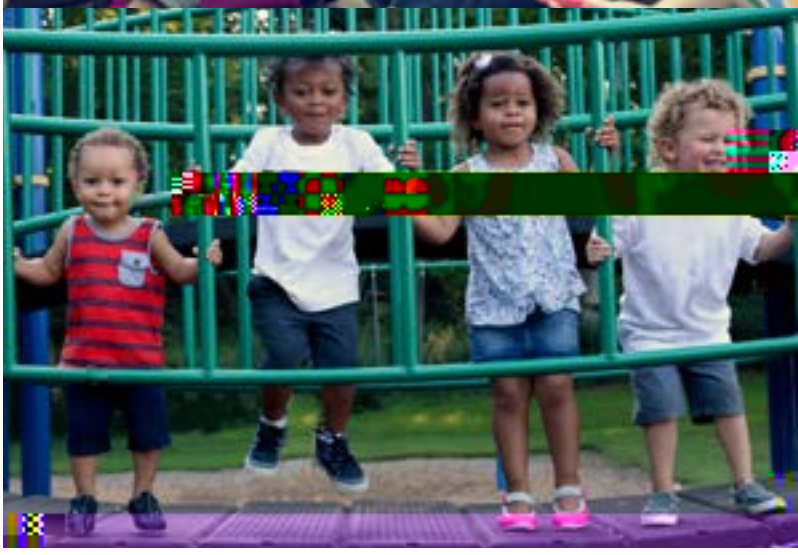

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This document has been designed in collaboration with our members to ensure it meets most accessibility standards. However, if this does not fit your requirements, please contact corporate.communications@rcn.org.uk

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Key definitions

Children and young people

We define children and young people as all those who have not yet reached their 18th birthday. [1] The unborn child must also be considered.

The changing scope of service provision increasingly however encompasses care leavers and young people in education, as well as young adults up to the age of 25 years. [2]

Looked after children [2]

This term is used to describe any child who is in the care of the local authority or who is provided with accommodation by the local authority social services department for a continuous period of more than 24 hours. This covers children in respect of whom a compulsory care order or other court order has been made, including those on an adoption pathway. It also refers to children that are accommodated voluntarily, including under an agreed series of short-term placements which may be called short breaks, family link placements or respite care, as well as those who are on remand.

Care leavers [3,4]

Those children and young people formerly in care before the age of 18 years of age. Such care could be in foster care, residential care (mainly children's homes), or other arrangements outside the immediate or extended family.

Corporate parenting

The term in England set out in the Children Act 2004 refers to the collective responsibility of the local authority and partner agencies including health to provide the best possible care and protection for looked after children and to act in the same way as a good parent/ birth parent would.

1

Competence

The ability to perform a specific task, action or function successfully.

Designated professional

In England, the term designated doctor or nurse denotes professionals with specific roles and responsibilities for looked after children, including the provision of strategic

Foreword

Over recent years there has been a significant rise in the number of looked after children across the UK, although there are variations in trends between the four nations. The number of looked after children has however increased steadily each year and is now higher than at any point since 1985. [7] For the majority, this is as a result of abuse or neglect, although there is an increasing number of unaccompanied asylum seekers and children who have been trafficked from abroad. Looked after children and young people have greater mental health problems, as well as developmental and physical health issues such as speech and language problems, bedwetting, co-ordination difficulties and sight problems. They are more likely to be involved in risk taking behaviour, the youth justice system and have poorer educational attainment.

Health professionals must also be mindful of the increased needs of care experienced children and young people which can be during childhood but also after 18 years old. Carers and professionals should practice trauma informed care and at all times be aware of new safeguarding needs. We also have a duty to profile contextual safeguarding of care leavers.

Healthcare staff working with this group of children and their carers [8] must have the right knowledge, skills, attitudes and values, particularly as access to highly skilled and knowledgeable health practitioners results in improved outcomes, enabling young people to achieve their full potential. In order to achieve the required improvement in outcomes for these vulnerable children and young people, there continues to be 4.7 (t)18.6 (i)7.9uing of.8 (l)2 eo be 4.7 8 (s i)6.8 5oae st-2.S (o)-gnittr10.4 (n10.716.1 (v)19.t)18p.22.1 (k)8.3 (i).6 (e)-0.8.8 (t)14.14.7 (d)3.

We urge health service planners, commissioners and provider organisations to recognise the importance of enabling staff to access education and training, as well as flexible learning opportunities to acquire and maintain knowledge and skills to improve outcomes for looked after children and young people.

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A child who has been in the care of their local authority for more than 24 hours is known as a looked after child. Each nation within the UK has a slightly different definition of a looked after child and will follow its own legislation and guidance. Looked after children7.8.1 (O)-3.1 (NTE)-8

Northern Ireland

- The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 [43]
-

The framework

The competencies encompassed in the framework are the set of abilities that enable staff to effectively safeguard, protect and promote the welfare, health and wellbeing of looked after children and young people, as well as care leavers. They are a combination of skills, knowledge, attitudes and values that are required for safe and effective practice. Promoting the health of looked after children [55] refers to this specific intercollegiate framework stating ‘health professionals contributing to the care planning cycle for looked after children should have the appropriate skills and competences and receive continuing professional development’. Looked after children still need safeguarding and therefore Working together [56] also signposts healthcare organisations to the intercollegiate safeguarding framework [57] and states that ‘All staff working in healthcare services – includiillso si(a)19.65J (i)6.8 (n)5.8 (g)-0.7 (c)13 (y)18 0 Tw 6.4 0 .1 (e)om8.7 (i)6.9 (a)1814.2-(h)-1.1 (e)-0.7

Level 5 : designated professionals.

Each level builds upon the competencies, knowledge and skills of the proceeding levels within the framework.

In addition, this version of the framework also provides specific detail for chief executives, chairs, board members including executives, non-executives, lay members and commissioning group leads.

Those requiring competences at Levels 1 to 5 should also possess the competencies at each of the preceding levels. It is important for practitioners to be aware of the overarching content of the framework in addition to any specific section related to their roles.

Annual appraisal is crucial to determine individuals' attainment and maintenance of the required knowledge, skills and competence. Employers and responsible officers should assure themselves that appraisers have the necessary knowledge, skills and competence to undertake appraisals and in the case of medical or nursing staff to

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