



To: Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board

Date: 26th of April 2018

Subject: Quality Assurance Audit Activity

1 Purpose of the Note

- 1.1 To inform the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) of the progress on Quality Assurance and auditing activity to date and provide a summary of case audit activity undertaken in Children's Services since the previous report submitted for the 11th of January Board.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board:
- 1) Consider the information presented and note the progress made to date.
 - 2) Identify any recommendations to the appropriate Cabinet Member.
 - 3) Agree that Members from the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) will receive 6 monthly progress reports on Quality Assurance and auditing activity.

3 Background/Information

- 3.1 The Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement Framework articulates how Coventry City Council Children's Services manages and measures quality. Improving the consistency in the quality of work improves outcomes for Coventry's children. This supports the development of a culture that expects and values high standards to improve the experience of users and carers. These aspirations and standards drive up expectations, improve learning, and strengthen outcomes and impact.
- 3.2 The Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement Framework focuses specifically on casework services for children provided by children's social care and early help services with an emphasis on quality assurance that underpins continuous improvement. The framework has been used to support improved outcomes. Assuring quality of practice is essential to the provision of a good service to the children and young people of Coventry. A revised Audit schedule for 2018/19 is part of the framework which is updated monthly.
- 3.3 The framework continues to evolve as changes as a result of information learnt from the assurance activity is embedded. It is informed by learning from the audits, single agency learning reviews and serious case reviews overseen by Coventry Safeguarding Children Board.
- 3.4 There continues to be a relentless focus on improving the quality of practice through the audit and review cycle, which is linked to developing practice through the use of supervision, team meetings, practice improvement forums and manager briefings.

3.5 The service has developed a more robust programme of audit activity to inform continuous improvement in front line practice.

4 Monthly audit activity

4.1 Quality Assurance activity is mandatory for all managers across Children's Services.

4.2 Case audit activity, focussing on the impact and outcomes for children and observations of practice, are completed by managers at all levels, from the Director of Children Services to front line managers.

4.3 An increasing number of audits are now moderated by a Senior Manager to check for consistency and a standard approach. For example in February a 100% of audits were moderated by a Senior Manager.

4.4 Managers are engaged in developing action plans from audit findings.

4.5 Learning is collated and shared with staff at the Practice Improvement Forums for managers and front line practitioners.

4.6 A newly developed audit tool is now embedded onto Protocol for Social Care audits which means outcomes of audits are immediately available to managers and lead professionals.

4.7 Early Help audits are completed in word format and added to the child's file.

4.8 The audit tool used across Children Services is based on the Ofsted case tracking audit tool, which focus on outcomes based on the evidence and impact on children's lives.

4.9 Areas of audit activity identified by changes in our performance data also take place and inform the future Quality Assurance Framework schedule.

5 Training and good practice

5.1 As part of the ongoing audit training for managers, a cohort of 10 Operational Leads were trained in how to complete Coventry's audit tool on the 20th of February and 28th of March, 2018. This involved two half-day sessions that outlined the approach to auditing in Coventry and a hints and tips on how to complete each of the 12 areas in the audit tool. Good practice examples were used to illustrate the standard that is required of managers who undertake audits and a live practice run of completing one area in the audit tool was facilitated as part of the training session. Following the training, each Operational Lead was given a 'practice audit' on an early help or social care case to complete in the following month. The completed audits were moderated and one to one feedback provided to each Operational Lead. The audit training, moderation and feedback was undertaken by the Chair of the Children's Services Improvement Board and the Strategic Lead for Improvement.

5.2 Further audit training is being scheduled for May/June, 2018. Training is facilitated by the Strategic Lead, Quality Assurance; the, Chair, Improvement Board and the Strategic Lead, Improvement.

5.3 During 2017, audit training was rolled out for all Early Help managers. This has widened the area of quality assurance into Early Help whilst also increasing the pool of auditors currently completing audits on a monthly basis to cover all service areas across Children's Services.

5.4 Good practice audit exemplars are now available for managers to model their audits on.

5.5 Good practice guidance is available for practitioners on specific audit themes, such as Chronology Guidance.

6 Lead Member & Scrutiny Oversight

6.1 The Lead Member takes an active role in the work of Children's Services and regularly receives monthly audit highlight reports from the Strategic Lead, Quality Assurance and the Director of Children's Services. Quality Assurance audit activity reports are also taken to Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board.

7 Senior Management Oversight

- 7.1 Senior Managers ensure quality assurance processes are consistently implemented and that learning informs practice change to safeguard and ensure an impact for children and young people.

8 Quality Assurance Reporting

- 8.1 Quality Assurance reports are produced and will inform decision and business planning for children's services, measure performance against our priorities and outcomes for children and young people.
- 8.1 Action plans are produced to monitor progress of audit recommendations and actions.
- 8.2 Each audit undertaken includes direct feedback and discussion between the auditor and the case holder, and where appropriate, the team manager. This provides an immediate opportunity to discuss good practice and improvement opportunities, and agree timescales for any actions required to bring cases up to standard.
- 8.3 Senior Managers undertake moderation of audits and provide feedback to the individual auditors where the moderators adjust the overall judgement or identify any additional actions.
- 8.4 Where the auditor does not grade a case as at least 'meets good', Team Managers and Operational Leads ensure that appropriate corrective action has taken place within timescales set by the auditor to improve this specific case and outcomes for the child.

9 Findings from Audit Activity 2017/18

- 9.1 The results of audits from 2017/18 have reinforced findings across a range of different services along the child's journey. This has allowed for some triangulation and definitive conclusions in relation to both the strengths and weakness in practice across the whole of Children's Services.
- 9.2 Audit themes and activity including re-auditing are linked to the Coventry Children's Services Improvement Plan - Getting to Good.

10 Audits activity undertaken in December 2017, January & February 2018

10.1 LADO Audit - December 2017

- 10.2 This audit was undertaken to seek evidence to demonstrate an improvement in timeliness and quality of investigations and support the Ofsted Recommendation. Referrals were dip sampled between August and December 2017; the dip sample was made up of referrals that led to Position of Trust (POT) Meetings and those that were advisory.

10.3 Findings:

- Overall POT meetings were being held appropriately and usually within 2 weeks of receiving the referral.
- There was evidence of clear decision making and analysis.
- Relevant agencies and organisation representatives were attending POT meetings and their views were clearly recorded to evidence the working together process and aid overall analysis.
- The current systems and processes are not sufficiently robust as regards being able to track and fully conclude outcomes of HR disciplinary actions and the future employment status of individuals who have been the subject of concern.
- Records are in place to enable the LADO to evidence their actions outside POT meetings.
- Allegations of a child protection nature against persons working with children in the City, both in a professional and voluntary capacity, are managed and monitored by the LADO; support is provided via this function to a wide range of organisations and the wider community to ensure children are effectively safeguarded.

- Even though adults about whom there are concerns are referred to the Disclosure Barring Service (DBS), in order to close the loop, there needs to be more work done to develop a system to ensure that actions have been followed through post POT meeting and that outcomes are known and recorded.

11 Looked After Children (LAC) in long-term foster care case file audits - December 2017

- 11.1 Of the 9 cases audited, the auditor overall outcomes graded 4 cases (44%) as 'Meets Good' and 5 (56%) as 'Does Not Meet Good.' Following moderation overall grading adjusted down which resulted in an overall judgement outcome of 1 case (11.1%) graded 'Meets Good' and the other 8 (88.9%) graded 'Does Not Meet Good.' There were no cases graded as 'Exceeds Good.' This is consistent with the findings of the recent Ofsted focused visit.
- 11.2 In the case judged as 'Meets Good,' 11 of the 12 domains were applicable and of these, a grading of 'Meets Good,' was achieved across all except 3.
- 11.3 In the 8 cases judged overall as 'Does not Meet Good,' the areas of practice that were least strong were in relation to effective and timely decision making and the quality of assessments and plans. Consideration and impact of diversity. Timely risk identification, response and reduction, also require strengthening overall.
- 11.4 In the 'Does not Meet Good cases , it was noticeable that within this, some domains were more consistently positive and these include effective coordination between agencies, children and young people participating in and benefitting from regular reviews of their plan and good quality placements that are meeting children's needs.
- 11.5 Significantly for all the cases where preparation for Independence was relevant, auditors judged that this domain 'Meets Good,' across the board - 100%.

12 Children with Disabilities case file audits - January 2018

- 12.1 Of the total 19 cases audited, the auditor overall outcomes graded 5 (26%) as 'Meets Good' and 14 (74%) as 'Does not Meet Good.' There were no cases graded as 'Exceeds Good.'
- 12.2 As a result of moderation the outcomes remained the same which is positive as the moderators agreed with the judgements made by the auditors. This is progress.
- 12.3 Of the 15 social care audits, 3 (20%) were graded 'Meets Good' and 12 (80%) were graded 'Does not Meet Good.'
- 12.4 In the Social Care cases that were graded 'Meets Good,' the strongest areas of practice were in relation to risk, involvement, coordination across agencies, permanence, reviews and quality of placement. In all cases the help provided was felt to have made a difference for the better and impacted positively as regards improved outcomes for the children concerned.
- 12.5 In the Social Care cases that were graded 'Does not Meet Good,' 2 cases scored 'Does not meet Good,' across all the domains applicable. The areas of practice that were evidenced to be the least strong were decision making & management oversight, quality of plans, assessment, reviews and diversity. Strongest areas of practice were in relation to quality of placement and coordination across agencies.
- 12.6 Of the 4 completed early help audits, half (2) were graded 'Meets Good' and the other half (2) were graded 'Does not Meet Good.'
- 12.7 In the Early Help cases that were judged to 'Meet Good,' one met good consistently across all 12 domains; in the other, the majority of the domains were felt to 'Meet Good,' with one 'Exceeds Good.' This was for very good practice as regards effective, regular reviews.

12.8 In the Early Help cases that were judged overall as 'Does not meet Good,' one case scored 'Did not meet Good,' across all the domains and in the other case, 2 of the 12 domains were not applicable and the 10 remaining domains scored equally - 5 for 'Meets Good' and 5 for 'Does not Meet Good'. The areas of practice that were least strong across all the early help cases were involvement and assessments.

13 Practice Observations CiN Reviews and LAC Reviews - January 2018

- 13.1 Of the 7 Practice Observations completed, 6 (86%) were graded 'Meets Good,' (3 CiN Reviews and 3 LAC Reviews) whilst 1 LAC Review (14%) was graded 'Does not Meet Good.' The Director of Children's Services and the Strategic Leads were part of this cohort that completed these observations.
- 13.2 Good practice features identified in the CiN Reviews included effective engagement of parent and partners by practitioner and evidence of good transition and handover between teams/workers including period of joint working.
- 13.3 In the LAC Reviews, there was evidence of good practice as regards review being chaired well and children at the centre, good rapport between social worker and young person and IRO knowing children well and understanding their journey.
- 13.4 Areas that were less strong in the CiN Reviews included lack of involvement of significant males and a practitioner not coming across as confidently in front of others as she was able to articulate on reflection with the observer afterwards.
- 13.5 In the LAC Reviews, the case that 'Did not Meet Good,' was in the main too focused on negative aspects and would benefit from more rigorous application of Signs of Safety practice methodology to ensure a more positive and focused approach.

14 Adoption, Care Leaver, Private fostering & Early Help audits – February 2018

Case Status - SC & EH	Number
Adoption	5
Care Leaver	5
Private Fostering	2
Early Help - Level 3	9
Total	21

- 14.1 Of the total 21 cases audited, the auditor overall outcomes graded 1 (5%) as 'Exceeds Good,' 10 (48%) as 'Meets Good' and 10 (48%) as 'Does not Meet Good'. Further to moderation the overall outcomes changed; 2 (10%) were graded 'Exceeds Good,' 2 (10%) 'Meets Good,' and 17 (80%) graded 'Does Not meet Good.'
- 14.2 Of the 12 social care audits, 2 (17%) were graded 'Exceeds Good,' 2 (17%) 'Meets Good' and 8 (66%) were graded 'Does not Meet Good.' Of the 9 completed early help audits, all of them (100%) were graded 'Does not Meet Good.' 5 scored 'Does Not Meet Good' across all the domains applicable and another scored 'Does not Meet Good' across all bar one of the domains.
- 14.3 Findings:
- Permanence – There is evidence of a plan for adoption being ratified early on in the care planning for one child and a robust approach through the LAC Review process as regards planning for permanency. An excellent plan was in place to support smooth transition from foster care to adopters. For the other child, the timescale to progress the permanence plan of adoption could not feasibly have been completed in a shorter space of time – there is

clear evidence of a real focus on the need to progress without delay and this was successfully achieved.

- Decision making incorporating management oversight - clearly recorded rationale for decisions is not always evident and in some cases there are gaps in management oversight.
- Placement – Evidence of good quality adoptive placement, fully meeting child’s needs with a good support plan in place to assist stability and security throughout childhood and into adulthood. Very timely and focused adoption matching process.
- Involvement/participation – In a number of cases significant males were not involved in the assessments and planning. Children are not always engaged sufficiently in individual/direct work with practitioners and there are situations where the focus is too much on the adult/parent and not enough on the voice of the child. In one case there is a lack of consideration of parental capacity and that this is a barrier to their involvement /understanding.
- Help – The help provided has secured the opportunity for long term stability through adoption for the children concerned, and has been thorough, timely and focused.
- Assessment – In a number of cases the quality of assessments and chronologies is below expected good practice.
- Plans - The quality of plans remains variable and are not SMART.

15 Audits Schedule

15.1 The table below outlines the audit schedule from March to June 2018.

Month	Audit Activity
March 2018	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Supervision audits. 2. CIN – case audits. 3. Early Help – case audits.
April 2018	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. LAC – case audits. 2. Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children – case audits. 3. No Recourse to Public Funds – case audits. 4. Early Help – case audits
May 2018	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Special Guardianship Order – case audits. 2. Fostering compliance with national minimum standards audits. 3. Adoption compliance with national minimum standards audits. 4. Residential Children’s Homes compliance with

	<p>national minimum standards audits.</p> <p>5. Private fostering audits.</p>
June 2018	<p>1. Repeat CP Plan audit.</p> <p>2. Early Help - re-audit of case files.</p> <p>3. Observation of Child Protection Case Conferences by DCS, SL's and OL's.</p>

16 Ofsted Focused Visit & further developments

- 16.1 Ofsted's revised new framework includes focused visits to local authorities who are judged to be 'requires improvement' the first visit was held on 30-31 January 2018. Ofsted recognised that Leaders understand their service well and this is supporting the development of better practice. They also indicated this is supported by a range of relevant performance reports and a comprehensive quality assurance programme. They advised that the local authority recognises that their needs to be an increase in Senior Manager moderation to ensure a more robust focus on practice and its impact. This has been identified prior to the focused visit and plans had been put in place to increase moderation from 10% of cases, in February 100% of audits were moderated. Moreover Ofsted suggested that auditors need to ensure views of children, parents and carers were included in all audits and this has been taken forward through our ongoing audit training. This will also be monitored through Senior Manager moderation.
- 16.2 The Department for Education Partners in Practice programme, Achieving for Children (AfC) is offering support to Coventry as an authority who was judged to be 'requires improvement'.
- 16.3 This will include a review of the quality assurance systems and processes, and will be undertaken from September 2018 onwards.
- 16.4 A quality assurance workshop was undertaken with Scrutiny Board 2 elected members on the 14th of February, 2018. This private briefing enabled elected members to understand the process by which auditing is completed and learning fed back in to practice.

17 Conclusion

- 17.1 The themes from audit activity have been identified both in relation to areas of progress and those requiring improvement. Where audits have identified deficits in practice and a number are repeat themes it has allowed senior managers in collaboration with the Operational Leads, Team Managers and Principal Social Worker to develop action plans which will facilitate learning. This learning will take place through: action learning sets, discussions at the Practice Improvement Forums, manager's briefings, formal training, reflective supervision and informal/formal workshops. This will have an impact on the quality of practice; repeat audits in certain areas will then evidence improvement. This is particularly important where there are repeat themes and the need to evidence that practice learning has had an impact through re-auditing to demonstrate outcomes are improving for children. Audit themes and activity including re-auditing are linked to the Coventry Children's Services Improvement Plan - Getting to Good.
- 17.2 Continuing interrogation of data will also help to evidence where practice is improving and conversely where there might continue to be challenges. Indicators alone, however, are not

an accurate barometer of the quality of practice more an early warning sign or confirmation of improvement.

- 17.3 Once audits have been completed, reports are produced detailing the findings, both in terms of areas for improvement and existing strengths. Recommendations are also attached to the report. Reports are sent to Director of Children's Services, Strategic Lead's and the Principal Social Worker. Front and middle managers take part in developing action plans which address the areas for improvement within their service area. Action plans are monitored through quality assurance meetings. This does not, however, replace individual performance clinics in each service area, which are normally held fortnightly. This approach will be rigorously applied to all audits going forward.
- 17.4 It is evident that practice is improving from a low base. Only through audit and by identifying the issues in practice will it be possible to drive up standards, improve practice and make a difference to children's lives.

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