



Briefing for:	Corporate Parenting Group	Item number	
Title:	Rapid Health Needs Assessment for Looked After Children in Haringey		
Lead Officer:	Sheena Carr, Senior Public Health Commissioning Strategist		
Date:	22 nd September 2011		
Cabinet member input and introduction	Councillor Reith		

1. Issue under consideration

To share the outcome of a rapid health needs assessment for looked after children, as requested by Ofsted.

2. Background information

In January 2011, Haringey's Safeguarding and Looked after Children Services were subject to a joint Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection. The inspection reports highlighted three specific health recommendations:

a) From the Ofsted report (published 25 February 2011)

Within three months:

NHS Haringey should ensure there are robust systems in place to monitor the quality of healthcare provided to all looked after children and care leavers in all settings.

b) From the CQC report (published May 2011)

Within 3 months:

NHS Haringey to ensure the agreed care pathway for looked after children's healthcare is implemented.

c) Within 6 months:



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NHS Haringey to ensure that the views of young people are heard strategically in the planning and development of health care services.

As a result of these recommendations, it was agreed to undertake a rapid health needs assessment of looked after children in Haringey to assess if their health needs were being met and to assess if the health needs of looked after children in Haringey were similar or different to their peers as described in published literature.

A rapid health needs assessment concentrates on collating information that already exists and applying intelligence to it via a gap analysis. An effective rapid health needs assessment provides sufficient information and intelligence for decision makers to improve the existing service content and configuration to better meet local need.

As part of the rapid health needs assessment, young people in care and leaving care were invited to a workshop facilitated by the Council's Children and Young People's Participation and Strategy officer to share their experiences of health and health services.

Ten young people aged 9 – 19 participated in the workshop and represented: young people in foster care, leaving care, asylum seeker backgrounds, young people accommodated by Southwark judgements, unaccompanied minors, those that had been in Children's Homes and young mothers. The young people were asked a series of questions which they explored as a group:

- What does being healthy mean to you?
- What do you think of the information and advice you have received on healthy eating; smoking, drugs, alcohol; sex and relationships; oral health and mental health?
- How do you feel about your health assessments? How involved do you feel? What could make them better?
- What are your experiences of using health services? Did you feel listened to?
- Who would you talk to if you had a problem?
- How prepared were you for leaving care?

Overwhelmingly, the young people said that they had received little or no information on health issues. Many of the young people were critical of the health assessments, although it should be noted that all the young people had had their health assessments prior to the new system being put in place in January 2011. Their comments therefore, do not relate to the current situation, whereby all review health assessments are carried out by the Children in Care Health team based at Bounds Green Health Centre.



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None of the young people in the focus group felt that they were prepared for leaving care and therefore further work needs to be undertaken to ensure that young people are equipped with the necessary skills and information before they leave the care system.

A workshop was also held with professionals. The aim of the workshop was to bring together local professionals who have a role in promoting the health and well-being of looked after children and young people.

Participants were asked to identify the key health issues faced by Haringey's looked after children and young people. These were then categorised by themes with the following emerging overwhelmingly as the key issues facing children and young people in Haringey:

- Sexual health:
- Drugs and alcohol
- Emotional/mental health
- Immunisations

Consideration was also given to outlining existing services for looked after children in Haringey which enabled gaps in services to be highlighted.

3. Options for consideration

Gaps in Provision

- There is a delay in getting some services, particularly child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) for those children placed outside the borough. It was also felt that there should be a formal system in place to fast track looked after children to all relevant services.
- There was consensus amongst the workshop participants that there is a lack of preparation for young people on leaving care. This is reinforced by the young people themselves who stated that they were unprepared for leaving care.
- There was a lack of clarity on the transition to adult services where this is necessary, and concerns about the high thresholds for vulnerable adult services, meaning that many 18 year olds may no longer have access to services.
- Concerns were also raised about young people with long term conditions e.g. asthma, as often these conditions are not well managed by young people once they leave care.
- Although children and young people are encouraged to access universal services, e.g. GPs etc, work needs to be undertaken with young people to reduce anxiety about using health services, and also with health



professionals to ensure they understand the particular needs of looked after children and young people.

Recommendations for consideration

Planning and service developments

- Organise another session with the looked after children and care leavers focus group to share the findings from the rapid health needs assessment and to assess if the changes made to improve initial and review health assessments have been successful. Commissioners and providers could consider working with the looked after children and care leavers focus group on an on-going basis to regularly review services for looked after children and care leavers.
- To improve future planning and service development, it would be useful to share the views of looked after children and young people gathered during the workshop in June, with commissioners and providers.
- Ensure that the mental health needs of looked after children and young people remain a high priority and that adequate provision is commissioned.

Data

- Commissioners could consider the potential for developing additional health outcomes data for looked after children and young people, beyond the statutory requirements, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of their health status.

Information

- Develop a resource (web based) providing looked after children and young people (and professionals) with a range of health information and local services available. In addition, develop an age appropriate welcome pack for children and young people on entering care. In partnership with young people, this could include the NHS Direct information card; information on looking after your health, including appearance e.g. skin, hair and nail care and include free samples. These could be given out by the nurses at review health assessments. A similar pack could also be offered to foster carers.

Training and education

- Improve local practitioners awareness of services available to looked after children and care leavers and ensure better communication between partners and agencies i.e. regular forum for professionals working with looked after children and young people to share good practice, experiences and to problem solve.



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- Develop regular brief intervention training for professionals working with looked after children and young people focussing on substance misuse to respond to young people's comments about a lack of awareness in this area.

- Commissioners could consult with GP Consortia on the most effective way to improve access and provision for looked after children and young people.

The full report, "Rapid Health Needs Assessment for Looked After Children in Haringey" is available from the Public Health Directorate.