

Wokingham Children's Services
ANNUAL REPORT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE
April 2017 - March 2018

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1. Introduction to and purpose of this report

The contribution of quality assurance arrangements to practice quality and its improvement has been further developed within children's services since March 2017.

The Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Standards Service is a newly established service within the People Services Directorate that provides focus to Quality Assurance activity. The new service has a small flat structure with an Assistant Director, two Service Managers and a Board Manager. This area of the business is growing. The Service comprises three Areas: Quality Assurance and Safeguarding (Children and Adults), Intelligence & Impact (Children and Adults) and Wokingham Safeguarding Children's Board (WSCB).

The Wokingham Children's Services Quality Assurance Framework is currently being refreshed to reflect the new focus and enable the service to continue to assure ourselves that we achieve good or outstanding outcomes for children and young people and their families, and meet the key service standards.

In addition the last 12 months has seen the introduction of two Practice Review weeks each year that allow for all staff to be involved in direct practice and peer to peer review. These took place in October 2017 and March 2018.

This report provides a summary of the current arrangements and sets out the essential areas of quality assurance activity in the twelve month period to the 31st March 2018. It outlines key findings from Quality Assurance activity. Finally, the report concludes by setting out the key lines of enquiry underpinning our audit programme for the year ahead to March 2019. These are informed both by the learning and recommendations from the current year's activity as well as known or anticipated changes within our operating environment.

2. Quality Assurance Activity – A Summary

Our model of quality assurance

Quality assurance is fundamental to the meaningful measurement of activity and its impact. Done well, it enables a commitment to enhancing improvement that is informed by evidence and focused on making a difference. The Quality Assurance process supports the development of good and outstanding practice, and prioritises learning from what is working well and where there are cases of concern. It reinforces good practice and drives improvement for individual children and young people, as well as at an individual worker, team, service and organisational level.

The Quality Assurance process enables us to answer the following questions:

- What is life like for the children, young people and families who use the local authority's services?
- What evidence there is to ensure the assessment, planning and help provided by the local authority make children and young people safer and promotes their welfare and development?
- What are the features of the local authority that make good practice more likely?
- What are the features of the local authority that inhibit good practice?

The Quality Assurance activity ensures that the Local Authority is able to answer these questions

and to support learning and improvement.

The principal sources of information that provides the answers to these questions are:

- The reported and observed experiences of frontline practitioners and managers;
- Observations and analyses of multi-agency meetings;
- Feedback from children, young people and their parents and carers;
- Audit of cases;
- Analyses of aggregated child level data, benchmarking exercises and accurate performance data.

Our approach to audit

Over the last 12 months we have been committed to developing a collaborative approach to case audit. This reflects an underlying premise that for an audit process to have real value then it must generate an accurate picture of practice and promote rather than hinder individual and organisational learning. This value can only be realised if the audit methodology in use actively involves those who have the best intelligence about the child's case. Collaborative arrangements have emphasised the participative aspects to case review and learning and look to operationalise a key idea within Signs of Safety: 'nothing about us without us'.

Core Audit

The Case Audit Template forms part of the arrangements in Wokingham to assess where we are achieving quality in practice and where we need to improve. It combines a standards-based approach with key elements drawn from the Signs of Safety practice and quality assurance framework. Further development is to connect Case Audit to family survey activity. This, in conjunction with the core dataset then allows for effective triangulation of findings as described within the Quality Assurance Framework.

As part of the monthly case core audit process, 2 collaborative case file audits are completed for each team, each month.

Practice Review Week

Two Practice Review Weeks have been carried out in the last 12 months in October 2017 and March 2018. During these weeks managers were scheduled to undertake collaborative and remote case audits, IRO audits and observations.

Thematic audit

More in-depth or thematic audit activity is carried out if the need is identified, for example, focussed audits into assessment or supervision practice. This enables a consistent measure of progress in specific aspects of work, or teams, or other factors to be identified.

The Wokingham Safeguarding Children Board has commissioned the following audits in the last 12 months to ensure the effectiveness of multi-agency practice:

- Neglect Audit – April 2017 - The purpose of the audit was to take an appreciative enquiry approach to what has worked with families to improve outcomes for children. This audit has been mirrored in Reading & West Berks, with a view to all 3 areas coming together to share learning and areas of good practice, to trigger the important discussions around moving forward with families where neglect is persistent or recurring.
- Bullying – June 17 – Audit was commissioned to speak directly to school children of differing ages to understand their direct or indirect experiences of bullying and how these incidences were responded to
- Cannabis/County Lines - Data/reported to WSCB Q&P Sub group in March 2018. Issues identified were: increase cannabis use and under reporting and increase in anti-social behaviours

Audit by type	Individual children subject of audits Oct 17-Mar 18
Practice Review Weeks	79
Core audit	39
Grand Total	118

Grading

Wherever appropriate individual cases are graded using the Ofsted grading system, to ensure consistency over time, and because this grading for case work is an accepted proxy for what good looks like.

Audit Theme	Inadequate	Requires Improvement	Good	Outstanding	N/A	Total
Core	1	4	9	1	24	39
Practice Review Week	7	23	45	3	1	79
Total	8	27	54	4	25	118

- 30% (38% adjusted) inadequate or requires improvement
- 49% (62% adjusted) good or outstanding

Actions and Recommendations

Individual actions or comments, for example on the quality of services being provided, are reported by the auditor to the social worker and manager following each audit. It is the responsibility of the worker and manager to ensure that any action and or recommendations are considered in supervision and acted upon accordingly. Any cases found to be Inadequate are reported immediately to the relevant Service Manager and Assistant Director to ensure that all actions are carried out immediately.

A team of 'Moderator Auditors' carry out a desktop re-audit of all the Core Audits and Practice Review Audits to ensure consistency and quality.

Team	Inadequate	Requires Improvement	Good	Outstanding	N/A	Total
Ambleside	2	4	11	1	0	18
Brambles	1	6	9	0	0	16
DCT	1	7	5	0	1	14
DTA	0	4	6	0	24	34
H4U	3	5	12	0	0	20
FPT	0	0	1	0	0	1
Early Help	1	1	7	1	0	10
YOS	0	0	3	2	0	5

Summary

A total of 118 children were subject to one of the main audit activities (i.e. core practice, thematic, Practice Review Week or other) over the review period.

What's gone well?	What has been of concern?	What can we do about it?
The Core audit programme is established and is now understood and accepted as a routine part of management responsibility.	The core audit programme, Practice Review weeks and system for themed audits has been staff intensive.	Ensure that tools and guidance are relevant and in place. Ensure that an administrative system is streamlined and simplified as much as possible. Review tools as part of business as usual within the established manager and practitioners forums. Review capacity in the IRO service, to add capacity and enable auditing to be a live learning experience with social workers.
Practice Review Weeks enable all staff to be involved in direct practice and peer to peer review. It allows for a more thorough review of the whole case, with the statutory Social Worker/IRO/chair, to gain learning from peers and others. The practice review weeks include a series of collaborative audits and practice observations.		Future Practice Review Weeks to ensure greater opportunity for frontline practitioners to be involved in auditing cases and feeding back the finding and learning to their peers.
Working with Performance	When areas of concern are	The Performance Improvement

Team to develop performance data, monthly performance meetings with managers and introduction of Performance Improvement Log has enabled potential KLOE's to be identified & triangulated and give required focus on areas of concern.	identified through the Performance data and issues added to Performance Improvement Log, need to ensure that the service are taking ownership of the issue to enable improvements to take place and evidenced through the Performance data.	Log will be owned by the newly established Quality Assurance Steering Group in order to provide the governance and accountability to identified areas for improvement.
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3. Analysis of findings from the audit programme

There have been 118 Audits completed. The distribution and final grading for each case is set out below.

Audit Type	Inadequate	Requires Improvement	Good	Outstanding	N/A	Total
General Audits	7	26	44	3	1	81
Early Help General Audits	1	1	6	1	0	9
Early Help Minimum Standards	0	0	2	0	0	2
DTA Minimum Standards	0	0	0	0	24	24
Other	0	0	2	0	0	2

In terms of practice standards, this cohort represents a reasonable sample on which to base an assessment of where quality is currently good and where it needs to improve.

4. Responding to the key messages from audit

A number of emerging and recurring themes have been distilled from the range of audit activity completed over the review period, namely:

- The quality of assessment and case history
- Supervision and oversight
- Planning
- Communicating with children

These are dealt with here in turn, including a brief description of each theme and the actions that have been taken and/or are planned to address them.

1. The quality of assessment and case history

- Reflective Case Summaries to be in place for every case
- Chronologies need to be up to date for all cases

2. Supervision and oversight

A clear improvement can be evidenced in this area from the October 2017 Practice Review week Audits to the more recent Practice Review week in March 2018. However areas for further development identified are:

- to improve the frequency of supervision
- to ensure supervision is evidenced on all case records

3. Planning

- All Plans need to be SMARTER, including Safety Plans, Trajectories and Care Plans. Audits show there is no evidence of plans being tried or tested & reviewed – require improved outcomes or evidence of impact on file.
- Transition plans to be developed

4. Communicating with children

- Child's version of safety plan and words and pictures needed for all cases.
- Visits – clear planning & purpose
- Advocacy to be provided and evidenced as appropriate

5. Moving forwards. The Quality Assurance Action Plan for 2018-19

We have drawn on our assessment of and learning from the past 12 months of quality assurance activity to plan for the coming year. We are already committed to a high level of audit activity and this will continue with six monthly Practice Review weeks and monthly Core Audits.

Further development for Children's Services Quality Assurance includes:

- Audit processes are to be reviewed to ensure that the Audit cycle is robust, complete and provides useful and meaningful recommendations and actions that are monitored, implemented and result in practice improvements that can be evidenced.
- the introduction of a Quality Assurance Steering Group that will lead on Quality Assurance activity across Children's Services. This Group will receive findings from audits, Performance reporting, findings from intelligence gathered from children and their families, and processes that measure impact. This will provide a clearer way of demonstrating impact and outcomes to those using services, staff across the partnership and others.
- A refreshed Audit Moderation Process will be in operation from Mid-June 2018 to ensure Audits are consistent

- The monthly core audit programme will continue. It currently provides a consistent view of practice quality and a reliable basis from which to evaluate performance and impact. This peer auditing is a key collaborative venture to promote a shared understanding of what constitutes best practice and how this can be achieved and sustained. We will continue to identify and support individuals who would like to develop auditing skills as part of their professional development.
- Six monthly Practice Review weeks will continue to take place as an intensive audit and review weeks when the service as a whole will focus on practice, its quality and impact. This involves the DCS and senior managers working with social workers and teams to audit cases, observe practice and undertake joint visits.
- Further work will be undertaken to improve the feedback to frontline staff on audit activity, its analysis and implications for practice. We want to encourage practitioners to see the value of their contribution to audit not just in terms of individual case responsibility but also as part of a wider effort to assembling a reliable picture of organisational achievement.
- The Children's Services Self-Assessment will be informed on a regular basis of the service quality and impact of learning showing qualitative as well as performance information alongside feedback from staff and families. This will feed into the action planning cycle and ensure the agreed actions are correct, agreed and SMART.