

Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> June 2024

Dear

The mental health of babies, children and young people is one of the most pressing issues of our time. As a coalition of over 300 organisations, we are writing to urge you to put mental health at the top of the agenda in the forthcoming election and beyond.

Around one in five children and young people in the country now have a mental health problem, up from one in nine in 2017. Too many children and young people also struggle to get the support they need, contending with high thresholds for support, rejected referrals and long waiting times. And failing to act comes at a high cost. Findings from Centre for Mental Health show that the economic and social cost of mental ill health to the country is £300 billion per year.

Yet our new polling reveals that a significant majority of voters (59%) feel that not enough has been done to prioritise children and young people's mental health over the last decade. This is even higher amongst young people aged 18-24 (69%). In addition, only 23% feel confident that political parties will prioritise children's needs in the election.

It's clear we need an urgent change of approach. Voters cited growing up feeling safe online and in communities, with a good education and free from poverty as the top election issues they want to see addressed - factors that are critical in promoting and supporting positive mental health. Voters are also clear on the action they want to see from political parties. Over two-thirds said they want to see mental health support embedded in local communities – like in schools and early support hubs – coupled with more investment in mental health services.

That's why we believe all political parties should:

- Commit at least an additional £1.7bn per year for Integrated Care Systems to deliver a comprehensive mental health pathway for all babies, children and young people.<sup>1</sup>
- Embed whole educational approaches to mental health and wellbeing across all education settings.
- Increase the provision of early intervention support in the community through the national roll-out of early support hubs in every local area.
- Bring forward reform of the Mental Health Act 1983.

These commitments are costed, well-evidenced and rooted in the needs of young people and their families. As a sector, we stand ready to work with whoever forms the next Government to implement these reforms.

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<sup>1</sup> This is based on calculations of NHS Integrated Care Systems planned spend of £998m in 2022/23 on children and young people's mental health (excluding eating disorders) which met approximately 37% of estimated diagnosable levels of need in England.

We call on you as leader of your party to put children and young people at the heart of your election campaign, so that together we can achieve the change that is so desperately needed for babies, children and young people.

Yours faithfully,

Amy Whitelock Gibbs, Chair, Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition

**Co-signed by:**

Andy Bell, CEO, Centre for Mental Health  
Andrew Radford, Chief Executive, Beat  
Arti Sharma, Chief Executive Officer, Nurture UK  
Bec Jasper, Founder and Director, PACT Parents and Carers Together CIC  
Cassandra Harrison, CEO, Youth Access  
Catherine Gordon, Director of Learning, Knowledge Change Action  
Catherine Roche, Chief Executive, Place2Be  
Claire Dorer OBE, Chief Executive Officer, NASS (National Association of Special Schools)  
Dom Smithies, Head of Influencing and Communications, Student Minds  
Dr Amanda Gummer, Chair, Association of Play Industries  
Dr Carol Homden, CEO, Coram Group  
Dr Cath Lower, General Secretary, Association of Educational Psychologists  
Dr Hannah Vickery, CEO, The Charlie Waller Trust  
Dr James Cusack, CEO, Autistica  
Dr Trudi Seneviratne OBE, Registrar, Royal College of Psychiatrists  
Dr Phil James, CEO, BACP  
Dr Tessy Ojo CBE, CEO, The Diana Award  
Emma Rigby, Chief Executive, Association of Young People's Health  
Felicity Biacsi, Neurological Music Therapist, Chiltern Music Therapy  
Fergus Crow, CEO, Winston's Wish  
Kamna Muralidharan, Programme Director Impact on Urban Health  
Kate Wareham, Strategic Director for Young people, families and communities, Catch22  
Kathryn Pugh MBE, Director, KCBD Limited  
Keith Reed, CEO, Parent Infant Foundation  
Kirsty McHugh, Chief Executive, Carers Trust  
Kiz Crosbie, CEO, Mortal Fools  
Laura Bunt, Chief Executive, Young Minds  
Leigh Wallbank, CEO, OCD action  
Lisa Carroll, CEO, Lifespace Trust  
Lissa Shortt, Centre Director, Counselling Pastoral Trust  
Louisa Rose, CEO, Beyond  
Louise King, Director of the Children's Rights Alliance for England, Just for Kids Law  
Lucie Russell, Chief Executive, Redthread  
Lucy Bailey, Chief Executive and Founder, Bounce Forward  
Maggie Cleary, CEO, SEND the Right Message Charity  
Mark Lee, Chief Executive, Together Trust  
Mark Russell, Chief Executive, The Children's Society

The Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition, 11–13 Cavendish Square, London W1G 0AN.

Matt Buttery, CEO, Triple P  
Natalie Webb, CEO, No Limits Help  
Neil Moggan, Founding Director, Future Action  
Pascale Berthellet, Senior public health practitioner  
Paul Wright, Director of Public Health and Political Affairs, Children's Alliance  
Paula Farrow, CEO, MyOTAS  
Pauline Daniyan, CEO, London Youth  
Peter Leonard, Chief Executive, The Centre for Emotional Health  
Rachel Bundock, CEO, Compass  
Rachel Kimberley Temple, Public Involvement in Research Manager, McPin Foundation  
Rose Dowling, CEO, Leaders Unlocked  
Sarah Hughes, CEO, Mind  
Sara Jones, Director-Impact Incubator, Social Finance  
Shantanu Kundu, Chief Executive, Be Free campaign  
Sharron Smith, CEO, York Carers Centre  
Simone Spray, CEO, 42<sup>nd</sup> Street  
Tara Leathers, Director, Prudence Trust  
Val, Senior Strategy and Operations Manager, YPAS  
Vicki Beevers, CEO and Founder, The Sleep Charity  
Wendy Minhinnett BEM, Founder/ Director, Rollercoaster