

Health and Wellbeing Board Meeting

Item Title – Reducing Health Inequalities of Homeless Families

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Homeless Link:

Homelessness Link are the national membership charity for organizations working directly with people who become homeless in England. They work to make services better and campaign for policy change that will help end homelessness.

Homeless Link's Vision: Everyone should have a place to call home and the support they need to keep it.

Homeless Link's mission: To develop, inspire, support and sustain a movement of organizations working together to achieve positive futures for people who are homeless or vulnerably housed.

What will it take to end homelessness? To achieve this ambition, we, as a society, need to:

1. Act faster to prevent people from losing their homes.
2. Ensure if you do become homeless, it's for the shortest time possible
3. Provide those with complex problems with the long-term housing and help they need
4. Support people to realize their potential and avoid becoming homeless again.

Summary and Background:

Homeless Link, the Young People's Health Partnership (YPHP) and Public Health England (PHE) worked together to look at the issue of health inequalities for homeless families.

The brief was to co-produce a toolkit and a learning resource for public health nurses i.e. health visitors and school nurses, to improve knowledge and understanding of homeless families, and support more positive outcomes by spotting children, young people and families at risk of homelessness.

There is a national awareness that the number of homeless families with dependent children is increasing with an increased number of households requiring the use of temporary accommodation. At times this will be B&B accommodation and / or accommodation out of the local area.

Developing the toolkit and the learning resource through co-production

The partnership began issuing a 'Call for Evidence' to identify emerging good practice in supporting homeless families and homeless young people to reduce their health inequalities and improve wellbeing, using public health interventions.

Alongside this they ran two focus groups with young people and homeless families. This worked well as many of the young people had experienced street homelessness, and the families were mostly living in temporary accommodation. Both focus groups recognized the issue of mental health within homelessness and most recognized that their homelessness directly impacted on their mental health. Most of the families enjoyed good access to primary care services but young people experienced problems registering with a GP.

The partnership also included the point of view of professionals and ran a survey with public health nurses and attended Public Health England events. The aim was to get early input as to what would work well as the toolkit and learning resource was developed.

The partnership attended the Level Trust annual Child Poverty conference in Luton where they ran a workshop asking delegates to think about health inequalities and homelessness and how they would address it locally. Luton is a beacon of good practice with strong relationships across the voluntary and statutory sectors, and whilst this was not an audience of nurses, delegates' input was invaluable to the section of the toolkit that identified what professionals can do to support homeless people and better understand how they support positive outcomes for people.

Learning Resource and Toolkit:

The aim of the **learning resource** is to be a self-study tool for those in the health sector (primarily public health nurses i.e. health visitors and school nurses however it can be used more universally than this) supporting them to be more aware of how they can work to reduce health inequalities, improve outcomes and engage effectively with this vulnerable group.

The guide focuses on the multiple impacts being homeless can have on an individual and / or household and the feelings of loss, separation and shame that can be felt by those who have to move away from support networks and environments they know. It talks through the impact on a person's health and wellbeing including that on childhood development as well as the behaviours that may be displayed as a way of coping. Part of this is a discussion around the importance someone will place on their health when homeless ie, health and accessing health services is not likely to be a priority when they are living a chaotic lifestyle, which will lead to more significant health issues and a vicious circle to resolve. Further to this there is an experience of stigma when accessing health services as well as practical difficulties such as transport and cost of prescriptions.

Finally, the Learning Resource also provides a good summary of the various rights and responsibilities people have when homeless and who they should contact if they require advice and assistance as well as good practice evidence and case studies.

The **toolkit** is designed to be a practical set of guidance for those in the health sector and working with individuals and households experiencing homelessness. There is clear direction about what professionals can do and how they can have the greatest impact. Joint working with other agencies is key along with clear protocols and reporting mechanisms. There are several resources mentioned throughout the document that provides further information and a summary of relevant legislation.

Financial Implications

None – The toolkit is developed and available via the internet for use within agencies and organisations.

Recommendations

The HWBB is requested to note the guidance and determine whether it could be used within Shropshire to promote and improve better health outcomes for those individuals and families at risk of or suffering from homelessness.

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| List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information) |
| Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder) Lee Chapman |
| Local Member n/a – relevant to whole County |
| Appendices Appendix A – Addressing Health Inequalities in homeless children, young people and families – A learning resource for Public Health Nurses Appendix B – Addressing Health Inequalities in homeless children, young people and families – A toolkit for Public Health Nurses |