

Future Mandatory Health Visitor Checks Undertaken by Councils

1. Following the transfer of 0-5 public health commissioning responsibilities in October 2015, local councils are responsible for delivering health visitor checks. At the point of transfer, statutory regulations were enacted to mandate councils to carry out five checks for all babies; an antenatal health visit; a new baby review; a 6-8 week assessment; a one year assessment; and a 2 to 2.5 year review. These checks are referred to as “universal health visitor reviews”.
2. The regulations mandating these checks expire in March 2017. The intention behind them was to safeguard services for families and to provide a degree of national consistency in local council’s provision to families.
3. At the request of the Department of Health (DofH), Public Health England (PHE) has undertaken a review of the mandation and will report its findings and advice to Ministers in October 2016. Ministers will determine whether the regulations should expire, be revised or cease altogether.
4. The Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA) (part of Cabinet Office and HM Treasury) has indicated that they will be carrying out an independent review of the health visitor mandated checks. This will include consideration of the PHE methodology for review and outcomes.
5. The Chair of the Community Wellbeing Board and the Chair of the Children and Young People’s Board have written to Nicola Blackwood MP, (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Public Health and Innovation) requesting that the Government does not make a decision about the mandation of health visiting services in isolation. They propose instead, a collective review of all mandated public health services delivered by local councils¹ next year. This is to ensure that councils are not forced to direct other public health budgets to mandated services and that within the context of reduced funding, there is local flexibility to determine how to target available resources. The Chairs have invited the Minister to meet with them to discuss this proposal further.

¹ National Child Measurement Programme, NHS Health Checks, Sexual Health Services, Public Health advices and Health protection.