

**Report of the Executive Director Core Services  
and the Executive Director People,  
to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee (OSC)  
on Tuesday 9th January 2018**

**Children's Social Care & Safeguarding Quality Assurance Framework 2017**

**1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an overview and update to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee (OSC) on the progress of the Children's Social Care (CSC) and Safeguarding Quality Assurance Framework (Item 4b).
- 1.2 The report should be considered together with the CSC and Safeguarding Quality Assurance Framework (Item 4b), the Continuous Service Improvement Framework (Item 4c) and the CSC Monthly Performance Report (Item 7 on today's agenda – not available to the public or press due to the content of sensitive information).

**2.0 Background**

- 2.1 The framework adopted for driving improvement in CSC Services is The Continuous Service Improvement Framework (Item 4c).
- 2.2 Improvement within the service is measured by the CSC Monthly Performance Report, (Item 7), which provides quantitative performance management analysis, showing the monthly progress that the service is making against national and local performance indicators and targets.
- 2.3 The CSC and Safeguarding Quality Assurance Framework (Item 4b) provides a set of qualitative methods for assessing the service. The framework looks much more closely at the quality of practice that sits under the numerical performance indicators in the CSC Monthly Performance Reports, by examining how the service is experienced by children and their families; their daily life experiences; what are the outcomes and differences made for them.
- 2.4 Equally, the framework tests the operating environment for front line practitioners and front line managers who are delivering the service by looking at what assists them and what are the barriers; what parts of the system can be improved; how is performance and improvement experienced, understood and translated by front line practitioners, when directly delivering services.
- 2.5 Quality assurance methods and activity in Children's Social Care include:
  - A monthly, qualitative case file audit process
  - Thematic practice reviews and deep dives into cases
  - Service user feedback initiatives, e.g. through the 'Care4Us Council' (which comprises of children in care and care leavers)
  - A staff supervision audit process

- An annual Social Work Health Check measuring how the working environment is perceived by Children's Social Workers, i.e. support, supervision, learning & development
- Direct observations of front line practice by managers, including the Director of Children's Services/Executive Director of People (ED); the Service Director (SD) of Children's Social Care Services and Lead Cabinet Member (LM) for Safeguarding
- Meetings with front line teams and practitioners by the ED, SD and LM
- Visits to the borough's Residential Children's Homes (both of which have a 'Good' Ofsted rating) by the ED, SD and LM

### 3.0 Quality Assurance Activity 2017 - Visits to the Front Line

- 3.1 As a means of checking the quality of services that sit beneath quantitative performance data, the ED, SD and LM meet every month with frontline social work teams and go out with practitioners to directly observe practice with children and families. This is in addition to a programme of single case file auditing in CSC.
- 3.2 The programme of visits to front line teams involve a meeting with a specific team for at least an hour, followed by the ED, SD and LM each accompanying a Social Worker/Practitioner to directly observe a home visit and/or meeting to a child and family. Following each visit the ED and SD record the visit and agree follow up actions arising from any issues that were raised by the teams, or by direct observation of practice and intervention during visits with Social Workers.
- 3.3 During 2017, the following direct observations of practice were undertaken for quality assurance purposes:-

<b>Team/Individuals Visited</b>	<b>Visit Date</b>
Adoption Team	1 February 17
Children in Care	9 <sup>th</sup> March 17
Fostering Team	10 <sup>th</sup> April 17
Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)/Child Protection (CP) Co-ordinators for Children in Care and Children on formal CP Plans	18 <sup>th</sup> May 17
Disabled Children's Team	29 <sup>th</sup> June 17
Front Door & Assessment Team	7 <sup>th</sup> August 17
Safeguarding Teams	25 <sup>th</sup> August 17
Future Directions (Care Leavers)	27 <sup>th</sup> October 17
Intensive Adolescent Service Team (IAST)	November 17

#### 4.0 Quality Assurance Activity 2017 - Case File Auditing

- 4.1 The auditing of case files tests compliance against agreed procedures and professional standards, but more so, it also tests how well the child's experience and daily life is truly understood and responded to, at the right time, by the right agencies, along with the quality and impact of agency intervention. Audits have an agreed methodology but will all test whether sufficient progress is being made with pace and in a child's timeframe, and the measures of impact which improve outcomes for the child.
- 4.2 Audits are completed every month by the CSC Management Team. Themes are agreed, but cases are selected by the Quality Assurance Team, who collate and analyse the results. The objective of all quality assurance activities is to reflect, learn and improve.
- 4.3 Audit outcomes are shared and discussed by Managers, who agree improvement actions, which the Quality Assurance Team monitor and oversee.
- 4.4 During 2017, the following case file audits were undertaken for quality assurance purposes:-

Case File Audit Theme	Date	Action Plan Status
Looked after Children (LAC); Child Protection (CP); Children in Need (CIN). Thresholds and Pathways –Have the appropriate thresholds been applied at the transition from Early Help Assessments (EHA) to CIN to CP	January 17	Completed
Quality of Care Plans	February 17	Completed
Outcomes for Care Leavers - Safeguarding / safe accommodation / education / pathway planning	March 17	Completed
Children subject to a Child Protection Plan	April 17	Completed
Deep Dive - 'Children living with neglect'	May 17	Completed
Cases held in the Disabled Children Team (incorporate feedback from family and young person within the audit analysis)	June 17	Completed
CIN Cases. Focusing on the complexity of CIN cases and how Thresholds are used	July/August 17	Completed
Establishing and Evidencing Outcomes	September 17	Completed
Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND)	October 2017	Audits completed, analysis in progress
Quality of planning for children (Stepdown/CP/Looked After Children (LAC)/Transitions/Pathway plans)	November 2017	Cases audited; analysis in progress
Managers Decision Making and Case Supervision - are decisions timely and effective based on clear reasoning. Is formal supervision at the appropriate frequency, is it reflective and challenging are decisions outside of formal supervision recorded?	December 2017	Audit in progress

## **5.0 Impact of the Quality Assurance Programme 2017**

- 5.1 The Continuous Service Improvement Framework and Plan has driven real improved progress for vulnerable children in Barnsley, as evidenced by the monthly performance information and data, which tracks performance and progress against key national and local performance indicators, as routinely presented to the OSC in private session.
- 5.2 Equally the quality assurance programme, involving audit and direct observation of practice, help validate the improved performance indicators, where practitioners articulate and demonstrate meaningful interventions and relationships with children and families, that are helping them to achieve improved and evidenced outcomes.
- 5.3 Staff are confident at the meetings to raise issues that concern them, which senior leaders have respond to. This demonstrates a culture of dialogue, visibility, learning and improvement. For example, office accommodation, IT equipment and caseloads are all issues that have been raised and responded to.
- 5.4 The Quality Assurance Programme in 2017 has concluded that practice is consistently good and delivered by a stable, supported, highly motivated and committed workforce.

## **6.0 Invited Witnesses**

- 6.1 The following witnesses have been invited to today's meeting to answer questions on the Quality Assurance Framework from both a directorate and practitioner perspective:
  - Rachel Dickinson, Executive Director – People, BMBC
  - Mel John-Ross, Service Director, Children's Social Care & Safeguarding, BMBC
  - Cllr Margaret Bruff, Cabinet Spokesperson – People Directorate, BMBC
  - A number of Front Line Social Work Practitioners

## **7.0 Possible Areas for Investigation**

- 7.1 Members may wish to ask questions around the following areas:
  - On reflection, what have been the success stories from the quality assurance activities over the last 12 months and what could have gone better?
  - What do front line staff consider to be the main barriers to undertaking their work effectively and how are these addressed?
  - What impact has the Quality Assurance Programme had on front-line practitioners and their work and what input have they had into the development of the process?
  - Can you give an example of an improvement action identified during the last 12 months and how did this enhance outcomes for children and families?
  - Do front line staff know in advance when senior management are to accompany them on their visits and what input does the child/family have?
  - What evidence do you have to show that actions identified from the quality assurance visits are having the desired impact?

- Do you consider the frequency of visits to the front line sufficient given the number of teams or should some teams be visited more often? If so, why?
- What mechanisms are in place for front line staff to use if they feel that colleagues or senior management are not discharging their duties in a satisfactory way?
- Given that funding has been very recently granted to increase the number of social workers, when do you anticipate these posts to be filled and do you foresee any potential issues with the recruitment process?
- What can Members do to support the Quality Assurance Framework?

## 8.0 Background Papers & Links

- Item 4b - Children's Social Care and Safeguarding Quality Assurance Framework
- Item 4c - Continuous Service Improvement Framework
- Item 7 on today's agenda - CSC Monthly Performance Report (not available to the public or press due to the content of sensitive information)
- [Working together to safeguard children - GOV.UK](#)
- [Children Act 1989](#)
- [Children Act 2004](#)
- [Munro review of child protection: a child-centred system - GOV.UK](#)

## 9.0 Glossary

- CIN Children in Need
- CP Child Protection
- CSC Children's Social Care
- ED Executive Director of People/Director of Children's Social Care
- EHA Early Help Assessment
- IAST Intensive Adolescent Service Team
- IRO Independent Reviewing Officer
- LAC Looked After Children
- LM Lead Cabinet Member for Safeguarding
- OSC Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- SEND Special Educational Needs and Disability
- SD Service Director for Children's Social Care

## 10.0 Officer Contact

- Anna Marshall, Scrutiny Officer (01226 775794)
- Mel John-Ross, Service Director for Children's Social Care & Safeguarding (01226 773665)

22<sup>nd</sup> December 2017