

<b>Committee:</b>	<b>Dated:</b>
Safeguarding Sub Committee	08/02/2021
<b>Subject:</b> Quality Assurance Annual Report 2020 to 2021	<b>Public</b>
<b>Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>If so, how much?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>What is the source of Funding?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Andrew Carter, Director of Community and Children's Services	<b>For Information</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Pat Dixon, Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service Manager	

### Summary

This report is to introduce the Quality Assurance Annual Report for 2020/21. The report shows the quality assurance activity that has taken place throughout the past year. Audits have shown that the majority of the practice within Children's Social Care is to a high standard. Where recommendations have been made, they have been acted on, either on a case-by-case basis, or included within the Service Development Plan. There have been some areas requiring learning and development, and these will be progressed through the learning and development programme.

### Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

### Main Report

### Background

1. As part of the quality assurance framework, audits are completed by independent auditors on cases open to the Children's Social Care and Early Help Service. This occurs on a quarterly basis. Some adaptations have been made to the auditing process due the unique circumstance of working in the changing environment of COVID-19. There has been more focus on thematic

audits this year, rather than full case audits, and this has allowed a more responsive approach to emerging needs.

## **Current Position**

2. In May 2020, the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service Manager completed a thematic audit on face-to-face and virtual visits. In total, 24 cases were reviewed from the Children's Social Care and Early Help Service. This audit involved reviewing how many visits took place during this time period, differentiating face-to-face and virtual meetings. If they were virtual, the audit also recorded which method was used to contact the family. Overall, there was evidence of use of technology such as Zoom and WhatsApp to contact children and families.
3. In July 2020, full case file audits were completed by independent auditors. A total of 12 cases (nine families) were audited, with cases from a cross-section of social work cases open to the Children's Social Care team, and those identified by the Management team. Audits were based on a review of the electronic case file and a discussion with the allocated worker, focusing on social work interventions between January and July 2020.
4. The auditors identified that the social workers knew and understood the needs of the children and families allocated to them by demonstrating commitment, enthusiasm and compassion when they were spoken to about the cases. There were some areas that required further development in relation to process.
5. In August 2020, an independent assurance stocktake was carried out on contacts, referrals and assessments by the Chair of the Achieving Excellence Board. The case selection for the stocktake was taken from all contacts, referrals and assessments between 1 July and 5 August 2020. In total, 25 contacts and referrals, and five assessments were reviewed. Of the 25 contacts, many were of multiple family members. One such example related to 14 members of the same family. The audit did identify some areas that could be improved, however, overall, there was evidence of good practice taking place.
6. In November 2020, independent auditors were commissioned to complete a thematic audit on placement stability. This followed concerns around the number of placement moves taking place, which were identified through performance data and the Independent Reviewing Officer's annual report.
7. The thematic audit focused on identifying common denominators for moving from foster care to semi-independent accommodation, and how practitioners and commissioned services responded. There were some interesting factors identified within this audit that will support a better understanding of the underlying causes and how they can be prevented, these have been included in the Quality Assurance Annual report.

## **Conclusion**

8. There is evidence of some excellent practice on the cases reviewed. However, practice is not always consistent, which can be due to recordings not being up to date or processes not being followed. The issues that have been identified are often easily rectified through adequate systems to ensure compliance.
9. On the completion of the audits, the recommendations are shared with the social workers, managers and the service manager. Issues are either resolved immediately on a case-by-case basis, or if they are more systemic, they are included in the Service Development Plan. The Service Development Plan is updated on a regular basis by the Children's Social Care and Early Help Service Manager, with oversight by the Achieving Excellence Board and Members.

## **Appendices**

- Quality Assurance Annual Report 2020 to 2021

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