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Public Health and Wellbeing Directorate.
Northamptonshire County Council
County Hall
Guildhall Road
Northampton NN1 1AN

6 June 2016

Dear Karen

Healthwatch Northamptonshire Response to Universal Public Health Services for 0-19 year olds consultation

I am writing to you on behalf of Healthwatch Northamptonshire (HWN) and our response to the Universal Public Health Services for 0-19 year olds consultation.

HWN has consulted with its working group members and volunteers and, overall, feels that there is not enough detail in the consultation document to give an informed response. Accordingly, we are concerned that this may appear to be not a truly meaningful consultation and engagement exercise.

Theoretically HWN supports the proposal of a universal public health service for 0 - 19 year olds but with some reservations, however the consultation document and its lack of information has led to more questions than answers.

For example, will the universal services be provided on a geographical model or targeted to specific areas? Will some areas have more workloads than others? HWN feels that the term 'universal' is misleading if it going to become a more targeted service.

HWN is keen to ensure that staff workloads are balanced. For example, school nurses currently work term time and health visitors all year round. How will it affect the health visitor work load if in the future they are also picking up work that would otherwise have gone to school nurses? (Particularly when there is already a shortage of school nurses?)

Health visitors are currently trained to deal with 0-5 year olds, not teenagers. So, how will their training needs be addressed? How will they be trained to swap roles? Do they want to swap roles?

Very importantly, there is little in the consultation about children's mental health and wellbeing. There is a huge amount of depression and self-harm within the school population and the focus in the consultation appears to be on physical health for children. For example, question 3 refers to maternal wellbeing and mental health and question 11 supporting parental mental health - but there isn't anything specific about the mental health of children and young people themselves.

As a general point, with the majority of the questions it is unclear whether it is referring to the child or the parents or both, e.g. knowing where to go for help and advice, which are two completely different audiences/service users. What has been the input from children and young people in putting together either the strategy or the questionnaire? Where is the questionnaire for children and young people to input into a service that directly affects them?

With regard to the best times for universal services and availability this coincides with the school day and does not take into account where both parents may be working.

In summary, whilst HWN is supportive of a universal service in principle, HWN's children, young people's and families working group would like to invite you to attend one of their meetings to give an update on the results of the consultation, what happens next and how the consultation has influenced the decision-making process once the consultation ends to ensure openness and transparency.

Yours sincerely



Kate Holt
Interim General Manager HWN CIC