

Standing together with a united voice

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A commonly asked question by healthcare professionals is 'Why should I join an organisation or association?'. Joining an organisation means joining together with other individuals in your profession, to make connections, build networks, promote our professions and strive for best patient care. Being part of an organisation allows members to collectively voice a need for change and encourage communication between professionals to enhance patient care.

Organisations can guide staff and students through uncertain times. This is achieved by sharing clear sources of information, signposting to professional help and supporting each other through change. There are numerous organisations worldwide that represent and connect nurses and other health professionals working with children and young people.

Children's nursing's oldest association is the Association of British Paediatric Nurses (ABPN). Since 1937, this organisation has been supporting United Kingdom's children and young people's nurses. The ABPN, along with other associations, is now needed more than ever. These organisations advocate for the care of children and young people, their best interests at the centre of decision making and support children's nurses. The ways in which the ABPN does this is through the *Journal of Child Health*, through the networks in children's nursing built over the years and continued communication with members. Other organisations across the world share similar values in supporting staff and strengthening services for children and young people's healthcare. With organisations such as the International Council of Nurses and the International Pediatric Association these allow for a collective international voice of those professionals involved.

Since WHO announced COVID-19 as a pandemic in March (WHO 2020), the virus has devastated thousands of lives and has pushed healthcare systems worldwide to a crisis point. As this pandemic continues to unfold health professionals need support. This has meant turning to friends, family, colleagues and professional organisations. The current situation has brought about many questions for future of healthcare for children and young people. Not only focused on the patient care delivery, but those working in healthcare settings across the world in many settings (Klein et al 2020).

Beyond requirements for lockdown and social distancing the impact of COVID-19 is far-reaching with the virus having an impact on many aspects of our lives. This includes aspects such as the economy, works and schooling. COVID-19 has had a detrimental impact on all staff from the frontline to student education. During the pandemic staff have been required to deal with the fall-out from the pandemic in a rapidly changing and highly uncertain situation. Healthcare services for children and young people in the UK has seen huge changes from redeployment of staff, children's settings being converted to adult intensive care wards, changes to telemedicine, closing or restructuring of services leading to a backlog of more routine work, and suspension of all non-essential research studies (RCPCH 2020). These changes are predominantly reflected across the world in healthcare services for children and young people, but not all have enough resources or staff to protect those caring for the sick (Tabah 2020).

Frontline staff have attempted to continue its delivery of high quality and supportive care and treatment in challenging circumstances, learning new skills, adapting to the requirements of

social distancing and dealing with PPE (Iyenger et al 2020). The need for an immediate increase in the number of frontline workers has resulted in professionals being redeployed to areas they were less familiar with, people returning to practice from retirement or being released by universities. In some clinical areas health professional students were withdrawn, whilst others were asked to step forward to join the COVID-19 workforce (Dewart et al 2020).

Healthcare staff across the world have faced the psychological pressures placed on healthcare professionals at this time needs to be acknowledged. Healthcare professional's mental health needs, not only in a pandemic, need to be recognised and support provided (Tsamakis et al 2020). Professional organisations can offer that support through signposting of resources, but also through the networks of professionals that can be a source of support.

Unprecedented changes currently happening to children and young people's services, have dramatically transformed ways of working and required rapid changes and responses to meet the demands for frontline workers. Some of these changes offer the potential for long-term beneficial change such as a shake-up of traditional and concrete thinking and practice (RCPCH 2020). Organisations need to take time to acknowledge the contributions of all healthcare professionals who have worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic. They need to continue to disseminate recommendations and provide links to resources to help members to use reliable information. Professional associations and organisations can help individuals feel that their voice counts and can raise awareness of issues impacting on children and young people and help bring about change.

COVID-19 has highlighted a dedication of health care professionals across the world continuing to care, teach, adapt and support one another and their patients. Not only the impact on professionals, but on our patients and their families. Professional organisations can use this moment to reflect and consider how they can better prepare, and support staff faced with future challenges. Acknowledging the need to consider the future of healthcare for children and young people's health care services. Being part of an organisation means your voice can be amplified and you can help influence change for the better.

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