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**Meeting:** Corporate Parenting Panel  
**Date:** 14 May 2012  
**Subject:** Six month health report: Health of Looked After Children  
**Report of:** NHS Bedfordshire  
**Summary:** The report sets out the findings of the recent Ofsted/Care Quality Commission inspection of services for Looked After Children and the actions proposed to address them.

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**Advising Officer:** Anne Murray, Director of Nursing and Quality  
**Contact Officer:** Cass Golumbina, Interim Designated Nurse for Looked After Children  
Emma de Zoete, Consultant in Public Health  
**Public/Exempt:** Public  
**Wards Affected:** All  
**Function of:** Council and NHS Bedfordshire

## **CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

### **Council Priorities:**

The report relates to the following Council priorities:

- Educating, protecting and providing opportunities for children and young people
- Promoting healthier lifestyles

### **Financial:**

1. NHS Bedfordshire Looked After Children's health services are currently funded from the NHS Bedfordshire commissioning budget. Any additional resource implications will be identified as part of the development of the post inspection action plan.

### **Legal:**

2. The Ofsted Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children is carried out under the Children Act 2004.

### **Risk Management:**

3. Failure to deliver effective health services that support looked after children will negatively impact on their health and wellbeing.

**Staffing (including Trades Unions):**

4. Not Applicable. All staffing issues are NHS related.

**Equalities/Human Rights:**

5. It is important that the health needs of Looked After Children, who are a vulnerable group, are met.

**Public Health**

6. This is a key Public Health priority, as agreed through the Central Bedfordshire shadow Health and Wellbeing Board.

**Community Safety:**

7. Not Applicable.

**Sustainability:**

8. Not Applicable.

**Procurement:**

9. Not applicable.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:****The Committee is asked to:**

- **Comment on the information within the report.**
- **Note the action to be taken to address the issues raised in the report.**

**Background**

10. The Children Act 2004 requires Ofsted to provide an evaluation of the contribution made by relevant services in the local area to towards ensuring that children and young people are properly safeguarded and to determine the quality of service provision for looked after children and care leavers. This report looks at the specific contribution of Health Services to the health and wellbeing of looked after children.

11. The Council has a lead role in providing services for children, and works with its partners, other agencies and the private and voluntary sectors to improve outcomes for children and young people. The inspection was carried out between 20 February and 2 March 2012. The report was published on 10 April 2012. This report focuses on the inspection findings on the health of looked after children, rather than all health work undertaken in the last six months.

### **Health Outcomes for Looked After Children**

12. Ofsted judged that Health outcomes for looked after children are poor and that outcomes to enable looked after children to be healthy are inadequate.
13. Ofsted found that health outcomes for looked after children in Central Bedfordshire had declined over the 12 months preceding December 2011, compared to the East of England and England averages. Health assessment rates were low at 73%. Immunisation rates were low at 52%, lower than the general population rates for non looked after children in the area, which are between 77% and 89%. In 2010/11 87.3% looked after children received dental checks.

Alongside the decline in health outcomes the report highlighted a number of specific weaknesses including:

- Health agency awareness of their responsibilities towards looked after children.
- Access to health information by looked after children.
- No specific health service for care leavers or health after care service.
- The content and quality of health files.
- No permanent designated doctor or nurse for looked after children in place.

### **Improvement Planning**

14. Ofsted concluded that health services face significant challenges in ensuring that the health needs of looked after children are addressed. Ofsted highlighted some issues which should be addressed in the three to six months following the inspection and others which will take longer term planning and service redesign. For the longer term aspects, the Council and NHS Bedfordshire and Luton will be working with the Eastern Region on a peer support and challenge programme to ensure that action leads to sustainable improvement.
15. The following sets out the actions planned and taken to address:
  - a) the issues which Ofsted requires to be addressed in the 3-6 months following inspection (stage 1),
  - b) the longer term planning (stage 2).

16. **Stage 1 action: in the 3-6 months following the inspection**

<b>Ofsted areas for improvement</b>	<b>Action taken</b>
<p>Ensure all LAC have prompt access to appropriate health services which promote good outcomes for them.</p>	<p>Funding for a Designated LAC Nurse, a Designated LAC Doctor, two additional LAC nurses and 0.5wte administrative support has been agreed for this year. This includes nurse capacity for a leaving care health service.</p>
<p>NHS Bedfordshire and Luton should ensure that all care leavers are enabled to access health services and receive a copy of their health histories to ensure they are able to make future life choices</p>	<p>An interim designated nurse is now in place and the permanent position will be advertised week commencing 30<sup>th</sup> April.</p> <p>An interim Designated Doctor appointment is being worked on and a Designated Doctor should be in post shortly.</p> <p>An interim Leaving Care Nurse has been appointed to improve the Leaving Care Service and a consultation is underway with CICC (Children in Care Council) and the Social Care Leaving Team to shape the Leaving Care Services.</p>
<p>NHS Bedfordshire and Luton should ensure that all looked after children and young people have access to age appropriate health education and promotion information.</p>	<p>An age appropriate health promotion information pack for LAC has been developed, printed and is being distributed at all initial and review health assessments.</p> <p>Core training for foster carers is now in place for the rest of the year and includes Public Health input on health promotion.</p>
<p>NHS Bedfordshire and Luton and Central Bedfordshire Council should ensure that the strength and difficulties questionnaire outcomes are reviewed as part of the emotional health and well-being assessment during review assessments.</p>	<p>BAAF Carers paperwork is being introduced to assess the emotional health and wellbeing of looked after children and young people.</p>
<p>NHS Bedfordshire and Luton must ensure that all GPs and independent health contractors are aware of their statutory responsibility to looked after children.</p>	<p>We are working with Clinical Commissioning Group to put together a plan to address this issue with GPs and Dentists.</p>

Stage 1 actions also identified a number of actions for Social Care to improve health outcomes. These include ensuring that case planning is of a consistently high standards and that case records support good quality practice across the partnership. Other issues identified were reducing delays in getting signed consent, and improving information sharing when children move placement.

17. We will know if the service has improved by looking at:
- Performance management information including (health assessments on time, immunisation and dental checks up to date).
  - An audit of initial and review assessment files by the Designated Doctor and Nurse, including monitoring if health plans are implemented.

Early performance management information already indicates an improvement since 2011 in immunisation rates, with health assessment and dental check rates just below the 2010/11 levels. The percentage of Looked After Children with up to date immunisations rose from 51% in 2010/11 to an approximate figure of 83% for 2011/12.

## **Stage 2: Longer term service redesign**

18. The Council and NHS Bedfordshire and Luton will be working with the Eastern Region on a peer support and challenge programme to ensure that action leads to sustainable improvement.

However, there are a number of themes which have emerged in the inspection which will need to be addressed in the redesign. These include:

- Ensuring that the LAC health team is optimally located to work in partnership.
- Ensuring that there is a choice of venue and appointment times for older looked after children and that the review assessment addresses relevant issues for this group.
- Having clear commissioning arrangements for health assessments for all children placed out of county.
- A clear strategy for developing the designated Doctors of the future, and additional expertise amongst GPs.

## **Conclusion and next steps**

19. A full action plan is being put together to address all the issues raised in the inspection. A paper on the health of Looked After Children will be going to the Central Bedfordshire shadow Health and Wellbeing Board on 29 May 2012. The next health report to the Corporate Parenting Panel in November will give a full update on progress.