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## **Uniting Voice and Vision: NASNA and SAPHNA's Strategic Affiliation**

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In previous NASNA columns, we have explored the evolving nature of the School Nurse role, and the increasing demands placed on both practice and education. From political advocacy at the House of Lords (Hayward et al. 2024) to embedding the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) (2022) proficiencies (Hayward 2024; Allan et al. 2025) it is clear that contemporary School Nursing requires a united and informed voice. We are therefore thrilled to announce a new milestone: the formal affiliation of NASNA with the School and Public Health Nurses Association (SAPHNA).

This strategic partnership, ratified by the SAPHNA Board in March 2025, marks a bold and timely step forward—aligning academic expertise, research leadership, and educational development with the powerful advocacy, practice insight and policy influence that SAPHNA has long championed.

### **Why This Matters Now**

School Nursing sits at the intersection of education, public health and safeguarding. As such, collaboration between practice and academia is not simply beneficial - it is essential. This affiliation enables a dynamic, responsive relationship that enables timely, two-way reflection on our respective roles, responsibilities and shared challenges. By bringing together NASNA's collective academic voice and SAPHNA's national leadership, we are better positioned to amplify our shared mission: promoting excellence in School Nursing for the benefit of children, young people (CYP) families, and communities.

This partnership comes at a time when the profession faces growing complexity. Workforce shortages, increasing safeguarding caseloads and widening health inequalities all underscore the need for coherent, collaborative leadership (SAPHNA, 2024) The latest NMC (2022) SCPHN Standards of Proficiency further raise the stakes, placing greater emphasis on ethical leadership, evidence-based decision-making and digital competence.

As educationalists and researchers, NASNA members are already addressing these challenges - designing innovative curricula, mentoring future leaders and producing impactful research. Our affiliation with SAPHNA ensures that this work informs national strategy, policymaking and workforce planning.

### **Shared Vision, Complementary Strengths**

The affiliation agreement outlines how NASNA will act as the educational and research arm of SAPHNA, contributing to the delivery of shared strategic goals. These include:

- **Enhancing Workforce Development:** Together, we aim to secure a sustainable pipeline of SCPHN School Nurses through apprenticeships, CPD innovations and postgraduate pathways.

- **Driving Evidence-Based Practice:** NASNA members will contribute research insights to SAPHNA-led initiatives, as well as collaborate on case studies and policy papers grounded in both academic and practice-based evidence.
- **Championing High-Quality Education:** We will co-design educational materials, shape standards and support quality assurance processes, drawing from our HEI expertise.
- **Strengthening Advocacy:** This partnership unites SAPHNA's campaigning strength with NASNA's research and educational voice, ensuring a joined-up message to policymakers and commissioners.

We are particularly proud that this is a group commitment model, meaning all NASNA members benefit from the affiliation without requiring individual SAPHNA membership. This ensures inclusive and equitable participation, recognising NASNA as a distinct but integrated partner within SAPHNA's broader professional ecosystem.

### **Early Wins and Future Ambitions**

Since the affiliation was agreed in principle, NASNA and SAPHNA have already identified priority areas for collaboration, including:

- Contributing academic feedback to practice case studies submitted to SAPHNA's professional development hub.
- Co-producing podcasts and publications that spotlight innovations in School Nursing education and research.
- Exploring ways to support the next generation of School Nurses through shared leadership programmes and mentoring initiatives.

We believe these early actions demonstrate the power of this partnership in action, and they are only the beginning.

### **Elevating the Profession Together**

At its heart, this affiliation represents a shared commitment to securing the future of School Nursing. It acknowledges the importance of research-informed practice, practice-informed education and policy-informed advocacy. Together, we are stronger, smarter and more strategic.

As Nurse Academics, we now have an even greater platform to influence national conversations and raise the profile of School Nursing. Our voices - shaped by evidence, informed by students and practice learning partners, and rooted in a deep understanding of CYP health needs - will contribute meaningfully to national debates about service delivery, education policy and health equity.

To quote the title of SAPHNA's (2024) national report, *The Forgotten Frontline*, School Nursing remains too often overlooked in policy and workforce discussions. This affiliation is a vital step towards changing that - ensuring the educational voice of School Nursing is heard loud and clear at tables where decisions are made.

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