



Committed to promoting the development of children's nursing through evidence based information about practice and education

## **Press release – embargoed until 00.00hrs 9<sup>th</sup> February 2026**

### **Children's Mental Health Week 9<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> February 2026**

The Association of British Paediatric Nurses (ABPN) is proud to stand alongside children's nurses across the UK in marking Children's Mental Health Week 2026, taking place from 9<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> February 2026.

1 in 5 children in the UK are estimated to have a probable mental health disorder<sup>1</sup>. Amongst children aged 5-16yrs, 1 in 6 are likely to have a mental health problem, an increase of 50% over recent years<sup>2</sup>.

Amidst this crisis in mental health concerns in children and young people, there are significant challenges when seeking support with over 78000 young people waiting more than a year for NHS mental health treatment in 2023-2024.

A sense of belonging within our home and community is a basic human need and one that is vital for the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people. A child who feels they belong is empowered to contribute, thrive and meet their full potential, making a real difference in the world.

This year's theme 'This is My Place' calls upon families, schools and communities across the UK to create spaces where every child can feel a sense of belonging and can safely and confidently say 'this is my place'.

Children's nurses, with their deep understanding of holistic care and child development, are uniquely positioned to lead efforts in identifying mental health concerns early, advocating for timely assessments, and coordinating comprehensive support. To address this growing challenge, we must invest in education, strengthen integrated networks of services for children and young people, and ensure that children's nurses are embedded within multidisciplinary pathways. These steps are essential to effectively manage the rising complexity and prevalence of mental health issues among the younger population.

Further guidance and support are available from leading children's mental health charities, including YoungMinds<sup>i</sup> and Place2Be<sup>ii</sup>, which provide evidence-informed resources for families and professionals.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.england.nhs.uk/2023/11/one-in-five-children-and-young-people-had-a-probable-mental-disorder-in-2023/](https://www.england.nhs.uk/2023/11/one-in-five-children-and-young-people-had-a-probable-mental-disorder-in-2023/)

<sup>2</sup> [www.childrensociety.org.uk/what-we-do/our-work/well-being/mental-health-statistics](https://www.childrensociety.org.uk/what-we-do/our-work/well-being/mental-health-statistics)

## The ABPN believes that

- Every child and young person has a right to have their specific needs recognised and addressed<sup>3,4</sup>
- Infants, children and young people should receive care from nurses that have the child specific and specialist knowledge, skills and competencies to meet their unique needs in age-appropriate facilities, at home or closer to home in community as appropriate<sup>5</sup>
- Child field specific pre-registration undergraduate education programmes, as well as specific post registration education is crucial to equip nurses to meet the needs of children and young people across all settings, including at home or closer to home in community<sup>6,7</sup>

“Children’s nurses bring a unique understanding of holistic care and child development, enabling them to spot early signs of distress, advocate for timely intervention, and coordinate support. But mental health is shaped beyond clinics—in classrooms, playgrounds, and homes. When communities create safe, inclusive spaces, children gain the confidence to thrive. Nurses play a vital role in bridging those connections. Belonging isn’t optional—it’s essential. When children feel seen and supported at home, in school, and in their community, their mental health flourishes”

Nicola Fielding – ABPN Member and Children’s Nurse

### Notes for editors

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

The ABPN recognises that primary and community services, as well as child public health and mental health services, including school nurses and health visitors also have a key role in supporting children, young people and families.

The ABPN is the oldest children’s nursing association in the world, established in 1938. Our wide membership includes experts in clinical practice, education, leadership and research.

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<sup>3</sup> See ABPN Position statement on Children and Young People’s rights [abpn\\_position\\_statement\\_children\\_and\\_young\\_peoples\\_rights.pdf](#) and ABPN Background briefing on Children and Young People’s Rights [abpn\\_background\\_briefing\\_children\\_and\\_young\\_people.pdf](#)

<sup>4</sup> UN Declaration of Human Rights 1948 see <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights/>

<sup>5</sup> See ABPN Position statement on Workforce planning and nurse staffing [abpn\\_position\\_statement\\_workforce\\_planning\\_and\\_nurse\\_staffing-final\\_nov\\_2024.docx](#) and ABPN Background briefing on workforce planning and nurse staffing [abpn\\_workforce\\_planning\\_and\\_nurse\\_staffing\\_background\\_briefing\\_paper-final\\_nov\\_2024.docx](#)

<sup>6</sup> See ABPN Position Statement on Children’s Nurse Education [abpn\\_position\\_statement\\_nurse\\_education\\_final\\_24\\_november\\_2024.pdf](#)

<sup>7</sup> See ABPN Background Paper on Children’s Nurse Education [abpn\\_cn\\_education\\_background\\_paper\\_final\\_22nd\\_november\\_2024.pdf](#)

The ABPN recognises Children's Mental Health Frameworks Across the UK and Ireland as below:

### **England**

*Improving the mental health of babies, children and young people: a framework of modifiable factors.* <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-the-mental-health-of-babies-children-and-young-people/improving-the-mental-health-of-babies-children-and-young-people-examples-of-government-led-contributions>

### **Scotland**

*Children and Young People's Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Supports and Services Framework* <https://www.gov.scot/publications/children-young-peoples-community-mental-health-wellbeing-supports-services-framework/>

### **Wales**

*NEST Framework (Mental Health and Wellbeing)* <https://www.gov.wales/nest-framework-mental-health-and-wellbeing-introduction>

### **Ireland**

Infant Mental Health Framework <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/infant-mental-health-framework>

[www.abpn-uk.com](http://www.abpn-uk.com)

Blue Sky: @abpn-childnurse.bsky.social

Facebook: Association of British Paediatric Nurses

Tik Tok: @ABPN\_ChildNurse

YouTube: @ABPN\_ChildNurse

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[https://www.youngminds.org.uk/?gad\\_source=1&gad\\_campaignid=100441065&gbraid=0AAAAADk6C8d917W3X5tGw3nFyx9fJmFbP&gclid=CjwKCAiAybfLBhAjEiwAI0mBBh\\_irk9cFan7DPjse-AhxYtGUcgcPu1HVDrWksacs4psa8aSFOrRoCk7wQAvD\\_BwE](https://www.youngminds.org.uk/?gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=100441065&gbraid=0AAAAADk6C8d917W3X5tGw3nFyx9fJmFbP&gclid=CjwKCAiAybfLBhAjEiwAI0mBBh_irk9cFan7DPjse-AhxYtGUcgcPu1HVDrWksacs4psa8aSFOrRoCk7wQAvD_BwE)

ii <https://www.place2be.org.uk/>