

Appendix 6 - Quality Assurance

Quarter 3 – Overview Report

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 3 in 2021-22. 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.

A number of different actions plans have been brought to the strategic group for oversight of the key actions that are relevant to the local authority with individual actions signposted to the relevant group or team for action.

Joint Inspectorate Review of Child Protection Arrangements (JICPA)

The Joint Inspectorate Review of Child Protection Arrangements (JICPA) Inspection reviewed in 2021 the following areas in relation to Children’s Services:

- the response to exploitation at the point of identification
- the quality and impact of assessment, planning and decision-making in response to notifications and referrals
- protecting children and young people at risk of exploitation, (evaluated through a deep dive evaluation of the experiences of these children)
- the leadership and management of this work
- the effectiveness of the multi-agency safeguarding partner arrangements in relation to this work.

Following the inspection in June 2021 which was undertaken within Children’s Services and across our partner agencies and the positive report subsequently received, a plan was devised that considers the current arrangements for all agencies and identifies areas for further development such as:

- Referrals and reports to the
- Assessments and Planning
- Outcomes
- Voice of the child/family
- Meetings
- Response to Harm Outside the Family Home
- Safeguarding
- Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)
- Services
- Response to Missing Children Reports

Children’s Rights Approach Action Plan

The group is responsible for overseeing the Children’s Rights Approach Action Plan that was developed following a series of training sessions for a cohort of staff to become Children’s

Rights Champions. During these sessions, staff from across a diverse section of the service learned about children's rights and a "Children's Rights Approach", with champions providing ideas of how they plan to take this approach in their work. The plan focussed on the five principles of a Children's Rights Approach:

1. Embedding the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child (UNCRC) – Putting Children's Rights at the core of planning and service delivery
2. Equality and non-discrimination – Ensuring every child has an equal opportunity to be the best they can be
3. Empowering Children – Giving children the knowledge and confidence to use their rights and hold organisations to account
4. Participation – Listen to children and take their views seriously
5. Accountability – Duty bearers should be held to account for how well they support children to access their rights

This action plan is reviewed on a six monthly basis with the champions with the Quality Practice Strategic Group having oversight of progress, this then feeds into the Children's Services Management Group.

Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS)

During this quarter the strategic group continues to have oversight 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.

Learning Review

A learning review has been undertaken on a case which will be subject to a Child Practice Review by the Safeguarding Board in 2022. The aim of the review is to try to understand the practice on the case against the background of their physical and psychological work environment. If what people did made sense to them at the time (even if it led to a negative outcome), then this may well make sense to others like them as well. If it does, and if we leave in place the conditions that make it so, then we will very likely repeat this. The point of this review is not to assign blame or responsibility, but to learn: to learn to improve. It should, in that sense, not even be seen as a review, but as a learning opportunity. The chronology of the case was mapped on to a timeline with an event held with all practitioners, managers and principal officers who had input in the case within Children's Services to talk through the timeline. The outcome of the learning from this event enables the service to identify areas where it may have been possible to use a different approach and to understand the external influences and pressures that ultimately affected the case. The learning points will be communicated to all those in attendance at the event and with senior officers within the service prior to enable key messages and actions for change to be effected at the earliest opportunity.

Research Projects

There are several research projects underway within the service that the group has oversight of such as:

- **Born into Care** – The Nuffield Family Justice Observatory (Nuffield FJO) undertook a research study on children that were removed at birth from their parents. Neath Port Talbot were part of the original study and following its publication the Nuffield FJO developed *Born into Care: Developing best practice principles when the state intervenes at birth*, the findings of which were shared with the region through a webinar. There are three stages the findings address:
 1. Pre-birth Practice (Conception to labour)
 2. Practice within maternity settings and first court hearing (birth and care proceedings)
 3. Support for parents when they leave hospital and return home (post-discharge support and family team)

A multi-agency working group has been set up to work collaboratively in addressing the recommendations of the report and to implement new practice principles in the region.

- **Neglect Toolkit Project** – The Local Authority and its partners are working with the University of Birmingham on developing a child neglect measurement tool for use across the partnership. The developed tool will enable all multi-agency professionals within Neath Port Talbot to use the toolkit when working with children and families at risk of or experiencing neglect. The finished toolkit will be inclusive of wider disadvantages, such as poverty, homelessness and lack of access to supportive services.

Quality Assurance Strategic Group

Towards the end of the quarter it was established that the Terms of Reference for the group would realign itself within the department structure by revising the membership to include all Principal Officers who are responsible for the respective service areas and devising a governance structure. The group will then serve to seek assurances and to act as a critical and independent friend to the service by monitoring and tracking progress, ensuring we are delivering against services plans and future visions. The benefits of this is that work streams and groups across the directorate are connected and will help to alleviate the load across the service by ensuring there is no duplication of work or unnecessary activity undertaken. It will also provide assurances to the Senior Management Team and Members that the Principal Officer group across the directorate through the Quality Practice Strategic Group has a line of sight on all areas of practice. A governance structure (*figure 1, page 4*) has been set out which demonstrates the position of the strategic group within the directorate and wider council.

The group has developed a programme of quality assurance activity for 2022 taking into account the different work streams currently being undertaken across the directorate. This includes audits, mapping exercises, workshops, performance clinics and learning reviews. Further areas of work that the group will be taking forward are:

- Research Studies - Consideration and coordination of requests
- Quality Conversations – case studies and good news stories to share positive outcomes and good practice across the directorate
- Good Practice Standards – Developing a set of service standards for areas of practice that new and experienced practitioners can refer to and will inform quality assurance audits
- Monitor action and business plans for groups/meetings across the directorate

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 auditing activity than previous quarters owing to the surge in COVID-19 cases and the response required from the department. Dip sampling of care and support plans across the directorate has taken place which will inform the Outcomes Strategy. The Quality Practice Framework continues to make progress in other areas of the framework such as highlighted within this report. The group will continue to monitor the audit programme to ensure that practitioners across the directorate have capacity to participate in any activities with plans being made for groups of auditors to come together in person in 2022 to re-establish this way of working as practitioners benefit from collectively analysing cases and identifying themes, patterns and trends.

Figure 1 – Governance Structure

