

Report to: Corporate Parenting Panel

Date of meeting: 27 April 2018

By: Director of Children's Services

Title: Interim report on Health of Looked After Children

Purpose: To update the Panel regarding the health needs of Looked After Children and young people, progress since the transfer of the contract for the medical services to East Sussex Healthcare Trust (ESHT), the newly published guidance from NHS England regarding reducing unwarranted variations in meeting statutory requirements, current strategic health roles and proposals to launch a Strategic Health of Looked After Children's Health Forum.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1) Members are asked to note and comment on the challenges with meeting statutory timescales and related requirements and the progress that is being made; and to note and comment on the increasingly collaborative work on improving pathways and communication between ESCC and ESHT Looked After Children's medical and nursing services.

2) Members are asked to note the launch of a Strategic Health of Looked After Children's Forum and the further development of an Operational Health of Looked After Children's Forum.

1 Background

1.1 Children and young people who are looked after through the local authority have many of the same health issues and need for health services as their peers, though their health needs may have been neglected prior to being accommodated and they may have additional needs resulting from neglect or trauma. Health needs are identified on entry into care through a statutory health assessment and continue to be addressed through a range of services – mostly generic and some specifically for children and young people looked after by the local authority. Fuller background information is set out in Appendix 1.

1.2 The corporate parenting responsibilities of local authorities include having a duty under section 22(3)(a) of the Children Act 1989 to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children they look after, including those placed for adoption, regardless of whether they are placed in or out of authority and whatever the type of placement. The corporate parenting responsibility includes the promotion of a child or young person's physical, emotional and mental health as well as acting on early signs of any health issues. Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG's) and NHS England, in the Children Act 1989 and amended legislation, have a duty to comply with requests from a local authority to help them provide support and services to looked after children and young people which promote their health and well-being.

1.3 The statutory guidance “Promoting the health and well-being of looked after children” 2015 sets out the major role the NHS has to ensure the timely and effective delivery of health services to looked after children and young people.

1.4 NHS England published a very useful document in November 2017 with exemplars: “A Guide to Meeting the Statutory Health Needs of Looked After Children through a Standard Approach to Commissioning and Service Delivery”. The Designated Professionals in East Sussex have been seeking to implement recommendations made in this document. The guidance had been developed by the NHS England National Steering Group - Looked After Children Forum with the aim of improving the health outcomes of looked after children and young people across England by reducing the unwarranted variation in the health delivery and commissioning arrangements.

1.5 In April 2017 the contract for providing Looked After Children (LAC) medical services moved to East Sussex Healthcare Trust (ESHT). Experienced Community Paediatricians have been employed to undertake the initial health assessments, adoption medical advice and provide Named Doctor LAC and Designated Doctor LAC roles. The quality of reports and advice has been consistently good; the adoption team (as stated in the Adoption Annual Report) have reported a significant improvement in Medical Advice at Panel since ESHT started the contract. ESHT health visitors have continued to undertake review health assessments of East Sussex County Council Looked After children under 5 years placed in county. The ESHT LAC Nursing team is an experienced team of specialist nurses undertaking the remainder of review health assessments, monitoring of healthcare plans and providing a point of contact for Looked After Children and young people.

1.6 The Designated Doctor for Looked After Children was appointed from mid July 2017 with 3 sessions per week earmarked for this role in line with the number of recommended sessions for the child population. Following the Care Quality Commission/Ofsted inspection in December 2016 the decision was taken to move the Designated Nurse role to the CCGs from ESHT for 2.5 days per week. This has helped to clarify the distinction between roles for the post holder (who at the time was also Named Nurse Looked After Children for East Sussex Healthcare Trust). From April 2018 the Designated and Named Nurse LAC roles will be fulfilled by different people, further clarifying the roles and emphasising the strategic role of the Designated Nurse. Roles are set out in the Intercollegiate Framework (roles and responsibilities) 2015.

2 Supporting information

2.1 Joint operational and communication meetings (ESHT / ESCC / Designated professionals) have been held regularly over the last year and proved invaluable in addressing issues around notification, consent, processes and appropriate communication channels. These meetings have enabled both services to drill down to find different issues creating delay in or confusion. Requirements for consent and essential information have been clarified – the standardised Coram BAAF forms commissioned by ESCC are continuing to be used for Consent, Initial Health Assessments (IHA's), Review Health Assessments (RHA's), and collation of birth (B), antenatal (M) and family history (PH). New 'smarter' processes have been launched for requesting health assessments and sharing information. It has been agreed by the Designated professionals and Head of Service LAC that the operational meetings are further developed and expanded to provide ongoing robust response to the issues identified to date.

2.2 The NHS England Guidance strongly recommends both a Strategic and an Operational Health of Looked After Children Forum. The overall aim is to improve the health outcomes for Looked after children and young people.

2.3 The purpose of the Strategic Forum would be to monitor and improve the delivery of health outcomes for Looked After Children and young people; to ensure ESCC and East

Sussex CCGs are meeting statutory duties under the 'Promoting the Health and Well-being of Looked-after Children' (2015) statutory guidance; to ensure the health needs of those placed outside of area/borough are being met; to be responsible for the implementation of a 'Health of Looked After Children Action Plan'; to monitor performance, value for money and quality assure the Looked After Children medical and nursing service; to influence service development for known priority health needs for looked after children and young people, including mental health, emotional wellbeing, substance misuse and factors relating to child missing and sexual exploitation; to deliver the CCGs annual health report from a partnership perspective and be accountable to the Corporate Parenting Panel and CCGs.

2.4 The Operational Forum would build on existing meetings between ESCC and ESHT Looked After teams. This would have the following purposes: to ensure the operational processes within ESHT, 'out of county' arrangements, the Local Authority and within the wider health economy all enable delivery of the statutory requirements. These requirements include duties to: review and refine the implementation of the operational processes; monitor the performance management framework, including key health dashboard performance data (% of Initial IHA's, RHA's, care leavers' health summaries, dental attendance, completion of Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires, immunisation uptake rates) and take remedial action as required to ensure delivery of key performance indicator targets (KPI); ensure on-going delivery of a robust joint quality assurance programme; ensure that the voice of the child is incorporated into decision making; monitor, assess, manage and mitigate risks, and report them to the Strategic Forum; establish Task and Finish Groups to complete tasks, as required.

2.5 The notification rate, of within 5 working days of a child entering care, has significantly improved over the first 3 quarters of the year and this requires a sustained commitment. The recently published NHS England Guidance recommends that local authorities notify health within 48 hours of a child being placed in care or moving placement and then forward consent form and demographic details within 4 working days.

2.6 The LAC Nursing team will undertake all review health assessments in East Sussex from April 2018 in order to aid streamlining of pathways and assist with closer monitoring. The health visitors will continue to provide an enhanced service to Looked After children and focus on implementation of health care plans and attending Looked After Children's reviews.

2.7 Named professionals for Looked After Children are in post in ESHT but need to be identified in all health providers in East Sussex in order to ensure staff in those providers are appropriately trained and to facilitate sharing of health information when necessary.

2.8 Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) have planned an increased focus on monitoring and reviewing statutory requirements including timeliness of IHA's. The statutory requirement means the IHA must be completed, and the report returned to social services, within 20 working days of the child entering care. Timeliness of Notification, early provision of consent and essential paperwork, a swift appointment and timely distribution of reports will all help towards the LAC medical service being able to contribute to a child's health plan by the first LAC review. The IROs have committed to providing a challenge which will help both services push towards the goal of the IHA being completed and health care plan ready by every first LAC review.

2.9 Children in East Sussex placed by other local authorities: an increased monitoring and closer liaison with placing authorities will give a clearer picture of the health needs of children placed in East Sussex by other local authorities and ascertain whether their health needs are being met. Any requests for statutory health assessments are currently undertaken by the ESHT LAC medical and nursing teams.

2.10 The Looked After Children's specialist nursing team are available to train foster carers each year. This has not been arranged during the past year but could be useful to highlight the health needs of looked after children and raise awareness of issues regarding consent and carers' responsibilities regarding statutory health appointments and healthcare plans.

2.11 Joint training of health and social care professionals could enhance learning and build on a shared understanding of the needs of looked after children and young people.

3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

3.1 The corporate parenting responsibility of the Local Authority includes the promotion of a child or young person's physical, emotional and mental health as well as acting on early signs of any health issues. CCGs and NHS England, under Children Act 1989 and amended legislation, have a duty to comply with requests from a local authority to help them provide support and services to LAC and young people which promote their health and well-being. NHS England published a document in November 2017: "A Guide to Meeting the Statutory Health Needs of Looked After Children through a Standard Approach to Commissioning and Service Delivery", based on statutory requirements, with the aim of improving the health outcomes of Looked After Children and young people across England by reducing the unwarranted variation in the health delivery and commissioning arrangements. The Designated Doctor recommends that this practical guidance, together with statutory guidance, continues to be used to inform local service delivery, monitoring and assurance arrangements.

3.2 The Panel is asked to note the launch of a Joint Strategic Health of Looked After Children Forum and further development of a Joint Operational Health of Looked After Children Forum, building on increasingly collaborative working, with the aim to improve the health outcomes of Looked After children and young people.

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Background documents:

Promoting the health and well-being of looked after children 2015:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/413368/Promoting_the_health_and_well-being_of_looked-after_children.pdf