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New horizons for children and families

None of us need reminding of the importance of early childhood experiences in relation to physical, intellectual, and emotional development. However, it is just as essential to promote healthy development across the life course by providing adequate support to school-aged children and young people and their families.

It has been more than a decade now since the Health and Social Care Act 2012 set out local authorities' statutory responsibility for commissioning public health services for children and young people aged 0–19 in England. For many health visitors and school nurses, this meant moving into 0–19 teams, with team leaders stemming from either specialty. While this move has not always been easy, and even controversial at times, it is generally believed that it has been a positive development in terms of limiting silo working.

The 0–19 team structure supports communication between healthcare partners and continuity of care as services are able to work in collaboration to deliver the Healthy Child Programme. In a similar vein, the Healthy Child Wales Programme and the Child Health Programme (Scotland) aim to improve partnership working between services to deliver a universal service to children, young people and their families.

Of course, the aim of fostering effective collaboration is to ensure that no child gets left behind or falls through the gaps. This becomes even more vital when children and young people face additional barriers including SEN, mental health, and poverty.

In England, 18% of children in the school system have SEN (Department for Education, 2024) and 22.6% of 11–16-year-olds are considered to have probable mental health conditions as well as 15.7% of 8, 9 and 10 year olds (Newlove-Delgado et al. 2023), while 4.2 million children are growing up in poverty in the UK (Department for Work and Pensions, 2023). With essential services such as CAMHS unable to meet demand and setting access thresholds ever higher, and with waiting lists growing longer, this collaborative approach to supporting family and child has never been more vital.

We know that health visitors and school nurses are working in a challenging environment, with workforce shortages, and recruitment and retention of professionals needing attention from policy makers moving forward. It is hoped that the new government's renewed focus on the importance of your work with children and families remains a priority.

We took the decision to merge the *Journal of Health Visiting* and the *British Journal of Child Health* – creating the *Journal of Family and Child Health* – to reflect this new way of working by promoting collaboration and more integrated delivery. We hope that our new offering mirrors the reality on the ground for many of you. Wherever you are based, and whatever your role in supporting the health of children, young people and their families, we would like to welcome you to this new-look journal.

Our name may have changed, but our focus on delivering crucial and high-quality practice evidence and guidance to help support you in this vital work has not.

We would of course love to hear your thoughts. Email us at jfch@markallengroup.com

Polly Moffat and Caroline Voogd Editor and Commissioning Editor, JFCH

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