Results 1) Initial findings from the systematic literature review reveals that universal supplementation of vitamins such as folic acid significantly reduces the incidence of preventable ill health due to vitamin deficiencies such as neural tube defects compared to a targeted approach.; 2) In areas using the targeted approach, the uptake of children’s drops and women’s tablets was 1.46% and 2.56% respectively. In the area that adopted a universal approach, the uptake of children’s drops and women’s tablets was 3.97% and 7.72% respectively.; 3) Barriers shared by both approaches include a lack of awareness of the scheme amongst health professionals, onerous administrative processes and the availability of vitamins. The universal approach is supported by health professionals because it does not stigmatise recipients.

Conclusion 1) From the systematic review, mandatory universal fortification of foods, e.g. flour is a major public health opportunity for the UK.; 2) Uptake of Healthy Start food vouchers and vitamins is low whatever the implementation strategy. However, uptake of Healthy Start vitamins is significantly higher in areas adopting a universal approach to implementation. A universal approach to implementation is supported by the literature and this study suggests that it may overcome some barriers to the implementation of the Healthy Start scheme nationally.; 3) In particular, a universal approach may reduce some of the administrative hurdles confronted by a targeted approach and will also address the stigma associated with the use of Healthy Start vitamins.

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