

Unite/CPHVA Statement

What size caseload should a health visitor have?

This much asked question has cropped up again with the publication of the second report by Lord Laming¹ where a figure of 400 children was alluded to. It is the view of Unite/CPHVA that 400 must be the absolute maximum caseload size for any health visitor if relevant health needs of children and families are to be addressed by this service. The average and more normal caseload size for health visitors should be no more than 250 children but we would advise that caseloads for health visitor working in areas of high vulnerability should be much less. Unless caseloads are of a manageable size the health visitor does not have the opportunity to establish the crucial relationship with a family or to assess health needs in line with the Child Health Promotion Programme².

Factors to take into account when deciding an optimum caseload are:

- Vulnerability factors for the community
- Ease of access for home visits
- Availability of, and access to additional services such as children's centres
- Additional responsibilities the health visitor has e.g. teaching students
- The burden of administration including time required for record keeping and writing reports in areas of high vulnerability
- Time for supervision and training

Due to the importance of the health visitor's having time to develop a relationship with every family, and the need to regularly assess need in every family, Unite/CPHVA believe that these caseload sizes are realistic even in the presence of a skill mix team. This should serve to enhance, not dilute professional skills.

The Community Practitioner journal hopes to publish a fuller paper on this subject in May 2009. Meanwhile it is possible to access a model for funding health visitor services (*Community Practitioner* 2007; 80(11): p18-24 & *Community Practitioner* 2007; 80(12): p24-31)

References

1. The protection of children in England a progress report

<http://publications.everychildmatters.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/HC-330.pdf>

2. Child Health Promotion Programme:

http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/DH_083645

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