
CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

Strengthening health assessment pathways for children and young people in care

2nd Asia Pacific Conference on Integrated Care, Melbourne, 11-13 November 2019

April Turner

Brisbane South Primary Health Network, Brisbane, QLD, Australia

Introduction: The current health trajectory for children and young people in care is not positive. Evidence shows that children and young people in care are likely to have poorer physical, mental and developmental health than their peers.

'Strengthening health assessment pathways for children and young people in care' is a joint initiative between the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women (DCSYW), Queensland Health and Primary Health Networks (PHNs) aimed at improving both the child safety and health sector responses to the health needs of children and young people in care.

Funded by DCSYW, Queensland PHNs and Child Safety Service Centres are leading this key system reform at a local level. This is in direct response to the findings of the Queensland Child Protection Commission Inquiry which recommended every child in care is given a Comprehensive Health and Developmental Assessment within 3 months of placement (Recommendation 7.7).

Practice change implemented: With a focus on coordination and collaboration, this partnership is improving the way the child safety and health sectors integrate, through the development of localised health pathways to improve access, timeliness and quality of health assessments for children and young people in care.

Aim and theory of change: To support this reform, Brisbane South PHN has been working with partners to:

- support the development of regional digital health pathways for general practitioners working with children and young people in care – providing step-by-step management guidelines on how to conduct assessments
- implement a training program for general practitioners, primary care clinicians, child safety representatives and partners which enables the sharing of information about clinical assessments and health management, trauma-informed practice and child safety practices
- successfully advocate for dedicated Medicare Benefits Schedule item numbers to incentivise quality health assessments by general practice and health team collaboration
- establish localised Communities of Practice which integrate child safety services and the health sector, build localised health pathways for children and young people in care and act as a support for general practices with a special interest in supporting children and young people who are in state-based care and experience vulnerability.

Targeted population and stakeholders:

- Children and young people in the child protection system, their carers and families.
- DCSYW; Health and Hospital Services; Aboriginal Medical Services; primary care and other health providers; foster and kinship agencies.

Timeline: 2018-2022

Highlights: This work is making an impact on the lives of children and young people in care and the work practices of child safety and health sectors to care for these children and young people. Some of the immediate impacts have been reduced wait times for service access and higher quality and earlier interventions by providers.

Sustainability: The project is embedding practice within the existing service infrastructure

Transferability: This activities of this project have transferability within and outside of the state

Conclusions: Integration between Child safety and health sectors through the development of localised health pathways improves access, timeliness and quality of health assessments for children and young people in care.