

Children and Young People's Mental Health Inquiry - Executive Commentary

We would like to express our gratitude to the Chair and members of the committee for the inquiry on Children and Young People's Mental Health. This is indeed an important subject, and we appreciate the thorough examination of the issue.

The Committee's inquiry delved into crucial aspects of children and young people's mental health, and we would like to acknowledge the gravity of the situation based on the points raised during the inquiry:

- **Scale of Mental Health Need** - Statistics from the Birmingham Children and Young People Joint Strategic Needs Assessment reveal the magnitude of the mental health challenges faced by our young population. With approximately 19.3% of Birmingham's total population being children aged 5 to 18 years, it is evident that the demand for mental health support is substantial.
- **Impact of the Pandemic** - The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the mental health situation among children and young people, as highlighted by the Mental Health Survey for Children and Young People. The sharp increase in estimated rates of mental disorders, coupled with the adverse effects on education and well-being, underscores the urgency of addressing this issue.
- **Access to Services** - Data from the Health Foundation's report points out the challenges in accessing Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CYPMHS), including a sharp drop in referrals during the pandemic and increased waiting times. This presents a concerning situation that requires immediate attention.
- **Key Areas of Concern** - The Health Foundation's Networked Data Lab has identified key areas of concern, such as the rising prevalence of mental health issues among adolescent girls and young women, and stark socioeconomic inequalities across the UK. These disparities in mental health outcomes highlight the need for a comprehensive and equitable approach.
- **Definition of Mental Health** - The definitions of mental health and mental well-being provided by various contributors emphasise the multifaceted nature of this issue. It extends beyond clinical diagnoses to encompass emotional, psychological, and social well-being, making it imperative to adopt a holistic approach to address mental health needs effectively.
- **Diverse Perspectives** - The inquiry's inclusion of perspectives from children, young people, parents, carers, staff, volunteers, and elected members through an online questionnaire is commendable. It recognises the diverse factors that impact mental health, including socio-economic factors like the cost of living.

Considering the comprehensive examination conducted by the Committee, we want to assure you of our commitment to addressing the challenges faced by children and young people regarding their mental health. It is crucial that we take a multi-agency approach, bringing together health, local authority, education, and criminal justice sectors to create a coordinated and effective strategy.

We also commit to providing regular updates to the Committee on our progress in implementing the recommendations made during the inquiry. We must work collaboratively to ensure that children and young people receive the support and care they need, when they need it, to enhance their mental well-being.

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