

Consultation Response



NHS Carer Information Strategy: Draft Guidance (October 2004)

CHILDREN IN SCOTLAND

Children in Scotland is Scotland's national agency for organisations and professionals working with and for children, young people and their families. It exists to identify and promote the interests of children and their families and to ensure that policies, services and other provisions are of the highest possible quality and are able to meet the needs of a diverse society.

Children in Scotland represents over 350 members, including all major voluntary, statutory and private children's agencies, professional organisations, as well as many other smaller community groups and children's services. It is linked with similar agencies in other parts of the UK and the European Union.

The work of Children in Scotland encompasses extensive information, policy, research and practice development programmes. The agency works closely with MSPs, the Scottish Executive, local authorities and practitioners. It also services a number of groups such as: the Cross Party Parliamentary Group on Children and Young People; the National Children's Voluntary Forum; the National Early Years Forum and the Special Needs Advisory Group. Children in Scotland also hosts Enquire, which is a national information program for parents of children with additional support needs.

General Comments

Children in Scotland appreciates the opportunity to respond to the Draft Guidance and recognises it as a positive move towards supporting carers and young carers in Scotland. This response is based on consultation with a young carer organisation who is a member of Children in Scotland's Participation Network and refers to the sections of the Draft Guidance chronologically.

The recognition of young carers throughout the Draft Guidance is welcome and including young carers needs alongside those of adult carers may be useful in regarding young people as carers. However, there are some areas of the Draft Guidance, outlined below, that need to be strengthened in relation to young carers and the needs of this distinct group. Children in Scotland believes that the development of NHS Carer Information Strategies

presents an opportunity to identify and support the specific needs of young carers. Therefore, devoting a section in NHS Carer Information Strategies to young carers or, developing an NHS Young Carer Information Strategy, could prove a useful and practical tool for NHS staff in dealing with young carers, particularly as the role of a carer is often viewed as an adult role. Such a move would need to place an equal requirement on NHS Boards to provide these strategies.

Children in Scotland would recommend that the following areas of the Draft Guidance be strengthened with regards to meeting the needs of young carers.

Section 2: Who are Carers?

- 2.1 Young carers are covered by the term 'carers of any age', however, it would be helpful to define young carers in the Annex so that they are recognised as a distinct group, this could encourage NHS staff to think about young carers and their specific needs from the start.
- 2.4.2 In developing an NHS Carer Information Strategy, the guidance should specify that NHS Boards have to identify issues through discussion with young carers' organisations and young carers themselves on the information they require.
- 2.4.3 Child and young people-friendly information should be a specified requirement in NHS Information Strategies when developing targeted information for carers.

Section 3: General Principles

- 3.4 **NHS Delivery**
The action point on developing strategic proposals to identify and provide information for young carers and carers from ethnic minorities is very welcome. It would be useful to add to this that such proposals should address how NHS boards will engage and work with young carers and young carers' organisations.
- 3.8 **Culture**
The action points in this section should make reference to key policies for children's services such as child protection and health.
- 3.9 **Engaging carers/communities**
Young carers' organisations should be mentioned as key stakeholders for developing an NHS Carer Information Strategy. The action point to specify the arrangements for involving young carers is

welcomed as an important recognition of the need to engage with young carers.

Overall, the NHS Carer Information Strategy Draft Guidance has laid the groundwork for NHS Boards to consider the needs of young carers but it needs to be strengthened to ensure that NHS staff are fully aware of the distinct needs of young carers, are trained to engage with them and meet their needs.

For further clarification on any of the above points, please contact Ingrid Fitzsimons, ifitzsimons@childreninscotland.org.uk tel. 0131 222 2412