



HILLINGDON
LONDON

London Borough of Hillingdon
Children's Social Care
Quality Assurance Framework

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1. Introduction and Purpose

The internal audit function for the Children's Services in the London Borough of Hillingdon (LBH) is provided by an in-house team under the Safeguarding, Partnership and Quality Assurance service. As a *learning authority* we recognise that maintaining the quality of our services necessitates commitment to continuous improvement.

LBH's Quality Assurance Framework is designed to promote continuous learning and improvement through four stages.

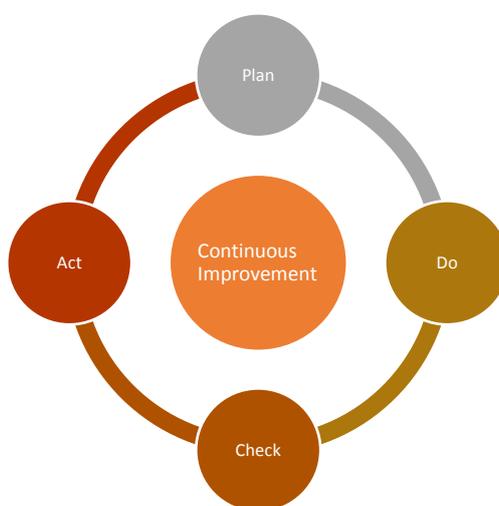


Diagram 1 – Four Stages of Improvement

In Hillingdon we have high aspirations and a clear shared vision that puts residents and children first. We work together with families and colleagues to enhance children's present and future lives, to ensure they are and feel safe, enjoy good physical, emotional and mental health, have pride in their unique identities, feel that they belong and have opportunities to thrive.

We recognise that we can only achieve our vision through effective partnership with families and across agencies, including schools, and a wide variety of voluntary and community sector partners, placing family's needs at the centre of everything we do.

The services we deliver with our partners are guided by Children's Social Care's Plan On a Page, which outlines our five outcomes for young people, our mind set, behaviour and priority areas (appendix 1)

Ultimately, the purpose of the Children's Services Quality Assurance Framework is to ensure that children, young people and families are achieving their potential through excellent service and continuously scrutinised practice. We will do this by:

- Strengthening our partnerships with children, their carers, and partners: Start, Hear, Understand and Stay with the child.
- Developing our workforce resilience and skill in applying evidence informed practice approaches
- By focusing on innovative early help solutions, robust step up/down processes to match intervention to need.
- By focusing on transitions; age, milestones, setting and service
- Focusing on strengths and building resilience for our children, their families, our partnerships, workforce and organisation.

2. The link between Performance Information and Quality Assurance

Like with quality assurance, performance assurance is everyone's responsibility with all staff having a role to play. All staff across the directorate are responsible for the quality of their own work and their individual performance.

Managers have an additional responsibility to monitor and address performance within their service area or team and with individual staff members where necessary.

Effective use of data and performance indicators is an essential element of beginning to understand the quality of practice and services provided however in addition to this effective quality assurance systems need to be in place to determine the "story" behind the data. All managers are supported to ensure they are equipped with the skills, knowledge and tools to access, understand, interpret and use performance information. Robust analysis of accurate performance information will assist with quality assurance activity.

Performance reports are delivered through the weekly data sets sent to managers to enable them to address performance within their team alongside the monthly ChAT report.

Performance data has an important role to play in understanding the direction of travel,

identifying trends and themes and potential issues. At the same time, the data can be analysed at individual and team level helping in understanding their performance and holding them account for their contribution to improving outcomes for children.

3. Quality Assurance – The Approach

We understand that quality services and practice first requires effective leadership and is then best achieved when all staff at all levels across the local authority and partner agencies recognise that they have a shared responsibility for quality assurance.

3.1 Individual Responsibility

Children's Services staff should strive to ensure that their practice is:

- Safe
- Effective
- Child and Family Centered
- Timely
- Efficient
- Equitable
- Responsive and Caring

To support this, staff are required to ensure that all work is undertaken with the child at the centre in line with legislation, internal policy, procedure, standards and expectation and as a result in line with external standards, policy and legislation. All Children's Services staff are required to take individual responsibility for ensuring they meet the requirements of the professional registrations and standards (including Professional Capabilities Framework, and Knowledge and Skills Statement for child and family practitioners and Social Work England professional standards).

To assist colleagues in feeling confident in their role a thorough and robust induction training package is available for all new starters. Ongoing training and development opportunities are provided and regular supervision provides individual support.

4. Quality Assurance Activity

A range of quality assurance methods are in place to assist in ensuring that we deliver high quality services to all children, young people and families. Quality assurance activity can be broadly split into three areas of activity:

1. Internal audit activity
2. Multi-agency quality assurance
3. Stakeholder engagement/feedback.

4.1 Internal audit activity

The primary purpose of auditing is to ensure that the work we do is of the highest standard and it ensures that our children achieve the best possible outcomes.

4.1.1 The process of internal monthly audits

The monthly case files that are audited are selected randomly from the current open referrals and distributed to the internal auditors with a clear date when the audits are expected to be completed. These are: Assistant Director, Heads of Service, Team Managers, Independent Reviewing Officers, Child Protection Advisors and Advanced Practitioners. The internal auditors will complete audit activities on monthly basis.

Three times a year the audits conducted will be thematic and as part of these the records that will be reviewed will be selected using clear, predefined criteria.

The ambition is for the majority of the audits to be completed in LCS (Child's Electronic Record) unless specified otherwise. The audits should be collaborative and will be undertaken by the auditor working with the allocated Social Worker face to face. Findings will be shared with the worker verbally in the first instance and then they will receive a copy of the final audit report. The Social Worker and the Team manager are expected to note the findings of the audit report and record in the monthly supervision record how these have been addressed. Further guidance on auditing can found in the A guide to auditing document (see appendix 2).

The Safeguarding, Partnership and Quality Assurance service will coordinate allocation and analysis of audits, drawing of the conclusions and formulating recommendations for the Senior Management Team (SMT) to consider. The final analysis of the audits is also shared with the

rest of the children's social care service via monthly newsletters, use of rolling presentations on screens and presentations at management and service meeting as appropriate.

4.1.2 Scaling and Escalation

It is a requirement that all auditors scale the case they are auditing in line with the Ofsted grading as per the audit guidelines. It is also expected that any auditor identifying a serious safeguarding issue or significant concern escalates the finding to the relevant Team Manager immediately.

4.1.3 Moderation

The Safeguarding, Partnership and Quality Assurance service will moderate a sample of completed audits to ensure consistency and quality. It is envisaged that this level of moderation may highlight areas for development in relation to undertaking audits that require bespoke training/briefings. If this is the case the findings of the moderation will be Shared with SMT and Learning and Development team.

4.2 Thematic Audits

Every fourth month of the year (or more often if necessary) the audit undertaken by the Internal Auditors will be thematic addressing a theme identified by SMT. The process will follow as above. The case files that are audited are selected based on set criteria from the current open referrals. The completed themed audit will be saved to the individual child's electronic file.

4.3 Ad hoc audits

The theme and scope of ad hoc audit will be determined by SMT and will be in response to specific areas of concern. These audits will be completed as a desk top exercise by the QA Team or specific individuals identified for this purpose. The case files that are audited on ad hoc basis are selected from the current open referrals using predefined criteria. These audits are not completed on a regular basis and completed audit tools may not be saved to the electronic case record depending on the issue being addressed.

The Safeguarding, Partnership and Quality Assurance service team will be coordinating and receiving completed audits. They undertake the analysis, drawing of the conclusions and formulating recommendations for the Senior Management Team (SMT) to consider.

4.4 Additional Audit Activity

In addition to the audit activity set out above, further quality assurance activity is conducted.

4.4.1 Practice Observations

In addition, the supervision the practice of all Social Workers will be observed at a minimum of twice a year by their line manager. The findings of the observation will be discussed in supervision and contribute to the professional development of the Social Worker.

4.4.2 Commissioned Services

A number of services for children, young people and families are commissioned by LBH to external providers. All commissioned services will have in place a contract to which they are required to adhere to. Part of this contract will be focused on performance and quality assurance and issues in relation to these elements should be identified and addressed through standard contract monitoring processes.

Where there is a concern over the quality of a commissioned service the Safeguarding, Partnership and Quality Assurance service can work with the service (with their agreement) and the contract manager to develop a bespoke piece of quality assurance activity to investigate the concerns further. Once the activity has ended the team will produce a report which will be presented to SMT to agree further steps.

4.4.3 Internal Audit

Internal audit is an independent appraisal function, which reviews the adequacy and effectiveness of controls that managers have put in place to address the risks inherent in meeting their business objectives. It provides managers with assurance that their systems are operating as they intended and are sufficient to control risks. The Internal Audit team have a Annual Audit Plan which is presented to the Corporate Management Team and the Audit Committee annually. This may include audits within children's services.

4.4.4 Youth Offending Service (YOS)

It is also acknowledged that YOS will have dual recording case management systems (LCS and Care works) with additional auditing schedules and responsibilities under the HMIP framework. As such a separate Quality Assurance Framework has been developed.

4.5 Hillingdon Safeguarding Children Partnership Board

4.5.1 Multiagency audit programme

The Hillingdon Safeguarding Children Partnership Board scrutinises the work of all safeguarding partners and subgroups and holds them to account on safeguarding practices. The Board will analyse and identify unassessed or developing risks to children, using performance and audit data and reports from safeguarding partners.

The Hillingdon Safeguarding Children Partnership Board will be developing a multi-agency practice development forum to produce a multiagency audit plan agreed by the partnership and undertaken on a multi-agency basis. Children's and Adult Services will be part of this partnership. Findings of each audit will be collated by the practice development forum for quality assurance purposes. Quality assured audit reports, which include recommendations, are presented to the Hillingdon Safeguarding Children Partnership Board for agreement and implementation of identified learnings.

4.5.2 Safeguarding Learning Events

Safeguarding Learning Events will take place quarterly to help develop collaborative partnership relationships and find creative and innovative solutions to achieve better outcomes for children.

The aim of Safeguarding Learning Events is to analyse lessons from practice, locally and nationally, to improve practice and achieve ambitious outcomes for all children, including those who use universal services.

Safeguarding Learning Events will use service user feedback and the voice of the child in practice to challenge and promote practice growth and continuous professional development.

4.6 Stakeholder Feedback

Gaining feedback from children, young people, families and carers is an essential part of the quality assurance process as it is central to understanding the subjective experiences of those accessing services. It is equally important that those working for Children's Services have the opportunity to feedback on how we deliver services to individuals, working conditions and policy and processes that we expect staff to adhere to, to help us improve the quality of what we deliver in the future.

Feedback can be obtained in a number of ways and does not always have to be formally

requested. Feedback can be found in:

- Assessments
- Supervision records
- Plans and reviews
- Case notes
- Visit records
- Complaints, comments & compliment logs
- Direct work sheets

There is an expectation that every child, young person, family and carer who comes into contact with Children's Services is provided with the opportunity to express their views. All monthly audits will consider the appropriateness of contacting children, young people and their families as part of the internal auditing process.

In addition to the feedback opportunities listed above. Specific pieces of work are also conducted to gain feedback from stakeholders, this includes:

- Staff Survey
- Learning Events
- Annual Staff conference
- Team / service / management meetings
- Staff Forums with Principal Social Worker (including Advance practitioner and ASYE supervision)

In addition to this the Team Managers will discuss as part of supervision the things that are working well in the team, the things that are a worry and the objectives for the next month. Each Head of Service share the service feedback with the SMT.

4.7 Children's Rights and Participation Team

It's easy to make assumptions about what children, young people and families think and feel, but we need to listen carefully and take their views seriously. Participation is about ensuring that children, young people and families are given opportunities to be involved in decision making processes on issues which affect them. It is not simply about seeking the views of

children, young people and families, but acting on them as part of developing and improving services.

The children's Rights and participation work closely with the children in care councils - who act as a representative voice for children in care. The team organise participation and consultation events for children in care on a 6 monthly basis, ensure that the views of Children in care are heard by directors through quarterly thinking out loud sessions (pizza with Tony) and support young people's involvement in corporate parenting panel.

5 Link to External Quality Assurance

5.1 Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted)

As a regulatory requirement, LBH hosts a series of announced and unannounced inspections led by Ofsted. Children's Services can be subjected to an inspection against a number of different Ofsted frameworks. Whilst some of these frameworks are specific to particular services area for example Children's Homes, some have a wider scope. The Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) Framework can incorporate all elements of children's services. The aim of this particular framework is to ensure a culture of continuous improvement and high quality of service for children, young people and families. Inspection outcomes have a multi-purpose; informing parliament of national performance and quality standards, delivery of guidance for improvement to local authorities and to act as a review document for Ofsted in ensuring that all previous recommendations have been addressed.



5.2 Care Quality Commission (CQC)

From October 2015 commissioning for 0-5 health services transferred from NHS England to Local Authorities, joining up the whole 0-19 commissioning.



Local Authorities (LA) are expected to ensure that the appropriate clinical governance arrangements are in place to support safe delivery of health services. LBH became both the commissioners and providers of Children's Health Services 0-19 in October 2017. In addition to this it is a requirement of The Health and Social Care Act 2008 (regulated activities) and The Care Act 2014 that all care providers are registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC). As the regulator of health and social care in England, the CQC provides assurance that the care people receive meets the fundamental standards of quality and safety.



5.3 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP)

HMIP are an independent inspectorate, funded by the Ministry of Justice and reporting directly to the Secretary of State for Justice. HMIP report on the effectiveness of work with adults and children and young people who have offended by inspecting the quality of services provided and the organisations who deliver them. Recommendations are then made to assist providers with the continuing improvement and effectiveness of services. All youth inspections consist of three domains. Domain one covers aspects of organisational delivery. Domains two and three look at the quality of post-court supervision and the quality of out-of-court disposals respectively.

In all cases of external inspection Children's Services are required to meet or evidence a set of specific standards or regulations. This Framework and the audit and quality assurance activity that sits within it will help ensure that the services provided by Children's Services meet a level of 'inspection readiness'.

6 Comments, Compliments and Complaints

Comments, compliments and complaints are vital in helping to determine the quality of the services and practice provided to children, young people and families which when used in conjunction with other quality assurance methods. Comments and compliments direct to teams should be logged with the Complaints and Enquiries (Residents Services) team.

Formal and informal complaints can help identify recurring or underlying problems and potential improvements. Learning from complaints involves a four stage process.

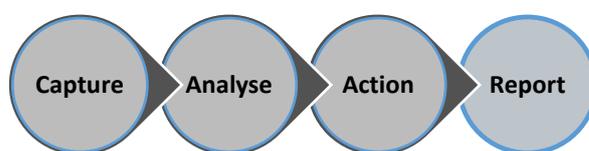


Diagram 2 – Four Stage Complaint Process

Capture – information about the complaint is recorded accurately

Analyse –the root cause of the complaint and any associated learning is identified

Action – action taken to resolve complaint and prevent future complaints

Report – promote the learning and improvements made

Complaints in relation to Children's Service, either its workforce or services, are collated by the Complaints and Enquiries team within LBH and analysed quarterly and annual basis. The information collated is presented to SMT so that any outcomes, development work and learning can be shared and further disseminated where appropriate.

7 Learning and Development

As a learning organisation that is committed to continuous learning we understand that it is imperative that learning from all quality assurance activity is captured, addressed, implemented and monitored. It is important that this learning is shared with the right people and used in a meaningful way which will contribute to improvements in service and practice leading to improved outcomes for children, young people and families.

Once final reports from quality assurance activity have been ratified by SMT the Principal Social worker and learning and development team will work to explore potential arrangements for addressing the learning highlighted and supporting improvement.

In addition to learning captured from specific QA activity it is vitally important that other sources of information are considered when developing ways in which to improve practice. A whole system approach to QA and performance management is required to fully understand the learning and development needs of the service.

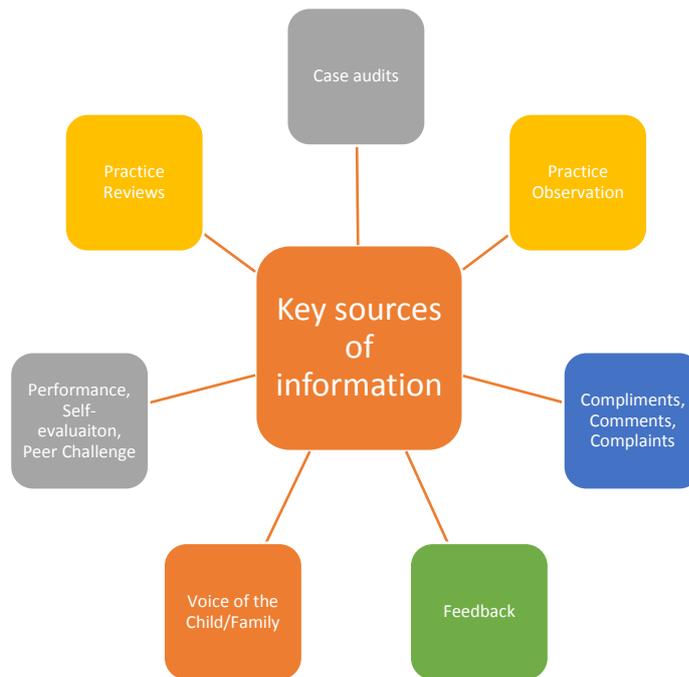


Diagram 3 – Whole System Approach

Once considered, improvement can be supported via a number of routes including:

- Increasing the volume of already existing face to face training opportunities
- Commissioning new and bespoke learning and development to meet needs or gaps highlighted
- Providing coaching and mentoring to individuals
- Development of new e-learning support packages
- Dissemination of information i.e. through one minute briefings

8 Impact of Quality Assurance

Evidencing the impact of learning from audits is central to ensuring audits make a difference to children, young people and families. An annual survey will also be developed for Children's Services staff, to help evidence the effectiveness of the audit programme; dissemination and embedding of learning and improvement to practice across teams. To make sure the Framework is truly child and family centred and follows the journey of the child, the impact of the Framework will be judged yearly on the following factors:

- Is quality assurance activity being carried out in partnership with service users and professionals?
- Are we continually seeking to improve performance and demonstrate the impact of help for children and their families in improving their outcomes?
- Are the findings from all quality assurance activity driving service improvement and creating better outcomes for our children and our workforce?

Appendix 1 – Hillingdon Children and young people plan. (plan on a page)

