

## **Press release – embargoed until 00.00hrs 4<sup>th</sup> March 2026**

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### **World Obesity Day – ‘8 Billion Reasons to act on Obesity’**

The Association of British Paediatric Nurses calls for more action to address the root causes and influences underpinning obesity, necessitating a concerted focus on health care provision, policies, food systems, and built environments. The increase in sedentary lifestyles, consumption of high calorie processed foods and urbanisation over the last three decades are seen as key issues.

Obesity is associated with mortality risk, including comorbidities such as cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, osteoarthritis and some cancers.

It is estimated that by 2030 **1.3 billion** people across the world will be living with obesity, and by 2035 childhood obesity is anticipated to have increased by 100%. In 2024 NHS England reported that one in eight children aged between two and 10 were obese<sup>1</sup>. Children living in more deprived areas were noted to be more likely to be obese<sup>2</sup>. All four nations across the UK have strategies aimed at reducing childhood obesity<sup>3</sup>

Although many actions have been taken, there continues to be a need to do more to enable healthy food choices particularly at a time of economic crisis when unhealthy food items are often cheaper. Increasing access to health professionals such as school nurses for children, young people and families to acquire advice, guidance and support is crucial.

### **The ABPN believes that**

- Every child and young person, including those with additional learning needs and disabilities has a right to have their voice heard and for their specific needs to be recognised and addressed<sup>4,5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/health-survey-for-england/2022-part-2/childrens-overweight-and-obesity>

<sup>2</sup> See <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn03336/>

<sup>3</sup> See <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5b30a40de5274a55c78cef32/childhood-obesity-a-plan-for-action-chapter-2.pdf>; <https://www.gov.scot/publications/healthier-future-scotlands-diet-healthy-weight-delivery-plan/>; <https://www.gov.wales/healthy-weight-healthy-wales> and <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/obesity-prevention-framework-and-reports>

<sup>4</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>5</sup> UN Declaration of Human Rights 1948 see <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights/>

- 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, at school or closer to home in community and general practice settings<sup>6</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 school, at home or closer to home in community and general practice settings<sup>7,8</sup>
- Every child and young person should have access to a school nursing service for confidential advice, support and information to underpin healthy lifestyle choices
- All nurses who come into contact with children and young people should make every contact count, providing concise advice around healthy lifestyles, physical activity, smoking cessation, healthy eating and mental wellbeing, as well as vaccinations and screening programmes.

**The Association of British Paediatric Nurses calls on the Government to urgently invest in school nursing services to ensure equitable access to a qualified school nurse<sup>9</sup> by every child and young person across the UK.**

“Obesity is a multifaceted condition that has negative consequences for children and adolescents’ physical and mental wellbeing, quality of life and as well as other factors such as educational attainment. Obesity in childhood can result in lifelong health, quality of life and economic consequences to individuals, families, communities and health and other services. To address these challenges responses, need to be comprehensive and sustained and should encompass many different agencies and organisations. All nurses working with children and young people have a role to play; we need to make every contact count with the child, young person and their family. Together we can make change happen”

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

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<sup>6</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>7</sup> See ABPN Position Statement on Children’s Nurse Education [abpn\\_position\\_statement\\_nurse\\_education\\_final\\_24\\_november\\_2024.pdf](#)

<sup>8</sup> See ABPN Background Paper on Children’s Nurse Education [abpn\\_cn\\_education\\_background\\_paper\\_final\\_22nd\\_november\\_2024.pdf](#)

<sup>9</sup> A qualified school nurse is a registered nurse or midwife who has completed an additional, specific qualification known as the Specialist Community Public Health Nursing - School Nursing (SCPHN - SN) programme.

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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