Addressing health inequalities in homeless children, young people and families

Health at the Margins Conference 2018
5 July 2018
Health and Wellbeing Alliance - overview

• Facilitating **integrated working** between the voluntary and statutory sectors

• **Connecting communities**, the VCSE sector and policy leads. Supporting a two way flow of information

• Amplifying the **voice** of people with lived experience to inform national policy

• Sharing experience of **delivering health services** in the VCSE

• Facilitating **co-production** to promote equality and reduce health inequalities
Homeless children, young people and families

Homeless Link and the Young People’s Health Partnership were commissioned through the Health and Wellbeing Alliance by Public Health England to develop a learning resource and toolkit for public health nurses working with homeless families and young people.

We are working in partnership with the Queen’s Nursing Institute and the following HWAlliance members:

- Citizen’s Advice
- Maternity Action
- The National LGB&T Partnership
- Mental Health Consortium
- Race Equality Foundation
- Win Win Alliance

The project involved a call for evidence, and consultations with professionals, young people and families.
What is Homelessness?

More than rough sleeping....

Homelessness can be defined as:

- Rooflessness (without a shelter of any kind, sleeping rough)
- Houselessness (with a place to sleep but temporary in institutions or shelter)
- Living in insecure housing (threatened with severe exclusion due to insecure tenancies, eviction, violence)
- Living in inadequate housing (in caravans on illegal campsites, in unfit housing, in extreme overcrowding)

Homelessness is often a culmination of several problems – not just a housing problem!

Public Health England - There’s no place like home – tackling the health and wellbeing of homeless families.
http://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/Homelessness%20QNI%202017_0.pdf

Takes its toll on families and children...
The impact of homelessness on children, young people and families

Some of the many impacts...
- Loss, separation
- Insecurity, emotional burden
- Stress, anxiety
- Poor mental health
- Poor quality sleep
- Unhealthy diet
- Susceptibility to infections

Did you know...?
- Parental homelessness and insecure housing have significant impacts on foetal development
- Homelessness during pregnancy is associated with higher risk of premature birth, low birth weight and delay in development
Barriers to accessing health and support

Barriers include:
• No permanent address
• Frequent moves
• Language and literacy barriers
• Limited access to internet
• Over-reliance on A&E
• Limited access to sexual health services
• Lack of knowledge about rights and entitlements

Did you know...?
• Without a fixed address, families and individuals have every right to access healthcare from a GP or other NHS service, regardless of immigration status
We talked to families and young people...

“Health workers need to know where to refer us to get help. There’s a lot of obstacles in the way... we need effective advice agencies” (young person with experience of homelessness)

“Our life is on hold when you are a family living in temporary accommodation and it is draining. You cannot see your family and friends because you are ashamed” (parent with experience of temporary accommodation)
What can professionals do?

What’s most important

• Clear protocols for identifying, assessing and working with children, young people and families at risk
• Clear process for reporting concerns
• Understand appeal options
• Clear safeguarding protocols
And Finally....

It’s a special day!

Happy Birthday NHS!

Thanks for all that you do....
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