Your Health Visiting Service

Information for new parents
Welcome to the Health Visiting Service in Lothian

We would like to take this opportunity to welcome you to the Health Visiting Service in Lothian. This leaflet is a guide to the services we provide and the support you can expect from us.

What is a Health Visitor?

The aim of the Health Visiting Service is to provide you and your family with a specialist health professional. Health Visitors are qualified nurses (or Midwives) who are registered with the Nursing and Midwifery Council. They have studied to a specialist practitioner level in child and family health and will be able to offer you advice and support about the health and wellbeing of your child until the school years.

Because we are very aware that many families need support when becoming a parent, Health Visitors also provide guidance on areas such as making sure your baby is safe, family routines, supporting your baby’s sleeping patterns, advice about crying and any other areas of support that you may ask for. If we cannot help we will find out who can.
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What care does the Health Visiting team provide?
This is a home visiting service where your Health Visitor will provide you with specialist up-to-date advice and support on many health and wellbeing topics such as your own support after the birth of your baby, your child’s development, assistance with the various aspects of being a parent, childhood immunisations, breastfeeding, formula feeding, weaning your baby, dental care, safety and minor ailments your baby may experience.

When will I meet my Health Visitor?
All families have a Health Visitor from pregnancy through to school entry. In your pregnancy, labour and immediate post-natal period your Midwife will provide your care and support as they are the experts in pregnancy care. Your Health Visitor will be told by the Midwife that you have been booked for pregnancy care at 16-18 weeks.

The Health Visitor will contact you between 32-34 weeks of pregnancy to introduce the service and to support you further.
What can I ask my Health Visitor?

Please feel free to ask your Health Visitor any questions that you have at any time. Your Health Visitor will give you their direct contact details.

The Health Visitors are supported in their teams by Staff Nurses, Nursery Nurses, Student Nurses and Healthcare Assistants.

Health Visiting teams spend a lot of their working day on home visits so may not always be available, however all Health Visiting teams have answer phones and will aim to get back to you as soon as possible if you wish to leave a message.

We would encourage parents to do this however it may not always be possible to respond quickly - if you have any concerns and cannot get in contact with your Health Visitor contact your GP surgery (or NHS24 in the out of hours period). In an emergency contact the Emergency Services number as below:

**Health Visitor Normal Working Hours:**

- Monday – Friday 9am to 5pm (excluding public holidays)
- NHS24 telephone number: 111
- Emergency Services: 999
Where is my baby's progress recorded?

Following the birth of your baby your Community Midwife will continue to visit you usually until your baby is around 10 days old. Your Health Visitor will visit after this from between 11–14 days.

At this time the Health Visitor will give you a Personal Child Health Record book (known as the Red Book). This is an important document where both you and your Health Visitor will record your baby’s growth development, wellbeing and progress.

Each child also has an NHS Electronic Child Health Record, and the Health Visitor will update this after each contact with you. This record is held within NHS Lothian's secure electronic archives.
How is information about me and my baby used?

Health Visitors work in partnership with you and if information requires to be shared (for example, to make a referral to an NHS Speech Therapist) the Health Visitor will discuss this with you to agree the referral and sharing of the relevant information.

The only time a Health Visitor may need to share information without your consent is where they have concerns about a child's safety. Under Child Protection legislation all health professionals have a legal obligation to raise any concerns they may have about a child's safety as described in the NHS Lothian Child Protection Procedures 2016.
We know that while this is an exciting time it can also be a challenging and tiring time for parents.

Health Visitors will regularly visit the family home during the first six weeks after the birth of your baby as this can be where you may have questions about your new baby’s health. When your baby is between six and eight weeks old the Health Visitor and your family doctor (GP) will complete assessments for your baby. These assessments look at the overall health and development of your baby.

At six to eight weeks after your baby is born, all mums also receive a post-birth assessment to make sure you are well and recovering.

It is important that soon after the birth of your baby you register with your family doctor (GP) so that these assessments can be carried out and you can receive any medical care that you need. Your Health Visitor will be able to give you advice on the local arrangements with your GP.
What happens after that?

In Scotland, there is a standard visiting programme offered to all families. The aim of this is to allow you to see your Health Visiting team regularly for support.

Some families may need support in between these scheduled contacts and this will be planned with you. The Health Visitor will be the key person visiting you with support from the wider Health Visiting team.

Child Health Developmental and Wellbeing reviews are offered to all children in Scotland and aim to ensure that if your child has any health or developmental issues we can offer support early.

These reviews are carried out at 6-8 weeks, 13-15 months, 27-30 months and 4-5 years.
Your child will also be invited for a programme of childhood immunisations (baby jags). Immunisation is a way of protecting against serious diseases. Once we have been immunised, our bodies are better able to fight these diseases if we come into contact with them. Your baby is invited for these at 2 months, 3 months, 4 months, between 12-13 months, and after 3 years and 4 months of age. These are offered at your health centre, and will be given by either your GP, Practice Nurse or Community Staff Nurse. Your Health Visitor and GP can talk to you about immunisations and explain this to you.

More information can also be found at: http://www.immunisationscotland.org.uk/documents/6016.aspx

Your Health Visitor will discuss your ongoing contact with the Health Visiting team. This will depend on how things are going with you and your baby and what further care and support you both need. Whilst some families need only the regular, scheduled contacts other families may need additional support in-between times.
What happens when my child goes to school?

It may seem like years away at the moment but your Health Visitor will be involved in you and your child's health right up until your child starts school.

When your child is moving onto Primary 1 the Health Visiting Service will then pass on your care to the school and school health services (which includes School Nurses).

Where can I find more information?

NHS Lothian's website gives more details about the Health Visiting service, and includes contact details if you would like to talk to someone about the information in this leaflet.

Go to [www.nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk) and search for "health visitors".

For a copy of this leaflet in a larger print, Braille or your community language, please speak to your GP or Health Visiting Service.