



DEBATE PACK

Number 2015/133, 14 December 2015

Conception to Age 2: the first 1001 days

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Backbench Business Debate Main Chamber, 17 December 2015

A backbench business debate on a motion relating to conception to age 2, the first 1001 days will be held in the Commons Chamber on Thursday 17 December 2015. This debate has been scheduled following a bid by Tim Loughton and Liz Saville Roberts. Their bid to the Backbench Business Committee may be heard on parliamentlive.tv

The debate will be opened by Tim Loughton.

The text of the motion is:

That this House calls on the Government to consider the adoption of the recommendations in the cross-party manifesto entitled 'The 1001 Critical Days, the importance of the conception to age 2 period'.

The proceedings of this debate may be watched on parliamentlive.tv

This debate will take place in the same week as the [relaunch](#) of [The 1001 Critical Days Manifesto](#) – a document which when originally launched in 2013 had cross party support from a number of MPs representing eight of the political parties in Westminster.

The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. A more detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

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1. A Child's Early Years

It is generally accepted that the early years of a child's life, from conception to age 5, are critical in shaping future health and wellbeing.¹ A number of external influences can have an impact on a child's development. These vary from getting sufficient nutrition and sleep, to maternal stress during pregnancy or experience of neglect, abuse and maltreatment all of which can impact future mental and physical health.

The period between conception, during pregnancy, and in the first two years of a child's life is vital for a child's neurological development, as an infant's brain and neurological pathways are set for life. This is the most important period in brain development and can be a key determinant of intellectual, social and emotional health and wellbeing.²

Healthcare in the UK is a devolved issue: this debate pack will mainly focus on Westminster policy, but will highlight some key differences across the UK and links to further information.

1.1 The 1001 Critical Days Manifesto

The 1001 Critical Days Manifesto is a document produced by the APPG 'Conception to Age 2' and the 1001 Critical Days Manifesto Coalition.³ The manifesto was launched at four of the political party conferences held in October 2013 – Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrats and the Green Party – and was relaunched in Parliament on 14 December 2015.

The manifesto highlights the importance of the first 1001 days of a child's life – from conception to age 2. The manifesto notes that this is a time which can, 'affect great change, as pregnancy and the birth of a baby is a critical "window of opportunity" when parents are especially receptive to offers of advice and support.'⁴

The vision put forward in the manifesto is that every child is given appropriate and sensitive care by their main caregiver, supported by a holistic approach to ante, peri and postnatal support provided to families.⁵ 'The contacts that all parents have with services before and after the birth of their child, provides a unique opportunity to work with them at a stage which is so vitally important to the development of children.'⁶ In order to achieve this goal, the manifesto has three specific aims and nine recommendations as to the level of support which should be provided through local services. These include:

- Access to specialist services for vulnerable families.
- Specialist support available at the earliest opportunity in every local area for parents at risk of or suffering from mental health problems.

¹ NHS England, *Guide to the Early Years Profiles*, 2014, para 2.1.

² *Ibid.* para 2.2; see also Department of Health, *Healthy Child Programme*, 2009, p11.

³ The [1001 Critical Days website – About the Coalition](#) [accessed 16 December 2015].

⁴ *The 1001 Critical Days Manifesto*, p5.

⁵ Perinatal is from 20th week of pregnancy to the 28th day of life.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p8.

- Access to antenatal classes on the emotional and physical aspects of parenthood for all parents.

The manifesto has cross-party support, currently being represented in Parliament by a number of MPs from eight of the political parties represented at Westminster.⁷

1.2 Healthy Child Programme

The [Healthy Child Programme](#) is the universal NHS programme for the health and well-being of children in England. Published under the 2005 to 2010 government, it sets out a framework of good practice for the delivery of services for the first five years of a child's life, through pregnancy to age 5.

Much of the Healthy Child Programme is provided through the [Health Visiting Programme](#) which commenced in 2011.⁸ The programme has four levels of service which families can expect to receive:

- Community, e.g. local children's centres.
- Universal (five key visits receive from health visitor teams from birth to age 2 - now transferred to local authorities).
- Universal Plus for expert health advice on specific issues such as postnatal depression, weaning or sleepless children.
- Universal Partnership Plus which consists of ongoing support provided by health visitors for families with ongoing complex needs.

Further information on the exact schedule of a child's birth and development reviews can be found on the [NHS Choices website](#).⁹

On 1 October 2015, services for children aged 0 to 5 was transferred from the NHS to local authorities who are required to make provision for the five main universal health visitor reviews which are part of the Healthy Child Programme, specifically:

- Antenatal health promotion review
- New baby review (first check after birth)
- 6 to 8 week assessment
- 1 year assessment
- 2 to 2.5 year review

Further information on this policy is available from the Department of Health's guidance published on GOV.UK, [Services for children aged 0 to 5: transfer to local authorities](#).

NHS Scotland have a similar programme – the [Child Health Programme](#) – and an [Early Years Framework](#) which provides a framework based on the principles of early intervention and a tailored delivery of services for all children from pre-birth to age eight. The framework was launched in 2009, and the 2011 report, [Early Years Framework: Progress so Far](#) gives an update on its implementation.

⁷ See section 4.1 for more information.

⁸ Under the coalition government's [Health Visitor Implementation Plan for 2011 to 2015](#), the government committed to recruiting an additional 4,200 health visitors.

⁹ [NHS Choices website – Pregnancy and baby](#) [accessed 16 December 2015].

1.3 Early Intervention Policy

In the previous government's public health strategy, *Healthy Lives, Healthy People*, a range of early intervention measures were proposed, aimed primarily at disadvantaged families. In the policy paper, the government set out its commitment to early intervention:¹⁰

Starting well, through early intervention and prevention, is a key priority for the Government, developing strong universal public health and early education with an increased focus on disadvantaged families.

In this paper the government proposed the following measures to offer children the best start in life:¹¹

- Developing integrated public health services at a local level, increasing the number of health visitors to deliver the Healthy Child Programme and working alongside the [Family Nurse Partnership](#).
- High quality universal services ensuring the strongest outcomes for children and parents, especially through the preventative aspects of maternity care. Continuing the delivery of the Healthy Child Programme by health visitors, primary care teams, midwives and early years workers.
- Investment in the health visitors programme.
- Doubling the capacity of the Family Nurse Partnership to support families with additional or complex needs through early intervention.
- Children's centres to focus on families where children are at risk of poor outcomes to ensure they have a good start to school.
- A promise that the central government will work to eradicate child poverty by 2020.

¹⁰ *Healthy Lives, Healthy People*, 2011, para. 3.5.

¹¹ *Ibid.* paras 3.6-11.

2. Parliamentary Business

The following is a small selection of recent business relevant to this debate. To search for more parliamentary business relating to this, or any other topic, please use [Parliamentary Search](#).

2.1 Parliamentary Questions

Health: Children [[17912](#)]

Asked by Andrew Gwynne on 26 November 2015

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what his policy is on the future of the mandated universal elements of the Healthy Child Programme for children aged 0 to five.

Answered by Jane Ellison on 4 December 2015

The commissioning of 0 to 5 years public health services transferred from NHS England to local authorities on 1 October 2015. Prior to transfer, Regulations were made to mandate the delivery of five universal health visitor reviews as set out in the Healthy Child Programme. The Regulations have a sunset clause that ends their effect on 31 March 2017, 18 months after coming into operation.

The Regulations make provision for a review, by the Secretary of State, of the operation of the mandated elements. This will help inform future arrangements.

In the interim, the Department is working with Public Health England, (as the strategic and professional lead for health visitor services), to monitor progress of the new arrangements.

Health: Children [[5065](#)]

Asked by Frank Field on 1 July 2015

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what steps he is taking to ensure that all families benefit from targeted support under the Healthy Child Programme.

Answered by Jane Ellison on 6 July 2015

The Healthy Child Programme is a progressive universal service which offers every child a schedule of health and development reviews, screening tests, immunisations, health promotion guidance and support for parents tailored to their needs. For children and families with greater needs and risks, a range of additional preventive and early intervention services are offered, including services promoting child development and emotional and psychological support.

To ensure the programme remains up to date with the latest evidence, a review of the evidence base for the Healthy Child Programme was undertaken by Public Health England and published in March 2015. The findings of the review will ensure that the Healthy Child Programme is underpinned by robust, up-to-date evidence of what works.

The review report is available on the gov.uk website at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/healthy-child-programme-rapid-review-to-update-evidence>

To support the continued provision of the Healthy Child Programme following transfer of responsibility for planning and commissioning of public health services for children up to age five from NHS England to local authorities on 1 October 2015, we are mandating five universal health visitor reviews:

- the antenatal health promoting visit;
- the new baby review;
- the 6-8 week assessment (the health visitor or Family Nurse led check);
- the one year assessment; and
- the 2-2½ year review.

Evidence shows that these are the key times to ensure that parents are supported to give their baby the best start in life, and to identify early those families who need extra help. This will help ensure all children under five and their parents get the support they need, whilst also providing an opportunity to identify those families where extra support may be needed.

Health: Children [223397]

Asked by Luciana Berger on 4 February 2015

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what guidance his Department has issued to local authorities on the transfer to those authorities from NHS England of the responsibility for public health services for children aged 0 to 5 in October 2015.

Answered by Dr Daniel Poulter on 9 February 2015

The Department has published guidance in the form of factsheets [i], for local authorities and other key stakeholders about the transfer of 0 - 5 years children's public health commissioning, which from 1 October 2015 moves from NHS England to local authorities.

In autumn 2014 the Department part funded and participated in the Local Government Association's series of regional roadshows. These events provided information to local stakeholders about the new commissioning arrangements, particularly finance and contracting issues, and about the proposed mandation of five universal reviews from the Healthy Child Programme.

The Department will ensure this guidance is refreshed as appropriate. Other key stakeholders have issued guidance on their own websites.

[i] <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transfer-of-0-5-childrens-public-health-commissioning-to-local-authorities>

Health: Children [221066]

Asked by Andrew Griffiths on 16 January 2015

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what assessment he has made of the success and cost-effectiveness of the (a) Healthy Child Programme and (b) Healthy Start Programme.

Answered by Dr Daniel Poulter on 21 January 2015

The Healthy Child Programme is the key evidence based, universal public health service for improving the health and wellbeing of children, through health and development reviews, health promotion, parenting support, screening and immunisation programmes.

The programme has a strong evidence base, which is set out in Health for All Children (Hall and Elliman, 2006). To ensure the programme continues to promote best practice, Public Health England are leading a rapid review of the evidence base for the Healthy Child Programme for 0 to 5 year olds, which will be published later this year.

Healthy Start is a means-tested, United Kingdom-wide government scheme that offers a nutritional safety net for pregnant women and children under four in low income families by providing them with weekly vouchers to put towards the cost of milk, formula milk, fruit and vegetables, and free vitamin supplements. The delivery costs for this year for Healthy Start throughout the UK (vouchers, vitamins and administration) is expected to be around £85 million, with 90% of vouchers redeemed.

The Department commissioned a formal evaluation of the Healthy Start scheme, published in March 2013. This considered the experiences of Scheme users and the effectiveness of the Scheme at delivering against its stated purpose. The results of this evaluation can be found at:

<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/sps/migrated/documents/finalreport2.pdf>

Health: Children [905557]

Asked by Chi Onwurah on 15 October 2014

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what steps he is taking to promote early intervention in improving child health.

Answered by Dr Daniel Poulter on 21 October 2014

The Government promotes early intervention through the Healthy Child Programme, which is the key universal National Health Service programme for the health and wellbeing of children, and Family Nurse Partnerships, a licensed preventive programme which targets vulnerable first time young mothers.

Healthy Child Programme

[[HC Deb 15 July 2014 c672](#)]

Mrs Sharon Hodgson (Washington and Sunderland West) (Lab):

What assessment he has made of the adherence by NHS trusts and clinical commissioning groups to the healthy child programme (a) in general and (b) in respect of the provision of perinatal mental health services.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Dr Daniel Poulter):

NHS England commissions the healthy child programme and the NHS England mandate includes an objective to reduce the incidence and impact of post-natal depression. NHS England is held to account through its regular assurance processes and we are well on track to deliver an additional 4,200 health visitors by 2015 who will provide individual one-to-one support for women in the post-natal period.

Mrs Hodgson: The National Childbirth Trust found that just 3% of clinical commissioning groups have strategies to provide these services and 60% have no plans to put them in place at all. The Minister might be aware that the all-party group on conception to age two, superbly chaired by the hon. Member for East Worthing and Shoreham (Tim Loughton), has recently announced an inquiry into factors affecting child development, with the first session last week considering this very issue. In advance of its conclusions, will the Minister give a pre-emptive guarantee that all expectant mothers will have access to perinatal mental health services and that it will not just depend on where they live?

Dr Poulter: The hon. Lady makes a very important point. We know the importance of good perinatal mental health not just for the mother but for the life chances of the child. That is very important if we are to ensure that we get the commissioning of maternity services right in the future. There is a commitment in the Health Education England mandate that by 2017 all maternity units will have specialist perinatal mental health staff available to support mums with perinatal mental health problems.

Health: Topical Questions

[[HC Deb 14 Jan 2014 cc709-10](#)]

Andrea Leadsom: I certainly associate myself with the Secretary of State's remarks. Will he undertake to look carefully at The 1001 Critical Days manifesto, which was recently launched by the right hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr Field), the right hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Paul Burstow), who is in his place, the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion and me? Will he look at what more can be done to provide a comprehensive care pathway for the perinatal period?

Mr Jeremy Hunt: Yes, we are looking at that closely, with the Minister responsible for paediatric services doing so particularly closely. In principle, we support what my hon. Friend is trying to achieve with that document and we welcome its contribution to the debate.

Health: Children [HC Deb 30 Oct 2013 c515W]

Mr Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will investigate ways to support children's early development, particularly the first 1,001 days from conception; (2) if the Government will investigate ways to identify families that require additional support to ensure children are protected in the first 1,001 days from conception.

Dr Poulter: The Healthy Child Programme – Pregnancy and the First Five Years of Life, sets out a universal service for children and families, with the goal of promoting the health and well-being of children, as part of an integrated approach to supporting children and families. It includes development reviews, screening and immunisation, health promotion and support to parents. This universal programme led by health visitors allows the early identification risks and issues and provides early support and additional help for those who need it. The Government have commissioned a review of the evidence for the Healthy Child Programme to ensure that it remains evidence based.

The new, four tier health visiting service model (ranging from universal action with communities and families through to more targeted support) will further help to identify families who require additional help.

We are increasing the number of health visitors, trained nurses or midwives with specialist training in family and community health, by 4,200, who will provide women with professional support during pregnancy and after birth. Also, the Family Nurse Partnership (FNP) programme, which gives support to young, at risk, first time mums, will expand to 16,000 places by 2015.

Health: Topical Questions

[HC Deb 22 Oct 2013 c148]

Andrea Leadsom (South Northamptonshire) (Con): Can my hon. Friend update the House on what he is doing to support the earliest relationships of new families through early years intervention? Specifically, will he support the cross-party “1,001 Critical Days” manifesto?

Dr Poulter: I pay tribute to the work that my hon. Friend has done on the early years, and there are many good things in that manifesto. That is why we are investing in an additional 4,200 health visitors by 2015 and why we are supporting the most vulnerable families by increasing to 16,000 the number of families that will be supported by family nurses by 2015. A lot of investment is going into early years, which pays back to the Exchequer and gives much better care to families, too.

2.2 Debates

Early Childhood Development

Backbench Business Debate, Westminster Hall, 30 January 2014

[\[HC Deb 30 Jan 2014 c331WH\]](#)

On 30 January 2014, a Westminster Hall debate was held on the motion that, 'this House has considered Early Childhood Development'. The motion was made in relation to the launch of the *1001 Critical Days Manifesto*. The Member in charge of the debate was Andrea Leadsom.

Early Intervention

Adjournment debate, Andrea Leadsom, 31 January 2012

[\[HC Deb 31 Jan 2012 c795\]](#)

On 31 January 2012, Andrea Leadsom lead the adjournment debate on Early Intervention during which she spoke of prevention by early intervention in a child's life, particularly between conception and age 2.

2.3 Ministerial Statements

Families in the Foundation Years

Written Statement by the Minister of State, Department for Education, Sarah Teather

[\[HC Deb 18 July 2011 c72WS\]](#)

Early Intervention

Written statement by the Minister of State, Department for Education, Sarah Teather

[\[HC Deb 18 July 2011 c71WS\]](#)

3. Media Articles

The following is a small selection of recent press and media articles relevant to this debate. Please note the Library is not responsible for the views expressed in, or the accuracy of, external content.

BBC News, 14 December 2015

['Huge rise' in newborn babies subject to care proceedings](#)

The Spectator Blog, 14 December 2015

[The sacred mother-baby bond is being eroded by an overzealous state](#)

PIP UK Blog, 14 December 2015

[1001 critical days – the time from conception to age two is essential to a child's wellbeing](#)

Nursing in Practice, 14 December 2015

[MPs unite to support perinatal health policy](#)

British Psychological Society, 14 December 2015

[BPS welcomes 1001 Critical Days cross-party manifesto](#)

The Guardian, 11 December 2015

[Preschool education boosts children's academic success, research finds](#)

Mail Online, 11 December 2015

[Poorer children are nearly 3 TIMES more likely to be obese than their richer peers - with unhealthy mothers, junk food and lack of exercise to blame for class divide](#)

Independent, 26 November 2015

[A childhood development expert on how 'twisted' early education has become](#)

The Telegraph, 20 November 2015

[Children starting school 'struggling to speak properly'](#)

Mail Online, 20 November 2015

[Three-quarters of primary teachers say they have seen children start lessons being unable to form a sentence](#)

Huffington Post UK, 20 November 2015

[We Need a Bold New Vision to Support Children in the Early Years](#)

The Guardian, 26 April 2014

[Is misused neuroscience defining early years and child protection policy?](#)

The Guardian Letters, 29 April 2014

[Early- years interventions and social justice](#)

The Guardian, 11 September 2013

[Support for mothers and babies needs overhaul, says UK health minister](#)

4. Further Information

4.1 1001 Critical Days APPG

Originally launched at four party political conferences in October 2013, and then relaunched in Parliament on 14 December 2015, *The 1001 Critical Days Manifesto* is, 'a vision for the provision of services in the UK for the early years period, which puts forward the moral, scientific and economic case for the importance of the conception to age 2 period.'¹²

The document enjoys cross-party support and is currently represented in Parliament by the following Members:

- Frank Field (Labour)
- Norman Lamb (Liberal Democrats)
- Caroline Lucas (Green Party)
- Tim Loughton (Conservatives)
- Mark Durkan (SDLP)
- Phillipa Whitford (SNP)
- Jim Shannon (DUP)
- Liz Saville Roberts (Plaid Cymru)

The manifesto can be downloaded from the 1001 Critical Days website: <http://www.1001criticaldays.co.uk/>

In February 2015, the group published their report, *Building Great Britons*, which considered the relationship between perinatal mental health and child maltreatment. Focusing on early intervention and primary prevention in the early years of a child's life, the report made nine recommendations for improving early years development.

4.2 Government and NHS

England

Department of Health, *2010 to 2015 government policy: children's health*, 2015

Department of Health, *Healthy Lives, Healthy People*, 2011

Department of Health, *Health Visitor Implementation plan 2011 to 2015*, 2012

Department of Health, *Healthy Child Programme: Pregnancy and the First 5 Years of Life*, 2009

Department of Health, *Services for children aged 0 to 5: transfer to local authorities*, 2015

DCLG, *2010 to 2015 government policy: support for families*

NHS England, *Health Visiting Programme*

¹² [The 1001 Critical Days website](http://www.1001criticaldays.co.uk/) – The Manifesto [accessed 15 December 2015].

Wales

Welsh Government, *Pregnancy and early years*

Scotland

ISD Scotland, *Child Health Programme*

Healthier Scotland (Scottish Government), *Early Years Framework*

Scottish Government, *Early Years Framework: Progress So Far*, 2011

Scottish Government, *Healthy Families*

4.3 Charities

The [Parent and Infant Partnership UK](#), alongside the [WAVE Trust](#), provides support for the Conception to Age 2 APPG and facilitates the 1001 Critical Days Campaign.

The [PIP UK Blog](#) featured news of the relaunch of the *1001 Critical Days Manifesto* in which they welcomed the manifesto commitments and highlighted three key recommendations for improvement.

The [Early Intervention Foundation](#) is a charity which provides advice and evidence on social problems for children and young people. It calls for early intervention in a child's life to ensure they are meeting developmental milestones, such as healthy weight, learning, speech, play and interaction with peers, and to prevent issues such as youth violence, mental health issues, exclusion from school or being taken into care.

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