

Committee:	Dated:
Safeguarding Sub Committee	08/02/2019
Subject:	Public
Aidhour Audits November 2018	
Report of: Andrew Carter, Director of Community and Children's Services	For Information
Report author: Pat Dixon, Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service Manager, Department of Community and Children's Services	

Summary

In October 2018 a team of three auditors from Aidhour (independent safeguarding and child protection services) audited a total of 31 cases open to the Children and Families Team. This is approximately half of all cases open to the team. As there was a focused inspection on care leavers by Ofsted, the priority was on auditing care leaver cases, with a small proportion from Early Help, Children in Need, Child Protection and looked-after children cases.

The auditors identified that the City of London Corporation continues to provide an overall good service to children and families, with some cases being judged as 'outstanding'. However, the auditors considered that improvements in certain areas could move cases from an overall judgement of 'good' to 'outstanding'. The auditors made recommendations to support the improvements required.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. In previous years, Aidhour has completed audits on all the open cases in the Children and Families Team on an annual basis. However, in 2018, the auditing cycle changed to bi-annually, with half the open cases being audited in the

autumn between October and November, and the other half being audited in spring between April and May. The reason for this change is to ensure that there are always current audits available. It also allows for a more focused approach, as demonstrated by the focus on care leavers which supported the Ofsted inspection.

2. Audited cases are graded and awarded using the following methodology:
 - Independent review of case file records on Mosaic
 - Interview with allocated social worker/early help worker
 - Discussions with team managers
 - Feedback form (where available) from child/young person and their carers/parents.

3. Aidhour developed the audit tool used in the auditing process. The process follows the model used by Ofsted and focuses on impact and outcomes for young people, as well as on the process. Considering user feedback and information from the workers themselves ensures that information is appropriately triangulated and quality assured. Audits were moderated internally by the City of London Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Team.

Current Position

4. Due to the changes around the auditing cycle, it has been difficult to draw on comparisons from previous years, as they involved auditing all cases. Therefore, this needs to be taken into consideration when looking at the outcome of the audits for 2018 in comparison to 2016 and 2017. As in the previous two year's audits and the 2016 Ofsted inspection, overall this audit found that the services that care leavers receive from the City of London Corporation continue to be very good. The table below shows the number of Care Leaver's cases that have been audited by year and the moderated grading that has been awarded.

	Total number of Care Leaver's cases audited	Inadequate	Requires improvement	Good	Outstanding
2018	17	0	5 (30%)	6 (35%)	6 (35%)
2017	16	0	5 (31%)	10 (63%)	1 (6%)
2016	13	0	0	12 (92%)	1 (8%)

5. Aidhour identified very strong positive direct social work practice and partnership working. There was also evidence of positive relationship-based practice. Social workers worked hard with Care Leavers to engage and motivate the young people to fulfil their potential. Aidhour also identified strong evidence of the positive impact this had on young people's lives.

6. Aidhour audits identified that social workers (and others – for example, the virtual school personnel) often went “above and beyond”. They were accessible to young people, who could contact them for help, support and assistance. The audits describe the social workers as being “compassionate and empathic, making themselves available to support young people to attend appointments, and attending university open days with them”. Many young people report that they like their social workers and appreciate their intervention and support. There is strong evidence of positive and proactive corporate parenting. The positive and responsive social work supports the development of good-quality pathway plans, based on sound assessments.
7. The audits identified that, while practice and outcomes were (broadly speaking) good and, in some areas, outstanding, there were some process issues that tended to impact on the grading. While these process issues did not impact directly on the outcomes for children, they were discerned as impairing the quality of the case work overall. Examples of this were delays in writing up case records, supervision notes, Pathway Plans and other documents. In a limited number of cases, Pathway Plans had fallen out of timescale.
8. Recommendations for audits:
 - Introduce case mapping in group supervision sessions to focus on complex case work to foster effective, shared understanding of risks and needs.
 - Team managers should undertake joint visits and direct observations of practice to improve management oversight and provide confidence in practice.
 - Ensure that the supervision policy is fit for purpose and that supervision is reflective, outcomes-focused and is driving care planning for children and young people.
 - With support from human resources, ensure that team managers and service managers have a clear understanding of policy and procedures in relation to managing poor staff performance.

Conclusion

9. Overall the audits identified positive practice and that the outcomes for young people were good and, in some cases, outstanding. The areas for development related more to the implementation of the processes that underpin practice. This was identified by the independent auditors and was progressed by the allocated social workers.
10. The findings and recommendations from the audits are currently being progressed, and it is envisaged that they will be in place by the end of January 2019.
11. The Assistant Director for People chairs a meeting called ‘Getting from Good to Outstanding’ which is attended by the team managers, service managers and the Independent Reviewing Officer. This meeting focuses on the actions from

each individual case file audit. Timely actions are put in place to ensure that work is completed and follow-up audits check on compliance.

Appendices

- None.

Pat Dixon

Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service Manager
Department of Community and Children's Services

T: 020 7332 1215

E: pat.dixon@cityoflondon.gov.uk