



Haringey Council

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| Report for: | Corporate Parenting Committee: October 3rd 2013 | Item Number: | |
| Title: | Update on the development and implementation of the Quality Assurance Framework | | |
| Report Authorised by: | Marion Wheeler - Assistant Director Children and Families | | |
| Lead Officer: | Rachel Oakley - Head of Service, Safeguarding, Quality Assurance and Practice Development | | |
| Ward(s) affected: All | Report for Non Key Decisions: | | |

1. Introduction

This report will provide an update on the development of the Children and Families Quality Assurance Framework, associated activities and documentation.

1.1 In February 2013 the Quality Assurance Framework and a new audit tool was formally launched at a workshop attended by managers and practitioners from across the Children and Young Peoples Service.

1.2 A Quality Assurance Steering Group consisting of a senior representative from each service, plus a member of the Performance Team and the Learning & Development Consultant for Children and Families was constituted in conjunction with the launch of the framework. Members were responsible for disseminating information about the framework and learning captured through QA activities. Quality Assurance presentations were made at the Children and Families Departmental Management Group meeting in May and June 2013.

1.3 In August 2013 the Steering Group was reconstituted and given the status of a monthly Board, chaired by the Deputy Director for Children's Commissioning. The Board formally endorsed an overarching Quality Assurance Strategy, which documents the vision, context, aims and objectives of the quality assurance function across Children & Families.



Haringey Council

1.4 The Quality Assurance Framework was then revised in line with the Working Together to Safeguard Children (2013). The framework provides the details of what, where, when, why, who and how of the quality assurance activities that we undertake throughout the year and is regularly reviewed by the Quality Board.

2. Quality Assurance Framework

2.1 The framework provides a clear simple structure for collating and sharing information about major areas of concern and good practice. The original framework consists of 11 key areas of quality assurance activity which combined are designed to support the organisation at all levels in understanding areas of concern and need for improvement as well as demonstrating the progress being made.

2.2 The range of activities cover a mixture of internal and external auditing activity, evaluations and escalations undertaken by Child Protection Advisors and Independent Reviewing Officers and reported in their respective annual reports, analysis of complaints; review of cases in proceedings; specific feedback from service users, review of Organisational Learning and Development initiatives; Supervision Audit and the findings of Internal Management Reviews. The framework will evolve as we learn from our experience. New elements will be included and wider groups of staff will undertake the activities associated with the framework.

2.3 Throughout 2012-13 this range of quality assurance activities consistently identified eleven of clear overarching and recurring issues for practice development these have been incorporated into the 2013-14 Quality Assurance Action Plan and are being monitored through the Board. See appendix 1

2.4 A key principle behind the approach is that Quality Assurance activity is something that is done with, not to, staff. There is a clear distinction to be made between quality assurance that supports staff in delivering good practice first time, and quality control that identifies and puts right poor practice that has already occurred. Our broad focus within the framework is upon the former, but specific poor practice when identified will be reported to the responsible manager for them to address.

3. Audits

3.1 Light touch/Process

3.1.1 The introduction and development of a simple “light touch” audit of a random selection of cases from across Children and Families. The audit was designed so that a cumulative picture of strengths and areas for practice development would be gathered over time. The focus of the audit is on the last six months intervention, with a concentration on understanding social work practice and management oversight at team and service level. The emerging picture is fed back for attention and will be used to inform the commissioning of Learning and Development Activities.

3.1.2 The audit template is divided into domains which cover the journey of the child from referral and response through assessment, planning, review to adoption/pathway plan,



Haringey Council

plus a number of management and administrative areas including recording and supervision. To support the development of a consistent approach to what good social work practice looks like, a new set of “practice standards” have been developed and are currently the subject of consultation. This will be built on through the creation of exemplars covering key areas of work.

3.1.3 Fifty cases are allocated each month with the intention of auditing 450 to 500 cases each year. In addition to file scrutiny the auditor will bring the social worker into the quality assurance process and have a conversation with parents and in some cases children about the impact interventions have had on their lives. The involvement of social workers in the process is currently under development and will be the subject of the third phase of auditors training.

3.1.4 The audit programme has been co-ordinated by one of the Child Protection Advisors supported by a leader auditor from each service (First Response, Safeguarding & Support, Children in Care, Disabled Children, Fostering & Adoption and Safeguarding and Quality Assurance) who is responsible for a team of auditors drawn from the management group. A three phase training programme is in place to ensure that each auditor is familiar with the audit template and approach, has a consistent understanding of thresholds, a knowledge of service standards and the ability to feedback directly to social workers. In addition auditing workshops are scheduled each month to enable auditors to share experiences and develop consistency of approach.

3.1.5 Information from the monthly audits is collated and circulated across the service, in depth quarterly reports identify the key areas for practice development. The first report covering audits undertaken in May, June and July highlighted the need for greater attention to be given to the following areas: Children in Need, Direct Work, Supervision and Recording. This report was presented to the Quality Assurance Board in October and the emerging themes will be shared with practitioners at monthly practice development workshops led by the Principle Social Worker.

3.2 Themed or Event Audits

3.2.1 To augment the light touch audits a series of “event audits” will be commissioned each year, these will measure how a department is functioning in respects to chosen criteria / themes. These themed audits are more in-depth audits that focus on specific issues or care groups where there is an indication that we need to have a better understanding of what is happening. The audit tool will be specifically designed for the audit in question.

3.2.2 Three themed audits are currently in progress – Domestic Violence (reporting October 13) Children in Residential Care (reporting November 13) and review of practice around Pre-birth referrals (reporting November 13) being undertaken jointly with Health.



Appendix 1

Future planned work:

To address the areas of development outlined above, the following actions are being implemented. The ownership of these tasks has been agreed within DMG(Departmental Management Group) and progress will be reported via the quarterly update reports.

| <i>Area of risk / concern</i> | <i>Proposed action</i> | <i>Expected outcomes</i> |
|---|--|---|
| Strategy meetings are frequently single agency, do not consistently plan investigations and are not recorded. | First Response – management intervention and monitoring of strategy meetings from December 12 | Multi-agency strategy meetings which plan coherent investigations prior to decision to take to ICPC(Initial Child Protection Conference) – recorded on file |
| Lack of up to date chronologies on file | Individual service strategies and ongoing monitoring mechanisms | All cases to have a record of significant events to help understand family history, identify patterns and issues – routinely updated |
| Actions lack timeliness – resulting in drift and delay | Tri-borough court project – June 13 Charge in transfer point for Child protection cases – April 2013 Adoption improvement plan | Work is undertaken and completed to timescales that make sense for the child and family and make effective use of social workers and partners time |
| Responding to families in a timely manner | Actively engaging in the Back to Basics initiative 2013-14 | Reduction in complaints about communication – family feedback that responses timely |



| <i>Area of risk / concern</i> | <i>Proposed action</i> | <i>Expected outcomes</i> |
|---|--|---|
| Supervision is not always as regular and does not offer the opportunity to reflect and analysis. Direction from supervision and management oversight not acting to drive the case forward. | Supervision policy and documentation – update and launched - February 13 18 month Supervision Strategy agreed – Supervision Pilots involving social workers and managers in 5 teams across C&F(Children and Families) | Supervision supports a reflective and analytical approach to social work whilst and acts to help drive the work forward. |
| Case transfer points and changes of social worker are arranged to minimise the impact on families | Change in transfer point for CP cases FR(First Response to S&S(Safeguarding and Support) – April 13. Impact monitored | Impact of transfer on families is reduced and momentum of work sustained – length of time on plans reduced. |
| Social work practice lacks appropriate levels of challenge to other professionals and families | 360 degree feedback against the professional capabilities framework for social work practitioners to lead to targeted L&D. Authoritative Practice embedded across L&D(Learning and Development) activities– increase skills, confidence and professional capabilities | A more confident workforce that appropriately challenges partners and families. |
| Thresholds are not always consistently applied | Multi-agency review of the implementation of thresholds across the partnership led by the LSCB | Thresholds for intervention are appropriate and proportionate. |
| The respective roles of the Child Protection Conference and the role of the Core Group in developing the outline child protection plans needs to be clarified | Initiative between S&S(Safeguarding and Support) and CPA's – led by Practice Development Partners Feb – July 13 | Roles and responsibilities are undertaken in a consistent manner- which maximises the input of and empowers professionals |



Haringey Council

| <i>Area of risk / concern</i> | <i>Proposed action</i> | <i>Expected outcomes</i> |
|--|--|--|
| Father not routinely included in assessments and direct work | Training programme includes a focus on working with fathers. | Fathers included /engaged in work undertaken with families |
| Early help approach not embedded | Council and C&YPS service plan – Haringey 54,000 | Improved pathways and access to early help so families receive the “right” help at the right time. |