

European Nursing Congress

March 04-05, 2019 | London, UK

Community intervention to prevent child maltreatment in England: Evaluating the contribution of the family nursing partnership

Kevin Browne

University of Nottingham Medical School, UK

Background: The Government in England has recognized the importance of early intervention to promote positive child development and prevent maltreatment. In doing so, efforts have been made to increase the implementation of the Family Nurse Partnership (FNP) to target a greater number of families who require intensive secondary intervention.

Methods: This paper presents an argument that the FNP can be targeted more effectively to yield a greater return on investment. This is based on the re-analysis of data collected by the largest cohort study carried out into risk factors for child maltreatment in England.

Results: Currently, around 315 health visitors are estimated to be implementing this programmed, projected to increase to around 585 health visitors in 2015. However, targeting the programmed towards first-time, young vulnerable mothers with low socio-economic status means that around 1350 health visitors would be needed. Critically, targeting only this

population is estimated to prevent only 10% of cases of child abuse and neglect.

Conclusions: By targeting risk factors which are less common in the general population, but which are more prevalent amongst abusive families, fewer specialist health visitors would be needed to prevent a higher percentage of child maltreatment.

Keywords: children, cost-effectiveness, population-based and preventative services

Speaker Biography

Kevin Browne is Chair of Forensic Psychology and Child Health, as well as Director of the Professional Doctorate Programmed in Forensic Psychology and the research Centre for Forensic and Family Psychology. He first held academic appointments at the University of Surrey, University of Leicester and University of Birmingham Medical School before being appointed as Professor and Director of the WHO Collaborating Centre in Child Care and Protection at the School of Psychology, University of Birmingham from 1998 to 2007. He then became the Chair of Forensic and Child Psychology at the School of Psychology, University of Liverpool (2007 to 2009).

e: kevin.browne@nottingham.ac.uk



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