

This week was children's mental health week. It was an opportunity to raise awareness about the increasing prevalence of mental health conditions in our youngsters and what can be done to support those who do suffer. Astonishingly 1 in 5 children will experience some sort of mental health episode by the time they are 11, which given 1 in 4 of us will experience an episode at some point in their lifetime perhaps shows why we need to refocus some of our preventative efforts at the earlier age spectrum.

A survey by the charity Place2Be found gaps in support service provision and the lack of awareness of mental health in teaching staff but a newspaper report also identified a shocking underspend of £87m for children and new mother's mental health. The money is there; it needs to be spent.

As well as in primary school we are seeing pupils at secondary level becoming more susceptible to mental health conditions. Sadly we are seeing a rise in self harm, particularly (but not exclusively) among girls, but there are often limited access to services to support people through difficult times. By the time they are seen their conditions are often far more acute and the intervention required is deeper.

The theme for this year's awareness week was "building resilience" and teaching children to "bounce forward" from life's challenges. As someone who practices mindfulness I love this theme and have seen pupils from both primary and secondary advocate how simple meditation classes can help them cope. The report published in parliament last year strongly advocated mindfulness in education to help build coping mechanisms into a child's life, which in turn becomes a life skill.

Mental health services are receiving more attention now than ever before but we can always do more. Let's spend the money allocated to services and support our young through challenging episodes. That way we will build a stronger, happier more resilient future generation.