

Committee:	Dated:
Safeguarding Sub Committee	03/10/19
Subject: Annual Quality Assurance Report	Public
Report of: Andrew Carter, Director of Community and Children's Services	For Information
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Summary

This report outlines the quality assurance activity that has taken place in relation to the Children's Social Care and Early Help Service from May 2018 through to June 2019. This includes the outcome from: independent auditing; thematic audits; and multi-agency audits, all taking place twice a year. Reference will be made to the findings of the Action for Children Survey, which was completed with children, young people and their families who used the Children's Social Care and Early Help Service in July 2019. Overall, the audits identified that children and young people have a good relationship with their social worker and intervention has improved outcomes. Areas for development are in relation to the inclusion of the wider family in assessments.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. The annual quality assurance report identifies that there have been significant changes within the Children's Social Care and Early Help Service. Three managers and three social workers left over the past year. This has been due to natural career progression for some members of staff, and recruitment of permanent staff in posts where there had been agency staff covering or filling temporary posts that became permanent.
2. These changes within the service need to be taken into consideration when looking at the audit findings, as this has created some inconsistencies over the past year in relation to management and practice performance. The team is currently fully staffed, and social workers and managers are in the process of being trained in systemic practice.

Current Position

Audits Completed

3. Thematic audits were completed on all contacts and referrals over a three-month period between May and July 2018. This established a baseline for the application of thresholds in the Children's Social Care and Early Help Service. In regard to the referrals, the decision-making presented as being clear with the appropriate application of thresholds.
4. In October/November of 2018, a team of three auditors checked the records of 17 care leavers from a list of open children's cases. The cases were audited between 10 October, 2018 and 14 November, 2018. Overall, auditors considered that social workers in the City of London knew their young people and were working hard with them, having sensitive and challenging discussions, which were in their best interest.
5. Multi-agency audits on three Early Help cases were organised through the City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership (CHSCP) in January 2019. The scope of these audits was to identify the key strengths and areas of development in relation to multi-agency working with children and families in the City of London. This meeting was well attended by all agencies involved with the children and families, and generated discussion and challenge. The audits identified good multi-agency working across the partnership. Areas for further development were in relation to the engagement of the wider family.
6. In June 2019, the CHSCP organised multi-agency audits in the City. This followed two serious case reviews on two adolescent suicides in Hackney. The CHSCP decided to review cases where there were adolescent mental health issues. The City of London had only one case where the young person had significant mental health issues, so this case used for the multi-agency audit. To ensure proportionality, the audit was focused on agency involvement and intervention in the last 12 months. Key areas for further development were around information sharing.
7. Between May and June 2019, independent auditors checked 58 cases out of a potential 83 cases, excluding cases that had been audited in October/November 2018. The auditors noted a significant increase in cases: from 66 in October 2018 to 83 in April 2019, which represents a 28% increase in six months between October 2018 and April 2019. Key areas for further development were in relation to contextual issues and the involvement of wider family members. Strengths were identified as being the relationships between the young people and their social workers.

Conclusion

8. Recurring themes identified include contextual safeguarding and the inclusion of fathers as part of the assessment process. Thematic, procedural and policy issues will be included in the Service Development Plan and Practice Standards, with timely plans in place to progress the recommendations.
9. It is envisaged that the introduction of training on systemic practice will support the progress in these areas. Consideration also needs to be given to the changes that have occurred within the Children's Social Care and Early Help Team. The next round of independent audits will give a clearer picture, as new staff will have a better understanding of the City of London context and the children and young people they are working with.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Quality Assurance Annual Report for 2018 to 2019

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