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For immediate release

Mental Health Strategy focus on early intervention welcome – but children’s voices must be at heart of implementation

Responding to today’s announcement of the Scottish Government’s new ten-year Mental Health Strategy, Children in Scotland’s Head of Policy Amy Woodhouse said:

“We welcome the strategy’s publication and are particularly encouraged to see its emphasis on early intervention and prevention, and the need for coordination around children and young people’s mental health and wellbeing.

“These are fundamental areas of mental health policy about which Children in Scotland has been calling for recognition and progress.

“We are also heartened by the strategy’s accent on understanding the social determinants of mental health and the need to address poverty and inequality.

“However, while it is clear that the right intentions are in place, we feel that a vision for a mentally healthy Scotland foregrounding children and young people could have been more powerfully articulated.

“The strategy raises a series of points and questions for the Scottish Government to consider. These are:

“Who will be the recipients of mental health training in schools and how will this be resourced? We believe is vital that this includes pre-school settings.

“Development of a matrix of evidence-based interventions will be helpful, but there should be recognition that there may be gaps in evidence, and that the evidence base may focus more on programme-based than relationship-based approaches. Children and family-led evidence of what helps them must be valued.

“We would like to see parenting support be extended beyond those with conduct disorders. This should be linked with extension of childcare provision. Early Learning and Childcare providers have huge potential to support positive mental health and development of parents and children. It should also include parenting support for those with additional support needs.

“We look forward to working with Scottish Government to support effective implementation, drawing on the expert views and knowledge of our members.

“Our priority will be to ensure that implementation focuses strongly on children and young people. Their voices have to be central if the Scottish Government is to realise its vision for a mentally healthy Scotland.”

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