



Section 4

Children Looked After by a Local Authority

Contents

<i>Chapter</i>		<i>Page</i>
	<i>Key Points</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>1</i>	<i>Introduction</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>3</i>	<i>Assessing needs of Children Looked After</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>10</i>	<i>Health of Children Looked After</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>13</i>	<i>Education of Children Looked After</i>	<i>5</i>

Key Points

This section briefly sets out:

- ❑ our joint responsibility to children and young people who are looked after by a local authority
- ❑ how the assessment framework applies to children looked after
- ❑ our responsibility for young people leaving care
- ❑ specific arrangements for promoting the health and education of children looked after

Introduction

- 1 Children looked after (sometimes referred to as children in public care) are the corporate responsibility of the whole of the local authority, not just social services. The National Joint Priorities guidance makes it clear that Health Services also have a responsibility to positively promote the welfare of children looked after, by giving them priority for resources.
- 2 Quality protects requires all statutory agencies to work together to:
 - ‘ensure that children looked after gain the maximum life chance benefits from educational opportunities, health care and social care
 - ensure that young people leaving care, as they enter adulthood, are not isolated and participate socially and economically as citizens.’

Assessing needs of children looked after

- 3 In 1997 the Department of Health published ‘Looking After Children’ (Good Parenting, Good Outcomes). These materials aim to develop planning and decision-making as well as improve the health, developmental, educational and employment outcomes for children and young people looked after.
- 4 The assessment framework has been designed to assess children’s needs across the same developmental dimensions as the Looking After Children materials. Core Assessment Records are organised to assess a child’s developmental needs along the same age bands as those used in the *Looking After Children Assessment and Action Records*. The Looking After Children materials are under revision to develop an integrated system with the Assessment Framework.
- 5 An inter-agency core assessment of needs will be undertaken for any child or young person at the point of entry to being looked after. This will make sure that there is good quality baseline information about the child’s developmental and wider needs.

- 6 The assessment framework supports an inter-disciplinary approach to make sure there is an holistic assessment which will help identify the child's needs whilst looked after, including any needs which may impact on any placement. The assessment framework will lead to better outcomes for children looked after by improved assessment of:
- a child's needs, so improving the quality of placement matching in foster and residential care or permanent substitute family
 - the suitability of foster carers
 - the viability of re-uniting children looked after with their parents or other members of the extended family.
- 7 The **Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000** provides for every looked after child to have a personal adviser and a pathway plan by their sixteenth birthday. The pathway plan will be informed by an assessment of need based on the assessment framework. The plan will be reviewed irrespective of whether the child remains looked after or has left care. The Act ensures that the plan and contact by a personal adviser will be in place until the young person reaches 21 and up to the age of 24 if the young person is in higher education or training.
- 8 Children looked after will always have a written care plan. The format of the care plan is part of the *Looking After Children* (LAC) materials (Department of Health). Some of these children will be subject to a care order and a formal care plan will have been drawn up for the purposes of the care proceedings. The content will be similar to the LAC care plan, but the format and style will be different.
- 9 In family court proceedings, assessments will be required for the courts and they would normally be shared among all the parties involved. Assessments may have also started prior to court proceedings or where proceedings may not have been anticipated. If such an assessment includes information, opinions and recommendations from professionals not employed by the local authority, those persons should be advised that their contribution might be used in family proceedings.

Health of Children Looked After

- 10 Healthcare and health promotion are essential elements in promoting the welfare of children looked after.

Nottingham Health Authority

- 11 A specialist health team, that includes a community paediatrician, is responsible for initial and annual statutory health assessments for children from Nottingham Health Authority area. This health team will co-ordinate the health needs and health assessments of children looked after. These arrangements also apply for children with disabilities who are looked after. The GP remains the point of contact for routine medical issues.

The Health Team for Children Looked After is based at the Children's Centre Nottingham City Hospital, Nottingham. Tel: 0115 969 1169 ext. 34245.

Help lines - for any enquiries about looked after children by foster carers, residential staff and young people only: (Mon/Thurs) 0115 969 1169 ext. 34249.

**For urgent medical enquiries about Looked After Children by staff, carers and children (not including child protection or acute emergencies where the standard procedures should be followed):
(Monday - Friday) 9a.m. - 4p.m. 0115 969 1169 ext. 34245.**

North Nottinghamshire Health Authority

- 12 For children who originate in the North Nottinghamshire Health Authority area, the arrangements for statutory health assessments rest with the child's GP. These arrangements will change from September 2001, with all health care assessments being co-ordinated from Mansfield Community Hospital. Separate information will be issued.

For all children who need medical attention due to concerns about significant harm, the staff should follow the ACPC child protection procedures and consult with appropriate medical personnel, including the Community Paediatrician and the GP.

Education of Children Looked After

- 13 Children who are looked after by local authorities are most vulnerable to educational failure as a consequence of under achievement, exclusion, poor attendance or losing their school place for other reasons.

- 14 A **corporate parenting** approach between local authority departments and relevant agencies is essential in order to improve the life chances of these children. The assessment framework provides a common assessment framework to address the needs of children corporately.

- 15 The Education of Young People in Public Care Guidance 2001, issued by Department of Health and Department for Education and Employment, sets out requirements for local authorities in meeting the educational needs of children looked after. Some of the requirements are that:
 - each child who is looked after by the local authority has a personal education plan
 - the local education authority makes sure that an appropriate education placement is available within twenty days of entry to care
 - there are designated teachers in each school for children looked after.