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IMPLEMENTING NURSE HOME VISITING PROGRAMS: OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES IN ENGLAND & AUSTRALIA

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POLICY CONTEXT

Over the past decades a series of well-designed randomised controlled trials have demonstrated the efficacy of programs of home visiting for first-time teenaged mothers in the United States. The Australian-developed Maternal Early Childhood Sustained Home-visiting (MECSH) program is a home visiting intervention and service system designed to enhance the capacity of universal services to respond to the needs of a broader range of vulnerable families, improving population reach of effective nurse home visiting programs. Transferability to the English service system was explored.

KEY FINDINGS

Engagement with practitioners, academics and policymakers in England suggests that the MECSH program would be an appropriate model to meet the gap in service provision for the broad range of vulnerable families with differing needs. Implementing MECSH was seen to support equity and address the 'polarised practice' created by tensions between implementation of universal and targeted programs. Four recommendations were identified for Australian child health policy:

- The implications of health system reforms for universal preventive child health services need to be identified. In particular, how will current levels of investment in preventive child health be protected and enhanced? Who will manage child and family health nursing services? Who will be in control of and accountable for the level of funding? Who will monitor the quality and fidelity of service provision?
- Evidence-based decision-making support tools should be developed, trialled and supported in Australia to improve the capacity of government and civil society to identify effective programs for investment.
- Policymakers and service managers should commit to delivering effective interventions with fidelity to improve the health of Australian children.
- Policymakers should identify, resource and promote evidence-based programs for practitioners working with families with varying vulnerabilities and needs in their local communities to improve the outcomes of all families with young children.

For more details, go to the [three page report](#)

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