

SCHOOL NURSE: SCHEME TO BE ROLLED OUT ACROSS TWO COUNTIES

Health help by phone's a hit

A mobile phone service allowing students to text health concerns to their school nurse is to be rolled out across two counties.

Pupils at Judgemeadow College, in Evington, Leicester, have been testing the service for Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust.

It gives students the chance to speak to a nurse by text message or through a downloadable app, rather than visiting them at a weekly clinic.

Feedback from students over the past nine months has been extremely positive and now the service will be rolled out to all 11 to 19-year-olds in the city and across Leicestershire and Rutland from March.

Lutterworth and Charnwood colleges have also tested the system.

In all, 200 youngsters have used the service.

Dawn Batson, Judgemeadow's nurse, said: "We've had more students contacting school nurses since they've been able to get in touch with us through the messaging service.

by **FIONA DRYDEN**
EDUCATION CORRESPONDENT

"We've also had more contact from teenage boys, who are usually less likely than girls to approach a healthcare professional and talk about their problems, including emotional well-being.

"The service is completely confidential and if I feel they need to see someone I encourage them to do so."

Users said anonymity meant it was easier to talk about potentially embarrassing issues via text first before seeing a nurse in person.

Judgemeadow pupil Jasmine Ferguson, 16, said she has used the text line.

She said: "I found it really useful, whether you have a very personal question or a general question about healthy eating or something else like that."

Vanisha Solanki, 15, said: "It's anonymous and it's easier to discuss something via text sometimes."

Clinicians said the scheme was helping them respond more quickly to inquiries from a greater number of young people.

While face-to-face appoint-



WELL RECEIVED: Wendy Nicholson, Maggie Clarke, Jasmine Ferguson and Dawn Batson

PICTURE: BETH WALSH / LEBW20140121D-079

ments are still available to students, they are now more likely to be taken up when most needed.

Maggie Clarke, senior nurse for school nursing at Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust, said: "This service is a response to young people's ex-

pectations about how we should communicate.

"Nearly all teenagers use mobile phones and about three-quarters own smartphones which they use to administrate every aspect of their lives, from shopping to communicating with family and friends.

"School nurses need to be accessible on that platform if we are to keep NHS services convenient and accessible for young people."

Wendy Nicholson, the UK's top school nurse, visited Judgemeadow yesterday to see the trailblazing scheme for herself.



CYCLISTS: Peter and David

Footballing memorabilia auctioned

A CHARITY is holding an auction of football memorabilia collected during a cycle challenge.

David Clarke and Peter Cooper cycled to all 92 Football League grounds last year to raise money for cancer charity Edgar's Gift.

The charity was set up in memory of David's step-brother, Ben Edkins, who died of a rare form of muscle cancer in April 2010.

Memorabilia collected along the way will be auctioned at a dinner at the King Power Stadium on Saturday, May 17.

The event will be hosted by snooker star and charity patron Willie Thorne.

The ticket price is £35.

For more information, visit: <http://www.edgarsgift.co.uk>

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