

A Brief History of the Association of British Paediatric Nurses

In the Spring of 1938, a group of matrons of children's hospitals met together at the Princess Elizabeth of York Hospital, Shadwell, in London's East End. This preliminary meeting had been called to discuss the need for an association that could further the interests of sick children's hospital nurses, to enable them to discuss matters pertaining to the nursing of sick children and to encourage social activities and stimulate good will and friendship. The new Association would work for the principle that children's trained nurse should nurse the sick child. It would strive for the representation of sick children's nurses in their own right at the National Council of Nurses of Great Britain and lastly it would "stress the need for a private nurses' cooperation"¹ and a Register for Sick Children's Nurses.

From its earliest years, ABPN has focused on promoting excellence in children's nursing, supporting professional development, and championing the rights and wellbeing of children, young people, and their families. The Association emerged at a time when child health services were evolving rapidly, and when nurses increasingly sought a national platform to influence policy, education, and standards of care specific to babies, children and young people.

Over time, ABPN has developed into a respected professional organisation representing children's nurses working across a wide range of settings, including acute care, community services, mental health, education, and specialist services. Central to its mission has been the belief that children and young people have unique physical, emotional, psychosocial, and developmental needs, and that nursing practice, education, and research must reflect this.

ABPN has played an important role in:

- Advocacy and policy engagement, contributing the children's nursing perspective to national debates on child health, workforce development, safeguarding, and service design
- Professional support and leadership, providing opportunities for networking, shared learning, and leadership development
- Education and standards, supporting high-quality children's nursing education and continuing professional development
- Amplifying the nursing voice, ensuring that the experiences and expertise of children's nurses inform decisions affecting children and young people

Throughout its history, ABPN has adapted to changes in healthcare delivery, workforce pressures, and the wider social context affecting children and families. Its work increasingly reflects contemporary challenges such as health inequalities, mental health needs, digital environments, and the importance of listening to children and young people themselves. Today, the Association of British Paediatric Nurses continues to build on its founding principles: to support children's nurses, influence policy, and promote the highest standards of care for babies, children, and young people across the UK.

¹ i.e. a nurses' cooperative