



The Role of the Health Visitor in Supporting Parents

At the birth of a baby, especially your first, parents often experience new challenges/additional pressures. This is perhaps one of life's greatest adjustments for parents/families. You may have already been introduced to your family Health Visitor in the antenatal period. If not, your first visit is usually around 10 – 14 days after you've had your baby and will be at your home. You will be advised how to contact the Health Visitor at any time by phone or in person at your local health centre, well-baby clinic or for a home visit.

Your Health Visitor is available from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday. It is not an emergency service, but your Health Visitor will provide you with suitable out of hours contact numbers.

If you are concerned about your child's health but don't feel you want to trouble your Doctor then why not ask your Health Visitor who will listen and provide practical advice. If your Health Visitor is out on call, you can leave a message, and contact will be made as soon as possible.

Soon after the birth of your baby you are given a Personal Child Health Record Book (Red Book), which you are asked to bring to each clinic visit, to ensure an up to date record of your child's development, growth, vaccinations and contact with other health professionals, e.g. speech therapist or paediatrician.

All pre-school children are routinely offered growth and developmental check-ups. At present these are around

- 10 – 14 days after birth
- 8 weeks with Health Visitor and Doctor
- 7 months
- 18 months
- 30 months
- 4 years with Health Visitor and Doctor

What happens when I consult with my Health Visitor?

As parents you know your children best. The role of your Health Visitor is to provide support and guidance by working in partnership with you to ensure your child/children reach their full potential. The Health Visitor who is part of the primary health care team works closely with other professionals, for example doctors, midwives, paediatricians, social workers, school nurses and voluntary organisations. You can avail of up-to-date information on a wide range of topics for example:

- Growth and development
- Immunisation programmes

- Common childhood illnesses and management
- Infant feeding – breast/bottle
- Healthy eating for children
- Accident prevention
- Common concerns e.g. crying, teething
- Behavioural issues e.g. temper tantrums, fighting, toileting problems
- Parenting
- Sure Start services if available locally
- Local pre-school activities, e.g. parent and toddler group, playgroups, nurseries and childminders
- Health – physical or emotional for 0 – 18 year old

What will happen if a Health Visitor has concerns about the health or care of a child?

Like other professionals when a Health Visitor has a concern about the health, growth, development or care of a child then they will talk to you, the parents, offer support and help and request the opinion of the appropriate professionals such as a paediatrician, or social worker. This assessment will be arranged to ensure the child's health and safety is safeguarded, and treatment/care is put in place so the child reaches their full potential.

What other services do Health Visitors offer?

Health Visitors promote public health for everyone and play a unique role by being easily accessible within their local communities. Within their wider role your Health Visitor can provide advice and information for you on a range of health and social issues such as:

- Smoking Cessation
 - Home/Road/Farm Safety
 - Bereavement
 - Mental Health/Illnesses
 - Heart Disease
 - Stress Management/Relaxation
 - Exercise
 - Alcohol/Drug/Substance misuse
 - Men's/Women's Health
 - Weight reduction
 - Travel health advice
 - Teenage/Adolescent Issues
 - Unemployment/Disability
 - Environmental issues
 - Benefits
- (Please note that this list is not exhaustive)

Additional Support for Parents

If you require information regarding parenting, or would like to talk in confidence regarding yourself or a family member please feel free to speak to a trained volunteer at the Parents Advice Centre (PAC) on FREEPHONE 08088010722 Mon to Fri 10am – 4pm, and Mon to Thurs 7pm to 9pm

