



**CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD
20th May 2004**

OVERVIEW OF HEALTH OF CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: BRENDA THOMPSON

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: JAN DOUGLAS

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to advise the Corporate Parenting Board of the arrangements for the Health of Children Looked After and local procedures to promote the health needs of those children and young people looked after by Middlesbrough Council.

BACKGROUND

2. In October 2002 the Department of Health published a guidance document 'Promoting the Health of Children Looked After' advising Council's with Social Services Responsibilities and the NHS of a model for best practice to ensure the health and health promotion needs of the looked after population were met. This model moves away from the concept of medical examinations to holistic health assessments of children and the production of a Health Plan for all children looked after.
3. Since December 2002 a group of multi-agency professionals from the South Tees area have been meeting to implement the Guidance. In response to the guidance, this group developed an action plan that was previously reported to the Corporate Parenting Board (27/11/2003).
4. Whilst there is still some work to be progressed in relation to information sharing protocols, the bulk of the action plan has now been implemented. The following provides an overview of current arrangements.

LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

5. The Children Act 1989 provides a comprehensive framework for the care and protection of all children in need, including those living away from home. Local authorities have a specific duty to safeguard and promote the well being of children looked after by them.
6. This legislation places specific duties on Council's with Social Services Responsibilities to promote the health of looked after children. The Arrangements for the Placements Of Children (General) Regulations 1991a and the Review of Children's Cases Regulations 1991b outline the regulatory framework and duties of local authorities in terms meeting the health needs of looked after children. In view of the evidence of high levels of unmet needs of the health of children looked after, these regulations were amended in 2002 to provide a more robust but also more flexible framework. The key changes to these regulations were as follows
 - An initial health assessment should be completed within 4 weeks of a child becoming looked after by an appropriately qualified registered medical practitioner
 - Review assessments may be carried out by an appropriately qualified registered nurse/midwife
 - Health assessments on children under five should be undertaken twice yearly. For those aged over five years, an annual health review should be undertaken.

LOCAL ARRANGEMENTS

7. In response to the Department of Health Guidance a full review has been completed of service delivery to meet the health needs of looked after children on a South Tees basis. The new procedures for the Health arrangements for children looked after came into effect on 1 April 2004. Attached as an Appendix to this document is a Practice Guidance Note developed for social workers, which details the Health Assessment and Health Planning Process.
8. Middlesbrough Primary Care Trust (PCT) has a Designated Doctor for Looked After Children, Dr Phyu is seconded to the PCT from Tees and North East Yorkshire Acute Health Trust. Dr Phyu is the Medical Advisor to the Family Placement Panel and co-ordinates the health assessments of looked after children undertaking the majority of initial assessments herself. She produces a report on the health assessment and Health Plan and where appropriate, takes the decision to devolve the health review to a named health visitor, school nurse or midwife. She only retains children who have ongoing health needs requiring her oversight.

9. In July 2003 Middlesbrough Primary Care Trust created the post and appointed Chris Nugent as Nurse Co-ordinator for Looked After Children with administrative support. Chris is based at the Leaving Care/Middlesbrough Independence Network building at 3 Park Road North offering both a practitioner and developmental service. Being based with social services staff enables her to provide health promotion support to those young people looked after and leaving care and be available to give advice and guidance to staff. This post is pivotal in promoting health needs of looked after children, Chris has been involved in training of social workers and foster carers and works in partnership with social services to improve health outcomes for looked after children and young people.
10. A multi-agency group comprising of Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland Social Services and Middlesbrough and Langbaugh PCTs was established to develop the new procedures for promoting the health of looked after children. This group continues to meet to review the implementation of the procedures, evaluate its success and make any necessary changes to improve service delivery. A multi-agency practitioner group also exists to continue to develop the health promotion of looked after children. This group has produced a hand held record for children looked after entitled 'The File with a Smile'. This book enables a child to keep records of their health and appointments attended as well as offering guidance and advice on common health matters. This group also developed records for foster carers to maintain about a child's health and appointments attended to be used at meetings such as looked after reviews.
11. In 2003 Middlesbrough and Langbaugh Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services developed a 'Looked After Children's Service' (LACS). This service enables looked after children in Middlesbrough to have fast track access to mental health services. The LACS team comprises of one full time primary care worker, 4 sessions (one session is half a day) from a psychologist per week, 2 sessions from a psychiatrist and 10 other sessions including family therapy and play therapy. This service delivers:
 - Direct therapeutic work with looked after children
 - Advice, support and guidance to foster carers
 - Consultation to staff and carers
 - Training on mental health issues for staff and carers.

This team has been established and working with children and young people for 3 months. A number of referrals have been made to the service and work as detailed above has commenced. This service will be regularly reviewed with regard to service delivery and effectiveness.

12. Practice in relation to the promotion of health of looked after children has changed significantly in recent months in response to the Department of Health Guidance. There has been a shift in focus from medical examinations to health assessments and health plans, with the emphasis on an holistic view of the child's health and health promotion. There is greater flexibility in the new system giving the child or young person more involvement and choice with regard in their health promotion. This new system will be reviewed in 3-6 months to see how effectively it is working and any appropriate changes will be made.

FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND WARD IMPLICATIONS

13. There are no specific financial or legal implications arising from this report and the report will be of interest to all Members

RECOMMENDATIONS

14. It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Board:
 - a) Note the contents of this report and
 - b) Endorse the continued work of Middlesbrough Council and PCT in developing services to promote the Health of Looked After Children and Young People.

REASONS

15. The Council is responsible for ensuring that the best possible outcomes are achieved in relation to the health of children looked after by this authority. This report details the actions being undertaken to address this issue.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background paper was used in the preparation of this report:

'Promoting the Health of Children Looked After' Department of Health 2002

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**Middlesbrough Social Services Children & Families Practice Guidance Note
No. 7 – Health Assessments and Plans for Children Looked After**

<p>What is a health assessment?</p>	<p>A health assessment is a holistic approach to assessing the health needs of a child looked after which replaces the system of annual medicals. The health assessment looks at all dimensions of a child's health, including physical, social, emotional, psychological and educational. It leads to a health plan which set out ways of addressing, promoting and improving the child's health.</p>
<p>Why are health assessment being introduced?</p>	<p>There has been a legal requirement for looked after children to have an annual medical for some time. In 2000, the Department of Health produced a document 'Promoting the Health of Looked After Children' which highlighted the problems with this approach. The recommendation was that there should be changes to make the system more child-friendly, more holistic and something which would enable children over a certain age to identify their own health problems.</p>
<p>Who needs a health assessment?</p>	<p>Every child who becomes looked after by Middlesbrough Council should have a health assessment within 4 weeks of them becoming looked after. They are then reviewed at regular intervals.</p>
<p>How often will they be done?</p>	<p>Children under the age of 5 will have two health assessments every year. Children over the age of 5 will have one per year.</p>
<p>Who will carry out the initial health assessment?</p>	<p>All initial health assessments will be done by a Community Paediatrician. The Designated Doctor for Children Looked After is Dr Phyu and she is based with the Child Health Team at West Lane Hospital.</p>
<p>How are initial health assessments arranged?</p>	<p>When a child becomes looked after, the social worker completes a Notification Form and a copy of this is sent to the Community Child Health Department. They also need a copy of the consent form which is completed and signed by the birth parent - this is usually the Placement Plan Part 1. Once the Child Health Department receive these documents, they will make an appointment for the health assessment and send details of the appointment to the social worker, the parents, the foster carers and also direct to young people who are over the age of 14.</p>

Who goes to the health assessment?	The social worker will normally take the child to their first health assessment accompanied by the birth parents(s) and/or the current carer(s) if possible.
How long will the assessment take?	This will vary according to the child's health needs but on average it will take an hour.
What information will be needed for the initial health assessment?	The doctor will need the Child Health Record book (which should have been obtained from the birth parent(s) when the child became looked after) and the name of the child's dentist and any dental information which is available. The doctor will also have collated other relevant records, such as those from the GP, Accident and Emergency.
What happens after the health assessment?	The Community Paediatrician will produce a health assessment report and a health plan for the child.
What is a health plan?	Each child looked after will have a health plan to meet their assessed health needs. This will provide key information on the child's health needs and strengths. It will also set out the actions to be taken, with responsibilities and timescales, in relation to the child's health. A copy of the health plan will be sent direct to young people over the age of 14, the social worker, the GP and normally a copy will go to the child's birth parent(s) and/or current carer(s).
When is the plan reviewed?	For children under the age of 5, the plan will normally be reviewed twice a year. For children over the age of 5, it will normally be reviewed annually. If it needs to be reviewed more often, this will be stated in the plan.
Who will review the health plan?	This will be stated on the Health Plan. Children who have high levels of health needs will be reviewed by the Designated Doctor. Otherwise, for children under the age of 5, it will be reviewed by their Health Visitor. For children over the age of 5, it will be reviewed by their School Nurse. For young people who are supervised by the Leaving Care team, the review will be done by Chris Nugent, the Health Co-ordinator for Looked After Children.
Who do I contact if I've got any questions or problems relating to health assessments or plans?	Contact Chris Nugent, the Health Co-ordinator for Looked After Children, tel. 354118, or Dr Phyu, Designated Doctor tel. 813144.