**West Sussex – Practice Guidance**

IROs are qualified social workers with at least five years’ experience, and who have acquired the right skills to carry out this role.

**Health Care Assessments and Plans**

* WSCC has a duty to promote the welfare of looked after children which includes promoting the child’s physical, emotional and mental health. Every Looked After Child must have a health care assessment so that a Health Plan can be developed to reflect the child’s health needs and be included as part of the child’s overall care plan.
* The relevant clinical commissioning group (CCG) and NHS England have a duty to undertake health assessments and provide any necessary support services to Looked After Children without any undue delay.
* There is recognition that there needs to be an effective balance between confidentiality and providing information about a child’s health. This is a sensitive area, but fear about sharing information should not get in the way of promoting the health of Looked After Children.
* A Looked After Child must be registered with a GP and Dentist near to where they live in placement.
* Key workers must be familiar with all health treatment a child is receiving and ensure that this is being progressed and that the treatment regime is being followed.

**Health care assessments**

* Consent from the child (if aged 16 or 17) or their parent must obtained before the health care assessment takes place and the key worker must check this is recorded on the child’s file. *(See Practice Guidance on Consent and Delegated Authority for more information).*
* Health Care Assessments, sometimes referred to as “LAC medicals” must be conducted before the child's first Looked After Review (unless one has been done within the previous 3 months) and at least once a year after this (unless the child is under 5 years of age).
* In West Sussex, Health Care Assessments are carried out by the child’s allocated Looked After Children’s Nurse and are co-ordinated by the child’s social worker. It is sometimes helpful if the child’s key worker accompanies the child to the assessment.
* Following the assessment, the children’s home will receive a written report, referred to as the ‘Health Plan’ which will list any recommendations necessary for the child following their assessment.
* It is the home’s responsibility to ensure the recommendations within the health Plan are followed in a timely manner, in partnership with the child. These recommendations should form part of the child’s Support Plan within the home.
* Key workers should also ensure the child has a copy of their health plan.

**Health Plans**

* Each Looked After Child’s Care Plan must incorporate a Health Plan in time for the first Looked After Review, with arrangements as necessary incorporated into the child’s placement plan.
* This plan must be reviewed after each subsequent Health Care Assessment and at the child's Looked After Review or as circumstances change.

**Strength and Difficulty Questionnaires (SDQ)**

* Understanding a Looked After Child’s emotional, mental health and behavioural needs is as important as their physical health. WSCC are required to use the Strength and Difficulty Questionnaires (SDQs) to assess the emotional needs of each child.
* The SDQ Questionnaire, along with any other tool which may be used to assist, can be used to identify the child’s needs and be part of the child’s Health Plan.

**Links to related documents:**

Consent and Delegated Authority