

# Child Health

## A manifesto from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health

### Our child health manifesto

The 2019 UK General Election is an important opportunity to advocate for children, young people, and the paediatricians and child health workers who care for them. Our College represents more than 19,000 Members and Fellows in the UK and across the world. Our mission is to improve child health with policy and practice that makes a positive difference to the lives of children and young people.

This document makes the case for the next government to invest in our workforce, put child health at the heart of policy making, and to implement health improvement programmes in every community. Brexit will

loom large in the campaign, and we want to ensure that children and young people are protected from any ill-effects - whatever form Brexit takes.

The policies and priorities in this manifesto flow directly from the concerns and interests of our members, without whom our advocacy would not be possible.

Our manifesto is a four-point plan that will make a real and lasting difference to children and young people.



**Professor Russell Viner, President  
Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health**

### The RCPCH calls on an incoming government to:

- **Put children and young people at the heart of our health services**
- **Invest in a sustainable child health workforce**
- **Support healthier environments and lifestyles for children and young people**
- **Protect children and young people, whatever form Brexit takes**

# Put children and young people at the heart of our health services

**Our children's health and wellbeing is the strongest determinant of the UK's future over the next 30 years. An incoming government must give an unambiguous commitment to ensuring a financially sustainable National Health Service (NHS) delivering high-quality, modern, integrated services for children and young people.**

Today's children and young people are the workers of the next 30 years and the parents of the next generation. Their health will determine all of our futures.

The number of children and young people in the population will increase by 5% between 2017 and 2030.<sup>[1]</sup> This will put even more demand on services.

We believe that each of the four UK nations

should have long term plans, setting out a timely agenda that puts children and young people at the heart of healthcare delivery. Plans should focus on the integration of services and prevention, which paediatrics is central to delivering.

Paediatric care should provide a safe, sustainable, high-quality and modern service that meets the health needs of every child, young person and their families. Children and young people must also be at the heart of innovations in genomics, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and digital health. We are calling for a 'Children and Young People's Health Strategy' to provide a cross-government approach. It would identify and address the full range of child health issues in a co-ordinated way and ensure child health outcomes and inequalities in the UK are truly transformed.

## The RCPCH calls on an incoming government to:

- Commit to a financially sustainable, high-quality and modern NHS that remains true to its core principles.
- Support long term planning<sup>[2]</sup> for the NHS, which if properly implemented, will make a real difference to the health and wellbeing of children and young people.
- Establish a cross-government Children and Young People's Health Strategy for greater coordination of services, plans and programmes.



Health  
workforce  
shortages

2020



5%  
rise in number  
of children and  
young people



2030

# Invest in a sustainable child health workforce

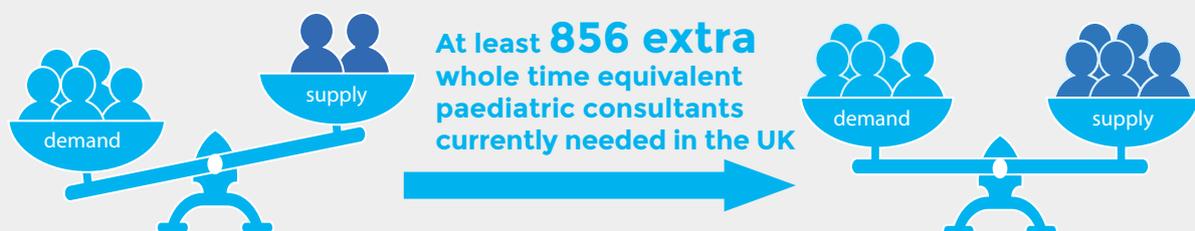
**Demand for child health services is rising fast, driven by the changing health needs of children, lack of appropriate services and dedicated expertise in primary care and other care settings.**

A well-resourced child health workforce is needed to deliver the standard of care children deserve, to set them up for a healthy and happy adulthood. Putting the right people in the right place at the right time is key to delivering a high standard of care.<sup>[3]</sup> However, the paediatric and child health

workforce is suffering from severe shortages across all professions. Our members tell us they are overworked, burned out and demotivated, with workforce shortages and attrition a pressing concern. Latest data show that there are 3,997 whole time equivalent (WTE) paediatric consultants in the UK and we estimate that at least 856 additional WTE consultants would be needed (England would need at least an additional 642 WTE, Scotland 82 WTE, Wales 73 WTE and Northern Ireland 59 WTE).<sup>[4]</sup>

## The RCPCH calls on an incoming government to:

- Ensure that the NHS urgently publishes full and coherent workforce plans, backed by the necessary resources to address grave workforce pressures.<sup>[5]</sup>
- Introduce measures that will help drive recruitment and retention of paediatricians, including urgent reform of the pension tax rules that are punishing doctors for working extra shifts.
- Provide resources to develop and support the multidisciplinary child health workforce.



# Support healthier environments and lifestyles for children and young people

**Adult health and our future prosperity are set in childhood. A truly 'national health service' must focus on prevention from pregnancy and early childhood.**

Children and young people in the UK have amongst the worst health outcomes and face some of the gravest inequalities compared to similar wealthy nations.<sup>[6]</sup> Many of these

negative outcomes – and almost all of the social determinants (societal, economic, political and environmental factors) that underly these outcomes – are preventable. Prevention is key to raising a healthy and productive population, and this must start in childhood.<sup>[7]</sup> An incoming government should enact policies to ensure all children and young people have the best start in life.

## The RCPCH calls on an incoming government to:

- Implement a 'child health in all policies' approach for all government departments, putting measures in place to assess impacts of policies on child health and to develop policies that improve child health.
- Ensure universal early years public health services are prioritised and supported with targeted help for children and families experiencing poverty.
- Protect funding for public health services so that health visiting, smoking cessation programmes and breastfeeding support are accessible to all pregnant women and new mothers.
- Support coordinated efforts for routine collection of data on breastfeeding at regular intervals, including reinstating the Infant Feeding Survey.
- Take a renewed focus on vaccination and ensure full implementation of National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) recommendations for reducing differences in immunisation uptake.<sup>[8]</sup>
- Help tackle childhood obesity<sup>[9]</sup> by protecting children from exposure to advertising for food and drinks high in fat, sugar and salt (HFSS) with a 9pm watershed on all media. Update the Soft Drinks Industry Levy (SDIL) to include milk based sugary drinks.
- Adopt a whole systems approach to both the prevention of mental illness and the promotion of good wellbeing. This should include a commitment to providing training for all child health professionals to support children and young people that present with mental health problems in non-mental health settings.
- Prioritise children within a cross-government action plan on air quality.

# Protect children and young people, whatever form Brexit takes

**Paediatricians need to know that children and young people are placed at the centre of preparations for Brexit.**

In leaving the European Union (EU), the health and wellbeing of today's children and young people must not be harmed. It is also critical that people who work at the heart of our NHS are protected and reassured about

their future. An abrupt severance of the vast web of connections we have built over the past 40 years will inevitably disrupt the health of children and young people.

While the process of leaving the EU continues to unfold, we have three core priorities in relation to child health in the UK, whatever form Brexit takes.<sup>[10]</sup>

## The RCPCH calls on an incoming government to:

- Ensure continuity of access to medicine supplies, devices and care for all children and young people residing in and visiting the UK.
- Introduce immigration measures that will incentivise EU nationals working in health to stay in the UK and encourage EU nationals whose skills will benefit the NHS to move here.
- Ensure the health research industry will retain and build strength in the UK after leaving the EU.



**Child health  
research**



**Medical  
supplies**



**Workforce  
recruitment**

## About us

**The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health is leading the way in children's health.**

Our College is the home of paediatrics in the UK and the professional body which sets and maintains standards for the education and training of all doctors working in paediatrics and child health. With a membership of more than 19,000 Members and Fellows, we are passionate about improving care for children, and advocate on the most important child health issues at home and internationally.

We are an evidence-driven body and charity, working to improve the quality of medical practice for children in hospital and in the

community. We work with children, young people and their families to inform our ideas, our training and our practice.

We are committed to an NHS that remains true to its founding principles – comprehensive, free at the point of care with equal access for all.

In the UK, health policy and spending is a devolved issue, with each of our four nations setting its own strategy but we monitor and publish progress through our annual State of Child Health report for each nation. We will campaign for action in support of our four manifesto calls in planned elections for Scotland and Wales in 2021, and Northern Ireland in 2022.

## Contact

**For more information on issues raised in this document, please contact our Media and Campaigns Team:**

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## Notes

1. Office for National Statistics (ONS) figures in *Child health in 2030 in England: comparisons with other wealthy countries* [https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2018-10/child\\_health\\_in\\_2030\\_in\\_england\\_-report\\_2018-10.pdf](https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2018-10/child_health_in_2030_in_england_-report_2018-10.pdf)
2. *The NHS Long Term Plan (England)* was published on 7 January 2019. This document set out a vision for the future of the NHS in England and includes ambitions for the next 10 years. Details of the plan are available here: <https://www.longtermplan.nhs.uk/about/>
3. Paediatricians work across the social and healthcare services, including in: primary care, community settings, district general, teaching and tertiary hospitals, emergency departments, schools and secure settings. Paediatrics is a very broad specialty, reflected by its 17 paediatric subspecialties ranging from neurodisability, nephrology and neonatology. Approximately one third of consultant paediatricians work in general paediatrics and one third work in community child health.
4. The RCPCH published a briefing on 13 November 2019, *Shortage of Consultant Paediatricians in the UK*, showing that at least an additional 856 WTE consultants are needed to meet demand in the NHS (England 642 WTE, Scotland 82 WTE, Wales 73 WTE, Northern Ireland 59 WTE). Details are available here: [www.rcpch.ac.uk/consultant-paediatricians-shortage](http://www.rcpch.ac.uk/consultant-paediatricians-shortage)
5. The NHS in England published an Interim *People Plan* on 3 June 2019. This complements the *NHS Long Term Plan (England)* as it focuses on the challenges particular to the NHS workforce. Details of the NHS *Interim People Plan* are available here: <https://www.longtermplan.nhs.uk/publication/interim-nhs-people-plan/>
6. Nuffield Trust and RCPCH, *International comparisons of health and wellbeing in early childhood*, March 2018 available here: <https://www.nuffieldtrust.org.uk/research/international-comparisons-of-health-and-wellbeing-in-early-childhood>; and RCPCH, *Child health in 2030 in England: comparisons with other wealthy countries*, October 2018 available here: [https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2018-10/child\\_health\\_in\\_2030\\_in\\_england\\_-report\\_2018-10.pdf](https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2018-10/child_health_in_2030_in_england_-report_2018-10.pdf)
7. The RCPCH published a detailed *Prevention Vision* on 25 June 2019. Prevention is an integral part of the solution to many of the problems that children face, from increasing mortality rates, to high prevalence of obesity, to widening social and health inequalities. The RCPCH *Prevention Vision* is available here: <https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/resources/rcpch-prevention-vision-child-health#downloadBox>
8. National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) – *Immunisations – reducing differences in uptake in under 19s*, Published September 2009 and last updated September 2017. The guidance is available here: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/PH21>
9. The outgoing Chief Medical Officer for England, Professor Dame Sally Davies, published an independent report on 10 October 2019 entitled *Time to Change Childhood Obesity*, which makes a number of helpful recommendations to address and reduce childhood obesity. The report is available here: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/837907/cmo-special-report-childhood-obesity-october-2019.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/837907/cmo-special-report-childhood-obesity-october-2019.pdf)
10. The RCPCH published a briefing on 9 September 2019 setting out its concerns regarding leaving the EU and the impact on child health. The briefing is available here: <https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/resources/leaving-european-union-briefing>