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## Record high: Over 400,000 children waiting for treatment amidst child health crisis

11 May 2023

Startling new data reveals that the number of children awaiting consultant led treatment has reached an all-time high, with 403,955 children currently on the waiting list.



Disturbingly, 17,991 of these children have been waiting for more than a year for essential treatments. During this period, we have seen considerable progress made in shrinking the adult backlog, but the children's list continues to rise at an unprecedented rate. Our children are not being prioritised.

These numbers, already too high, only represent the recorded and counted cases, failing to capture the true extent of the issue. Hidden waiting times for community care continue to grow, exacerbating the situation. Paediatricians are utterly focussed on delivering care for children, but the overwhelming rise in child waiting times has left them devastated - no medical professional wants to see a patient waiting for over a year for treatment, but especially not a child.

The consequences of such long waiting times are particularly damaging for children. Many treatments and interventions must be administered within specific age or developmental stages, making the irrevocable effects of such delays even more pronounced. Prolonged waits not only impair children's mental and physical development but also have a detrimental impact on their education and overall wellbeing.

RCPCH is deeply concerned with the de-prioritisation of children and young people in current health policy and in the wider political agenda. Children, who cannot vote and have no strong voice in these matters, are all too often left behind. The College is calling on Health Secretary, Steve Barclay, to put children at the heart of policy making by including ringfenced funding for children's service recovery at all levels (community, elective, and urgent care), and by publishing the long promised long-term, fully costed NHS workforce plan immediately.

**RCPCH President Dr Camilla Kingdon said:**