

Your Health Visiting Service



Information for parents and carers

Welcome 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?

Health Visitors are qualified nurses or midwives who are registered with the UK Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) and have studied to become specialist Community Public Health Nurses. They are based within your local community – usually in GP Practices and Health Centres.

The aim of the Health Visiting Service is to provide you and your family with a specialist health professional who can offer you advice and support about the health and wellbeing of your child from birth until they are of school age.



What care does the Health Visiting team provide?

Health Visitors provide a home visiting service with up-to-date advice and support on many areas of health and wellbeing. Your health visitor is able to provide you with a wide variety of information and advice using a person-centered approach. This includes: information on immunisations, dental health, weaning, childhood minor ailments, safer sleep, behaviour management and toilet training. They can also support you in your choice of infant feeding, both breastfeeding and formula. Routine child health assessments are also offered to ensure that your child is meeting their developmental milestones.

When will I meet my Health Visitor?

All families have a named Health Visitor from 32 weeks of pregnancy until your child starts school.

Your midwife will inform the local Health Visiting Service that you are in their care shortly after your antenatal booking appointment. Your named Health Visitor will then contact you between 32 and 34 weeks of pregnancy in order to introduce themselves, explain the service to you, and answer any questions you may have.

Should you need further support at this time, this can be offered.

What can I ask my Health Visitor?

Please ask your Health Visitor any questions you have, either during face-to-face visits at home, or via telephone contact. Your Health Visitor will give you their contact details.

Health Visitors are available:

Monday - Friday 8.30am to 5pm

Please note that they do not work public holidays.

Health Visitors are supported in their teams by Staff Nurses, Nursery Nurses, Healthcare Assistants and Administration Staff. Health Visitors also have responsibilities for the supervision and assessment of Student Nurses and Trainee Health Visitors.

Health Visiting teams spend much of their day visiting families out in the community and so they may not always be immediately available should you call. However, all teams have answer phones and will aim to return your call as soon as possible.

If you have more immediate health concerns about your child, please contact your GP surgery (or NHS 24 if out-of-hours).

Out-of-Hours and Emergency Numbers:

NHS 24 telephone number: **111**

Emergency Services (Ambulance Service): **999**

Following the birth of your baby your Midwife will continue to visit you, usually until your baby is around 10 days old. Your care is then transferred to your Health Visitor who will arrange to visit you between 11–14 days after the birth.

Where is my baby's progress recorded?

During your first postnatal visit your Health Visitor will give you a Personal Child Health Record book (known as the Red Book). This is an important document where your baby's growth and development, as well as any immunisations given, will be recorded.



This information is also kept on your child's NHS electronic health record which the Health Visitor updates after each contact with you and your child. This record is held within NHS Lothian's secure electronic database.

How is information about me and my baby used?

Health Visitors work in partnership with you. If information needs to be shared (for example to make a referral to a Speech and Language Therapist) your Health Visitor will discuss this with you and seek your agreement for relevant information to be shared.

The only time a Health Visitor may need to share information without your consent is where they have child safety concerns. Under child protection legislation all professionals have a legal obligation to raise any concerns they may have regarding a child's safety as outlined in the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2021).

**getting
it right**
for every child

What happens in the first few weeks after my baby is born?

We know that while this is an exciting time for new parents, it can also be a challenging and tiring time.

Health Visitors will visit you at home regularly during the first six weeks after the birth of your baby. You are likely to have lots of questions about your new baby's health and progress and may need increased support with feeding. When your baby is between six and eight weeks old the Health Visitor and your family doctor (GP) will complete your baby's first developmental assessment.

It is important that you register the birth of your baby as soon as you can after birth. It is also important to register your baby with your family doctor (GP) as soon as you can. This ensures that your baby will receive medical care promptly if required.

For new mums, a postnatal check may be offered by GPs at around 6 – 8 weeks. Your Health Visitor will undertake a routine assessment for postnatal depression.



What happens after that?

In Scotland, a standardised Health Visiting programme is offered to all families with pre-school children and is referred to as The Universal Pathway. The aim of this schedule of care is to allow you to see your Health Visiting team regularly for support and to ensure that your child is ready for school.

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



Routine developmental assessments are part of the Universal Pathway and are offered to all children in Scotland. These aim to ensure that if your child has any health or developmental issue, then support or referral for specialist help happens as soon as possible.

Reviews are carried out at 6-8 weeks, 8 months, 13-15 months, 27-30 months and 4-5 years.

Childhood Immunisations

With your consent, your child will be invited for a programme of childhood immunisations (baby jags). This protects children against serious diseases for example: diphtheria, polio, tetanus, Hepatitis B and Meningitis B. Babies can catch these serious diseases from birth so it's important to protect them as soon as possible.

Public Health Scotland recommends that babies are vaccinated at 2 months, 3 months and 4 months. Then at 12-13 months, and a pre-school booster from 3 years, 4 months of age.

Vaccinations are usually offered at your local GP practice or Health Centre. Please discuss these with your Health Visitor – they will provide you with an information leaflet on the national vaccination programme.

More information can be found at:

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/immunisation/when-to-immunise>

What happens when my child goes to school?

It may seem like a long way off, at the moment, however the Health Visiting Service will be involved with you and your child's health right up until the transfer to school.

When your child starts Primary School the Health Visiting Service will transfer your child's care to the School Nursing Service.

Where can I find more information?

More details about the Health Visiting Service can be found on NHS Lothian's website and includes contact details if you would like to talk to someone about the information contained in this leaflet.

Go to:

<https://services.nhslothian.scot/healthvisitors/Pages/default.aspx>

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

