

Corporate Parenting Panel

19 October 2018



Looked After Children and Care Leavers Health Needs Assessment

Report of Amanda Healy, Director of Public Health, Durham County Council

Purpose of the Report

- 1 This report is to present the Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP) with the final draft, key findings and proposed recommendations from the Looked After Children (LAC) and Care Leavers (CL) Health Needs Assessment (HNA).
- 2 The Public Health Strategic Plan outlines a need to prioritise vulnerable groups. The completion of the LAC and CL HNA ensures that these corporate commitments are progressed.

Background

- 3 In 2017/18 around 800 children and young people have been cared for in county Durham; 1 in 3 children who enter care are under 1 years, 4 out of 5 come into care due to abuse or neglect and 2 out of 3 children and young people are placed in foster care. Durham County Council has seen a 53% increase in the number of LAC between 2011 and 2018.
- 4 For 2016 and 2017, the rate of children in full time looked after care in County Durham is significantly higher than England and lower than the north east.
- 5 Looked after children (LAC) and care leavers (CL) are a vulnerable sub-group of the population. Most children enter care often as the result of abuse or neglect. Whilst they have many of the same health issues as their peers, the extent of these is often greater as a result of their past experiences. The available evidence suggests LAC and CL experience poorer health outcomes which can persist into adulthood.
- 6 Research tells us that LAC and CL are more likely to have been affected by Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's). ACE's are described as traumatic and/or stressful events that occur during childhood and adolescence. Adversities can include experiences of neglect, violence and/or abuse, the loss of contact with a sibling or care giver. Evidence suggests that emotionally distressing, difficult and traumatic situations will have a long lasting impact on children and young people's development, health and lifestyle.
- 7 As a corporate parent, local authorities should have the same high aspirations for the children they look after as any parent and should ensure looked after children and young people have the care and support they need in order to be healthy, happy and reach their full potential. Supporting those leaving care to successfully

transition into adulthood is also of key importance to ensure they are well prepared for adulthood, with support now provided for care leavers up to the age of 25 years.

- 8 In order to provide some level of understanding of the LAC and CL cohort, it was agreed that the following four areas would make up the scope of the HNA:
- Mental health and emotional wellbeing
 - Risk taking behaviours
 - Speech language and communication needs alongside special educational needs and disability;
 - Wider determinants for care leavers

Governance

- 9 The County Durham Looked After Children Strategic Partnership provided oversight and held overall responsibility for the HNA. Task and finish groups were established within each of the four priority areas as appropriate.
- 10 The HNA had three key processes for gathering relevant information. A literature review was conducted to understand, from published evidence, the burden of physical and mental health problems and health risk-taking behaviours among LAC and CL. Secondly, local data was also gathered to identify what local intelligence was available to identify needs and health service use across County Durham. Lastly, stakeholder engagement was conducted with LAC and CL and with carers and professionals who work with them in County Durham.

HNA Key Findings

- 11 LAC and CL have a range of needs that can impact on their overall health and wellbeing. Key findings are summarised from various national and local evidence and data.
- 12 Key findings of the HNA are summarised in the LAC and CL HNA Executive Summary (Appendix 2) and outlined in full in the LAC and CL HNA (Appendix 3).
- 13 These key findings have been used to inform the recommendations.

HNA Recommendations for action

- 14 Key recommendations for County Durham can be collated into four key themes:
- Leaderships and Partnerships
 - Strategic
 - Operational, Prevention and Early Help
 - Data Intelligence
- 15 Key recommendations are summarised in the LAC and CL HNA Executive Summary (Appendix 2) and outlined in full in the LAC and CL HNA (Appendix 3).

Next Steps

- 16 This HNA will support the development and commissioning intentions of health services, in respect of looked after children and care leavers from 2018 onwards.
- 17 As most health and wellbeing needs are inter-related, solutions to address the identified needs and recommendations must take a multi-agency approach and will require meaningful engagement of commissioners and providers.
- 18 Targeting those young people at most risk cannot be undertaken in isolation and requires a commitment from partner agencies to create a greater impact on reducing the health inequalities and improve the outcomes for young people.

Recommendations

- 19 Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are requested to:
 - a) Consider the findings and recommendations of the HNA
 - b) Note the recommendations will be developed into a multi-agency plan by the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategic Partnership.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Finance

Additional funding or the re profiling of current budgets may be required to implement the recommendations from the HNA. It is anticipated that partners work cohesively through a systems approach co-commission services effectively and efficiently to deliver better outcomes for LAC and CL

Staffing

A review of some staffing groups may be required following the recommended review of a identified pathways

Risk

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Would ensure vulnerable LAC and CL are better supported and health inequalities are reduced.

Accommodation

No implications.

Crime and Disorder

No implications

Human Rights

No implications.

Consultation

Consultations undertaken with young people and key stakeholders

Procurement

No implications.

Disability Issues

No implications.

Legal Implications

No implications