



Health Protection Agency  
Central Office  
7<sup>th</sup> Floor, Holborn Gate  
330 High Holborn  
London  
WC1V 7PP

Tel +44 (0)20 7759 2705  
Fax +44 (0)20 7759 2730  
<http://www.hpa.org.uk>

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Dear Colleague

### **A Children's Environment and Health Strategy for the United Kingdom**

Today, on behalf of the Department of Health, the Health Protection Agency (HPA) published a Children's Environment and Health Strategy for the United Kingdom. This document provides an overview of the current impact of the environment on children's health in the UK and highlights areas where this could be improved, either through strengthening current activities or by identifying new initiatives, to benefit the health and well-being of children and young people in the UK.

The UK's Strategy was developed in response to the 2004 World Health Organization's Children's Environment and Health Action Plan for Europe (CEHAPE)\*, which committed countries throughout Europe, including the UK, to develop national Children's Environment and Health Action Plans. The CEHAPE focuses on four main areas:

- water, sanitation and health;
- injuries, obesity and physical activity;
- indoor and outdoor air pollution; and
- chemical, physical and biological hazards.

The Strategy takes into account the views expressed during a public consultation, held in spring 2008, as well as the views of children and young people. These views do not necessarily represent those of any individual department of the Government or Devolved Administration or Agency.

It is widely recognised that the environment can have a substantial impact on health and well-being and children can be particularly vulnerable to environmental hazards and conditions. Whilst much has already been done in the UK to ensure that the environment is not harmful to health and nurtures good health and well-being, there remain areas where further improvement could be made that would particularly benefit the health of children and young people.

The Children's Environment and Health Strategy for the UK makes recommendations on areas where further work is required to ensure children and young people grow up in

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\* [http://www.euro.who.int/childhealthenv/Policy/20020724\\_2](http://www.euro.who.int/childhealthenv/Policy/20020724_2)

a clean and healthy environment. These include some longstanding areas of concern such as hygiene and sanitation in schools, air pollution and health inequalities and also issues which are becomingly increasingly important such as access to green open space, skin cancers and the long term chronic effects of the increasing number of chemicals and pollutants in our environment. The Strategy also takes into consideration wider concerns, such as climate change and the impact the environment has on mental health.

It is envisaged that the recommendations made in the Strategy will be taken forward by Government departments, the Devolved Administrations and Agencies via existing initiatives which are focused on various aspects and influences on children's and young people's health and well-being. This will help ensure that environmental influences on children's and young people's health and well-being are addressed in a comprehensive and coordinated manner throughout the UK.

The Strategy and supporting documentation can be found on the HPA's website at: <http://www.hpa.org.uk/cehape/> and hard copies of the document are available, on request (e-mail: [cehape@hpa.org.uk](mailto:cehape@hpa.org.uk)).

I very much hope that you find the Strategy useful in helping to ensure that we all work together so that children's and young people's health in the UK is the best it can be.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. J. McCracken', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Justin McCracken  
**Chief Executive**