

Press release – embargoed until 00.00hrs 1st December 2024

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World AIDS Day - Remember and Commit

On the 1st December every year across the World, AIDS day aims to break misconceptions by educating people on prevention, treatment and control of the spread of the disease. It also serves as an acute reminder to governments that the number of new infections every year is still significant.

AIDS stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, a condition first recognised in 1981.

It is estimated that there are 38 million people with the virus across the globe. In the UK it is believed there are over 105,000 people living with HIV, with many undiagnosed. In 2020 a study found that there were over 2,000 children living with HIV in the UK¹.

Since 2010 the number of children living with HIV in the UK has decreased by 47%. In 2022, there were noted to be amongst adults and children over 4,000 new HIV cases in the UK.

In the UK most children and young people living with HIV had it transmitted from their mother. Today, HIV testing is offered to all pregnant women. If appropriately managed, during pregnancy the risk of transmitting HIV is reduced. Antiretroviral therapy can prevent or reverse the damage caused to the immune system.

The Children's HIV Association (CHIVA)² and WHO³ recommend talking to children about their HIV between the age of six and nine, and encouraging them to ask any questions they may have.

The Association of British Paediatric Nurses calls on the Government to invest further in

- access to specialist multidisciplinary teams, including the availability of specialist nurses and psychosocial support for children, young people and their families.

¹ Collaborative HIV Paediatric Study <https://www.gosh.nhs.uk/conditions-and-treatments/conditions-we-treat/hiv/#:~:text=Most%20recent%20data%20on%20the%20number%20of%20people%20living%20with%20HIV&text=Of%20these%2C%20around%206%2C600%20are,with%20HIV%20in%20the%20UK.>

² <https://www.chiva.org.uk/>

³ <https://www.who.int/>

- the transition of young people into adult services and the importance of a smooth transition into adult services to help ensure compliance with treatment programmes
- education and training for all professionals working with children and young people to ensure they have the necessary knowledge and skills to provide support for children and young people infected and affected by HIV
- preventative education in schools for children and young people

“HIV and AIDS has a major impact on the lives of children, young people and their families. Beyond the need for prevention through HIV testing of pregnant women and intervention with antiretroviral therapy a major focus is on educating the public, reducing stigma and providing children and young people the opportunity to learn about HIV. Children’s nurses are skilled at communicating with children, knowing the importance of listening to children, giving them space and providing tailored explanations. Having good evidenced-based knowledge about HIV is core to underpinning communication skills”

Professor Bernie Carter, President

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 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

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