

March 2004

Developing Good Practice - Children's Services

Introduction

Children's Management Team have commissioned a piece of work to identify key elements and local arrangements that promote good high quality local practice and service provision (quality assurance). Reasons for doing this include:

- ◆ Feedback from the SSI inspection of Children's Services. This recommended that the role of the Reviewing Officers be enhanced to give greater focus and authority in the raising of standards and expectations of casework, and that attention be paid to the production and sharing of care plans and case file audit. (Children's Services Inspection: City of York, June 2003, DoH, p42).
- ◆ The local piloting of the Integrated Children's System: This system will prompt changes to local practice across the key elements of assessment, planning and reviewing in respect of individual's cases, and the scrutiny elements of these.
- ◆ Draft Independent Reviewing Officer Guidance (DfES, 2003): This guidance seeks to place Independent Reviewing Officers on a statutory basis to monitor the local authority's review of looked after children's cases. (New regulations expected September 2004.)

This paper aims to describe some of the existing key / critical elements that underpin good quality local practice and service provision and is intended to assist the debate about standards, expectations, roles, responsibilities & accountabilities, to identify problem areas and to consider the potential roles of IROs and others in supporting key activities and processes.

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This following sections aim to identify the specific and unique contribution made by key groups and individuals in relation to key activities and processes.

A: Individual Case Management

What?	Who?	Unique contribution
Information gathering	Worker	Gather full information / make relevant and full enquiries.
	Line Manager	Check information complete; if gaps, identify follow up action, check completion.
	Reviewing Officer / Perf.Man section	Check key data collected for MI / planning (health, dental, PEP etc). If gaps, refer back to worker / manager.
Assessment	Worker	Complete / co-ordinate assessment and record details.
	Line Manager	Check quality of assessment. Sign off.
	Reviewing Officer	Assess currency and adequacy of assessment in CP / CAC planning context. Refer back to worker / manager if incomplete or out of date.
Listening to children	Operational team	Involving children in planning. Record children's views, including effect of children's views in planning process. Respond to any complaints made by children as per complaints procedures.
	Reviewing Officer	Ensure contribution to formal review of CP/LAC plans. Ensure children aware of rights to complain / IV / advocate etc. Independently investigate complaints at stage 2 where appropriate.
	Children's Rights	Provision of IV / Advocate where relevant.
	Complaints	Investigate complaints (inc. independent element at stage 2+)
Planning	Worker	Formulate plans on basis of identified needs. Identify smart objectives / outcomes. Implement plans. Alert manager to problems.
	Line Manager	Check quality of plans & sign off.
	Reviewing Officer	Facilitate production of CP and Care plans and involvement of all parties.
	Group Manager	Check & agree Schedule 2 reports & Care Plans.
	Adoption Panel	Check & agree plans for children & matches with carers.
Implementing plans / providing a service.	Worker	Fully implement plans. Coordinate service provision. Follow up if Report difficulties to line manager.
	Line Manager	Check the progress of plans, identify follow-up action as appropriate.

Reviewing	Worker	Ensure care & other relevant plans completed /up to date in advance of review.
	Reviewing Officer	Formal, periodic check on quality and progress of CP / LAC plans. Co-ordinate involvement of key parties in planning and decision making process. Assess adequacy / availability of information for review purposes, where necessary refer back to worker / manager & identify follow up action & timescales. Can authorise review postponement. Agree to CP and Care plan changes where appropriate.
	Line Manager	Family Support cases: Ensure an appropriate review of the plan takes place. Check care & other plans completed, signed off & available to all parties prior to review. Regular check on progress re implementation. Ensure follow up action as appropriate.
Decision-making	Worker	Where need for decision, discuss with manager. Ensure record made of decisions / agreements made in supervision.
	Line Manager	Ensure key decisions countersigned on file.
	Reviewing Officer	Where appropriate, change CP and care plans in review context.
	Adoption Panel / Agency D-M	Approve plans and matches.
Recording	Worker	Maintain relevant and completed case records. Ensure key information is accessible.
	Line Manager	Check quality of case records, if complete & countersign. Routine file self-audit.
	Group Manager	Quarterly check on file audits. Identify strengths / problems. Agree and check on follow up action. Quarterly report to CMT.
	CMT	Assess trends & agree / follow up on action.
Maintaining standards	Line Manager	Supervise team members in line with divisional policy. Check quality of practice in supervision, follow up on agreed actions.
	QA Section	Disseminate procedures. Undertake periodic practice audits in line with divisional priorities.
	CMT	Consider outcomes / recommendations form complaints investigations and follow up on progress / agreed actions.

B: Resources

What?	Who?	Unique contribution
Assessing potential resources	Worker	Undertake full assessment of suitability, prepare report.
Approving resources as fit for purpose	Panels	Approve carers / adopters.
	Group Manager Resources	Authorise continued use of CYC resources. Take action where problems identified. Report to ??? Authorise use of external / agency placements (res / foster / adoption).
	???	Maintain preferred provider list. <i>(Not sure about what level of QA preferred status infers.)</i>
Maintaining standards	Unit / Resource Manager	Ensure safe and high quality services are provided through regular staff supervision, taking action and follow up where concerns identified. Formal feedback to GM Resources.
	Service Manager Family Placement	Ensure safe and high quality services are provided through regular staff supervision, taking action and follow up where concerns identified. Formal feedback to GM Resources.
	Family Placement Workers	Check on quality of foster / adoptive provision through routine visits & dialogue with placing SWs. Take action where concerns identified, formal feedback to SM Family Placement.
	Reviewers of foster carers	Full annual check on quality of service offered by and to carers. <i>Report to SM / panel?</i>
Checking on quality of service provision	Service Manager	Assess how well resource meets child's needs. Follow up action.
	Reviewing Officer	Independent assessment of how well resource meets child's needs. Identify action and follow up regarding concerns.
Inspection / regulation	Service Manager	Undertake regular Reg 33 Visits. <i>Report to ???</i>
	Elected Members	Undertake regular Reg 33 Visits. <i>Report to ???</i>
	NCSC	Carry out formal inspection programme.
Authorise use of resources	Group Manager Resources	Approve use of residential placements.
	Service Manager, Family Placement	Approve use of foster / adoptive placements.
	Adoption Panel	Approve matches – child and placement.
Collate feedback on resource quality	Group Manager, Resources	Collate information about resource quality / concerns / complaints. Investigate & follow up with action.

C: Strategic Quality Development

What?	Who?	Unique contribution
Business / service planning	Central / departmental CYC Sections	Set Council plans & objectives. Provide frameworks & support.
	CMT	Set annual divisional plan and targets, implement & review.
	All managers	Establish annual service / team plan, implement & review.
	SM QA	Coordinate specific elements of divisional service plans, T&D; Customer feedback.
Performance	CMT	Set divisional performance priorities & targets, analyse performance, decide on remedial action, coordinate communication / information / training requirements (through Performance Management Group) Ensure Management Information returns are achieved.
	All Managers	Set service priorities & targets. Implement actions designed to enhance performance / meet targets. Verify key data in relation to own service area.
	Management Information Team	Coordinate collation of key data & production of reports. Provide specialist & technical support and advice.
	SM QA	Coordinate distribution of info / updating of handbook / training etc.
	Senior & Performance Management Co-ords.	Data collection & inputting. Generate reports.
Customer feedback	All Managers	Plan and undertake customer feedback (linked to service plan)
	SM QA / QPPO	Co-ordinate divisional activity / offer support / training
Customer Information	All sections	Produce information about services.
	SM QA	Coordinate production / distribution of information. (Paper & electronic)
	All Workers	Routinely provide relevant information to customers.
	Admin team	Coordinate distribution / dissemination of leaflets
Communication	All chairs of meetings	Ensure minutes / notes are taken and distributed to circulation list.
	CMT	Set schedule of management meetings. Attend & participate fully in meetings. Receive information. Cascade information to teams.
	All Managers	Attend & participate fully in meetings. Receive information. Cascade information to team members.
	All members of staff	Keep up to date & informed.

Procedures	SM QA	Co-ordinate production of procedures & maintenance of handbook.
	CMT	Approve procedures.
	Managers / Reviewing Officer	Write procedures.
	All staff	Be familiar with the contents of relevant procedures. Where gaps / changed needed, alert relevant colleagues.
Standards	SM QA	Co-ordinate programme of standards development. Facilitate development and production of service standards.
	Service / Unit Manager	Co-work with SMQA in developing service standards. Plan and take action to achieve standards.
Audit / checking	SM QA	Co-ordinate, plan, carry out & report on periodic audits.
	Service Manager	Routine audit of case files. Ensure compliance with all procedures / standards etc.
	Group Manager	Quarterly monitoring of file audit activity. Ensure compliance with all procedures / standards etc.
	CMT	Receive reports. Identify follow-up activity. Monitor progress.
HR strategy	CMT	Agree Strategy. Monitor implementation / compliance.
	SM QA	Develop strategy with HR section / others.
	All Managers	Ensure HR standards met in operational context.
Training & Development	CMT	Agree training plan / strategy
	SM QA	Produce training strategy and monitor implementation / progress.
	T&DO	Contribute to development of Training Strategy. Implement strategy. Coordinate T&D elements in division & link with departmental initiatives.
	All Managers	Undertake PDRs annually. Facilitate T&D of team members.
	All Staff Members	Are also responsible for own T&D.

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