

# [New parents urged to have their say on available early years support via new online questionnaire](#)

- New parents, healthcare staff, charities and volunteer groups encouraged to share their views on the government's existing early years support
- Early Years Health Adviser Andrea Leadsom MP to lead new review commissioned by the Prime Minister into improving health outcomes of babies and young children
- The review will consider the barriers that impact on early years development, including social and emotional factors, and early childhood experiences

New parents are being invited to [have their say](#) on what support they need, and how it is best delivered, so that every baby is given the best start in life, no matter what their circumstances.

A major new [review into improving the healthy development of infants](#) was launched by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) in July, aiming to break down the barriers that can impact on early years development and level up the opportunities given to every newborn.

Led by Early Years Healthy Development Adviser Andrea Leadsom MP, this review will focus on improving the support available to babies and their families in the period from conception to age 2, often referred to as the 1,001 critical days.

New parents, health service professionals, charities and volunteer groups are being asked to share their views to help shape the outcome of the review, by completing an [online questionnaire](#) which will go live on GOV.UK today (Friday 18 September).

Public Health Minister Jo Churchill said:

To help inform our work on the Early Years Development Review we want to hear from new or expectant parents, carers and healthcare professionals about their experiences of life with baby throughout this recent critical and unusual time living with coronavirus. What worked well and what could have been improved – so we can ensure babies and young children are supported and nurtured during these vital early years.

Now is your chance to help shape this important piece of work, so please let us know your views through our online questionnaire so we can better understand what building blocks we need for those first critical 1,001 days.

The first 1,001 days – from conception to age 2 – provide the foundation for every human being, and have a significant impact on physical health, mental health and opportunity throughout their life.

The review is part of the government's commitment to levelling up the country and helping every child reach their full potential, building on policy already in place.

Throughout the pandemic, community health and mental health services have continued to deliver vital safeguarding functions and to provide support for new parents or parents of small children, with greater use of digital and remote technologies. During lockdown, a further [£3.3 million in funding was also awarded](#) to the Health and Wellbeing Fund to support mothers and babies, including improving perinatal mental health.

The government has also committed to transforming maternity services as part of the NHS Long Term Plan, backed by an extra £33.9 billion a year by 2023 to 2024, to help the NHS become the safest place in the world to give birth.

Early Years Healthy Development Adviser, Andrea Leadsom MP, said:

As well as helping the review to shape the services needed by new babies and their parents, this questionnaire will help to gather experiences of parents who had a baby during the coronavirus lockdown.

This will help us to understand the many challenges faced, as well as to learn what worked well and what new innovations we can build on. The findings of this questionnaire will help the review to shape our recommendations and to promote the best start in life for every baby.

The review will focus on the needs of the baby from conception to the age of 2 – seeking a broad improvement in outcomes, ranging from reducing disparities in birth weight, improving social and emotional development in early years, and reducing the impact of vulnerability and adverse childhood experiences in infancy.

Research from NHS England suggests that 1 in 5 mums and 1 in 10 dads experience mental health problems during pregnancy and after birth. Pregnancy can often be a trigger for domestic abuse, with between 15 to 30% of domestic violence cases starting during this time.

Understanding lessons learned from COVID-19, including how to provide better support for parents during childbirth, minimising the risks from the pandemic to very young children, and the better use of technology, the government will work with academics, health professionals and other experts to identify policies and services that will improve the outcomes for vulnerable babies, children and their families.

As part of the next phase of the review, Andrea Leadsom MP will be engaging

with a wide range of stakeholders, including independent academic experts, maternity and children's specialists, leading commissioners, service providers and volunteers, and parliamentarians.

Building on conclusions from the Inter-Ministerial Group on Early Years Family Support, Andrea Leadsom MP is expected to submit her findings and policy recommendations from the first phase of the Review into Early Years Healthy Development in January 2021. This 'vision for excellence' in the period from conception to age 2 will be rolled out across England during 2021.

In July 2019, the government launched the green paper [Advancing our health: prevention in the 2020s](#), making a commitment to support parents and modernise the Healthy Child Programme to enable effective services to those who are in need.

The government is investing more than £3.6 billion in 2020 to 2021 on free early education entitlements, helping parents to work more flexibly and supporting children's early development. This includes the universal offer for every 3 and 4-year-old of 15 hours per week of early education, as well as for the most deprived 2-year-olds, and our 30-hours offer for working parents of 3 and 4-year-olds.

The government is also investing in early years organisations to help them boost disadvantaged children's development, with grants targeted at improving outcomes for young children at risk of falling behind by age 5, and for those with special educational needs.