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Policy

## Maternal and child health

From: [Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care](#)

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### Universal health visiting service

#### Universal health visiting service

We are supporting the delivery of a universal health visiting service which provides pre-school children and their families with support from a Health Visitor between pre-birth and a child starting school.

#### Universal Health Visiting Pathway

The [Universal Health Visiting Pathway in Scotland](#) (October 2015) presents a home visiting programme which all families with a newborn in Scotland are entitled to access. The Pathway was developed with the help of clinicians, NHS staff and other stakeholders, and helps to ensure consistency of service across all of Scotland.

The Pathway places importance on health visitors providing support in families' homes. Support from your health visitor will begin before the birth of your baby and continue up until your child goes to school.

Between pre-birth and a child turning 5, families are entitled to 11 home visits, three of which include the health visitor doing a formal review of the family and child's health. The frequency of visits helps health visitors build relationships with children and their parents and act as early as

possible if any concerns are raised. If additional support is needed, health visitors are well placed to provide a gateway to other services.

Formal child health reviews are done when the child is aged between:

- 13 and 15 months
- 27 and 30 months
- 4 and 5 years

These formal reviews support the early identification of any child development concerns and enable the health visitor to be proactive in seeking any specialist support that a family might require.

The child development information in these reviews is collated by Public Health Scotland and published annually as [Early Child Development Statistics on their website](#). This information is crucial to understanding the wider picture of child development across Scotland and supports policy decisions within Health Boards and the Scottish Government.

## Increasing the workforce

To deliver the universal health visiting service successfully, we supported the recruitment of 500 additional health visitors across Scotland between 2014 to 2018. To do this we:

- invested over £40m over four years to recruit an additional 500 health visitors between 2014-2018
- provided funding of £20m per year to allow Health Boards to maintain the additional 500 health visitors

More information on local health visiting services can be found on individual NHS board websites.

## Health visiting action plan 2025–2035

We published [the health visiting action plan](#) in March 2025. This sets out how we will continue to support the delivery of the health visiting service.

The plan provides a comprehensive approach to improvement focusing actions around:

- the skills and confidence of Health Visitors
- workforce capacity
- Health Visitor role and remit
- system leadership

By delivering all actions within the plan we will create the conditions to support Health Boards and individual Health Visitors to maximise the delivery of the health visiting service now and into

the future.



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