

New £3.3 million fund to give babies from deprived areas or BAME backgrounds the best start in life

- Charities are encouraged to apply for share of the [Health and Wellbeing Fund](#) to develop schemes themed around 'starting well'
- Fund will help community projects improve learning and development, perinatal mental health and prevent obesity
- Third round of the Health and Wellbeing Fund is part of the government's aim to level up communities and promote equality

Mothers and babies will benefit from a new multi-million pound fund to give people from BAME or poorer backgrounds the best chance at a healthy start in life.

Applications open today for a share of a £3.3 million fund to support community projects in England aimed at tackling obesity, reducing smoking and improving learning among mothers and young babies.

This new round of the Health and Wellbeing Fund has been launched with the theme of 'starting well' to improve outcomes for mothers and babies in deprived areas or from BAME backgrounds from preconception to up to 2-and-a-half years of age.

This will pay for 3-year projects run by voluntary and community social enterprises (VCSEs) to help level up deprived communities and give children the best possible start in life.

Public Health Minister Jo Churchill said:

Everyone deserves to live a long, healthy life, and we're determined to reduce the inequality that some families face. We're committed to start this work from birth, and the voluntary sector have an enormous role to play in its success. This year we have launched the Health and Wellbeing Fund which is centred around starting well, to make sure mothers have the help they need to make the right decisions to support their health, and the health of their babies.

The fund is open to applications from charity-run projects aimed at:

- improving perinatal mental health

- reducing the percentage of babies born with low birthweight
- increasing babies being breastfed
- obesity prevention and support
- reducing smoking or encouraging smoke-free homes
- improving learning, speech and language development
- improving immunisation rates and reducing rates of preventable disease

It aims to tackle key public health issues from an early age such as obesity, which disproportionately affects people and children from an economically deprived area. The government recently launched a world-leading [obesity strategy](#) to make the healthy choice the easy choice for families and help reduce obesity rates.

The £3.3 million is available to support the new schemes in 2020/21, with funding for schemes planned for a further two years up to 2022/23.

The Health and Wellbeing Fund is already supporting 23 social prescribing schemes and 23 children and young people's mental health schemes that are providing important services to communities across England.

Chair of the Early Years Healthy Development Review, Andrea Leadsom, said:

As Chair of the Early Years Healthy Development Review, I am determined that every baby gets the best start in life, and the review will look at how to achieve world-class provision of services for new families.

The Health and Wellbeing Fund is a fantastic funding opportunity for charities spearheading perinatal mental health and I encourage them to apply.

Applicants have until Friday 30 October 2020 at midday to apply with the successful projects to be announced in December.

The Health and Wellbeing Fund is run by the VCSE Health and Wellbeing Alliance.

The alliance was relaunched last week with charities being encouraged to join and ensure the lived experiences of the people they represent are reflected in the development of health policy.

[VCSE organisations can apply for a share of the fund.](#)

The Health and Wellbeing Fund is an integral element of the Health and Wellbeing Programme, part of a programme of government investment in the voluntary sector. The programme is run in a partnership between the Department of Health and Social Care, NHS England and Improvement, and Public Health England.

The Health and Wellbeing Alliance is a key element of the Health and Wellbeing Programme, the aim of which is to promote health equalities and

reduce health inequalities across the country.