



Association of Directors of Public Health (UK)

The Association of Directors of Public Health

ADPH Response to the Children and Young People Mental Health Taskforce Report

The Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS), Association of Directors of Public Health (ADPH), Local Government Association (LGA) and Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (SOLACE) jointly recognise the important findings in the report. It is the culmination of months of hard work by a wide range of organisations, including our own members, young people and their families. Along with the recent Health Select Committee report looking at similar issues, it should act as an urgent call to action. This cannot be another report that sits on the shelf gathering dust.

While we recognise that this report usefully outlines some of the actions which can be taken to improve services, we now need to see a transformative approach from the next government that radically improves the accountability of the system and the effectiveness, availability and reach of services which support children's emotional health in the short and long term.

The recent announcement of additional funding that is expected in the Budget is welcome and we look forward to working with the Government to ensure it can be used in ways which truly meet the needs of children and young people across the country and joins up the system.

Our organisations, through our members, are committed to working with partners in the NHS, schools, colleges and the voluntary sector to do what we can now to improve services for vulnerable children and young people. This also means promoting emotional, psychological and social wellbeing and early intervention – key elements to prevent young people ending up needing more acute medical services. We are also committed to undertaking specific projects to support local authorities and share ways that local commissioners are overcoming in-built challenges of fragmentation, under-resourcing, stigma and misunderstanding.

We believe there is a crucial role for local authorities in their public health role and for local Health and Wellbeing Boards in driving change and bringing together key politicians and professionals to take a joined-up approach to tackling the wider social and economic determinants of poor mental health.

Cllr Izzi Seccombe, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board said: "This report points the way toward better support for the mental and emotional health of children and young people. However, it is vital that it is backed up by firm action, political leadership and proper resourcing if it is to have real impact. As local government leaders we are committed to playing our part to improve services, but we need the incoming government to play its role and to make children's mental health a priority. There is much more work to be done to join up the system so that children and young people can access services when they need it."

Nick Page, Solace representative on the Taskforce and Chief Executive of Solihull Council, said: "There is a growing recognition that more and more of our children and young people are suffering with the symptoms of mental health illness, but more work is needed to recognise the causes and ensure the right support and interventions are available. The work of the Taskforce has been wide

ranging and has been done at a considerable pace. The collective challenge now is to ensure quality services are delivered at pace for our children and young people."

Alison O'Sullivan, Vice-President of the Association of Directors of Children's Services, said: "Hundreds of children, young people and their families have collaborated in this exercise and their voices and experiences have been central in shaping this report. I think the real trick will be engaging with schools as commissioners. There is much to be gained from finding the right way to engage schools in the strategic commissioning of local systems and the ADCS membership will be in the forefront of leading this."

Dr Janet Atherton, ADPH President said: "The move of public health into local authorities presents a real opportunity to address the wider determinants of poor mental health which affect children, young people and adults. These extend well beyond the health system and include parenting, housing, economic opportunity and education".

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Further information

For further information please contact Rasal Sesay ADPH Policy Administrator on 020 7832 6945 or rasal.sesay@adph.org.uk.

For interview requests please contact Enquiries at enquiries@adph.org.uk.

Notes to Editors

1. The Association of Directors of Public Health (ADPH) is the representative body for Directors of Public Health (DsPH) in the UK. It seeks to improve and protect the health of the population through DPH development, sharing good practice, and policy and advocacy programmes. www.adph.org.uk
2. ADPH has a strong track record of collaboration with other stakeholders in public health, including those working within the NHS, local authorities and other sectors.

**Association of Directors of Public Health
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