

## **Child of the North APPG Meeting**

**11 November 2025**

### Attendance:

Emma Lewell MP, Kate Osborne MP, Ian Byrne MP, Rachael Maskell MP, Sam Rushworth MP, Professor Pam Qualter, Wahida Walibhai, Hannah Davies, Rosina Read, Alexis Darby. Joining online- Professor Kate Pickett, Professor David Taylor-Robinson.

### Notes

#### Professor Pam Qualter

There has been progress in schools regarding mental health provision

There is teacher training in place to support children's health and wellbeing.

But these need to go further, and different key priorities across the country should be determined

#### Ian Byrne MP

I'm interested in SEND and neurodivergent children – in Manchester, recently I visited a SEND School, and children are living healthy and fulfilling lives, but lots of children in my constituency are giving up hope. This is a big issue for MPs. We know this is a crisis. What are the solutions? Investment? Sure Start? We need to know how to solve it. Lots of children just don't go to school – how do we change this?

There's been an 'explosion' in SEND issues/needs; "Crisis point in classrooms"

#### Kate Osborne MP

If we can get the data at the constituency and local authority level, Emma and I share a local authority, and people are waiting years, 7 years for assessments. We have special schools and I hope they are building a new one in my constituency. There are frustrations that the assessments are taking so long and then these children need the adult services and then start all over again. I'd be interested to know what the statistics are for this.

2029/30, where some changes will come, feels like a long time away

#### Professor Pam Qualter

We can get these stats.

#### Kate Osborne MP

We can train the teachers but a lot of children need specialist help. The wait list is so long and the local authorities are under so much pressure.

Professor Pam Qualter

There is a feeling people are not getting what they need – feelings of isolation and not belonging. We can make suggestions based on this, links to toxic masculinity – we have this data.

Ian Byrne MP

There is a level of disengagement and community cohesion – definitely a link to mental health.

Rachael Maskell MP

I'm interested in the impact on early years and the support around parents and community interventions and how the children exposed to these interventions do. Understand a different perspective on parenting from those who have support. Strong communities and parenting support can help a child.

School does not work for all children – high discipline environments – this is why CAMS is important and we want to see them in the local authority – there needs to be a follow-through of services through the local authorities. We need to change the model so we have accountability all in one place.

Professor Pam Qualter

The idea of belonging and community is key schools – we need to think more holistically about young people.

Emma Lewell MP

Wellbeing in Schools Bill – White paper will be out in January 2026 and we can feed into this. With the CAMS piece they wouldn't take a child unless settled – but the reason they need this is because they aren't settled. This is over prescriptive.

Professor David Taylor-Robinson

The birth cohort – you can see that mental health problems have doubled and this is linked to a rise in social inequalities. Analysis shows that poverty is linked to children developing mental health problems. The rising welfare bill is driven by mental health problems – we need to prevent this by improving life chances of children. We need a national conversation on this. The cuts to PIP would have hit more people in the North and are linked to this – it is a prevention issue.

Professor Kate Pickett

I repeat the call for child poverty and child mental wellbeing to be looked at holistically. There is a book 'Bottom of the class' which focuses on children's experience of being bottom of the class and examines children's emotions around the issue of embarrassment and not fitting in and being judged by teachers and pupils. This is problematic as all children deserve dignity and this links to social cohesion and social capital.

Sam Rushworth MP

Sure Starts /Family Hubs are vital and I only have one in my whole constituency, the government provision is inadequate. Could we have cost proposals around Family Hubs? We have so many empty buildings in my constituency - so it isn't the building, just the services. We need a focus on social and emotional development – this is so key.

The idea of needing to see to what extent children are receiving the benefits of income; there is a need to look holistically at the realities of childhood today, as many children don't have what they should and would have a generation ago

Emma Lewell MP

Sure Start did that holistic piece – Family Hubs are key.

Liz from Liz Twist MPs Office

Local authorities used to have a bigger role in suicide prevention. Liz is on the APPG about this and cutting youth futures hubs has not helped.

Professor David Taylor- Robinson

There is also the aspect that children and families are missing important mental health appointments are they can't afford to get there.

Tackling child poverty is the key to everything else

Hannah Davies

We did an analysis on how Sure Start – we can look at this and our colleagues at Alder Hey will also have data to share. We can look at the ROI of Sure Start.

ENDS