT MUSIC STATION



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# Safety

Who we consulted...

- School Nurses
- Young People
- Police
- NSPCC
- Royal College of Nursing
- Safeguarding Leads
- Information Governance Leads
- Teachers and Governors
- British Youth Council
- Sexual health text helplines



NSPCC



txtm8  
89868

**school+nurses**  
YOUR SUFFOLK SCHOOL NURSING SERVICE

 **Suffolk**  
County Council

**Text your school nurse**  
**07507 333356**

**We can support parents and children with all kinds of things like...**

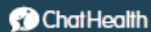

**Emotional health & wellbeing** **Growing up**  
**Dental health** **Keeping healthy** **Personal safety**  
**Bullying** **Toileting**  
**Healthy eating**

*Contact your school nurse for advice & support*

We offer half termly drop-ins at your local primary school or call us on this number.

We do not usually inform anyone else if you contact the school nurse. We might inform someone if we were concerned about your safety or your child's, but we would usually speak to you first. Your messages are stored and can be seen by other healthcare staff who follow the same confidentiality rules. We aim to reply to you within one working day and you should get an immediate bounce back to confirm we received your text. Bounces will not be sent outside of normal working hours. If you need help before you hear back from us, contact a member of school staff or your doctor. Our text number does not receive voice calls or MMS picture messages. Prevent the school nurse from sending messages to you by texting STOP to our number. Please respect your school's mobile phone policy. Messages are charged at your usual rate.

[www.suffolk.gov.uk/schoolnursing](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/schoolnursing)

 **ChatHealth** 

## Promotion

To promote the service, each school has access to...

- A4 and A3 Posters
- Business card flyers
- Social media adverts
- PDF's of the posters
- Text for inclusion in student publications.
- Text for inclusion in staff and governor publications.

Printed materials will arrive via your school nurse.

Young people helped to design our promotional materials.



## **FAQs: School Nurse messaging service**

### **What ages does the service cater for?**

The service is currently available for young people aged 11-19 years. It will now also be available to parents of all school age children. It will be marketed to parents of primary age pupils from April 2016. It will not currently be marketed at primary school age pupils themselves to directly access the school nurse in this way.

### **Can parents/ carers or young people use the service if they aren't in mainstream school?**

Yes the service is open to those not in mainstream schools. Messaging can help improve access to care for parents or 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. Planning to enable providing a messaging service in special schools is underway. This will include us examining what adaptations might need to be made for young people with additional needs.

### **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.

## FAQs continued

### 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. Parents or 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. A ChatHealth smartphone app will be available shortly. Parents or young people who download the ChatHealth smartphone app will be able to send instant messages within their existing data-plan at no additional cost.

### 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. The ChatHealth smartphone app will soon be available to users of Apple iPhones and an equivalent app for Android devices is planned for delivery shortly.



## **FAQs continued**

### **Is the service confidential?**

We do not usually inform anyone else if a parent or young person contacts the school nurse. If we are concerned about safety we might escalate our concerns and would attempt to consult with the parent or 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 Suffolk County Council and is a registered trademark of Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust which is the operating body.