SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN

What’s the issue?

As mentioned in the JSNA section on early years (www.hullpublichealth.org/jsna2017.html#36), a good start in life is essential as children develop quickly in the early years and a child’s experiences between birth and age five have a major impact on their future life chances. Children need this foundation, through good parenting and high quality early learning, so that they can successfully progress through school and make the most of their abilities and talents.

“Good education improves career prospects, raises aspirations, and gives people more financial control over their lives. Poor education and training, and low educational attainment can affect confidence, aspirations, and increase the risk of lifelong unemployment, benefit dependency or low paid employment” [170]. These factors have a strong influence on health and wellbeing. Children (and adults) with low confidence and aspirations, and with low educational attainment are more likely to make poor choices in their lives which put them at risk, and increase their likelihood of poor health. Ensuring children are ready for school and can achieve good levels of education is essential for them to achieve well-paid satisfying regular employment, increase resilience, and improve health and wellbeing.

As mentioned in the JSNA section on early years (www.hullpublichealth.org/jsna2017.html#36), Marmot stated that parents are the most important ‘educators’ of their children for both cognitive and non-cognitive skills. High levels of parent warmth and supervision with parental involvement in their child’s reading has been instrumental in raising a more confident, autonomous and empathic child with good language skills and emergent literacy.

Following the Children and Families Act 2014, children (under the age of 25 years so covers early years, school age children and beyond) who have special educational needs will have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan, developed by all professionals and the family working together, to address all needs that a child or young person has within education, health and care. Prior to the Act, children were on School Action, School Action Plus or have SEN statements (three classifications in order of severity of additional need requirements). Within the Act, SEN Support replaces School Action and School Action Plus (in schools) and Early Years Action and Early Years Action Plus (in early years). Children with a learning disability assessment should have their EHC plan by September 2016 and children with statements should have their EHC by April 2018.

What’s our situation?

Due to the increased levels of deprivation in Hull, the majority of children are at an increased risk of not fulfilling their potential and having worse health than England as a whole. A higher percentage of children in Hull live in poverty (see the JSNA section on deprivation and poverty, www.hullpublichealth.org/jsna2017.html#7) and many children have an immediate disadvantage in life due to their circumstances. Compared to England, there is a higher rate of emergency admission for accidents (see the JSNA section on accidents, www.hullpublichealth.org/jsna2017.html#35), and fewer children in Hull are ready for school and achieve five or more GCSEs at A-C level (see the JSNA section on schools and educational attainment, www.hullpublichealth.org/jsna2017.html#41). Children living in more deprived areas, are more likely to grow up thinking that poverty, poor housing, and unemployment are the norm, which could result in cyclic behaviours with these children behaving as their parents do as they reach adulthood. Compared to England, children more likely to have unhealthy lifestyle behaviours such as poor diets and low levels of physical activity (see the JSNA sections on behaviour and lifestyle risk factors, www.hullpublichealth.org/jsna2017.html#26). Children living in the most deprived areas are also more likely to be exposed to second-hand smoke and become smokers themselves. Children and young people living in the most deprived areas are more likely to have learning disabilities (see the JSNA section on learning disabilities,
www.hullpublichealth.org/jsna2017.html#74), poorer physical health (see the JSNA section on general health and physical disabilities, www.hullpublichealth.org/jsna2017.html#21), poorer emotional health (see the JSNA section on emotional health and wellbeing, www.hullpublichealth.org/jsna2017.html#22) and poorer dental health (see the JSNA section on dental health, www.hullpublichealth.org/jsna2017.html#24). The percentage of pupils requiring special educational needs (SEN) support or Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans is higher than England (see the JSNA section on schools and educational attainment, www.hullpublichealth.org/jsna2017.html#41). Whilst under 18 conception rates have fallen greatly in Hull over the last decade, they are much higher than England (see the JSNA section on under 18 conceptions, www.hullpublichealth.org/jsna2017.html#42).

For more detailed information, see the JSNA Toolkit: Children and Young People report.

What are the strategic needs?

As a good education is very important for future health and wellbeing, it is essential that children are ready for school, and children and young people are able to maximise their achievements whilst at school, college and university, so that they can have good employment prospects. It is important that there should be early help for the children and young people, and their families who need additional support, and that the support is timely, accessible and appropriate for their circumstances. There should be a focus of resources on identifying risks and intervening early to improve maternal health and wellbeing, promoting positive parenting skills, and creating an environment for children and young people that builds self-esteem and resilience. More information on Hull’s Early Help and Priority Families Strategy 2015–2020 [76] is given in the JSNA section on early years (www.hullpublichealth.org/jsna2017.html#36).

There should also be promotion of physical and mental wellbeing across all educational settings. Hull was one of the places awarded funds from the Big Lottery Fund for HeadStart project. This programme aims to enable children and young people to have positive mental health and wellbeing, thrive in their ‘communities’, and be able to ‘bounce back’ from life’s challenges. The programme is running in a number of schools in Hull.

References