Supporting the seldom heard – case study

NHS Milton Keynes Clinical Commissioning Group’s (CCG) raised an issue in relation to Primary Care access for vulnerable groups in the Milton Keynes.

We know that homeless people have a greater prevalence of both physical and mental health problems. Homeless people and rough sleepers have the same entitlement to access to healthcare as the general population and should be able to register with a local GP practice.

The CCG expects all our member practices in Milton Keynes to support homeless patient registration. This anecdotal evidence was corroborated by partners during the CCG’s Equality Delivery System (2) stakeholder external grading session in October 2018.

There also was media coverage of some homeless / rough sleepers who confirmed they had experienced problems accessing GP services due to not having a permanent address and/or ID.

The CCG started to act to ensure that all practices were aware of their obligation to the homeless members of our community. Actions included:

- Information to all practice managers which incorporated the NHS England patient registration guidance.

- A message from the CCG to all GPs indicating the recent MK director of public health report into homelessness and health and a reminder of their obligation in relation to those who are homeless and their right to access healthcare.

- Working with Healthwatch to inform of their “Right to healthcare” cards, which are being distributed in the local area.
We know that Healthwatch Milton Keynes will be undertaking a mystery shopper exercise to look at practices and the ease of registration for those with no home or identification. The CCG will be closely following this exercise and following up on the results.