



FACULTY OF
PUBLIC HEALTH



British Association for
Child & Adolescent
Public Health

The Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
Department of Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
Westminster
London
SW1H 0EU

14 August 2019

RE: Government response to the Health and Social Care Select Committee report on 'First 1000 days of life' an FPH and BACAPH response

Dear Minister,

The Faculty of Public Health (FPH) and the British Association for Child and Adolescent Public Health (BACAPH) welcomes the Government's response to the Health Select Committee's report and we note the good work that is underway and the new policy initiatives that should support improved services in the first 1000 days.

We feel it is vitally important to reiterate the importance of prevention generally and particularly early intervention during both pregnancy and the first 1000 days of a child's life. The Marmot Review evidence was very clear about the importance of this life stage and it would be very helpful if the Government adopted a "health in all policy approach" with a special emphasis on this time in the lifecycle. Integrated health systems are being promoted in the NHS Long-Term Plan and a similar integration of health across government departments and policy would be a model of best practice.

FPH/BACAPH recommends that a health in all policy approach is adopted by government.

Child poverty is increasing with one-in-three children now having dropped below the poverty line. There is evidence that the hard-won reduction in infant mortality is in fact getting worse in deprived communities. Childcare is being cut. Over a million people a year are using foodbanks and homelessness has more than doubled. Reducing poverty and improving equity is one part of WHO's SDG goal 10 i.e. 'Achieving and sustaining income growth of the bottom 60% of the population at a rate higher than the national average'. This is especially important for children and reducing child poverty and is vital for the development of children in deprived communities.

FPH/BACAPH recommends specific targets are introduced for reducing health inequalities.



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We are pleased to see the potential the universal HV assessments bring to monitor child health outcomes in the early years using the ASQ-3 and 'school readiness' indicators. We look forward to continuing to support government through public health commissioning of HV services across England. However, across the country there are now the lowest number of health visitors in England since September 2012. This demise in numbers means that those left have excessive caseloads and more serious safeguarding concerns to manage. It is important that the DH maintains its focus on ensuring a well-trained, cadre of early years' practitioners with sufficient numbers to enable delivery of a quality service. This is especially important for vulnerable children.

The recent report on Sure Start also highlights the fact that services focused on this age group can make a difference to long-term outcomes. This is particularly important in the wider context of austerity and public service cuts. The Children's Commissioner has estimated that there will have been a 60% cut in Sure Start and youth services in the 10 years up to 2019/20 and this will mean an increasing number of vulnerable children fall through the gaps*.

FPH/BACAPH recommends that well proven evidence-based enhanced health visiting programmes should be expanded and targeted on the most vulnerable or at-risk families to improve outcomes.

We welcome the Digital Child Health Strategy and the fact that compliance is mandated from December 2019 however there is much to do to improve data quality not least the definitions and coding for health determinants essential for the prospective epidemiology element of population health management to reduce future burdens on the NHS. This will hopefully support the continual drive to improve outcomes for children.

The NHS Long Term Plan and the local maternity services transformation programme all stress the importance of prevention and partnerships. The new Primary Care Networks and Integrated Care Systems, emphasised in the implementation plan, highlight the importance of local systems working across traditional organisational boundaries. Cross-government working at national level is also imperative to enable a focus on health and social needs and a continued emphasis on the wider determinants of health including education and housing. For young children, it is important there are population approaches to parenting and that early years' childcare and education sectors as well as social care are included in this system wide approach.

FPH/BACAPH and would be keen to support the work of and be involved in the Transformation Board for Children and Young People.

Finally, our future economic strength is dependent on a healthy and resilient population and improving equity throughout society, the foundation of which is the first 1000 days.

Yours sincerely,

Maggie Rae

Prof. Maggie Rae
President, FPH



Dr. Simon Lenton
Chair, BACAPH

*Public Spending on Children in England:2000 to 2020
June 2018, Institute of Fiscal Studies
Elaine Kelly, Tom Lee, Luke Sibieta and Tom Waters
Economist 2018
Trussell Trust 2019
DWP 2019

Health in all policies is defined as "an approach to public policies across sectors that systematically takes into account the health and health systems implications of decisions, seeks synergies, and avoids harmful health impacts, in order to improve population health and health equity."