

Quality Assurance Overview Quarter 2

Quality Practice Strategic Group

The Quality Practice Strategic Group meets on a fortnightly basis and is made up of principal officers, managers, deputy managers, consultant social workers and quality assurance officers from across the directorate representing a wide range of teams. The primary aim of the group is to ensure that the Quality Assurance and Learning Framework is embedded and evidenced through practice and provides assurances to senior leaders on the quality of social care throughout the directorate.

Our guiding principles for embedding the framework are that:

1. Children, young people, adults, families and carers are at the heart of what we do. The focus of quality assurance must be on impact and outcomes for the child, young person or adult in their journey through our social work and safeguarding systems.
2. The approach to Quality Assurance will be underpinned by Restorative Practice, and a desire to examine and capture best practice. This means that QA activity is done “with” staff, rather than “to” or “for”, in ways that build relationships and are characterised by respecting each other’s perspectives, high expectations, high support and high challenge, to enable use to learn, improve and change.
3. Throughout the quality assurance processes the views of children, young people, adults, families and carers are integral to improving our services, we will where reasonable and practicable to do so, gain the voice of those who have received our services.
4. Our multi-agency and collaborative working with our partners, whether statutory or 3rd sector will be enriched and where practicable we will include them within our QA processes

Quality Assurance Activity Includes:

- **Audits and dip sampling:** This is a core area of the framework in that regular audits or dip sampling is performed across the functions of the department to establish a baseline in practice and process, both qualitative and quantitative. These are completed either internally or on a multi-agency basis.
- **Learning Reviews:** Learning reviews are undertaken on cases/families identified by practitioners with the aim to try to understand why it made sense for people to do what they did – against the background of their physical and psychological work environment. A timeline is completed of the case which then facilitates a walkthrough of the timeline with practitioners involved to identify shared learning that can lead to changes in practice and process. The point of the review is not to assign blame or responsibility, but to learn: to learn to improve.

- **Case Studies:** Case studies are completed by practitioners and presented to the Quality Practice Strategic Group by the author with the aim being to highlight good practice, areas for development and learning that is cascaded across the directorate and overseen by the group.
- **Research:** The Quality Practice Strategic Group has oversight of all research undertaken both on an internal and external basis that is relevant to the directorate and coordinates the dissemination of key messages to the workforce in addition to any action plans
- **Performance Clinics:** All teams will run a structured review of quality assurance feedback and data every 6 months, through a “Performance Clinic” meeting with a range of senior leaders for shared learning. Teams will receive:
 - Performance Indicators for their team
 - Results from audits
 - Consultation data
 - Key practice issues arising from practice reviews
 - Learning from feedback, compliments and complaints
 - Feedback from practice observation

This report seeks to provide members with an overview of some of the quality assurance activity that has taken place or been reported during quarter 2 in 2021-22, and will highlight what is working well, what we can improve and next steps in relation to quality assurance. This report collates activity from across Social Services: Children and Young People Services, Adult Services and Youth Justice Early Intervention Service and the work of the Quality Practice Strategic Group.

During this quarter the strategic group has had oversight of a number of key areas of work across the directorate such as of the work being undertaken around Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS), which provides protection for people aged 16 and above who are or who need to be deprived of their liberty in order to enable their care or treatment and lack the mental capacity to consent to their arrangements. Due to the changes in legislation, this has required the department to review all cases that are affected, the Quality Practice Strategic Group has oversight of this work through the Principal Officer for Safeguarding.

A total of three learning reviews have been requested and accepted by the group, this includes one Children and Young People Services family group, one young person known to the Youth Justice and Early Intervention Team and three adults known to Adult Services. A timeline/sequence of events for these three cases will be compiled with all practitioners within the department who were involved in the case(s) “walking” through the timeline to identify what worked well, what could have been improved and establishing if there is wider learning for the directorate.

The group received two audit requests for consideration, one from the Strategic Outcomes Group to “dip sample” the quality of plans across the directorate which will feed into the Outcomes Strategy currently being completed. A second request was made from the Youth Homelessness Group to ascertain the extent of youth homelessness within the local authority and to highlight areas for further development.

The group also considered the findings of audit activity being undertaken independently by teams such as a report on males who access the Youth Justice and Early Intervention Service which identified themes, patterns and trends. The Emergency Duty Team also provided a breakdown of work they had been involved in out of hours in particular those individuals requiring mental health assessments. Further analysis is taking place on a cohort of cases to establish if these need to be reviewed in more detail as a collective.

Audits and Dip Sampling Activity

The summer period is a time when quality assurance activity typically slows down to accommodate the fact that more workers are on annual leave and team numbers are therefore lower than usual. This year has been no exception and in particular audit activity has been kept to a minimum across all teams especially with the remodelling of adult services and the spike in COVID-19 cases across the locality.

The audit programme continues to adapt and be flexible to change when the demands on teams within Social Services are high, whilst this quarter has seen a lower amount of quality assurance activity than usual there has still be progress in other areas of the framework such as through learning reviews and requests for audit. The group will continue to monitor the audit programme to ensure that practitioners across the directorate have capacity to participate in any planned activities.

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