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Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition launches at the House of Lords

In response to concern about the high level of mental and emotional distress experienced by children and young people living in the UK, a coalition of charities will today - at the House of Lords - launch their plans to protect and improve the mental health of those up to the age of 25.

One in ten children aged 5-16 years have a clinically diagnosable mental health problem, including depression, anxiety or psychosis (1). Nearly 80,000 children and young people suffer from severe depression (2). It is estimated that 1 in 12 children and young people deliberately self-harm (3) – a behaviour symptomatic of mental distress, and rates of self harm among girls and young women aged 16 to 24 have increased dramatically since the year 2000 (4).

It is now widely understood that most adult and adolescent mental illness begins in childhood. And evidence shows that early mental health problems can seriously impact on life chances (5). In contrast positive mental health is associated with good educational outcomes, productivity and strong relationships.

The **Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition** will seek to influence policy and practice on a range of issues and in the first year will focus on four streams:

1. The Early Years – to include equipping parents with the knowledge and tools to improve their children's mental wellbeing as well as their own
2. Building Emotional Resilience – to resource children with self awareness and resilience to meet the challenges of growing up and enjoy good mental health
3. Reaching Adulthood – to ensure adequate provision of care and flexible services for those entering into and adjusting to adulthood
4. Seldom Heard Voices – to ensure that minority groups are able to access good quality support from services

The coalition's core members are Action for Children, Children England, Family Action, the Mental Health Foundation, Mind, the National Children's Bureau, Place2Be, Right Here, Rethink, The Prince's Trust, YoungMinds, Young Scotland in Mind, Youth Access, Youth Action and YouthNet.

Chair of the Coalition, Sarah Brennan (also the Chief Executive at the Young Minds charity), said: "The launch of the Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition represents the opportunity to bring together a range of high profile organisations to lobby and campaign for much needed improvements in the provision of mental health services, and for greater recognition of the vital importance of children's wellbeing and good mental health. I am delighted to be

chairing the coalition and for YoungMinds to be taking part in the potential influencing power of this partnership.”

Dr Cathy Street, Young People's Research and Development Lead at Rethink, said: “Rethink is very pleased to be a part of the new Coalition and supports its focus on how we can create flexible services for young people up to the age of 25. These need to be responsive to their many and varied needs. We are aware of much progress in mental health service delivery but also through our Uthink programmes for young people, know that many still struggle to get help when they need it. We hope that the collective voice of the different organisations within the Coalition, and their strong links with many young people in both statutory and voluntary sectors, will provide an impetus for improving this situation.”

Barbara Rayment, Director at Youth Access, said: “There remain considerable challenges for national policy in meeting the mental health needs of young people. Despite the gaps and the challenges of funding, the voluntary sector has developed proven service models for reaching out effectively to this group. Youth Access is delighted to be working with the Coalition to bring a stronger voice to creating change in the way we deliver services to young people in the future.”

Lucie Russell, Director of Campaigns, Policy and Participation at YoungMinds, said: “Young people’s mental health is the elephant in the room. Thousands of young people are suffering in silence and the launch of the Children and young People’s Mental Health Coalition provides a much needed platform to campaign on behalf of these young people and to raise awareness of the vital importance of good mental health for all children and young people”.

The coalition has recruited Sarah-Jane James as policy officer and Kim Penketh as participation co-ordinator. The initiative has been funded by the Zurich Community Trust. A grant of £135,000 will finance the three-year campaign strategy and Zurich employees will have opportunities to contribute their business skills.

Head of Zurich’s Community Trust, Pam Webb, explained: “Our partnership with the Mental Health Foundation to host the Coalition supports our desire to focus on the early intervention and prevention of mental health issues as part of the Trust’s £1.2 million Young People’s Mental health programme.” She added: “In so doing, we hope that by getting one strong united voice from charities that it will lead to changes in policy and services which will improve the emotional wellbeing of children and young people with mental health issues.”

Ends

References:

- 1) Green, H., McGinnity, A., Meltzer, H., et al. (2005). *Mental health of children and young people in Great Britain 2004*. London: Palgrave. See <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/>

- 2) Office for National Statistics (2004). *Census 2001: national report for England and Wales*. London: Office for National Statistics.
- 3) Adult Psychiatric Morbidity in England, 2007: Results of a household survey, The NHS Information Centre, 2009
- 4) Mental Health Foundation (2006). *Truth hurts: report of the National Inquiry into self-harm among young people*. London: Mental Health Foundation
- 5) Colman, I., Murray, J., Abbott, R., Maughan, B., Kuh, D., Croudace, T. & Jones, P. (2009) Outcomes of conduct problems in adolescence: forty-year follow-up of a national cohort. *British Medical Journal* 338: a2981.

Notes to editors:

For more information and interview requests, please contact the Mental Health Foundation's press office team on 020 7803 1130 / 1128 or email fgorman@mhf.org.uk (coordinating media work on behalf of the coalition).

To attend the event at the House of Lords on Monday 29 March from 3.30pm to 5.00pm, please email fgorman@mhf.org.uk by Thursday 25 March. An invitation shall then be sent to you in the post, which you will need to enter the House of Lords. Access will not be permitted without one.

The Zurich Community Trust, a registered charity funded by pre-tax profits from the Zurich UK businesses and donations from Zurich's UK staff, provides an umbrella for all Zurich's community involvement in the UK. The Zurich Community Trust manages and matches Zurich employees' and financial advisers' £1 million donations, 22,000 hours of business volunteering time, involving around 2,000 staff. Visit Zurich Community Trust's website on www.zurich.org.uk for more details.