

Prevention in health and social care Inquiry

Institute of Health Promotion and Education (IHPE)

IHPE is charitable organisation whose membership consists of Health Promotion and Education professionals and academics from public, private and voluntary sectors. It has a proven track record of influencing policy and has been at the forefront of developments in Health Education and Health Promotion since 1962.
<https://ihpe.org.uk/>

The nature of the issue that the Committee should explore

- Accidental injuries are a leading cause of preventable death and are a major cause of serious disability and ill health.
- Accidents are often dismissed as inevitable, but there is so much that we can do to stop them from happening. We don't have to accept accidental deaths in our homes, roads and workplaces.
- The burden of injury falls unequally.
- There remain omissions in intelligence - in particular, there has been little in the way of national accident data coming from emergency departments for some years.
- Preventable accidents result in huge costs to health services, social care, economies, and people's lives.

Why it deserves attention from the Committee now

Accidental injuries have been a neglected area for many years.

There are evidence-based approaches available to prevent many accidental injuries. Funded accident prevention interventions can produce positive public health outcomes.

We are very fortunate within the UK to have a world leading organisation, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA), that has worked for more than 100 years to help people recognise and reduce their risk of accidents, on the road, at home, at work and at leisure.

A national strategy has been produced by RoSPA and other eminent organisations including the Faculty of Public Health, IHPE, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, Royal College of Emergency Medicine, and Royal College of Nursing. It draws upon the significant evidence-base, including guidance from NICE and Public Health England. But funding is lacking. This innovative strategy could have a great impact on accidents if more of the effective approaches were funded and implemented.

A central aim of this strategy is to reduce the costly burden of accidents on individuals, families, businesses and the health and social care system.

Local authorities have also played vital roles, co-ordinating activities and introducing a range of measures to reduce the number of for example, home and road accidents. However, much could be achieved if investments were made.

At a time when A&E departments are having to cope with unprecedented levels of pressure, it is vital that we recognise the contribution that evidence-based accident prevention could make to relieve some of the demand.

How Government policy in this area could be developed or improved.

Coordination

There is a need for improved coordination at national and local levels.

Data

The quality and quantity of data for accident prevention should be improved. This is important for effective needs assessment, raising awareness, monitoring and evaluation.

Data should be made easily accessible to local and national practitioners.

Funding

The Government should support the national strategy and ensure that it is adequately resourced so that the evidence-based interventions can be effectively implemented.

Public health teams in local authorities should be adequately resourced so that they can facilitate, support and drive forward effective action.

Specific programmes

We need a step-change in the delivery of evidence-based programmes across the country, promoting safe and active lives and reducing the burden of serious accidental injury on society. Examples of specific programmes needed:

- Reducing child home accidents
- Falls prevention (children and older people)
- Safer stairs - Improving safety standards for stair design
- Provision of safer road environments
- Child Pedestrian Training
- Courses for young drivers
- Cycle training
- Courses and awards for couriers (driving and safer handling)
- Safer driving campaigns (e.g. covering – alcohol, speeding, distractions, drugs)
- Active safer travel initiatives

Key References

Public Health England. Reducing unintentional injuries on the roads among children and young people under 25 years. London: PHE, 2018.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reducing-unintentional-injuries-among-children-and-young-people>

Public Health England. Reducing unintentional injuries in and around the home among children under five years. London: PHE, 2018.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reducing-unintentional-injuries-among-children-and-young-people>

Watson M C and Errington G. Preventing unintentional injuries in children: successful approaches. Paediatrics and Child Health. 2016; 26(5), 194-199

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1751722215002553>

Watson M C, Thompson S. Government must get serious about prevention BMJ 2018; 360 :k1279 doi:10.1136/bmj.k1279

<https://www.bmj.com/content/360/bmj.k1279.full>

RoSPA. Safe and active at all ages: a national strategy to prevent serious accidental injuries in England. Birmingham: RoSPA, 2018.

<https://www.rospace.com/national-strategy/>

Watson M C and Lloyd J. IHPE Position Statement: Unintentional Home Injuries to Children (Under 5s). Lichfield, IHPE, 2019.

<https://ihpe.org.uk/resources/position-papers/>

Dr Michael Craig Watson 07/02/2023