

Summary Sheet

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Directorate Leadership Team – 12th March 2018

Report Title

Rotherham Looked After Children (LAC) Needs Assessment

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Ian Thomas

Report Author(s)

Ian Walker

Ward(s) Affected

All

Summary

Catherine Homer from the Public Health Team has, in partnership with Sheffield Hallam University, undertaken an assessment in respect of LAC Health Needs as commissioned by Ian Walker, Head of Service. The aim of undertaking the Assessment was to identify the key health needs for LAC and identify potential areas of improvement in respect of the support offered by the Health and Social Care agencies.

It was agreed in the set up meeting that this assessment would focus on two key issues:-

- The emotional health and wellbeing of LAC as evidenced by the higher than average Strength and Difficulty Questionnaire scores.
- The challenges and outcomes faced by LAC and Care leavers who are parents.

The methodology of the assessment included data analysis from local and national sources and three focus groups consisting of the LAC Council, a range of social workers and team managers from the LAC and Leaving Care Service, the Rotherham Therapeutic Team, the NHS Foundation Trust and CCG and Specialist

midwives. A focus group had been planned for care leavers but it proved to be impossible to successfully engage the potential participants.

Recommendations

DLT is recommended to note the contents of this report and endorse the action plan that will evolve from it.

List of Appendices Included

The Health Needs Assessment is attached in full to this report

Background Papers

None

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

No

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Insert Title of Report here

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 DLT is recommended to note the contents of this report and endorse the action plan that will evolve from it.

2. Background

- 2.1 The aim of the assessment was to provide a systematic analysis of the unmet health care needs of LAC within Rotherham and to review and challenge the current systems so as to improve the physical and emotional health of children and young people looked after by RMBC. This ties in with Promise 8 of the Looked After Children Strategy 2017-20:

‘We will help you to be happy and healthy’

3. Key Issues

- 3.1 Chapter 1 of the report analyses the demographics of the LAC population in Rotherham and raises the risks posed by the current trend for increasing numbers of LAC. The report highlights that the gender ratio of LAC is becoming more equitable with a greater proportion of females being admitted to care. It further hypothesises that, although child sexual exploitation is not an exclusively female issue, more young women have been admitted to care since the publication of the Jay and Casey reports. The increase in LAC has had the impact of meaning that the number of LAC placed more than 20 miles from their home address is significantly higher than regional, national and statistical neighbours. The report also highlights that LAC in Rotherham are more likely to experience fixed term exclusions than their peers on a regional and national basis and this will be a focus of work for the Virtual School over the course of 2018.
- 3.2 Another identified shortfall is that 50% of looked after children with a Statement of Educational needs do not have an Educational health Care Plan (EHCP) and this will become a focus of activity within the LAC Performance Clinics for 2018.
- 3.3 The assessment also highlights that 52% of the cohort have a raised to very high Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) score with 27% having a very high score of 20+.
- 3.4 The Assessment highlights that a significant amount of information is collected on individual children through the LAC Health Assessment process including in respect of Body Mass Index, smoking, drug use, self-harming behaviours and sexual activity. However, there is no current mechanism to draw together this information in order to better inform the commissioning of services to improve the health of LAC. The LAC Health Team will be asked to provide an annual report analysing the trends and themes arising from individual Statutory Health Assessments in order to better inform the support offer to LAC.

- 3.5 Chapter 2 focusses on information taken from the Voice of the Child Lifetime Survey which highlights that LAC are significantly more likely to smoke cigarettes and to have been involved in a sexual relationship than their peers.
- 3.6 Chapter 3 details the findings from the focus groups which were designed to explore the issues from both an adult professional and LAC perspective in order to highlight and contrast the differing perspectives between the two groups. One of the key findings from the LAC focus group was that the importance of having a regular hobby or activity to support the emotional wellbeing of young people may have been previously underestimated. This contrasted with the professional focus group which concluded that material possessions would be rated as being more important to LAC. In addition contact with the wider birth family and friends and having some connection with their early childhood in the form of photographs or mementos was a key factor in achieving emotional well-being. The report also highlights the need for social workers across the LAC pathway to receive input to raise their awareness regarding the longer-term outcomes for LAC.
- 3.7 The focus group regarding young parents highlighted the concern that LAC and Care Leavers are more likely to have a lower threshold for pre-birth assessments and subsequent child protection planning than their peers. It highlighted the potential degree of conflict between the social worker for the baby (Locality Team) and the social worker for the parent (LAC/Leaving Care). It was apparent that there is a lack of focus on LAC and Care Leavers as young fathers. There was an identified need to support LAC to reduce repeated future pregnancy and removal indicating that there should be further consideration to prioritising LAC and Care Leavers who have already had one child removed from their care in the PAUSE project. The development of an enhanced support package for LAC and Care leavers who are parents including a Young Dad's Group and play courses will be led by the Leaving Care Team to be provided out of the Journey.

4. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 4.1 There are no options to be considered. DLT is therefore recommended to note the contents of the Assessment and endorse the resulting Action Plan.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 This report has been formulated in full consultation with a range of social work and health professionals and with the LAC Council themselves.

6. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 6.1 An Action Plan has been developed out of this Needs Assessment the implementation and oversight of which will be managed through the LAC Physical and Emotional Health Work-stream over the course of 2018.

7. Financial and Procurement Implications

- 7.1 There are no financial or Procurement implications arising from this report as the Action Plan can be implemented within existed resources.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 There are no legal implications arising as this report is for information purposes only.

9. Human Resources Implications

- 9.1 There are no direct HR issues arising from this report. However additional training needs will be required for some to ensure that Social Workers have the awareness regarding the longer-term outcomes for LAC and the needs of the Action Plan.

10. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 10.1 This assessment and resulting action plan is designed to improve the physical and emotional health of LAC and Care Leavers.

11 Equalities and Human Rights Implications

- 11.1 The assessment and Action Plan are similarly designed to address the health inequalities that LAC and care leavers can experience.

12. Implications for Partners and Other Directorates

- 12.1 All of the implications for Partners and other Directorates are detailed in the Action Plan

13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 there is a risk that if the Action Plan is not completed in full that the LAC and Care Leavers will continue to be at risk of being disadvantaged in respect of their health needs.

14. Accountable Officer(s)

Ian Walker – Head of Service

Catherine Hall – Head of Safeguarding CCG

Approvals Obtained from:-

	Named Officer	Date
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services	Mick Wildman	8/03/18
Assistant Director of Legal Services	Sharon Fleming	7/03/18
Head of Procurement (if appropriate)	N/a	
Head of Human Resources (if appropriate)	Amy Leech	8/03/18

Ian Walker
Head of Service
LAC and Care Leavers

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<http://moderngov.rotherham.gov.uk/ieDocHome.aspx?Categories=>