

Exploring the potential of a school-based online health and wellbeing screening tool: Professional stakeholders' and young people's perspectives and experiences

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Background

- Rising prevalence of mental health issues for young people
- Detecting need and facilitating access to services and support is challenging
- Many young people who experience health and wellbeing issues do not seek, access or receive required support
- Early intervention and support is associated with better outcomes for young people who experience health and wellbeing issues

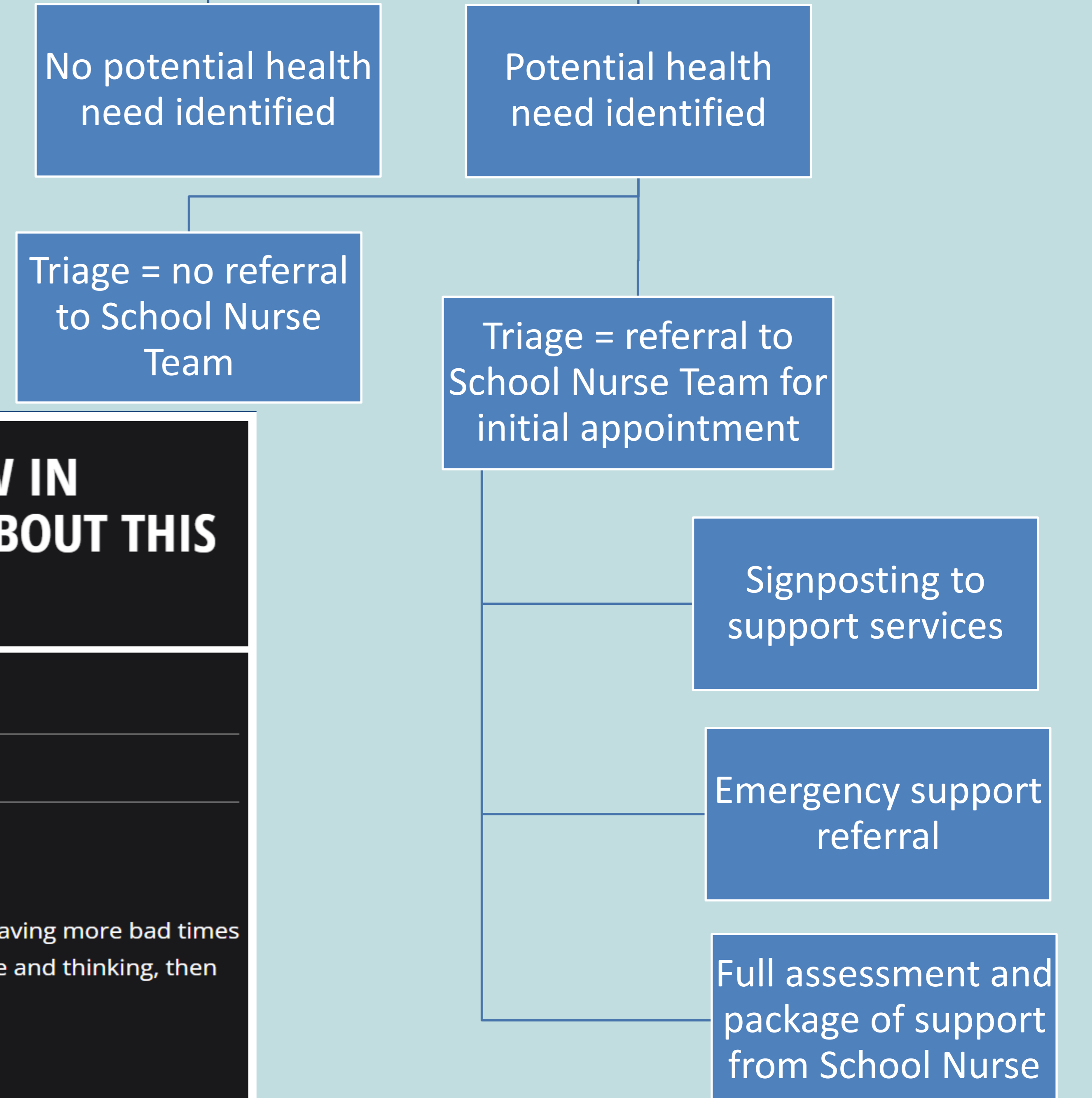
Our study explores young people and professional stakeholders' perspectives of the acceptability, utility and effectiveness of a novel school-based online health and wellbeing screening tool which has linked follow-up support, the Digital Health Contact (DHC)

The Digital Health Contact (DHC)

- **A non-mandated offering.** Schools Nurses recruit schools to participate
- **An online questionnaire** delivered to an entire secondary school year group
- **A range of questions around physical and mental health/wellbeing**
- **All participants receive a digital personalised care plan** (health promotion resources, signposting and advice) upon completion of the questionnaire
- **Certain responses/words/phrases given by participants produce a 'red flag'** alert on their health records system, which triggers a referral alert to School Nursing teams
- **Referrals are screened by Public Health School Nurses.** Face-to-face intervention and follow-up support from the School Nursing team is provided for those where unmet needs are identified (see 'Simplified DHC flowchart')

Students complete the DHC questionnaire

Simplified DHC Flowchart



Methods

- **Online in-depth interviews**
- **Participants:**
 - **14 professional stakeholders** involved in the design and implementation of the DHC (commissioners, school nurses, school leaders)
 - **51 young people** (aged 13-14) from two schools who had participated in the DHC (32 female and 19 male participants)
- **Interview questions:** perceptions of the DHC and follow-up support

Findings

- Young people's perspectives
- **A useful way of discussing health needs**
 - **Context of screening delivery (at home or in school) can have a crucial impact on perceived privacy and reported honesty** in responses
 - **Clarity regarding the DHC process (who sees the responses) important** in ensuring detailed and honest responses
- Stakeholder perspectives
- **Effective means of identifying and supporting young people** who have not previously been identified as needing support
 - **Efficient way to target limited service resources**
 - **Barriers around enabling school engagement:** logistics, school infrastructure, perspectives of fit with schools
 - **Ways to minimise school engagement barriers:** presenting case studies of successful work, and through persistence, knowledge and enthusiasm from School Nurses

FEELING SAD

DO YOU REGULARLY FEEL LOW IN MOOD? YOU MIGHT THINK ABOUT THIS AS FEELING SAD.*

Yes

No

DID YOU KNOW?

People tend to have good days and bad days. If you're having more bad times than good times and this is affecting your sleep, appetite and thinking, then think about talking to someone you trust about this.

Example question from DHC screening questionnaire

'A lot of students might be afraid to come forward or not really know who to go to and so this survey gives them like an opportunity to ask for help without really having to ask for help'

Participating young person

"I've picked children up that have had no support in the past, not even told their parents, schools, anybody. So we are picking up young people that otherwise would have sort of maybe continued to self-harm and, you know, just escalated further"

Public Health School Nurse

Implications

The DHC, as a universal school-based screening programme which has linked follow-up intervention, has great potential to identify unmet health need and result in better health outcomes for young people