

North London Care Proceedings Project (NLCPP)

Addendum to Haringey Q2 Report

Quality Assurance of Initial and Final statements in Care Proceedings

Introduction

The revised Public Law Outline guidance was introduced in Barnet Court in August 2013. The guidance supported the view of the President of the Family Division that social work evidence was the expert evidence in care proceedings.

New statement templates were introduced to reflect the expertise which requires that statements are analytical and provide expert evidence to the court in respect of:

- the children
- the impact of harm on them
- their parents' capacity to care for them
- care planning to permanence

The care proceedings project manager supported training through the provision of coaching to social workers and team managers to support the development of this expert evidence.

Children and Families Legislation and National Statement templates

- Subject to timely completion of the Parliamentary process in relation to the Children and Families Bill, 22 April 2014 a new single Family Court will be created. There will also be implementation of the final version of the revised Public Law Outline guidance in public law cases including revised national statement templates.

Case Audit

- In February 2014 an initial benchmark audit of 17 cases, chosen randomly from 55 applications across three services in the Children and Families' Division, were audited by the care proceedings project manager.
- Initial and final statements were audited. These statements had been written by 16 different social workers; two final statements were written by one social worker.
- The criteria for the audit was whether statements were analytical and focussed on the children who were the subject of each statement; the

impact of harm on them; their parents' capacity to care for them and care planning to achieve permanence. Gradings of 1-5 were used to define the quality.

Findings

- In general the statements were concise and analytical with the factual basis for the application appropriately incorporated in the supporting chronologies.
- The statements focussed on explaining to the court the parental difficulties and the harm to the child caused by those difficulties and the support provided by Haringey to attempt to address the difficulties and reduce the harm.
- 46% (8) of statements were good, very good or excellent. These statements were noteworthy for being child centred and balanced, providing the court with a clear account of child impact and parental capacity analyses with thoughtful permanence planning.
- 41% (7) of statements were satisfactory. These statements were primarily focussed on the parental capacity analysis.
- 11% (2) of statements were adequate. One of these statements was completed shortly following the introduction of the new template and the social worker used the old template in error. The other statement was provided for a reunification and supervision order care plan and was primarily about the changes the parent had made.

Future actions

- A series of workshops for social workers and team managers will be led by the care proceedings project manager in order to introduce the new national statement templates and develop the inclusion of child centred evidence in April and May 2014. The services are starting to pilot completion of the new templates in order to inform national feedback prior to the launch.
- An initial snapshot of the quality of evidence has been provided by this first audit. A further audit by a lead auditor will be completed by end of June 2014. Graded findings will be used so that the standards of statements, ie outstanding/needs improvement, can be quantified.
- The scope of this second audit will be assurance that initial statements provide clear evidence in relation to harm; that they are child centred and fully address permanence planning. An action plan, mapping improvement based on outcomes from this will then be formulated.