

Looked After Health Check **Consultation Report**

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Health Checks and Medical Consultation Project

Executive Summary

The Young People's Engagement Team work with young people who receive services from Social Care and Health, in particular it works with Looked After Young People. They aim to increase Young People's participation in planning and delivering the services that they receive. They also seek to find out Young Peoples views on how their services are delivered.

The main aim of this project was to record what Looked After young people think about the medical/health checks that are organised for them to attend and how these can be improved. It was also aimed at gaining a greater understanding of how Looked After Young people view health and health related issues and begin the process of supporting them to take control of their own health. Every young person who becomes Looked After is required to attend a health check when they first enter the system; they are then required to go on an annual basis.

We spoke to young people who were all living in local authority residential care. The meetings were relaxed and informal and took place in a group setting. The Young Peoples Engagement Officer and the Looked After Children's Nurse carried out the consultation.

Summarised Findings:

Nearly half the Young people questioned had not attended their last medical. Reasons given were generally a **lack of motivation** and the fact that it was a **doctor of the opposite sex** – most of the young people described it as a **negative experience**.

Most young people did not know what a health check was for and gave this as a reason for it having low priority.

Most people said they would like the health checks to be **carried out by a same sex doctor**, to be more **convenient** i.e. in time and place and for the check to be **shorter**.

The consultation shows that many of the young people are concerned about not knowing the person who carries out the medical, not being in control of the process, and being worried that everyone might find out that they have a particular illness.

The project recommends that the young people be given more information about the health checks, allow them to make choices and feel that they have more control over the process. For example, choosing the sex of the doctor, choosing who carries out the medical (this could be someone they already know), choosing where the medical takes place. It also includes providing literature which explains the purpose of the health check, providing materials which will help them decide if they are unhealthy, and giving support to help them decide to be healthy when confronted with choices which impact on their health.

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Background:

Anecdotal evidence suggests that LAC young people do not place a high priority on their LAC medicals and health checks. Few older young people actually attend their appointments and seem to resent having to attend; this not only wastes staff time but also means that young people are not taking advantage of all the services available to them. This project aimed to record what young people think about these checks and how they can be improved. There will also be opportunities to pass on health information to young people so that they can take more responsibility for their own health. It will also be used as a basis for planning the Holistic Health Event in Feb 04.

Aims:

- Ascertain what LAC young people think about health checks and medicals.
- Give the young people an opportunity to suggest ways of improving the current system.
- To help young people have more control over their own health.

Objectives:

- Visit all three residential units and speak to the young people in order to:
 - 1) Find out what they think about medicals, whether they attend, how they can be improved.
 - 2) Encourage them to think about the best way to gain the views of other LAC young people on this subject.
 - 3) Check feasibility of organising a Holistic Health Event for LAC young People. (Invite young people to event where various agencies have health information available as well as head massage, aromatherapy, skin care, sports, gym use, self-defence plus consultation.)
- Use the information from the units to plan a further consultation exercise with all LAC Young People aged 12 and above. This could incorporate the Holistic Health Event or another method depending on the views of the young people in the residential units.

Method:

The Youth Engagement Officer and the Looked After Children's Nurse visited the three residential units on consecutive days in November. They met with the young people who chatted informally about their experiences of LAC health checks and medicals; the young people also completed a simple questionnaire while the workers took simple notes of all anecdotal evidence. The visit included providing tea (pizza) to allow workers to gather more information in an informal setting.

After tea the young people were asked for their ideas on how a "Holistic Health Event" could be organised and what activities would encourage a large attendance from Looked After Young People.

The questionnaire included the following:

- What they think about medicals
- Reasons for not going
- What should the medical include?
- Who should do them?
- Where should they be carried out?
- How often should they be?

They then had to complete another sheet, by placing coloured dots onto any of the various reasons for not wanting to have a health check.

The coloured dots were separate colours for each unit – this means the young people remain anonymous but we can see which unit they are from. They also had to put a coloured dot on their questionnaire in order to distinguish between the different units.

The itinerary of the visits are shown below:

- 4pm** Arrive, General Conversations, Decide on Pizza's to order.
Informal activities, questionnaires, doty lists, brain shower –
Plus, have examples of medical equipment if they want to look at it
e.g. Scales, height recorder, stethoscope etc.
- 4:45-5pm** Pizza arrives and eating.
- 5:30 – 6pm** Thinking about how to get information from other LAC young people,
explain about health event, would they come along, what should be
included. Use of the Internet may be appropriate.

The young people were provided with vouchers to reward their participation and encourage future involvement with the engagement team.

Cost of Project:

- Pizza - 20 per unit
= £60 in total.
- Vouchers - £5 per person x 13 young people
= £65
Total - £125

Results

Number of Young People spoken to: 13

Lanark Drive: 3

Whiteleas way: 6

Henderson Road: 4

1) Did you go to your last medical/health check?

Yes = 7 No = 6

2) If not why did you not go?

Didn't want to go.

Didn't get an appointment.

Couldn't be bothered.

Too far away.

Don't want a man doctor.

Don't want everyone to know that I'm ill

Don't like doctors.

3) Have you ever had a Looked After Medical/Health check?

Yes = 11 No = 2

4) What did you think about it?

Boring

It was scary

Crap

Ok x2

Haven't been

They don't check you as much as I'd like

Would like a girl G.P

Didn't like it x3

Alright

5) Who carried it out?

LAC nurse

A lady

Doctor x4

G.P. x2

School doctor

Man

6) Do you know why you are supposed to have a health check?

Yes = 8 No = 5

7) What can we do to make health checks better or more relaxing?

Shorter with less questions
 Do them in units
 Have them when I'm ill
 Seem ok
 Nothing
 Same sex doctor
 Make sure I know results
 More frequent
 Better times
 Less questions
 Man doctor
 Someone to go with you and wait outside
 Closer
 Have GP do it x2

8) Is there any other service/information that you would like from a health check?

Substance misuse information	2
Sexual Health advice	1
Nutrition information	2
Bullying information	0
Help with emotional problems	3

9) Anything else you want to say?

If I had to go I would want a man doctor
 See own doctor get it over with

10) Reasons for not going to my health check?

Unsure of Purpose	2
Not important	5
Worried about comments	5
Intimidating	1
Inconvenient Time	3
Too far away	3
Difficult to get to	1
Don't know doctor	6

General Themes

- 1) **Nearly half** the young people had not attended their last medical.
- 2) Reasons given are generally a **lack of motivation** and the fact that it was a **doctor of the opposite sex**.
- 3) Only 2 young people had never had a medical – so the rest all have experience of them. Of the two that hadn't one was being accommodated and the other only recently became Looked After.
- 4) The overall opinion of the health check was low – 3 young people thought it was ok or all right the rest of the young people described it as a **negative experience**.
- 5) Most of the young people had a doctor carry out their health check - 2 specified their GP, one their school doctor and 4 as doctors – these could be GP's or hospital doctors.
- 6) Most Young People stated that they did know what a health check was for – however when we questioned them further they were very vague with their answers. For example some said the purpose was to check your health or see if you are ill.
- 7) Most people said they would like the health checks to be **carried out by a same sex doctor**, to be more **convenient** i.e. in time and place and for the check to be **shorter**.
- 8) The extra information options were not very popular but some young people believed that extra info. about sexual health and emotional problems would be useful.
- 9) No themes
- 10) The reasons given for not attending can be grouped together into one category – **feeling uncertain and hesitant about the whole process**. Not knowing the doctor and being worried about what they might say were the most popular reasons for not attending. Five young people also believed that the health check was not important and so didn't attend.

Health Event:

The young people were also asked to think about the practicalities of organising a large health event and what kind of activities they think would attract young people. We explained the purpose of the event i.e. to promote health, and to discover more views on the health check process and LAC young peoples views on health issues.

The discussion remained informal but the young people were enthusiastic in expressing their views.

The general ideas were:

- A large community venue would be suitable
- Various activities available and young people can choose what they attend and what they don't.
- Rewards and prizes
- Open throughout the day
- Drop in/drop out
- Food available
- Football competitions

- Use of multi-gym equipment
- Head and hand massages
- Aromatherapy
- Keep fit
- Swimming
- Go-karting
- Drugs info. - Interactive
- Sexual health info.
- Health checks i.e. heart monitors and blood pressure checks

Evaluation

The aim of this project was to begin to build a picture of how the LAC medicals and health checks are viewed by the young people who have them. In that respect the project has been successful – even though the meetings were informal and took place at or around tea times the information that was gathered has been insightful.

The majority of young people had had experience of a health check and so have given valuable feedback. Nearly half the young people had not attended their previous health check appointment and so this gives an indication that there are issues with the service that need addressing. Some of the responses will be easy to rectify others may be more difficult.

It is clear from the results that some young people have a problem with seeing a doctor of the same sex and some young people seem to prefer this. When the young people refer to the term “doctor” it is difficult to identify whether they mean their GP or the doctor at Palmers who carries out health checks. However in either of these cases it would seem sensible to allow the young people to choose who their doctor is or at least the sex of the doctor who is going to carry out the health check. This becomes particularly relevant when we consider the past experiences that these young people may have had.

For some of the young people it is the thought of “the doctor” that puts them off attending their medical – the more that can be done to give them confidence about this the better. From some of the comments it seems that they are concerned about not knowing the person who carries out the medical, not being in control of the process, and being worried that everyone might find out that they have a particular illness.

One way to solve some of these issues would be for someone that they already know to carry out the medical in a place that they are familiar with or for them to meet the doctor beforehand. This is linked with the comments about the venue of the health check being too far away or at an inconvenient time. If the check were to be carried out in the young persons home for example, the take up rate would definitely be a great deal higher.

As stated already, the young people said that they knew what medicals were for but when questioned were very vague. This suggests that more can be done to publicise the importance of the health check and to clearly identify the purpose. There was a general feeling of lethargy towards the health check – partly due to the fact that health

is not normally at the top of any teenagers priorities – but partly because they didn't see it as important or understand fully it's purpose.

If young people can be provided with the relevant information then they can at least make an informed choice about whether they attend. It is interesting to note that in the discussions with the young people they all said that they would visit the doctor if they thought they were ill but didn't see why they should go when they believed they were healthy. This attitude may be acceptable as long as they base their judgement of what is healthy on the same criteria that Social Care and Health might use.

The young people that were involved had a limited understanding of what was meant by health or healthy living – and that is possibly why it had such low priority in their lives.

From speaking to the young people it was clear that even when their knowledge of healthy living was high these “facts” were quickly forgotten when confronted with a decision that had to be made regarding their health i.e. if offered a cigarette or asked if they wanted to go out to get drunk etc. This means that either part of the medical or other healthy living intervention should include help or support in negotiating healthy living choices.






Although the young people that were spoken to did not place a high priority on any of the extra information options that were available it may be worthwhile providing access to information on different topics during a health check as it would help to show that the medical has relevance to there particular lifestyles.

Recommendations:

- ➔ Allow young people to choose the sex of their doctor for the health check or allow them to choose someone they know and are comfortable with e.g. The LAC nurse.
- ➔ Carry out the health check in a venue chosen by the young person e.g. at home.
- ➔ Explain the confidentiality of the service to the young people before any medical appointment is made.
- ➔ Where possible negotiate the time of the health check.
- ➔ Publicise the importance of the health check and clearly identify the purpose before any appointments are made – this could be achieved by providing a leaflet that explains the process (this could be designed by LAC young people) and sent out with the appointment times.
- ➔ Provide materials that give criteria for deciding whether you have a healthy body/lifestyle. This means young people can make more informed choices.
- ➔ Provide access to information on various health related topics e.g. sexual health, substance misuse and emotional well being during the health check.
- ➔ As well as providing information about health – support individuals to develop skills to prepare them for decisions that can influence health e.g. how to resist peer pressure, or how to negotiate safer sex.
- ➔ Plan a Health Activities Event to be held in April 04 according to the specifications provided by the young people. A group of young people could be tasked with organising this.

Appendix 1

Health Check Questionnaire

<p>Did you go to your last Looked After medical/health check?</p> <p>Yes? <input type="checkbox"/> No? <input type="checkbox"/></p>	
	<p>If not why did you not go?</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>Have you ever had a looked after medical/health check?</p> <p>Yes? <input type="checkbox"/> No? <input type="checkbox"/></p>	
	<p>What did you think about it?</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>Who carried it out?</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	

Appendix 2

Do you know why you are supposed to have a health check?

Yes? **No?**



What can we do to make health checks better or more relaxing?

Eg. Change venue, time, etc

Is there any other info/services that you would like from a health check/service?

Substance Misuse info

Sexual Health Advice

Nutrition Information

Bullying information

Emotional Problems



Is there anything else that you want to say?

Appendix 3

Inconvenient Time

Too far away

Reasons I don't go to my Health Checks.....

Difficult to get to

Don't know the doctor

Appendix 4

Unsure of Purpose

Not Important

Reasons I don't go to my Health Checks.....

**Worried about
Comments**

Find it Intimidating