WHC/2021/007

WELSH HEALTH CIRCULAR



Issue Date: 11 March 2021

STATUS: ACTION

CATEGORY: HEALTH PROFESSIONAL

Title: The Healthy Child Wales Programme – The 6 week post-natal GP physical examination of child contact

Date of Expiry / Review: N/A

For Action by: Action required by:

NHS Wales, General Practitioners March 2021

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Welsh Government

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Enclosure(s): Data collection form

<u>The Healthy Child Wales Programme</u> – *The 6 week post-natal GP physical examination of child contact*

This guidance has been prepared in response to issues identified in the latest published coverage data for the Healthy Child Wales Programme.

The Healthy Child Wales Programme (HCWP) sets out what planned contacts children and their families can expect from their health boards; from maternity service handover to the first years of schooling. These universal contacts cover three areas of intervention; screening, immunisation and monitoring and supporting child development.

The 6 week examination is delivered by health boards and undertaken by General Practitioners as an established component of the HCWP.

There are four components to the 6 week physical examination (eyes, heart, hips and testes in boys), which are valid screening tests and are recommended by the UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC). Successful early identification and treatment in these four areas is highly prudent healthcare, as well as improving outcomes for children. Problems avoided through screening include congenital cataracts (preventing a lifetime of blindness), congenital heart disease (preventing sudden death and emergency admissions) congenital hip dysplasia (preventing limited mobility and multiple hip replacements over a lifetime) and undescended testes (preventing cancer and infertility in men). The UK NSC recommends that all babies should be examined within 72 hours of birth, and again at 6 weeks.

The examination of the eyes in particular is time critical and as a consequence a prompt examination at 6 weeks needs to be undertaken. Infants identified with a positive screen require assessment by a consultant ophthalmologist or paediatric ophthalmology service within 2 weeks of examination (i.e. by 8 weeks after birth). Visually significant cataracts are normally operated on by 6 weeks of birth if unilateral and 8 weeks if bilateral, and delays to surgery can affect visual development.

The HCWP is supported by the Child Health System, delivered by the NHS Wales Informatics Service. The system schedules the HCWP contacts and records data that is used to support improvements to child health across Wales.

Attached is the data collection form that includes guidance on what needs to be completed at the 6 week contact and all GPs must complete and submit this data collection form. To date, it is evident that not all GPs have been doing so. The data collected on this form will be recorded on the Child Health System, then Welsh Government receives an aggregated extract from it to monitor the programme. Welsh Government does not have routine access to data stored on GP systems, therefore it is imperative that the data collection form is completed and submitted to your Child Health teams.

The Health Visitor undertakes a separate contact at 8 weeks. A 6 week data collection form must be submitted in addition to the 8 week Health Visitor form.

