# Children’s Mental Health – can Scotland do more?

**Tuesday 13 October, 2015**

The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) will host a fringe event at the Scottish National Party Conference on Friday 16 October 2015. The event, called *Children's Mental Health – can Scotland do more?* will outline the current condition of children's mental health in Scotland, and explore how things might be improved.

The event will be chaired by Eleanor Bradford, BBC Scotland's Health Correspondent, and will include contributions from:

- Jamie Hepburn MSP, Minister for Sport, Health Improvement and Mental Health
- Karen Cromarty, Lead Advisor for Children and Young People, BACP
- Billy Watson, Chief Executive, Scottish Association for Mental Health (SAMH)
- Mark Mcdonald MSP, Co-convener of the Children and Young People and Mental Health Cross-Party Groups

Talking about child and adolescent mental health services earlier this year, Jamie Hepburn MSP, said:

“We've made significant progress in this area in recent years, with a substantial improvement in waiting times and a record number of people working in the field. But there is an increasing number of referrals as more young people feel able to ask for help. That is a good thing, but also brings challenges.”

Karen Cromarty, BACP Lead Advisor for Children and Young People, says:

“Counselling for children and young people has a vital role in preventing mental ill-health. It is very easy for parents, teachers and other adults to identify signs difficulties emerging in young people. Having identified these difficulties, there should be straightforward processes in place which allow the young person to be referred, with their consent, to counselling.

“Northern Ireland and Wales have counsellors in all of their secondary schools. Their Governments have national strategies and have provided ring-fenced funding for counselling in schools. The situation is not the same in Scotland, which has no national strategy and no ring-fenced funding provided.”

Billy Watson, Chief Executive, SAMH, says:

“Early intervention is vital – the sooner we help children to talk, the faster they will get the help they need. Alongside ensuring children have quick access to counselling, schools should bring in a “whole school approach” to mental health. In practice this means ensuring that any teacher or any other professional coming into contact with pupils in a school environment are given the confidence and the tools to help them support children's mental health and well-being. And schools should also be given guidance on where children can be referred onto to access specialised external support for mental health.

“We welcome the Scottish Government's announcement earlier in the year of a major investment in cutting waiting times and investing in mental health services for children. Significant investment should also be made in early intervention to ensure schools are places where children could ask once and get help fast on their mental health concerns.”

If you are a journalist and you are planning to attend this event, please drop us a line to let us know on 01455 206393 or media@bacp.co.uk.

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## Scan Me:

## Company Contact:

**British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy**

T. 01455883342
E. media@bacp.co.uk
W. https://www.bacp.co.uk

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