

Chief Medical Officer, DoH  
Chief Nursing Officer, DoH  
HSCT Directors of Nursing  
Director of Children's Services HSCB  
Director of Integrated Care HSCB  
Chair of SBNI

Office of the Director of Nursing,  
Midwifery and Allied Health  
Professionals  
Public Health Agency  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor South  
12-22 Linenhall Street  
BELFAST  
BT2 8BS

Tel: 028 9536 3505  
Website: [www.publichealth.hscni.net](http://www.publichealth.hscni.net)  
Email: [Rodney.morton2@hscni.net](mailto:Rodney.morton2@hscni.net)

## **BY EMAIL**

26 February 2021

Dear Colleagues

### **Text-a-Nurse Service via ChatHealth**

I am pleased to inform you all of a new and exciting School Nursing Service for all Post Primary Schools that successfully launched this week. The PHA Children, Young People Nursing Team have been working closely with the Department of Education and other agencies to develop a Framework for Children & Young People's Emotional Health and Wellbeing in Education. The Text-a-Nurse service is one of a range of services and programmes that have been proposed to support implementation of the Framework. It aims to provide a secure and confidential text messaging service for young people aged 11-19, which will allow them to easily and anonymously get in touch with a school nurse for advice and support, about their physical and mental and emotional wellbeing.

#### **How it will work**

Text messages from the young people will be managed by the local school nursing team using the secure award winning ChatHealth web platform. Young people who want to get in touch text the service, which is staffed on a duty rota from 9am to 5pm during the week, in both term time and school holidays. The message is delivered to a safe and secure web application for the nursing staff to view and pupils using it are guaranteed a response within 24 hours Monday to Friday. If a faster response is needed, they are given signposting information. There will be clear safeguarding procedures in place in the event that young people disclose they are at risk of harm. This text

***Improving Your Health and Wellbeing***



messaging advice service will initially be available to all post primary pupils across Northern Ireland, with the intention of rolling it out to school staff and parents/carers if they have concerns and wish to seek advice about a young person.

As this is a new service in NI, it is planned to introduce it as a pilot programme, but providing full coverage across all post primary settings. The pilot will be subject to review, at least 6 months in advance of the expiration of the pilot in March 2023, in order to evaluate performance and determine future plans for the programme.

The Text-a-Nurse service is set in the context that digital technologies have transformed our lives, more so in recent times, during the Covid-19 pandemic and the social restrictions placed upon all of us, including our young people. The school nursing service aims to capitalise on this by exploring new ways of engaging pupils and reaching out to offer health related advice and support. This service will provide advice about sensitive health issues, where young people might want to avoid a face to face appointment, and school nurses can provide help, advice and support with a variety of issues including:-

- Emotional health and wellbeing
- Stress and anxiety
- Self-harm
- Alcohol and drugs
- Body Image
- Smoking
- Bullying
- Sexual health
- Covid related worry
- General health issues

The unique Trust text numbers are listed in the information graphic below.



Text-a-Nurse is a new confidential text messaging service for young people aged 11-19



South Eastern Trust - 07507 327263

Northern Trust - 07480 635982

Western Trust - 07480 635984

Belfast Trust - 07507 328290

Southern Trust - 07507 328057



I would appreciate if you would share across your respective areas for information purposes. As part of our ongoing communication plan, we are in the process of printing posters for display in key areas where young people attend.

More information on ChatHealth can be found at [Home Page - ChatHealth](#)

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact project lead [Emily.Roberts@hscni.net](mailto:Emily.Roberts@hscni.net)

Yours sincerely



Mr Rodney Morton  
Executive Director of Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professionals

**Improving Your Health and Wellbeing**

