

Healthy lives, brighter futures

The strategy for children and young people's health – a summary

Healthy Lives, Brighter Futures, the new strategy from the DH and DCSF, for children and young people's health, aspires to make the UK the best place in the world for children to live. It builds on the *National Service Framework*, *Every Child Matters*, *High Quality Care for All*, and *The Children's Plan*.

The strategy recognizes the importance of good health in the achievement of all other outcomes, including educational attainment, personal well-being, and economic success.

The report focuses on three age groups: pregnancy and up to five; school age; and young people. It then outlines new proposals for universal, targeted, and specialist services for each age group.

Public Health

The strategy discusses the changing epidemiology of morbidity, with the increase in lifestyle-related health concerns such as obesity and sexual health problems, and the consequences of alcohol consumption, smoking, and substance misuse. The importance of minimising the impact of poverty and social inequalities on child health are also acknowledged.

To address these public health concerns, the strategy proposes:

- Better engagement with children and families
- The provision of health information and advice for families
- A focus on creating healthy environments
- Extra support for the most disadvantaged in society.

The intention is to make services locally available through extending the roles of both Children's Centres and schools, to provide health, education, and social care services.

The health service challenges

The report also highlights concerns about:

- The variation in quality of children's health services, including acute services, and access to specialist services
- The fragmentation of services, particularly for children with complex conditions
- The workforce issues resulting from the Working Time Directive (WTD)
- The lack of robust quality improvement systems
- Insufficient commissioning capacity.

Working Time Directive

There is a commitment to work closely with professional organisations to resolve the medical workforce problems resulting from the WTD, in order to create safe and sustainable services. There is recognition that services should be accessible locally, but that there is also a need co-locate tertiary centres to ensure high quality specialist care.

Whole systems approach

The strategy recognizes the need for whole system level transformation to support local delivery, including whole system alignment, with quality as the organising principle, and with clinical leadership to support the redesign of services. Managed networks are endorsed to create alignment between agencies and services, with competent multidisciplinary teams providing personalised services, but working together in managed networks which drive continuous improvement. The strategy also highlights the importance of performance information to drive quality improvement.

Increase in resources

£340 million is to be made available to develop better services for children with complex health care needs, including the provision of community equipment, wheelchairs, palliative care, and end of life care. This amount matches the previous investment by DCSF to provide more short breaks for disabled children and their families.

Primary Care

For primary care, specific mention is made to:

- Engaging general practitioners in the work of children's trusts
- Improving first contact practitioner skills in recognizing the sick child
- Increasing the focus on children's services within the Quality and Outcomes Framework, and practice accreditation
- New systems to identify families most at risk.

Transforming services

The need to spread 'leading edge practice' will be supported through a national Transforming Services Programme which will include pilot studies for new ways of working, and will focus on:

- Urgent and emergency care
- Services for children with complex health care needs
- The Healthy Child Programme
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services provided in the community.

RCPCH

The focus of this report is very much on creating health and well-being, with a lesser emphasis on the development of health services. However, the strategy complements the thinking and proposals in the RCPCH Modelling the Future work (<http://www.rcpch.ac.uk/Policy/ServiceReconfiguration/Modelling-the-Future>).

For more information on the Government's Child Health Strategy go to http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_094400