

About the RCPCH

The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) is responsible for training and examining paediatricians. The College has over 18,000 members in the UK and internationally and sets standards for professional and postgraduate education. We work to transform child health through knowledge, research and expertise, to improve the health and wellbeing of infants, children and young people across the world.

RCPCH response to Public Health Reform: Improving Health Commission Stakeholder Survey

Comments

1. How do you affect health in your context?

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2. What do you think is required for all organisations to give priority to their effects on people's health?

The following are key to prioritising and lobbying for health care resources: data, patient's voice and a strategy
Child health in Scotland ranks among the worst in Western Europe, and one in four children – around 210,000 – live in poverty.

3. What do you think is required to support the 'health in all policies' approach? This means ensuring the impact of health is considered in all decisions; including in areas, which are not specifically about health but which affect it (like housing, education, employment, social support, family income, our communities and childhood?)

In January 2017, RCPCH published our landmark State of Child Health report, in which we presented recommendations aimed at improving child health in the four nations of the UK. The recommendations for Scotland addressed 12 areas for improvement.

As part of this, we recommended that the Scottish Government should adopt a 'child health in all policies' approach to decision making, policy development and service design. This is based on the recognition that

challenges facing child health are highly complex and often linked through the social determinants of health. Just one government sector will not have all the tools, knowledge and capacity, let alone the budget to address this complexity.

Health in All Policies approach is a collaborative approach which requires:

- engagement of key-players and stakeholders
- simultaneous and positive impacts on other important priorities, such as promoting the creation of good-quality jobs, local economic stability, educational attainment and many others
- identification of issues which are addressed by multiple key players which is critical with the transfer of responsibility of public health to local authorities
- conversations about how resources can be shared – and duplication reduced, whilst retaining a focus on outcomes

4. What do you think is needed to ensure that actions to keep people healthy are prioritised over services that treat people once they are already ill?

The RCPCH report State of Child Health 2017 demonstrates how being a healthy weight and breastfeeding improves health outcomes for both mothers and infants. Compared with children of normal weight mothers, obese mothers have substantially increased risk of having overweight children. A greater emphasis should be placed on educating prospective mothers on healthy eating.

The Scottish Government should continue to promote sustained breastfeeding, raising awareness of the benefits particularly in areas where rates are low by increasing the visibility of national campaigns and by revising and updating Improving maternal and Infant nutrition: A Framework for Action.

The Scottish Government should develop targets to improve the rates of mothers exclusively breastfeeding after six to eight weeks and regularly monitor them to assess improvements. Early intervention will ultimately result in less interventions being necessary. NHS Scotland and professional bodies should invest further in training to ensure that all health care professionals can make every contact count by having that difficult conversation with their patients (whatever their age) who are overweight.

Food and health is represented well in the Curriculum for Excellence however, there needs to be specific targets set for the quantity and type of education on food and health. This should include a delivery plan and associated funding to ensure all child care settings have the time available and budget necessary to provide children and young people with these vital life skills to enjoy improved health outcomes.

For further information about any aspect of this consultation response, please contact Professor Steve Turner, Officer for Scotland at: s.w.turner@abdn.ac.uk