

## Response ID ANON-CSJB-7YT8-X

Submitted to **Advancing our health: prevention in the 2020s**

Submitted on 2019-10-10 10:30:15

### From life span to health span

**Which health and social care policies should be reviewed to improve the health of: people living in poorer communities, or excluded groups? Please restrict your answers to 250 words.**

**Medium text box for you to provide your answer to the question How can we design and implement health and social care policies that do this?:**

- The RCM has worked hard to promote the provisions of the Homelessness Reduction Act and new duty to refer . Living circumstances are crucial to a healthy pregnancy, birth and long term outcomes and therefore rising homelessness figures across the United Kingdom is an issue of great concern . Midwives have reported that a lack of training, communication and investment has impeded the effective implementation of the Act and that Homelessness needs to be a public health priority. All pregnant women should be settled in a decent home well before the expected due date for their baby's arrival.
- The Healthy Start welfare food scheme needs to be reformed to make it fit for purpose. The nutritional status of pregnant women, infants and young children has implications for the health of both current and future generations, and midwives care for many families that are experiencing food poverty. Eligibility, low uptake, value, the application process and overall value and effectiveness in meeting the needs of families are all aspects of concern. The scheme offers no support for breastfeeding and the RCM sees this as a missed opportunity.

### Intelligent health checks

**Do you have any ideas for how the NHS Health Checks programme could be improved?**

**Medium text box to enter your answer to the question Do you have any ideas for how the NHS Health Checks programme could be improved?:**

- NHS Health Checks could be extended to offer pre-conceptual screening for women that are planning to become pregnant. This would provide an opportunity for stop smoking interventions, alcohol abstinence advice, weight management support, nutritional information, including folic acid supplementation, and mental health support.

**Upload :**

support-to-quit-smoking-in-pregnancy.pdf was uploaded

### Supporting smokers to quit

**What ideas should the government consider to raise funds for helping people stop smoking?**

**Medium Text box for the question What revenue raising options should the government consider to fund stop smoking support services?:**

- Stop smoking services should be centrally funded in a consistent and sustainable way, as this work should be an integral part of every public health programme. To achieve the Government's ambition to reduce smoking in pregnancy to 6% by 2022 , specialist services must be available and accessible to support women to quit smoking, together with the provision of appropriate nicotine replacement therapy.
- The RCM would like to see investment in research and initiatives aimed at raising awareness of cannabis-related harms, including its use in pregnancy.

### Eating a healthy diet

**How can we do more to support mothers to breastfeed?**

**Medium text box for you to answer the question How can we design and implement health and social care policies that do this?:**

- Mothers and their partners need to be given sufficient information, advice and support from trained professionals to enable them to make informed feeding choices. Maternity units must be appropriately staffed and workforce shortages addressed in order to make the necessary improvements to postnatal care.
- A National Infant Feeding Strategy, with effective data collection on infant feeding, must be established to inform service provision.
- Advice on legal entitlements and best practice should be provided to employers on breastfeeding, to enable more mothers to return to work and continue breastfeeding their babies for longer. A business case should be developed demonstrating the benefits of supporting breastfeeding employees, including reduced sickness, increased retention, productivity and meeting equality objectives. ACAS guidance needs endorsement and backing of public health agencies to bring about widespread application and acceptance or, if necessary, a statutory framework for these rights to compel employers .

**How can we better support families with children aged 0 to 5 years to eat well?**

**Medium text box for you to answer the question How can we better support families with children aged 0 to 5 years to eat well?:**

### Support for individuals to achieve and maintain a healthier weight

**How else can we help people reach and stay at a healthier weight?**

**Medium text box for you to answer the question How else can we help people reach and stay at a healthier weight?:**

- The Department of Education should ensure all young people, boys and girls, learn about the importance of healthy bodyweight and a good diet before and during pregnancy, and breastfeeding as a normal human activity should be explained and de-stigmatised.
- A pre-conceptual check would offer an opportunity to advise parents-to-be on healthy weight gain, nutrition and access to weight management services, should these be required.
- Pregnant women should receive clear and consistent information about weight gain in pregnancy, and to be supported in this by midwives with access to onward referral to specialist services, if required.
- The Government should provide local authorities with ring-fenced funding to establish, re-establish or support universal Children's Centres, with a focus on areas of deprivation, with Centres able to offer breastfeeding peer support, cooking classes and evidence-based family behaviour change parenting programmes, such as HENRY.
- Physical activity should be promoted in line with CMO guidelines, and sufficient investment made to ensure that hard to reach groups are able to enjoy the benefits of exercise. Social prescribing and other innovative schemes should be explored to help achieve this.

**Staying active**

**Have you got examples or ideas that would help people to do more strength and balance exercises?**

Examples of strength and balance exercises?:

**Can you give any examples of any local schemes that help people to do more strength and balance exercises?**

Medium text box for you to share your answer to the question Can you give any examples of local schemes that help people to do more strength and balance exercises?:

**Taking care of our mental health**

**There are many factors affecting people's mental health. How can we support the things that are good for mental health and prevent the things that are bad for mental health, in addition to the mental health actions in the green paper?**

Medium text box for answering the question How can we support the things that are good for mental health and prevent the things that are bad for mental health, in addition to the mental health actions in the Green Paper?:

Maternal mental health is a vital issue, with up to one in five women experiencing mental health problems in pregnancy or within the first year following birth. Suicide is a leading cause of death for women during this period and its prevalence has risen in recent years .

However evidence shows that service provision is patchy and in need of improvement. Whilst maternal mental health specialist midwives are central to delivering care to these women, a recent RCM survey of heads of midwifery found half of areas do not employ one on a full-time basis, and a quarter have not employed any for at least five years .

With a shortage across England of around 2,500 midwives, staffing needs to form part of any solution to the problems facing effective delivery of maternal mental healthcare.

The Government has just announced £70 million for 1,000 new staff in specialist mental health roles in a series of pilots across England . This is the first tranche of £975 million committed to community mental health services. A proportion of this investment should be allotted to maternal mental healthcare and ringfenced to stop it being redirected, once the money reaches local level.

**Have you got examples or ideas about using technology to prevent mental ill-health, and promote good mental health and wellbeing?**

Medium size text box for you to provide your answer to this questionHave you got examples or ideas about using technology to prevent mental ill-health, and promote good mental health and wellbeing?:

**Prevention in the NHS**

**Have you got examples or ideas for services or advice that could be delivered by community pharmacies to promote health?**

Medium text box to provide answer to the question Have you got examples or ideas for services and or advice that could be delivered by community pharmacies to promote health?:

**Prevention in wider policies**

**What government policies (outside of health and social care) do you think have the biggest impact on people's mental and physical health? Please describe a top 3**

1:

2:

3:

**Sexual and reproductive health**

**What are the top 3 things you'd like to see covered in a future strategy on sexual and reproductive health?**

**Number 1:**

Women's health across the life course

**Number 2:**

Preconceptual advice, screening and support

**Number 3:**

Removal of migrant charging for these services

**Next steps**

**What other areas (in addition to those set out in this green paper) would you like future government policy on prevention to cover?**

**What other areas (in addition to those set out in this Green Paper) would you like future government policy on prevention to cover?:**

- The RCM welcomes the commitment to modernise the Healthy Child Programme. We would like this to join up with Maternity Transformation Programme in a way that provides a continuum of care from conception onwards, to enable health improvement and support programmes to flow uninterrupted throughout pregnancy, birth and beyond.
- Intelligent public health is hailed as a breakthrough of possibilities for improving health through digital innovation. The RCM is concerned that the most socially and economically deprived groups in society will be excluded from many of the new initiatives, deepening health inequality, rather than addressing it.
- Marginalised and vulnerable people, for example those that are homeless, very poor, lacking in literacy skills are less likely to utilise the new technology and devices that these initiatives depend on. Ofcom report, Adults' media use and attitudes 2017, found that mobile phone and computer access and use by lower socioeconomic groups was significantly lower – approximately 30% less than those in social grade A/B .  
Credit and data storage is costly and given that so many essential services, including Universal Credit and utilities rely on online access, it is reasonable to suggest that for many people, these activities will take priority over health promotion campaigns, marketing and apps. The RCM urges that a range of methods are utilised to convey public health communications, including leaflets, poster campaigns and social media advertising.

**About you**

**What is your name?**

**First name:**

Clare

**Surname:**

Livingstone

**What is your email address?**

**Email:**

clare.livingstone@rcm.org.uk

**In what capacity are you responding?**

Other

**If other, please specify:**

Professional body/trade union

**How did you hear about this consultation?**

Direct communication from third sector organisation or regulatory organisation

**If other, please specify:**

**Is it okay for the Department of Health and Social Care to contact you in relation to your consultation response?**

Yes

**Is it okay for the Department of Health and Social Care to use your email address to send you updates about other Department of Health and Social Care consultations?**

Yes

**How satisfied were you with using the digital online consultation form?**

Satisfied

**How could we improve this service?:**

## About you as an individual

**What is your gender?**

Female

**If other, please specify:**

**How old are you?**

45 – 54

**Where do you live?**

England

**If other, please specify:**

**Are you a parent or guardian for a child under the age of 16?**

Not Answered

**Number of children:**

**What is your ethnicity?**

White

**If other, please provide details of your ethnic background:**

**Do you consider yourself to be disabled?**

No

**Do you have a long term condition?**

No

## About you and your organisation

**What is the name of your organisation**

**Name of organisation:**

Royal College of Midwives

**Type of business/organisation:**

Professional body/trade union

**What is your role**

**What is your role in your organisation:**

Professional Policy Advisor

**Where is your organisation based**

**Please enter the first part of your work post code :**

W1G

The whole of the UK