

1. Introduction

Providing the policy context

The Mayor of London published the capital's first ever Health Inequalities Strategy in April 2010. The Greater London Authority Act 2007 requires that the Mayor sets out the health inequalities facing London, the priorities for reducing them and the role to be played by a defined list of key partners in order to deliver the strategy's objectives.

This report makes the case that interventions early in an individual's life can help to reduce health inequalities and other poor outcomes, including the detrimental impacts of child poverty, in an extremely cost effective way.

'Early years': definition

- Unless otherwise stated in this report, 'early years' refers to programmes and services that intervene and support early in a child's life (aged between 0 and 5 years of age, including prenatal care).
- 'Early years' is a component of early interventions, which also encompasses intervention early in a child's life, early in the development of a potential problem and early, once a problem has been identified. Early interventions would, for example, address problems at the transition period from primary to secondary school education.

This Mayoralty wants to ensure that investment by bodies working with children and young people across London is guided towards proven approaches and models and delivers cost effective, well-evaluated interventions that really work for children and young people.

Accordingly, this report provides recommendations on which evidence based programmes are likely to produce the best outcomes for reducing health inequalities and improving child outcomes in London.

Setting out the report

In what follows, **Section 2** briefly highlights the health inequalities that exist in London and looks at the factors that impact on health inequalities, particularly examining the relationship between health inequalities and poverty. The section illustrates that the high levels of child poverty and a growing child population in London increase the importance of ensuring effective interventions are delivered in London if child outcomes are to be improved in the longer term.

Section 3 looks at the need to invest in early years interventions. It considers the impact of the very early years on a child's development and the role that early years interventions can have in influencing that development. The section considers the general findings about the value of such interventions. The section also considers the balance of current funding of early years interventions.

Section 4 sets out the evidence (primarily in terms of cost benefit analysis) around the effectiveness of particular early interventions with a view to informing which type of interventions are likely to be the most effective for London.

A series of appendices provide more detailed analysis that supports each section and underpins the main report findings.

Appendix A provides more information on child poverty in London.

Appendix B attempts to give estimates of the expenditure on early years interventions in the UK and also looks at international comparisons of expenditure in this area.

Appendix C looks at the factors accounting for a potential under-investment in early years programmes.

Appendix D provides more detail on the evidence of the effectiveness of early years programmes in terms of cost benefit analysis. It highlights the analysis conducted to try to make

the results from international evidence more relevant to London.

Appendix E looks at some other literature and evaluation evidence – though not cost-benefit analysis evidence – that informs the effectiveness of early years interventions to reduce health inequalities. In particular, it considers literature that identifies characteristics of effective programmes in terms of avoiding teenage pregnancy, parenting programmes and programmes implemented in early childhood.

