

Association of British Paediatric Nurses' position statement on Community Children's Nursing

Purpose

This position statement affirms the beliefs and values of the Association of British Paediatric Nurses. It has been produced by officers and members of the Association in line with our role to promote the development of children's nursing through evidence-based information about practice and education.

Background

The *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*¹ states:

'Every child has the right to the best possible health. Governments must provide good quality health care, clean water, nutritious food, and a clean environment and education on health and well-being so that children can stay healthy' (Article 24)

A child therefore has a right to access services that meet their needs closer to home and to be cared for at home wherever possible.

The establishment of a specific community nursing service for children can be traced back to the late 19th century.

An effective and integrated community children's nursing service as outlined in *NHS at Home*² would not only reduce inpatient, as well as emergency and outpatient attendances but a reduction in overall costs and improved outcomes for children, young people and their families.

The recent Independent review of the NHS in England by Lord Darzi³ highlighted that there was a need for a shift towards more integrated care closer to home. Community children's nurses have a key role within comprehensive and integrated children's services.

The ABPN believes that

- Services for children and young people should be age appropriate and meet their specific needs
- Infants, children and young people should receive care and treatment at home or as close to home as possible, with transfer of care planned along with timely transition from children's services to adult service provision

¹ United Nations, 1989, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 24)

² NHS at Home: Community Children's Nursing Services (Department of Health, 2011)
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a74aa2ee5274a52940692e1/dh_124900.pdf

³ Independent Investigation of the National Health Service in England <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-investigation-of-the-nhs-in-england>

- The voices of children and young people should be heard and inform the development and planning/ commissioning of services for them
- Infants, children and young people should receive care from nurses that have the child specific knowledge, skills and competencies, including care provided in their home, community and general practice settings^{4,5,6}
- Parents, family and significant others should be involved in planning and delivery of care according to their and their child/young person's wishes

An integrated comprehensive Community Children's Nursing service working in partnership with Children's Public Health Services⁷ should be configured to provide a seamless service to meet the needs of infants, children and young people diagnosed and living with:

- acute illness and short-term needs, such as post-operative care at home
- long-term conditions, including management of asthma and bladder and bowel problems
- disabilities and complex needs, including continuing care and neonates
- life-limiting and life-threatening illness, including palliative and end-of-life care
- learning disabilities, including autism and neurodiversity
- mental health and emotional wellbeing issues⁸, requiring support in community settings

Community children's nurses

- coordinate care and support for infants, children, young people and their families, liaising with other service providers
- enable children and young people to receive treatment at home or closer to home in GP practices, rather than attend hospital settings

Although there has been progress in the provision of Community Children's Nursing across the UK since the late 1980's, the fragmentation of aspects of community children's nursing services⁹ over recent years, along with the restructuring of health services for children and young people has in many instances resulted in disinvestment and the loss of integrated service delivery. In addition, the loss of planning focused on the population of children and young people due to the lack of overall child health leadership within both commissioning and provider services at a local level in many areas.

⁴ Association of British Paediatric Nurses Position Statement on Children and Young People's Rights [abpn_position_statement_children_and_young_peoples_rights.pdf](#) and Background Briefing paper on Children and Young People's Rights [abpn_background_briefing_children_and_young_people.pdf](#)

⁵ ABPN Position Statement on Children's Nurse Education [abpn_position_statement_nurse_education_final_24_november_2024.pdf](#) and ABPN Background Paper on Children's Nurse Education [abpn_cn_education_background_paper_final_22nd_november_2024.pdf](#)

⁶ <https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/national-standards-for-neonatal-qualified-in-specialty-qis-education/>

⁷ Including Health visiting and school nursing provision

⁸ In partnership and with support from Child and Adolescent Mental Health teams

⁹ There are fragmented multiple separate community children's nursing teams delivering palliative care/hospice at home, hospital at home/virtual wards, as well as specialist teams/nurses i.e. Well Child, Diana Services delivering aspects of community children's nursing services

The ABPN calls on the UK Government and the devolved nations to:

- place children and young people at the heart of all policy-making decisions
- invest in integrated community children's nursing teams to enable infants, children and young people to receive care and support at home or closer to home
- develop a workforce strategy for integrated comprehensive community children's nursing teams¹⁰ and action plan to ensure a sustainable future workforce
- facilitate the development of services whose focus is the prevention of admission to and facilitation of early discharge from hospital and which work between primary, secondary and community care providers.

Terms

The term child refers to infants, children, young people and young adults up to 25 years of age.

About the ABPN

The ABPN is a network of children's nurses with a wide membership of experts in clinical practice, education, leadership and research. It is the oldest children's nursing association in the world, established in 1938.

www.abpn-uk.com

X (formerly Twitter): @ABPN_ChildNurse

Facebook: Association of British Paediatric Nurses

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¹⁰ Team composition to meet the needs of infants, children and young people will include individuals with a range of knowledge, skills and competencies including learning disabilities, children and young people's mental health and neonates