



Centre for Professional Practice

# Quality Assurance Framework

Revised July 2017



## Introduction

Dudley has the highest aspirations for children and young people. Evaluating the impact of service delivery is critical to achieving this. We require a strong quality assurance framework to evidence that services are being delivered effectively and to standards that enable children's welfare to be safeguarded and promoted.

Quality assurance is more than meeting targets and counting activity; it is a coordinated and qualitative approach that draws together all of the learning opportunities to celebrate success and identify areas for improvement. It is about listening to and acting upon the views of children and their families. Quality assurance involves the systematic monitoring and evaluation of practice with the aim of improving our services to achieve better outcomes for children and their families.

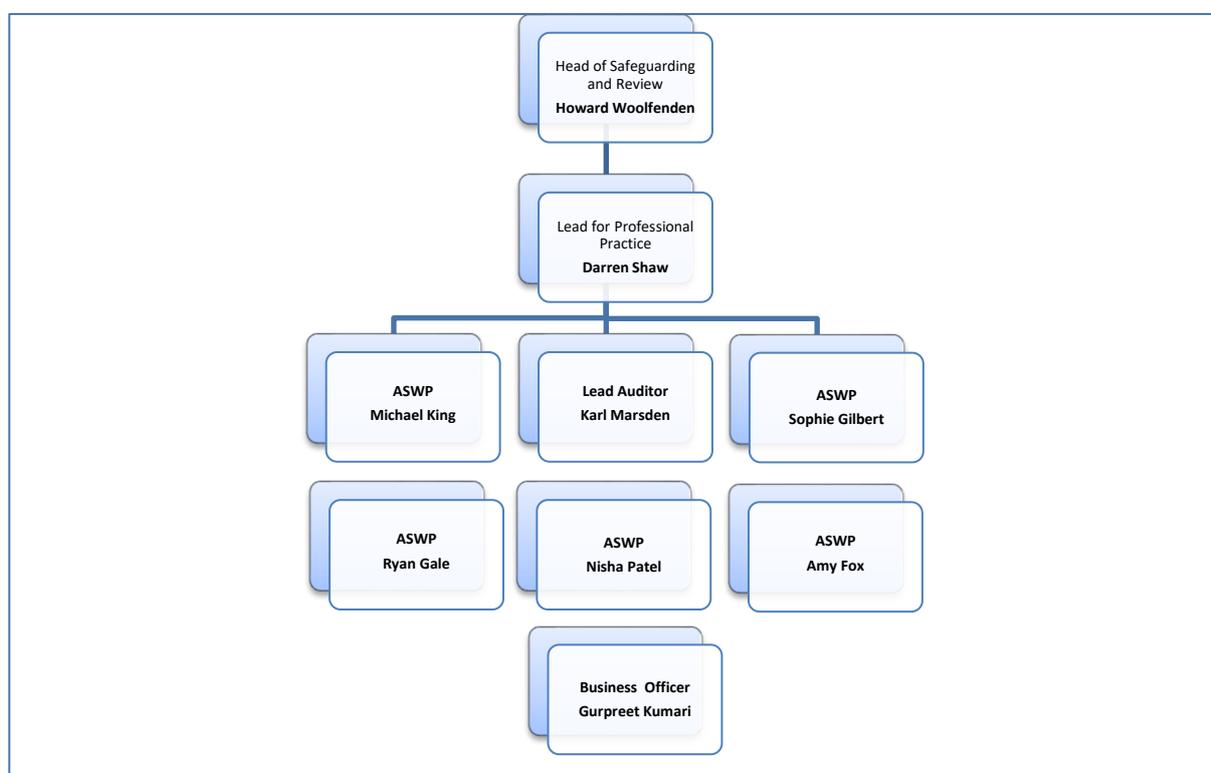
### **The following Quality Assurance Framework will set out -**

- The methods through which the quality assurance will be delivered.
- The approach through which the learning from Quality Assurance will be identified and reported.
- The roles and responsibilities for Quality Assurance.

## Methods of delivering Quality Assurance

Dudley's Centre for Professional Practice (Fig 1) is comprised of 1 Principal Social Worker, 1 Lead Auditor, 5 x Advanced Social Work Practitioners, 1 Business Development Officer. The service will undertake evaluations as determined by the audit strategy and the outcomes from the audit summary reports. The team will work alongside team managers, social work practitioners and Family Solutions personnel, looking at case files, observing practice and consulting key stakeholders and service users.

**Fig 1 (Centre for Professional Practice Structure)**



## Internal Case File Auditing

Case file auditing is a critical method within this framework. Consistent scrutiny of practice including management oversight makes explicit the services' expectations of each practitioner, operational manager and senior manager and enables the Centre for Professional Practice alongside the relevant Head of Service to provide evidenced feedback about practice, or to address any unacceptable performance.

The key aims of Case File auditing are:

- To support the evaluation of practice.
- To recognise and acknowledge good practice.
- To ensure that case file records are maintained in accordance with "Dudley's Practice Standards".
- To assure that children and young people have a good quality assessment and analysis of their needs on record.
- To assure good planning for children.
- To evidence that children and young people are listened to and their wishes and feeling impact upon services.
- To assure management oversight and scrutiny.
- To address drift and delay.
- To generate learning.

It will be the responsibility of a cross section of staff to undertake case file auditing. This will include the Chief Officer, Heads Of Service, Service Managers, Principal Social Worker and front line managers. It is important that every member of staff with management responsibility for children has opportunities to come face to face with the work that is being undertaken.

This Quality Assurance Framework is supported by the **Audit Framework 2017** that sets out the roles, responsibilities and associated tools that support this critical Quality Assurance Activity.

## Practice Observations

The most important skill when intervening with children and families is the use of 'self'. The capacity of a practitioner to relate to others and their problems is their most valuable asset. It is the quality of the relationship between the practitioner and the family that has been proven to be the strongest predictor of good outcomes. It is therefore critical that a service is able to evaluate the quality of interactions between staff and the children and families they work alongside. The use of practice observations is an important method to achieve this necessary insight. Observations will form a key part of the Practice Development Service Evaluation and will be routinely undertaken as part of this process.

## Centre for Professional Practice Audit Programme

Alongside the implementation of the Case File Auditing programme, CPP Audits will be undertaken to provide focus in respect to particular areas of practice. These audit cycles may be set in advance or be a rapid response to an emerging issue. The model will have the flexibility to respond to the demands of the service. These Audits will be governed through the Divisional Management Team and facilitated by the Centre for Professional Practice, either directly or via an independent commission.

The product of these audits will be a standalone report that sets out the findings and recommendations reported through DMT.

The Centre for Professional Practice will produce these reports to ensure that the information is triangulated with other sources of evidence and used to contribute to the Annual Report and self-assessment. The themes that emerge will be used to inform the workforce development agenda.

## **Peer Auditing**

In order to develop a common understanding of “good” practice it will be important that staff have opportunities to audit alongside one another through a programme of audit clinics, and joint audit activity.

These event will be organised through the Centre For Professional Practice and held throughout 2018. The benefits arising from peer auditing will include:

- Standardising the concept of “good” between and within different tiers of staff.
- A dynamic arrangement offering responsive evaluation of emerging practice issues.
- A model that can be broadened to include partner agencies and service users.
- An increased consistency of standards across the group.
- Significant contribution to both individual and service-wide development.
- Renewed focus on quality.

## **Service Evaluations**

Over a 12 month period, the Centre for Professional Practice will undertake evaluations of service areas team by team using the evaluation criteria set out in Annex F of the OFSTED inspection handbook.

The CPP team will work alongside Heads Of Service, Service Managers, Team Managers, Social Work practitioners and Family Solutions personnel, looking at case files, observing practice and consulting key stakeholders and service users. This will result in a report setting out the strengths and challenges for the team along with any recommended course of action. The findings of the report will inform the training and development offer to the team.

## Stakeholder Engagement

The point of quality assurance is to ensure that organisations are delivering good outcomes for the people they serve. Any reliable evaluation must therefore draw upon people's experience of the services they receive. This means that the views of children, young people, families and professional colleagues are routinely captured. An effective service is one that takes the views of others seriously and can demonstrate that the lessons are being learnt.

The Principal Social Worker (Lead For Professional Practice) will engage with the work of participation officers who support a range of established forums such as the Children in Care Council and Youth Council, to ensure that the child's voice is fully represented within the wider work of the Centre for Professional Practice.

## Complaints

Learning from complaints is integral to the quality outcomes achieved by the Centre for Professional Practice. Complaints provide a valuable opportunity to reflect on where services can improve. It is therefore critical that the themes are understood, routinely reported and form part of the annual reviewing and self-assessment process. The Complaints Manager is responsible for coordinating not only the response to complaints but the learning that can be drawn from them. This learning will be routinely shared with the Centre for Professional Practice. The Complaints Manager will produce quarterly and annual reports that will set out the learning throughout the period and will present these findings to the senior management team. The annual report will form part of the evidence and will contribute to the Centre for Professional Practice's workforce development strategy, audit planning and wider training.

The full details of the complaints strategy are set out within the "Children and Young People Complaints, Comments & Compliments Procedures Manual which are currently under review.

## Performance Data

Good performance information is critical to effective management oversight and should be relied upon to highlight children whose casework is experiencing drift, delay or inactivity. It is also important in charting progress across a range of key performance indicators. To support performance oversight a monthly challenge session will be established, chaired by the Head of Service and attended by Service Managers and team managers and a representative from the Centre for Professional Practice.

The sessions will focus on individual children where there is evidence of drift, delay or inactivity. The challenge sessions will be a key aspect of encouraging a performance led service and will robustly monitor children who may be at risk within the system.

For performance data to have impact it needs to be accurate, contemporaneous, easily accessible and presented in a way that maximises the end users' understanding of the critical issues. The present data landscape in Dudley will be thoroughly modernised to meet with these key principles.

## Supervision

One of the most important parts of a practitioner's day-to-day learning is their supervision. This is a critical opportunity for managers and their staff to reflect upon the quality of practice and developmental needs. This framework is supported by the "Supervision Policy and Procedure 2018" which sets out the principles of good quality supervision and how the service will monitor the delivery and impact of this key area of practice.

## Safeguarding and Review Service

An important part of the safeguarding system is the role of Child Protection Chairs and Reviewing Officers. These key roles provide a uniquely independent view about the quality of services individual children receive. It is therefore a service rich with insight and opportunity for learning. The Centre for Professional Practice's audit activity will compliment and contribute to the existing quality assurance programme undertaken by the reviewing service.

## Learning from Quality Assurance

The product of all the quality assurance activity will be the annual report and self-assessment, which will be co-produced by the Centre for Professional Practice so that the developmental needs of the organisation can be set out alongside the plan of delivery over the next financial year.

All of the audit activity will take place within a carefully planned programme of audit. When each audit cycle is started the Centre for Professional Practice will engage with the relevant Head of Service and Service Manager to plan the audit programme for the specific service area.

The Centre for Professional Practice will re-engage with the relevant Head of Service and Service Manager at key stages of the audit cycle. Completion of the audit cycle will be demonstrated by a summary report and action plan.

The focus of the audit programme will be defined by the outcomes of previous audit cycles, the monthly service performance meetings and the monthly **Quality Assurance and Performance Dashboard** that reports to DMT setting out progress against key performance indicators.

The Centre for Professional Practice therefore has a significant role in coordinating quality assurance activity; drawing together the themes, and setting out the learning and development offer across the service.

## Roles and Responsibility for Quality Assurance

The responsibility for quality assurance is held throughout all levels of the organisation. It requires full 'ownership'.

The key responsibilities are as follows -

- **Elected Member Scrutiny** – through the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee, Corporate Parenting Board and Dudley Safeguarding Children's Board (DSCB) there is an expectation that all members take an interest in and responsibility for the outcomes of the most vulnerable children, especially those for whom they are corporate parent. The Scrutiny Committee will be provided with key progress reports and will have sight of the annual report of Children's Services. They will be provided with a schedule of engagement opportunities so that member perspectives can be drawn into the learning framework.
- **Dudley Safeguarding Children's Board** – DSCB holds the Local Authority and partner agencies to account through its Quality Assurance subgroup as well as the coordination of Section 11/section 175 compliance and multi-agency audits. The DSCB will be responsible for undertaking its own learning activity to support the scrutiny and evaluation of the whole safeguarding system. The Centre for Professional Practice will work in tandem with the DSCB to ensure there is a shared learning and scrutiny across all services.
- **Chief Executive** - is ultimately responsible for shaping the strategic direction of council services. It is critical that this officer has insight into the performance of Children's Services and is provided with routine evaluation reports and critical performance information to support accountability and oversight.
- **Lead Member** – provides overall political leadership for the Directorate along with support and challenge to ensure the best possible outcomes for children and families in Dudley. The Lead Member should be visible and practically engaged in key forums where service performance and evaluation are discussed.
- **Director of Children's Services (DCS)** provides the strategic leadership, scrutiny and challenge for the Directorate through the People Leadership Team (PLT) and oversight of progress against the Chief Officer Plan. The DCS will be routinely provided with evaluation reports and key performance information to support scrutiny and oversight.
- **Chief Officer** provides the operational and strategic leadership through the Directorate Management Team (DMT) and monthly Performance Challenge Sessions. The Chief Officer will be regularly engaged with both case file auditing and oversight of all the key performance information. The Chief Officer will be responsible for agreeing the Quality Assurance Delivery Plans and prioritising and resourcing the response to teams following their quality evaluations.

- **Principal Social Worker and Lead for Professional Practice** holds a critical role in supporting social work staff by ensuring the learning and development offer effectively responds to the needs of the workforce. To fulfil this role the Lead for Professional Practice will be required to engage proactively with front line staff through shadowing and involvement with evaluation activity. The Lead for Professional Practice will support the delivery of the annual report by setting and delivering the learning and development offer in response to the learning needs identified.
- **DMT** – is responsible for agreeing the Quality Assurance Schedule and informing the required scope and focus before work is undertaken. Once a Quality in Practice Evaluation/ Audit Cycle has taken place, the draft report with an executive summary and proposed Action Plan is considered by DMT.
- **Heads of Service (HOS)** - provide leadership and management of individual services, teams and themed leads and come together in DMT meetings to manage and scrutinise budgets, plan services and scrutinise performance data. They will be responsible for agreeing the Quality Assurance Delivery Plans and supporting the evaluation team with their onsite visits. HoS will also undertake regular auditing work and support managers in day-to-day duties.
- **Independent Chairs CP & IROs** provide independent scrutiny over children subject to child protection plans and children who are Looked After. They will monitor progress and escalate matters where this is required. The reviewing service will contribute significantly to the provision of evidence against the Quality Assurance Delivery Plans by systematically reporting against key outcomes.
- **Team Managers** – provide operational leadership and management of individual teams and come together with their HoS to scrutinise performance and share knowledge and good practice.