



Child Health Systems in the United Kingdom (England)

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Child health in the United Kingdom has improved markedly over recent decades but has failed to match health gains and reductions in mortality achieved by other European countries. Child poverty and inequalities are rising in the United Kingdom. The National Health Service (NHS) is a universally accessible health service, funded by taxation and is free at the point of use. The NHS is undergoing substantial reform, aiming to improve care quality and experience, meet rising demands, and contain costs. The NHS is struggling to balance access with expertise for urgent and unscheduled care. There is increasing use of urgent and emergency care, and there are unexplained variations in outcomes. Quality of care for children and young people with chronic and long-term conditions, including transition services, is variable and sometimes poor. Many determinants of noncommunicable conditions are worsening. Key achievements include a universal service free at the point of use, providing generally accessible, and equitable care. Key challenges include increasing fragmentation of services, insufficient emphasis on preventive care, achieving an effective balance between access and expertise of care for children, and improving child health and well-being outcomes despite generally high quality inputs and high levels of spending. (*J Pediatr* 2016;177S:S217-42).

The United Kingdom (UK) is made up of 4 countries: England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. England is the largest country, where 84% of the UK population resides. Although each country has different health systems, there are also common features. This report focuses largely on England's health system and on UK-wide aspects; however, notable differences between countries are drawn out where possible.

Geography

The UK lies off the northwestern coast of Europe, between the North Atlantic Ocean and the North Sea and separated from France by the English Channel. The climate is unusually mild because of the Gulf Stream, with the average annual temperature being approximately 10°C and a summer average approximately 5° above and winter 5° below this mean. Rainfall is greater in the west compared with the east (200 cm vs 50 cm of rain per year). The UK has a total area of approximately 243 610 km² making it the 11th largest country in Europe; 25% of the UK is considered to be arable land. The mainland areas lie between latitudes 49°N and 59°N and longitudes 8°W to 2°E. The Royal Greenwich Observatory is the defining point of the Prime Meridian.

History and Political Context

The UK is a constitutional monarchy, and Queen Elizabeth II has been the Head of State since 1952. The UK is governed by a Parliament formed of two houses: the House of Commons and the House of Lords. The UK first became a sovereign state in 1707 with the political union of the Kingdoms of England (which included Wales) and Scotland into a united kingdom called Great Britain. A further Act of Union in 1800 added the Kingdom of Ireland to create the UK of Great Britain and Ireland. In 1922, 26 of 32 counties of Ireland formed the Irish Free State (later becoming the Republic of Ireland); to reflect the change in the UK's boundaries, the name was formally changed to the Parliament of the UK of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in 1927. The

British Empire and Industrial Revolution made the UK a dominant force in the

A&E	Accident and emergency	HCP	Healthy Child Program
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services	HEE	Health Education England
CCG	Clinical commissioning group	IT	Information technology
CMO	Chief Medical Officer	NHS	National Health Service
CPP	Child protection plan	OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
CQC	Care Quality Commission	PHE	Public Health England
GDP	Gross domestic product	SAS	Staff and associate specialist
GP	General practitioner	UK	United Kingdom
HbA1c	Hemoglobin A1c	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
HCC	Health Care Commission	WTE	Whole time equivalent

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world. The UK's culture, industrial, political, constitutional, religious, educational, and linguistic legacies continue to be influential worldwide. The UK joined the European Union (EU) in 1973 but remains outside the economic and monetary union.

The head of Government is the Prime Minister, who is the leader of the majority political party in the House of Commons made up of democratically elected representatives, Members of Parliament, from 650 local constituencies across the UK. Elections to the House of Commons take place at least once every 5 years under a first-past-the-post electoral system. Parliament's upper house, the House of Lords comprises 680 life peers, 87 hereditary peers, and 26 clergy.

There is no formal written constitution in the UK. British citizens 18 years of age or over have the right to vote in a general election, except for convicted prisoners (despite the European Court of Human Rights ruling that this is unlawful).^{1,2} The current Prime Minister and leader of the Conservative Party, David Cameron, took office in a Coalition Government with the Liberal Democrats in 2010, following 13 years of Labour Party governments. A majority Conservative Party government was elected in May 2015. The two main political parties are Labour and Conservative. Minor parties include Liberal Democrats, Scottish National Party, Green Party, UK Independence Party, and National Health Action Party. The devolved nations, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, have their own local governments, which decide on services affecting their local populations, with the British government deciding on UK-wide and English matters, such as tax, benefits, defense, and foreign policies.

Local government in the UK consists of 354 administrative regions known as Local Authorities or Councils (of counties or boroughs). Legislation concerning local government in England is decided by the Parliament and Government of the UK. At a regional level (excluding London), England has two different patterns of local government. In some areas, there is a county council responsible for services, such as education and strategic planning within a county, then within larger county councils, district councils responsible for services, such as housing, waste collection, and local planning. There are a total of 83 counties in England. The Scottish local Government consists of 32 elected councils, which provide services to the people of Scotland, such as education, social care, waste management, cultural services, and planning. The Welsh Government is responsible for similar areas in Wales, including health, education, language and culture, and public services. Wales is divided into 22 areas with elected councils. The Northern Ireland Assembly is the devolved legislature for Northern Ireland and also is responsible for passing laws on transferred matters, including health, education, agriculture and rural development, and policing and justice within their country. There are 11 councils within Northern Ireland.

Sociodemography

The UK's total population has increased over the last 2 decades, from 58 million people in 1995 to currently 64.1

million people.³ The population growth rate is the highest in the EU, doubling from 0.3% per annum in 1995 to 0.6% per annum in 2014.³ The estimated populations of the 4 constituent countries of the UK in mid-2013 were 53.9 million (growth of 0.70%) in England, 5.3 million (growth of 0.27%) in Scotland, 3.1 million (growth of 0.27%) in Wales, and 1.8 million (growth of 0.33%) in Northern Ireland.³ The UK is the third most populated country in the EU after France and Germany and the 22nd in the world (approximately 7.3% of the world's population). The average population density across the UK is 262.9 people per km²; 80% of the UK population live in urban environments.

The demographic transition toward an increasingly large proportion of elderly people in the population is happening in the UK as it is in many European countries. Thus, the proportion of children and young people aged 0-14 years of age in the total population has decreased from 19.5% in 1995 to 17.5% at present, and the proportion of people over 65 years of age has increased from 15.4% to 17.4% over the same time period and is estimated to increase by a further 33%, from 10 million in 2010 to 15.5 million, by 2030.^{4,5}

There has been a general trend towards decreasing fertility rates in the UK, thought to be attributable to women delaying childbearing to older ages.^{3,6}

In 2011, the most recent 10-year census, 86% of the population in England and Wales were of white ethnicity, 7.5% were Asian/Asian British, 3.3% Black/African/Caribbean/Black British, 2.2% were mixed/multiple ethnic groups, and 1% reported themselves to be in another ethnic group. Furthermore, 59% of the population of England and Wales identifies themselves as Christians, 25% as nonreligious, and 5% as Muslims. One in 8 of the resident UK population is born abroad. India, Poland, Pakistan, Ireland, and Germany are the 5 most common foreign countries of birth.⁷ Migration flow from Bulgaria, Latvia, Romania, Poland, Slovakia, and Lithuania has risen substantially over the past 10 years following the enlargement of EU.⁸ More than one-half of the population increase over the last two decades was directly contributed by migration.⁹

Life expectancy in the UK is increasing, however, there are significant inequalities in life expectancy both geographically and socioeconomically. The life expectancy is generally higher in the south of England compared with Scotland and the north of England. In the wealthier areas of London, for example, male life expectancy is 84.4 years of age and women's is 89 years of age. By contrast in Glasgow, where poverty is more prevalent, male life expectancy is 71.1 years of age and women's is 77.5 years of age.

There are 18.6 million families in the UK, and an estimated 2 million single parents with dependent children; women account for 91% of single parents with dependent children. Households consisting of 2 or more families were the fastest growing household type in the decade to 2014, increasing by 56% to 313 000 households.¹⁰ An estimated 46% of adults aged 16-64 years have a degree, and 48% have completed

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