

<b>Committee:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
Safeguarding Sub Committee	5 February 2013
<b>Subject:</b> Annual Quality Assurance Review	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Director of Community and Children's Services	<b>For Information</b>

### **Summary**

This report informs Members of quality assurance activity that has taken place over the past 12 months in the Children and Families Team, as part of the quality assurance framework. It illustrates the key themes that have been identified in relation to the quality of assessments, reports and plans. As previously reported, quality assurance and management oversight of case work undertaken since early 2012 has demonstrated and evidenced significant progress in the quality of interventions and the overall standard of recording; for example, case notes are always detailed and highlight the voice of the child.

However, audits also identified that this is not always consistently applied in the recording of assessments. There is at times a disparity between the interventions, which are outstanding, and the way in which this is recorded in reports and assessments. These issues are fed back in supervision sessions and team meetings. Furthermore, the service has introduced group reflective practice sessions as part of its continuing improvement journey, where these issues are also addressed.

Feedback has also been obtained from social workers on how the service can move from 'good' to 'outstanding'. Social workers have specified that they feel supported by the management team and find it rewarding to work with a generic case load. However, it was identified that staff would benefit from further administrative support as well as remote working arrangements.

Overall, the quality of social work intervention is positive, children are safeguarded, direct interventions are having positive impacts and recording is demonstrating that the voice of the child is clearly evidenced in the work. Ongoing developmental work is taking place to ensure that the recording of assessments reaches the expected standard of 'outstanding'.

### **Recommendation**

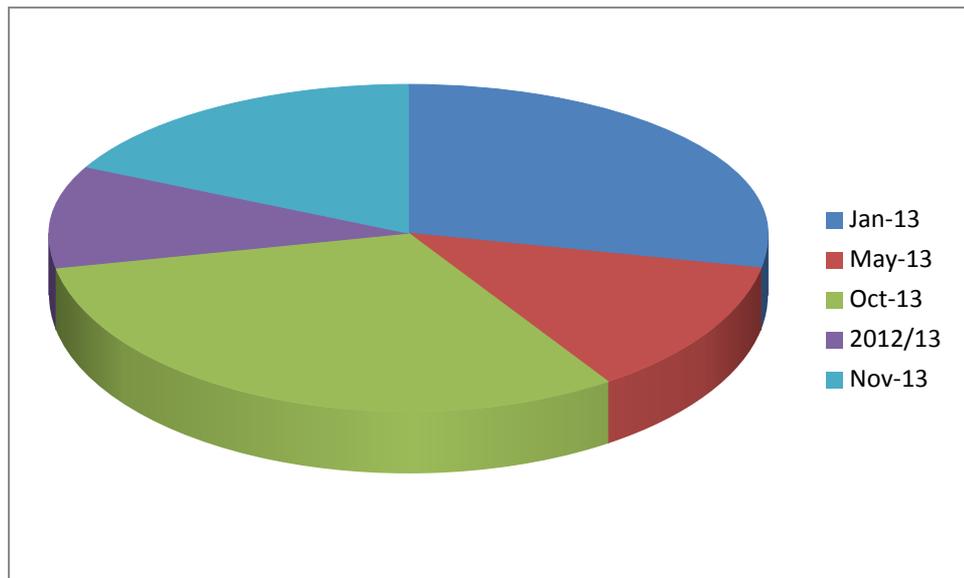
Members are asked to: Note the report.

## Main Report

### Background

1. The quality assurance framework has been in place since December 2011 and this report will show the activity that has taken place in the past year through case file audits, senior management engagement activity within the quality assurance framework and learning from complaints. Figure 1 shows the range and number of audits that have been completed in 2013.

**Figure 1: Audits reviewed during 2013**



### Audits reviewed

- ❖ Nine generic case file audits were completed by the Children's Social Care Service Manager in January 2013.
  - ❖ Four assessment audits were completed by the Children's Social Care Service Manager in May 2013.
  - ❖ 10 case file audits reviewing partnership working and the voice of the child and young person were reviewed by Children's Social Care Service Manager in October 2013.
  - ❖ Three generic audits were completed by the Departmental Leadership Team on each of the cases assigned to them.
  - ❖ Four peer audits were completed by social workers in October 2013.
2. All the audits completed show that children and young people supported by the City have been safeguarded and that risks as well as needs are being addressed appropriately through multi-agency plans. This is also evident from

both the case recordings and the key performance data provided by the performance team. The voice of the child is evident from case recordings on Frameworki and positive relationships have been established between social workers, children and young people and their carers.

### **Assistant Director visits**

3. In addition to the case audits, in July 2013 the Assistant Director carried out visits to five of our eight children who are looked after. The purpose was to hear directly from the children and young people about their views and experiences of the service. The feedback from four of the young people and their carers was extremely positive in regards to the quality of the support that they receive from the City. One young person raised several issues with the Assistant Director, which were followed up by the service. The report is attached as Appendix 1.

### **Learning from complaints**

4. During 2013, the service received a complaint from the mother of two children who have been the subject of child protection interventions. The complaint was upheld at stage two and is currently with the Local Government Ombudsman. The service implemented a detailed improvement plan to support learning from this complaint. While this has been a very challenging case for social work staff, the service has embraced the need to use it as an opportunity to improve practice for all. The improvement plan is attached as Appendix 2.

### **Thematic issues**

5. The audits completed over 2013 have been reviewed and the following key themes have been identified.

### **Areas of good practice and outcomes**

- ❖ Children and young people who are known to the Children and Families team are being safeguarded.
- ❖ Children and young people's views are listened to by their social worker and are visible in recordings and assessments.
- ❖ Children in care are in stable and supportive placements and are achieving educational attainment that is equivalent to or higher than that of their peers.
- ❖ Outcomes for our children and young people are excellent, with many of our older young people going on to higher education.
- ❖ There is evidence of good multi-agency working to support children and families.
- ❖ Children who are looked after are receiving a high level of support from health services, where this is necessary.

### **Areas that on occasion required attention following audits**

- ❖ Some chronologies were not up to date and/or did not reflect key events.
- ❖ Some assessments required updating despite the recording itself being up to date.
- ❖ Views of parents and carers were not always captured in assessments.
- ❖ Assessments were not always signed by parents and carers.
- ❖ Pathway Plans/PEPs did not consistently illustrate the child/young person's journey.

6. The above depicts a general overview of common themes arising from the audit work. However, this is not consistent with the quality of interaction observed, case notes recorded on the file and information obtained anecdotally from social workers, children and carers. This demonstrates that the majority of our children and young people are receiving a high level of support and are achieving good outcomes.
7. In order to support practice improvement, staff are accessing external training as well as having the opportunity to discuss practice issues within the reflective learning sessions. Managers are also observing practice and subsequently giving constructive feedback through regular supervision. Staff are also given the opportunity to work together on cases with more experienced staff to aid their development.
8. As a response to these findings, it was important to understand the barriers that were preventing progress being made. Feedback was sought from the social workers to establish their views on how they felt about the support that they received as practitioners in delivering services to children and families. The feedback form is attached as Appendix 3.

### **Feedback**

9. The feedback received was both constructive and insightful. It illustrated that social workers found the generic nature of the work interesting and the case loads manageable. They also appreciated the support that they received from managers; they found them accessible for advice and support. However, at times they felt that the scrutiny and oversight of their case work was disproportionate, with a focus being placed on areas where improvement was required rather than being balanced with acknowledgement of good practice.  
  
The logistics of managing a case load where children live across London were also highlighted. Social workers found that the travelling to and from placements took up a significant part of their day, and that this in turn

impacted on the administrative tasks to do with recording visits and updating reports. This issue will be addressed at the Frameworki Change Board.

## **Conclusion**

10. The quality assurance activity has confirmed that all the children and young people known to the Children and Families team are safeguarded against harm. Overall, the outcomes for our young people are extremely positive. There have been significant improvements in the information recorded on the integrated children's system (Frameworki), which offers a holistic view of the reason and level of intervention. Further progress could be achieved through the introduction of remote working. This would support social workers in utilising their time effectively, allowing them capacity to deal with competing demands.

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1: AD Visits

Appendix 2: Complaint Improvement Form

Appendix 3: Social Work Feedback Form

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