

2023-01-07

CANOK AT SCHOOL: Empowering and training school nurses to identify and support children as next of kin with mental ill-health: a training intervention for professionals

The CANOK AT SCHOOL project is about the empowerment and training of school nurses to identify those students (7-17 years old) who are experiencing mental health problems due to their role as children as next of kin (CANOK). These are children whose parent/s (or other co-habiting family member/s) suffers from serious health issues (mental disorder or disability, serious physical illness or injury, addiction to alcohol or other agents) or have died unexpectedly. The project promotes awareness of CANOK and provides new tools for school nurses to understand, manage and support CANOK and their mental health in school environments, in line with the Swedish Health Care Act.

The project develops an educational intervention for school nurses, aiming at:

1. increase their awareness regarding the living situation and mental health problems that CANOK often experience
2. offering tools and materials that school nurses can use to identify and support CANOK
3. follow up and monitoring CANOKs' progress during their schooling.

The CANOK AT SCHOOL project's specific objectives are:

- to co-design and evaluate a training intervention for school nurses which empowers them to manage primary and secondary prevention of mental health issues among CANOK
- to initiate and maintain a constant dialogue with end-users (school nurses) and stakeholders (CANOK, schoolteachers, school social worker, managers, school physicians, National Board of Health and Welfare) to promote awareness of CANOK, their needs and effective ways to co-operate for their wellbeing in the school environment.

The CANOK AT SCHOOL project will be organised in five interdependent scientific work packages (WPs)

WP1: Theoretical and conceptual model for supporting CANOK

WP2: Training intervention design, implementation and evaluation

WP3: User and stakeholder engagement via a Blended Learning Network and Advisory and Ethics Board (EAB)

WP4: Raising awareness and reaching societal impact

Relevance

The project is about an important and complex societal challenge. In general, international research has demonstrated that being a CANOK constitutes a risk factor for mental health and well-being, with around 50% experiencing care-related stress and 40% mental health problems. Further, this situation exacerbates health inequalities during the life-course. CANOK often also experience the consequences of social exclusion.

According to Swedish law – the Health Care Act (SFS 2017:30) and Patient Safety Act (2010:659), CANOK are children whose parent/s (or other co-habiting family member/s) have serious health issues (mental disorder or disability, serious physical illness or injury, addiction to alcohol or other agents) or die unexpectedly. CANOK are protected by the national welfare system, in line with the Council Recommendation (EU) 2021/2014 establishing a European Child Guarantee and the related incorporation into Swedish law.

Recent Swedish research reveals that: 24% of all children 15 to 17 years of age are CANOK, of these 27% have mental health issues; 13% have physical health problems; 13% have deteriorated school results; 11% have thoughts about harming themselves; 10% are bullied, teased, or ridiculed. It is estimated that over 70% of CANOK are actually young carers, defined as children and young persons under 18 years of age providing significant or substantial care, assistance or support to family members,

Lead researcher

- Elizabeth Hanson, Principal Investigator, Professor and scientific leader, Department of Health and Caring Sciences, Linnaeus University and Swedish Family Care Competence Centre (Nka)

Project team

- Samantha Sinclair, Senior Lecturer, Department of Psychology, Linnaeus University
- Francesco Barbabella, researcher, Department of Health and Caring Sciences Linnaeus University and Swedish Family Care Competence Centre
- Lennart Magnusson, Associate Professor, Department of Health and Caring Sciences, Linnaeus University and Director, Swedish Family Care Competence Centre
- Eva Nordqvist, möjliggörare/praktiker Nationellt kompetenscentrum anhöriga
- Doctoral student, to be recruited

Collaborations with organisations, researchers and practitioners

The CANOK AT SCHOOL project team will carry out research activities in collaboration with other professionals and representatives from civil society and faith communities. The following stakeholders are those who have already confirmed their interest to participate in and support the project:

- Municipalities of Borås, Jönköping, Mullsjö, Oskarshamn, Uddevalla and Uppsala
- Swedish Red Cross Trauma Centres in Skövde and Skellefteå
- Swedish Church (Borås)
- Swedish Family Care Competence Centre (Nationellt kompetenscentrum anhöriga - Nka)
- National Board of Health and Welfare (Socialstyrelsen, NBHW)
- The Region of Kalmar County (Region Kalmar län)
- Advisory and Ethics Board (AEB): a Board with eight international experts (from various European countries)
- Eurocarers: European federation of non-profit and research organisations working on/for informal carers.

Financing

- The Kamprad Family Foundation for Entrepreneurship, Research & Charity Research and education - Mental illness and/or prolonged pain
- Faculty of Health and Life Sciences, Linnaeus University

Time plan

January 1, 2023- December 31, 2025

Contact person

Elizabeth Hanson

Professor

Tel: +46(0)70 361 48 46

E-post: elizabeth.hanson@lnu.se

www.anhoriga.se

www.lnu.se