



4 November 2009

Schools agree charities' policy pack is crucial for supporting pupils with health conditions

Eight out of ten schools surveyed in England have created or amended their medical policies since receiving a policy pack created by charities Asthma UK, The Anaphylaxis Campaign, Diabetes UK and Epilepsy Action. The survey of school staff shows that the *Medical Conditions at School: Policy Pack* is helping schools across England to provide vital and potentially life-saving support for children and young people with medical conditions.

The pack enables schools to set up one overall policy to ensure children with medical conditions are protected at school. It provides comprehensive awareness information on four medical conditions that can have a major impact on a child or young person's time at school: anaphylaxis, asthma, diabetes and epilepsy, and includes useful materials such as templates for healthcare plans, out of school visits forms and staff training records.

The four charities united to develop the policy pack in 2007 as Government legislation does not currently require schools to have a designated medical policy in place. This meant that many schools either did not have a policy at all, or where medical policies did exist, they were often basic and poorly maintained.

Having a dedicated medical conditions policy is an essential way to ensure that school-wide measures are in place to protect the health of pupils with medical conditions, such as regular staff training sessions.

The survey of almost 300 schools was conducted by EdComs to evaluate the success of the policy pack. More than three quarters of respondents who have used the pack feel that it has already had a positive impact on staff, pupils or parents.

'There was nothing that did what this did..it absolutely saved my life'
Primary Head Teacher

Media Release Continued

Some of the most reported benefits of the pack for school staff include an increased understanding of medical conditions, greater confidence when dealing with medical conditions on a daily basis and knowing what to do in an emergency.

One Secondary School Nurse commented that prior to using the pack:

‘The majority of staff that we had here were absolutely scared of these conditions, they kind of ..ignored them and pretended they weren’t there.’

Many schools gave excellent feedback about the pack’s clear and concise layout, easy to understand format and relevant information. School staff also reported that having access to the resource helped to save them a lot of time and was invaluable for training purposes.

‘I started setting up training sessions based on the pack and now the staff will happily take..kids off with epipens and happily use them. Ignorance instils fear.’
Secondary School Nurse

Jenny Parry, Children and Young People’s Development Manager at Asthma UK, says: ‘Eight out of ten schools who have received our policy pack have used it to create or amend their medical policies, which highlights a clear lack of guidance on how schools should be supporting children with medical conditions. We urge other schools across England to download and use this resource, as it will help them to ensure that pupils with medical conditions feel supported at school, parents feel their children are safe and staff feel confident about how to deal with medical conditions on a day to day basis, and in an emergency.’

The four charities are part of an alliance of 30 charities currently lobbying the Government for better support for children and young people with medical conditions in schools. The charities are calling for all schools to be required to produce and implement medical conditions policies and Ofsted to make school inspections to monitor the support provided for pupils with medical conditions.

Cathy Moulton, Care Advisor at leading health charity Diabetes UK, says: ‘There are more than 22,000 under-17s with diabetes in England. It is vital that every one of them receives the appropriate support at school to manage their condition and protect their health and well-being. Our policy pack has proved crucial in doing this and we would encourage all schools to download it. Join us in helping to give all children and young people with diabetes the best possible start in life.’

Media Release Continued

Sue Clarke, Nurse Advisor for the Anaphylaxis Campaign, says: ‘This policy pack is a fantastic resource for schools and school nurses. With a growing number of children in schools with anaphylaxis the pack will give the staff the confidence to support these children so they can take part in all aspects of the curriculum.’

Leanne Creighton, Education, Policy and Campaigns Officer at Epilepsy Action, said: ‘It is vital that children with epilepsy receive support at school so that their health and education are not put at risk. It’s fantastic to see that so many schools are using the policy pack to inform their medical policies and improve procedures. This is a great step towards improving care and support in schools for children with epilepsy and other long-term medical conditions. We hope to see the packs being used in all schools in the future.’

The *Medical Conditions at School: Policy Pack* and other helpful resources can be downloaded from medicalconditionsatschool.org.uk

Ends

Notes to Editors

- A school healthcare professionals’ resource also launched in September 2007 to complement the policy pack. *Medical Conditions Awareness Sessions* is the ideal tool for school healthcare professionals such as school nurses to use with school staff to raise awareness and understanding of five long-term medical conditions. It is a series of ‘awareness sessions’ and includes slides and presenter notes for five long-term medical conditions (anaphylaxis, asthma, cystic fibrosis, diabetes and epilepsy). This free resource can be downloaded in PowerPoint format from www.medicalconditionsatschool.org.uk.
- Asthma UK is the charity dedicated to improving the health and well-being of the 5.4 million people in the UK whose lives are affected by asthma.
- For up-to-date news on asthma, information and publications, visit the Asthma UK website asthma.org.uk.
- For independent and confidential advice on asthma, call the Asthma UK Adviceline, which is staffed by asthma nurse specialists. It is open weekdays from 9am to 5pm on 0800 121 62 44.
- Diabetes UK is the leading charity for the three million people in the UK with diabetes. It is our 75th Anniversary in 2009 and events to mark this special occasion will be taking place around the country. We aim to spend more than more than £6.5 million on research in 2009 as well as campaigning and providing information and support. During our 75th Anniversary year, we hope you will be able to join in and support us so that we can carry on improving the lives of people with diabetes into the future. For more information visit www.diabetes.org.uk.
- In the UK, there are currently 2.6 million people diagnosed with diabetes and it is estimated that up to half a million people have the condition but do not know it.
- The Diabetes UK Careline (0845 120 2960) offers information and support on any aspect of managing diabetes. The line is a low cost number and opens Monday to Friday between 9am and 5pm (operates a translation service). Recorded information on a number of diabetes-related topics is also available on this number 24 hours a day.
- Supporting our work to fund vital research into the care, treatment and hopefully a cure for diabetes as a Diabetes UK Supporting Member entitles you to a range of benefits including our bi-monthly magazine Balance, reliable information booklets on diabetes, our confidential Diabetes UK Careline, over 400 local Diabetes UK support groups, and access to an exclusive personalised Supporting Members Area on our website.

Media Release Continued

- The Anaphylaxis Campaign is the only UK charity to exclusively meet the needs of the growing numbers of people at risk from severe allergic reactions (anaphylaxis) by providing information and support relating to foods and other triggers such as latex, drugs and insect stings.
- Our ultimate aim is to create a safe environment for all people with allergies by educating the food industry, schools, pre-schools, colleges, health professionals and other key audiences. Our focus is on medical facts, food labelling, risk reduction and allergen management.
- The Campaign provides a wealth of freely available information and also offers tailored services for individual and corporate members. Visit our website www.anaphylaxis.org.uk.
- Our Helpline is available Monday-Friday 9am-5pm on 01252 542029.
- Epilepsy Action helps more than 685,500 people every year through its range of services, including its advice and information service, branch network and accredited volunteer scheme. The organisation's award-winning website, www.epilepsy.org.uk, receives over 70,000 visitors a month. The Epilepsy Helpline freephone 0808 800 5050 is available Monday-Friday, 9.00 am - 4.30 pm (4.00 pm on Fridays). For more information about Epilepsy Action, contact the press office on 0113 210 8870 or email press@epilepsy.org.uk