

## **Prevention and Early Intervention for children 0-5: The New Public Health Role of Local Authorities.**

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### **Abstract**

According to research evidence, the care received during pregnancy and the early years is of vital importance for children's future life chances and health outcomes. Particularly, prevention and early intervention by professionals at the earliest life stages.

To this end, health visitors, family nurses and school nurses provide invaluable services to all children and families, whilst they support councils in applying Marmot's most significant principle - 'to give every child the best start in life'.

To further support this effort and to ensure that local needs are met for children aged 0-5 years, public health commissioning was transferred in October 2015 to local authorities. The transfer focuses only on the commissioning and not on the workforce.

According to the Local Government Association, the transfer "is an opportunity to take a fresh look at providing coherent, effective services for children locally" ('A New Home for Public Health Services for Children Aged 0-5: A Resource for Local Authorities' – LGA, September 2015). The two main programmes which were transferred are:

- the 'Health Child Programme (HCP) – Pregnancy and the First Five Years of Life', which is delivered by health visitors and aims to identify and treat problems early, to promote good parenting, to change behaviors which contribute to ill health and to protect against preventable diseases
- the 'Family Nurse Partnership (FNP)', which is a programme for vulnerable first time young mothers, where a family nurse replaces this role for the first 2 years of the child's life.

As a result, the transfer paves the way to joining up commissioning across the age spectrum 0-19, as well as for children and young people up to 25 years old who have special educational needs and disabilities. By doing this, local authorities are also given a huge opportunity to improve continuity and outcomes for children and their families, through integrating services from the health, education and social sectors.

This timely symposium offers an invaluable opportunity for local councils, healthcare practitioners and other key stakeholders to address key challenges emerging from the new commissioning landscape, as well as to explore what more needs to be done to achieve an integrated public health approach to the early years stage of a child's development.