

## FROM THE MINISTER OF HEALTH



Roberta Marshall  
Chair  
Association of Infant Mental Health Northern Ireland

[roberta.marshall@barnardos.org.uk](mailto:roberta.marshall@barnardos.org.uk)

Castle Buildings  
Stormont Estate  
BELFAST, BT4 3SQ  
Tel: 028 9052 2556  
Email: [private.office@health-ni.gov.uk](mailto:private.office@health-ni.gov.uk)

Your Ref:

Our Ref: CORR-1814-2021

Date: 24<sup>th</sup> May 2021

Dear *Roberta,*

Thank you for your correspondence of 19 May 2021 in which you ask that: the Mental Health Strategy and associated action plans must include an explicit commitment to promoting and improving infant mental health and, particularly, to identifying and addressing the needs of the most vulnerable babies and young children; and to ask for my participation in Infant Mental Health Week and in particular a clear public commitment that children and young people's mental health services in Northern Ireland should provide support for infants and toddlers, as part of a comprehensive 0-19 offer.

The consultation on the Mental Health Strategy concluded at the end of March this year, and in total 428 responses were received, with over 82% assessed as positive.

My officials have worked hard to consider and analyse the responses, and many of the comments and suggestions received will be reflected in the final draft of the Strategy.

With regard to infant mental health, I fully recognise the importance of giving every child a good start in life, and the need to promote good mental health in infants. My officials have therefore sought to make changes to ensure the final Mental Health Strategy focuses on the promotion of wellbeing, prevention and early intervention throughout the whole life of the person, incorporating initiatives from perinatal, infancy and early years through childhood and early adulthood, student life, working life and into later life. We have also made changes to the final draft to ensure the needs of children under 3 are included in the development of mental health services and in the delivery of CAMHS.

I hope to be in a position to publish the final Strategy in the summer, together with a Funding Plan that will set out the resource requirements to implement it.

I was pleased to launch Belfast Health & Social Care Trust's Infant Mental Health Strategy on 15 April 2021. I very much welcome the work of AIMHNI and I have no doubt that your work will improve outcomes in emotional wellbeing and resilience in our future generations.

I am very happy to support and disseminate messages on social media to support Infant Mental Health Awareness Week.

I hope that you find this information useful and I assure you that mental health and emotional wellbeing continues to be a priority for myself and my Department.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robin".

**Robin Swann MLA**  
**Minister of Health**