

Press Release



A Children's Environmental Health Strategy for the United Kingdom

Embargoed until 10.00 hours, Tuesday 24th March 2009

The Health Protection Agency today publishes a Strategy to improve the health and well-being of children in the United Kingdom by changing the environment in which they live.

The Agency was commissioned to write the report - A Children's Environmental Health Strategy for the United Kingdom – by the Department of Health. The report is part of the UK's response to a World Health Organization environment and health initiative¹ aimed at improving the health and well-being of children and young people throughout Europe.

The Strategy recommends:

- Steps are taken to reduce skin damage from ultraviolet light and child hospital admissions due to accidental poisonings.
- A review of reporting systems for congenital abnormalities is undertaken to identify means of improving them further.
- Measures are taken to ensure children and young people have easy and safe access to well-maintained green open spaces.
- A more coordinated approach is taken to preventing injuries.
- Action is taken to continue to improve hygiene and drinking water availability in schools.
- Further research into lead in drinking water supplies, and other sources, to ensure exposure to lead is as low as possible.

The Strategy proposes that issues such as inequalities and mental health are considered when implementing the recommendations. It also proposes that its recommendations work in conjunction with other Government policies and initiatives to ensure a coordinated approach to implementation.

Justin McCracken, Chief Executive of the Health Protection Agency, said: "The delivery of this Strategy will involve close partnership working between many public bodies, the Government and Devolved Administrations. The Health Protection Agency is looking forward to playing its part in helping to deliver this initiative."

He added: "The involvement of young people in the Strategy and the careful consideration of their views has been an important and welcome feature of its development."

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A copy of the report can be viewed at: <http://www.hpa.org.uk/cehape/>

Notes to Editors

- 1. The Strategy follows an agreement in 2004 by ministers across the World Health Organization European Region to develop a Children's Environmental and Health Action Plan for Europe (CEHAPE).

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- CEHAP has goals in water, sanitation and health; accidents, injuries, obesity and physical activity indoor and outdoor air pollution; and chemical, radiological and biological hazards.
- The Strategy was prepared to provide an overview of current environmental activities being undertaken that contribute to improving children's health in the UK. It recommends the steps needed to raise children's health by continuing to improve the environment. It also encourages a cross Government approach to these issues.
- The development of the Children's Environment and Health Strategy for the UK was overseen and coordinated by a cross-governmental Interdepartmental Steering Group on Environment and Health. The Steering Group is chaired by the Department of Health and is made up of a range of government departments, agencies and the Devolved Administrations.