

Kate shines light

THE spotlight shone on children's mental health by the Duchess of Cambridge has been welcomed by local campaigners.

The Duchess released a video message urging an end to the stigma associated with mental health problems, and calling for early intervention to help children facing issues such as depression, anxiety, addiction and self-harm.

She is the face of the first Children's Mental Health Week, which has been organised by Place2Be, of which she is Royal Patron. The charity provides school-based mental health support for children – something which Dorset schools are crying out for, according to local voices.

Sarah (not her real name), whose two daughters are being treated for depression and post traumatic stress disorder after they were abused by their step-father, has raised her concerns in person with minister for care and support Norman Lamb, inset.

She said: "The biggest thing my

**Juliette
Astrup**



daughters wanted him to look at was education about mental health in schools.

"A lot of children are suffering with depression, there is a huge epidemic of self harm, but no one is talking about it.

"Schools are burying their heads in the sand pretending it doesn't happen – but it does.

"Schools definitely need to be talking to children about how to recognise the signs of depression and stress, about self harm and all those sorts of things.

"It will promote discussion and start breaking down the stigma."

She welcomed the involvement of Her Royal Highness, adding: "This has

a massively high profile. It's great she's using her position to highlight this."

Dr Andrew Mayers, a senior lecturer in psychology at Bournemouth University specialising in mental health, particularly in children, also praised the Duchess' work with the charity.



Dr Mayers, a patron for the Samaritans of Bournemouth and District, said he was part of group looking at ways to bring mental health education into schools in Dorset.

"Most mental health conditions we know develop around late adolescence and early childhood. It's really important we educate youngsters about these potential problems," he said.

He added: "So much more needs to be done in terms of funding and awareness, but the more we talk about it, the more young people are likely to feel actually it's ok to talk about it."



