



Pioneer Scheme Half-day Learning programme

Wednesday 9th October 2019

KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

Challenge Poverty Week

With Jen Gracie (Child Action Poverty Group) and Roddy Samson (Improvement Service)

1) What were the key learning points from this session?

- 1 in 4 children live in poverty and this is expected to rise by a third by 2021/22
- Definition of poverty includes living in a household with <60% median income and being excluded from ordinary living patterns and activities e.g. having friends round for tea.
- 65% of children in poverty live in a household where a parent works.
- 3 main issues 1) Income from employment 2) Increasing cost of living e.g. transport, childcare etc. 3) Social security – the eligibility criteria and take up.
- Challenges faced: 1) often worse off when moving from legacy benefits to UC. 2) Inaccurate payments 3) Incorrect information 4) Income assessment period.
- 2 child limit – with subsequent children, benefits reduce.
- Child Poverty Act 2017 – new Scottish Child Payment to be introduced. Approx. £10/child/week if on UC.
- Introduction of welfare rights officers to practices has started in Lothian and GGC, recognising the impact of financial concerns on patients, and that it is difficult to address medical, psychological and emotional needs, when there is an immediate financial threat.

- The WRO addresses benefits and housing.
- Evidence suggests that addressing financial difficulties reduces number of consultations and prescribing antidepressants. Patients have lower levels of stress/anxiety, improved sleep, better use of medication and increased sense of control in their lives.
- WRO can access medical notes and therefore help improve accuracy of benefits applications, and therefore success of applications.
- WRO are part of the practice team, attend practice meetings, provide training to the medical staff.
- The success of this model lies in their being embedded in the practice. There is a stigma associated in accessing financial help and advice, even in walking into Citizens Advice Bureau etc.

2) What changes to practice might you consider?

- Familiarise ourselves with current local resources for money matters/advice/benefits advice so we can signpost people if no welfare rights office in practice.
- Consider pursuing integrating welfare rights officer into our practices.
- Signpost patients to local food banks for times of crisis.
- Routinely enquire about money worries patients may have.

3) Any useful resources to share?

- Financial inclusion referral pathways: www.healthscotland.scot/financial-inclusion-pathways
- Welfare advice and health partnerships: <http://www.improvementservice.org.uk/welfare-advice-and-health-partnerships.html>