

## **Press release – embargoed until 00.00hrs 10<sup>th</sup> October 2024**

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### **World Mental Health Day - Children's mental health is everyone's business**

On the 10<sup>th</sup> October every year across the world there is a focus on promoting, educating, and raising awareness of mental health issues. This year the importance of mental health in the workplace is the central theme.

The global pandemic COVID-19 had a significant effect on the mental health of the health workforce, the emotional toll on nursing children and supporting parents has been immense, with many children's nurses experiencing 'burn out', suffering from Long Covid and leaving the profession.

The pandemic also had a marked impact on children and young people, with a greater number experiencing mental health issues as a result of uncertainty, lockdowns and isolation from friends, peers, routines and the school environment. The cost-of-living crisis following the pandemic has added further worries and anxieties amongst children and young people.

- 1 in 5 children have a mental health disorder
- 50% of mental health disorders begin before the age of 14
- 13% of teenagers may experience depression before reaching adulthood
- Those with severe mental health disorders die at a younger age than their peers

While there has been recent investment for example in 24/7 mental health support online and crisis cafes, access to support, early interventions and the availability of specialist child and adolescent mental health services varies considerably across the four countries of the United Kingdom.

The recent Independent Investigation of the National Health Service in England ([publishing.service.gov.uk](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)) places a strong emphasis on the urgent need to improve Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services including increasing access to psychological therapies and ensuring mental health services are integrated into primary care. This is in recognition that 340k children are waiting for mental health services, with 109k waiting for more than 1 year. In March 2024, more than 70,000 children and young people under 18 were waiting at least 13 weeks for an assessment for autism

All nurses and other health care professionals working with children and young people must have up-to-date training to provide emotional and psychological support, as well as access to specialist children's and young people's mental health teams.

Education about mental health in schools is also critical, enabling children and young people to talk about issues affecting them and their peers, as well as highlighting confidential sources of support and advice.

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

- child and adolescent mental health services to ensure early access to the right support for children and young people, close to home
- education and training for all professionals working with children and young people to ensure they have the necessary knowledge and skills to provide support and early interventions
- a substantial increase in the children's nursing, and children's and young peoples' mental health workforce

“Ensuring the well-being and mental health of children and young people is a global concern. Poor mental health in childhood and adolescence can result in a lifetime burden of mental ill health. However, early intervention by skilled and knowledgeable professionals can make a difference. Further investment is crucial”

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.

Lord Darzi's report – [Independent Investigation of the National Health Service in England](#)

Association of British Paediatric Nurses position statement in relation to Lord Darzi's Independent Investigation of the National Health Service in England – see [www.abpn-uk.com](http://www.abpn-uk.com)

Young Minds - <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/>

Children's Society - <https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what-we-do/our-work/well-being/mental-health-statistics> and <https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/good-childhood>

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

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