

## **NICE/SCIE Programme Development Group 5 February 2009**

### **The physical and emotional health and well being of looked after children.**

#### **Ofsted: The contribution of inspection**

During the period 1 April 2007 to 31 March 2008, 3310 inspection visits were made by Ofsted to 2501 providers of social care services to children and young people. These included children's homes, fostering agencies and adoption agencies. In addition, 34 joint area reviews of local authorities were completed and included specific investigations of arrangements for looked after children.

#### **Quality of Provision**

The majority of social care provision, 67% is good or better. Inspectors found that where provision is outstanding all the important aspects of care that impact directly on the day to day care of looked after children are done well. These services meet or exceed all national minimum standards and joint working arrangements with partner agencies are underpinned by a holistic approach to meeting the needs of children. Outstanding councils also demonstrated a highly developed understanding of their corporate parenting responsibilities across their area and their partners.

However eight per cent of social care provision overall is inadequate. This includes eight percent of children's homes, seven per cent of fostering services and 14 per cent of adoption services. Joint area reviews also found that three per cent of local authorities had inadequate provision for looked after children.

Inspectors found variation in the quality of provision across statutory, voluntary and private sectors. Areas for improvement include the volatility in quality of care, particularly in children's homes, insufficient opportunity for matching of children to placements and poor safeguarding and management arrangements.

#### **Outcomes for looked after children**

Most looked after children live in healthy environments and have their health needs met well. Compliance with requirements for health and dental checks is very good overall.

76% of social care provision is good or better when evaluated against the national standards relating to Being Healthy. There is evidence of many very well designed services that are age and gender appropriate and sensitive to the diverse cultural needs of looked after children. Multi-agency arrangements to support the emotional health and wellbeing are resulting in better access for looked after children to child and adolescent mental health services.

## EP8 - LAC 3.6 The contribution of inspection to the health and wellbeing of looked after children – Anna Lis, Ofsted

However 4% of provision is inadequate with evidence of insufficient coordination and joint working between providers and health services. Good outcomes are impeded by failures to share information between professionals and to complete individual health plans at an early stage of a child's placement.

Placement stability, safeguarding arrangements and care planning are also improving but remain too variable in quality within and across providers and local authority areas. Eight percent of social care provision is inadequate in helping children to stay safe. Key areas for improvement include the need for better training, support and guidance for staff, safe management of medication and risk assessment.

Although the health and well being of most looked after children are effectively promoted, some groups are less well served. These include:

- Looked after children and young people in custodial settings: The quality of assessment of health needs varies from good to poor particularly at the point of entry. The potential for young people to succeed when they return to the community is impeded by difficulties in securing continuity of therapeutic or support services.
- Looked after young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities: Transition arrangements for young people moving into adult provision are inconsistent within and across local authority areas.
- Looked after young people who seek asylum: Although some good services have been developed to respond to the specific needs of young people who have suffered severe trauma, loss or bereavement, access and take up of these services remains variable.

### **Next steps**

From 1 April 2009, Ofsted will commence a three year programme of inspection of arrangements for looked after children. Most inspections will be conducted in parallel with an inspection of safeguarding arrangements. The inspection framework is underpinned by the Every Child Matters outcomes including 'Being Healthy'. The outcome of this inspection, together with those from inspection of regulated social care will inform the Corporate Area Assessment of each area.