

Press release – embargoed until 00.00hrs 2nd April 2025

2nd April 2025

World Autism Acceptance Day – Colour “Light It Up Blue”

On the 2nd April every year across the world, Autism Day aims to raise awareness, reduce misconceptions, promote inclusion and educate society about autism.

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a developmental disability that affects how children communicate, interact socially, learn, and behave. It's characterised by differences in the brain that cause challenges with social communication and interaction, as well as repetitive behaviours and sensitivity to things like noise and change.

In the UK there are around 700,000 people who are autistic, although research indicates that due to underdiagnosis there could be up to 1.2 million. One out of every 68 children are autistic, with boys three times as likely to be affected than girls.

In severe cases, an autistic child may never learn to speak or make eye contact. Many children with autism and other autism spectrum disorders can live fulfilling lives following early intervention and support.

Over the last twenty years there has been a significant rise in the diagnosis of autism and other types of neurodivergence in part due to increased awareness and changes in diagnostic criteria.

The provision of appropriate and targeted support recognising specific needs is a basic human right as outlined in the Human Rights Act¹, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child² and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities³. Good support provision encompasses:

- Respective legislation and policies
- Inclusion of those with autism and their family in the design, implementation and monitoring of services to meet their needs. There are many simple adjustments that can be made to make environments more autism-friendly.
- Information and data to aid service provision planning, including understanding barriers faced and individual support needs.

¹ Human Rights Act (1998) <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/42/contents>

² UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989) <https://www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights/>

³ UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) See <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/disability/crpd/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-crpd>

- Social and community support including specific services⁴ and financial benefits to cover disability-related extra costs that individuals and their families face.

The ABPN believes that

- Every child and young person has a right to have their specific needs recognised and addressed^{5,6}
- Infants, children and young people should receive care from nurses that have the child specific knowledge, skills and competencies to meet their unique needs in age-appropriate facilities, at home or closer to home in community and general practice settings⁷
- 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 and general practice settings^{8,9}

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.
- education and training for all professionals working with children and young people to ensure they have the necessary knowledge and skills to recognise neurodivergence, facilitate early interventions and provide support for children and young people.

“Encompassing practices and policies that are supportive of children and young people who are neurodivergent should be key to the way in which children’s services are designed and delivered”

Professor Bernie Carter, President

⁴ Specialist support for autism can include services from health professionals, schools, and other organisations.

⁵ 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](#)

⁶ UN Declaration of Human Rights 1948 see <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights/>

⁷ 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](#)

⁸ See ABPN Position Statement on Children’s Nurse Education [abpn_position_statement_nurse_education_final_24_november_2024.pdf](#)

⁹ See ABPN Background Paper on Children’s Nurse Education [abpn_cn_education_background_paper_final_22nd_november_2024.pdf](#)

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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