

Royal Borough Windsor and Maidenhead
Children's Services
Quality Assurance Framework

October 2016

“The Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead is a great place to live, work, play and do business supported by a modern, dynamic and successful Council”

Our vision is underpinned by four principles:

Putting residents first

Delivering value for money

Delivering together with our partners

Equipping ourselves for the future

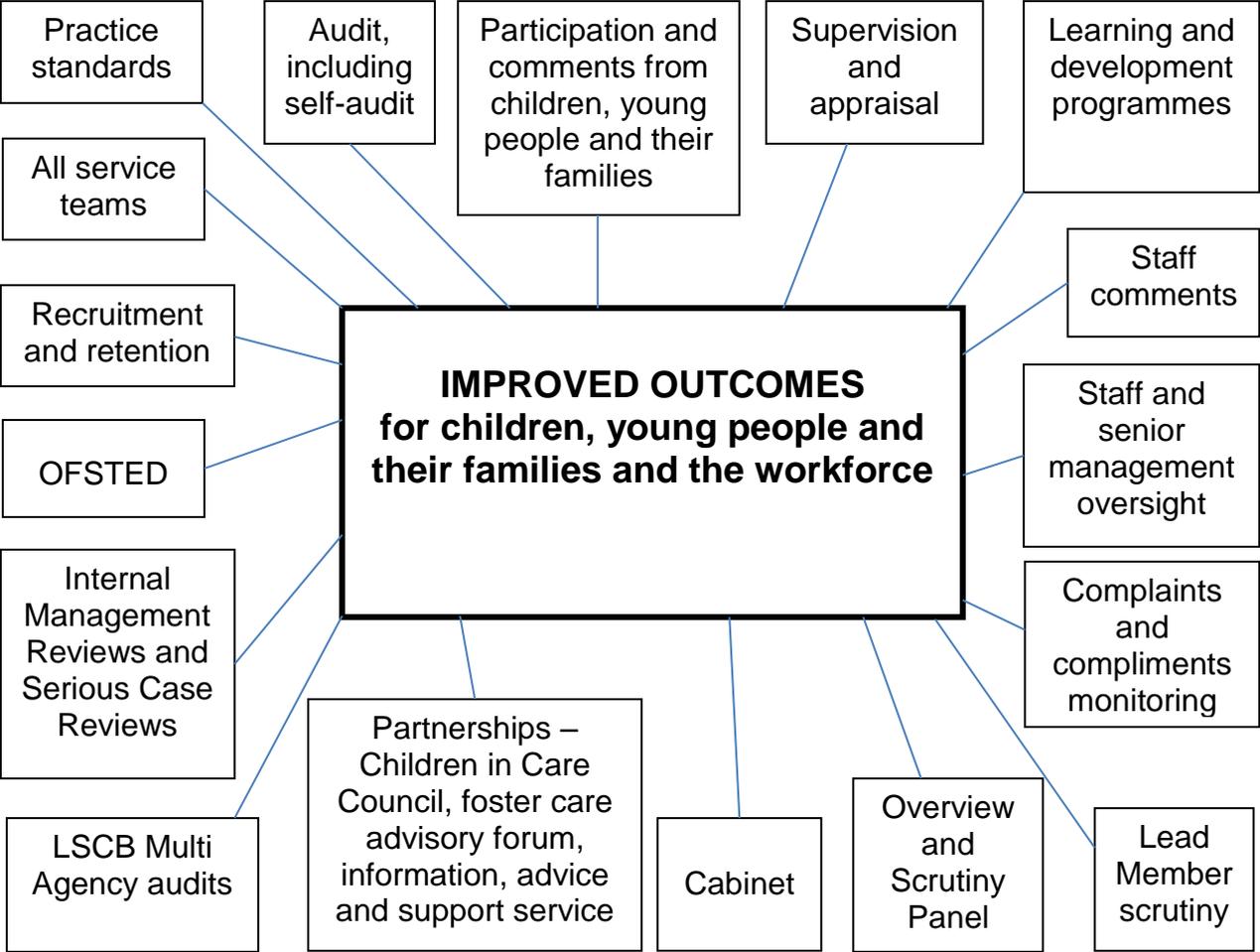
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Frequently used acronyms

CiC	Children in Care
CIN	Children in need
CREATE	the Royal Borough adopted values
CP	Child protection
DfE	Department for Education
DMT	Directorate Management Team
DSG	Dedicated Schools Grant
EFA	Education Funding Agency
FTE	Full time equivalent
YOT	Youth Offending Team

Quality assurance embraces all activity that contributes to service improvement. It satisfies the organisation and external partners that agreed standards are being set, met and outcomes, including safeguarding of children are being achieved. Quality assurance is a continual and dynamic process that sets standards, monitors achievement against those standards and uses the information to improve services.



1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Quality assurance is more than meeting targets and counting activity. It is a quantitative and qualitative framework which sets and measures standards, identifies strengths and areas for improvement. At the core of the framework is the authority's business objective, to improve outcomes for all children, young people and their families, securing successful, economically independent adults.
- 1.2 Measuring the impact of service delivery is central to achieving improved outcomes for children, young people and their families. A strong quality assurance framework assists the organisation to deliver an efficient and effective service. The framework, if applied correctly, will assist managers and the organisation to ensure:
- Vulnerable children, young people and their families' outcomes are improved.
 - Services are achieving consistently high standards.
 - Services are regularly monitored, reviewed and evaluated.
 - The organisational culture is committed to learning and continual development.
 - The continuous improvement and development of the children's workforce.

2. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 2.1 Assuring quality is everyone's responsibility. There are some specific roles for:
- Frontline staff.
 - Managers.
 - Quality assurance team.
 - Performance Meeting.
 - Corporate Parenting Forum.
 - Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel.
 - Local Safeguarding Children Board.

Frontline staff

- 2.2 Frontline staff are responsible for ensuring they uphold high quality practice standards, monitor their effectiveness and undertake learning and development to improve where necessary. Those conducting inspections, audits and other quality assurance approaches share responsibility for ensuring that frontline staff are actively engaged in the quality assurance process of setting and monitoring standards.

Managers

- 2.3 Managers are responsible for supporting frontline and support staff to deliver services that are of a high standard and effective. This is achieved through the line management process, including performance management. Managers are responsible for ensuring their direct reports are very clear about expectations in the supervision and appraisal process and how practice standards are an integral element of the process. Managers will use all of the available processes to recognise and praise good performance and address poor performance.

Quality Assurance Team

- 2.4 The team is responsible, together with frontline staff, managers and the Directorate Management Team for scrutinising and monitoring the work of the children's workforce in the Royal Borough in accordance with current legislation, practice

standards and national and local priorities. The Quality Assurance Team does not negate the accountability of operational managers for quality assurance.

- 2.5 The Quality Assurance Team comprises the Child Protection Conference Chairs/Independent Reviewing Officers, Local Authority Designated Officer and Foster Carer Reviewing Officer. Led by the Senior Quality Assurance Manager and working closely with the Principal Social Worker, it has a clear coordinating and analysis function for the Directorate, providing an overview of quality and monitoring improvement plans. Activity includes, but not exclusively:
- Providing support and challenge at an individual, team, service or Directorate level regarding practice standards and service delivery.
 - Targeting support for teams or individuals who are identified as needing additional support to enable accelerated improvement.
 - Coordinating and delivering casework and supervision audit, see appendix 1: Annual audit programme.
 - Coordinating and delivering themed audits, as identified in the annual audit programme determined by the Directorate Management Team.
 - Supporting multiagency audits – mainly organised through the Windsor and Maidenhead Local Safeguarding Children Board.
 - Reporting on Child Protection Conferences and Child in Care Reviews.
 - Developing policies and procedures to support the workforce in their work to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families.

Performance Meeting

- 2.6 Every other month, the Director of Children's Services chairs a performance day where all parts of the service are required to attend and present on their performance data and activity. This replaced the previous Performance Quality Assurance Group meetings and ensures that the Director of Children's Services is fully sighted on operational performance and can challenge appropriately. The Lead Member for Children's Services also attends these meetings..

Corporate Parenting Forum

- 2.7 The Royal Borough and partners of the Local Authority are responsible for ensuring that all services provided to children and young people in care and care leavers are delivered in line with statute and are of a high standard and achieving good outcomes.
- 2.8 The Corporate Parenting Forum receives qualitative and quantitative data reports from professionals delivering services to children in care and care leavers. The forum:
- Acts as the Forum through which elected members exercise their corporate parenting role and responsibilities.
 - Ensures that the Council Pledge to children and care leavers is meaningful and delivered in full.
 - Examine ways in which the Council as a whole and partner agencies can improve the life chances of all children in care and care leavers and become a more effective corporate parent.
 - Reflects the commitment of the Council, to reduce the need for children and young people to come into care and be an excellent corporate parent for those in care.

- Refers matters to the Council's Scrutiny and Overview Board which warrant further investigation.
- Advises the Cabinet of any actions which need to be taken.
- Ensures there are good working arrangements between council departments and partner agencies, maintaining an overview of these services and holding operational services to account.
- Provides an opportunity for elected members to hear the views, wishes and feelings of the children and young people in the care of the council, so that they are able to understand their experiences of being in care.
- Maintains a strategic overview of new developments, initiatives, plans, policies and strategies that impact on services for children in care and care leavers.
- Monitors the performance of the Council by receiving regular progress reports on all performance data relating to Children in Care Services.
- Receives regular reports on the needs of care leavers including employment, further education, training and housing.
- Receive annual reports from the Adoption and Fostering Services and Reviewing Officers.
- Agrees an annual forward plan setting out its key priorities and areas for action. This will be included in the annual report which will be submitted council.
- Acknowledges and celebrates the achievements of children and young people in care in areas of education, drama, sport and employment, and participate in annual celebration events.
- Takes account of direct experiences of parents of children in care and to ensure they influence the improvement of services and policy development.

2.9 The Forum membership comprises elected members and officers with a special interest in children in care and care leavers and meets every two months. Each meeting reviews data on:

- Demographics of children in care.
- Outcomes of children in care, including education, health, employment and housing.
- Placement types and stability.
- Timescales of processes that support children in care.

Overview and Scrutiny Panel

2.10 The Council's Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel discharges the functions conferred by Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000. The Overview and Scrutiny Panel:

- Reviews and/or scrutinises decisions to be made by Cabinet and made by it or actions taken in connection with the discharge of any of the Council's functions.
- Makes reports and/or recommendations to the full Council and/or the Cabinet in connection with the discharge of any functions.
- Considers any matter affecting the area or its inhabitants.
- Exercises the right to call-in, for reconsideration, decisions made in respect of which no steps have been taken to implement the decision.
- Assists the Council and the Cabinet in the development of its budget and analysis of the draft plans to be submitted to Council.
- Conducts such necessary research and investigation in the analysis of the policy issues and the possible options for the plans to be submitted to Council as above.

- Questions the Lead Member for Children’s Services and the Director of Children’s Services about issues and proposals affecting the area.
- Liaises with other external organisations operating in the area, whether national, regional or local, to ensure that the interest of local people are enhanced by collaborative working.
- Reviews and scrutinises the decisions to be made by Cabinet and which have been made by the Cabinet and Council officers both in relation to individual decisions and over time.
- Reviews and scrutinises the performance of the Council in relation to its policy objectives, performance targets and/or particular service areas.
- Questions members of the Cabinet and Directors about their decisions, whether generally in comparison with service plans and targets over a period of time, or in relation to particular decisions, initiatives or projects.
- Makes recommendations to the Cabinet and/or Council arising from the outcome of the Scrutiny process.
- Reviews and scrutinises the performance of the relevant bodies in the area and invite reports from them to address an Overview and Scrutiny Panel and local people about their activities and performance.
- Questions and gathers evidence from any person or organisation (with that person/organisation's consent).
- Considers any petitions referred to the Panel in accordance with the Council Procedure Rules C10.

Windsor and Maidenhead Local Safeguarding Children Board

2.11 The Children Act 2004 requires each Local Authority to establish a Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). The LSCB is a key statutory mechanism for ensuring relevant organisations in a local area co-operate to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, young people and their families and ensure single agency and multiagency work in child protection is of a good standard. In delivering its function, the LSCB Monitoring and Evaluation sub-group receives regular reports on the performance of member agencies. The Monitoring and Evaluation sub-group provides the quality assurance function of the LSCB, commissioning multi-agency audits and reviewing individual organisations’ assurance activity.

2.12 A part of the Windsor and Maidenhead Safeguarding Children Board’s scrutiny function is carried out through the Serious Case Review process. The Serious Case Review process is an investigation into the engagement of services with that child or young person before his/her death or near miss of a death. Each Serious Case Review includes internal management review reports from each agency involved. The internal management review sets out how the agency carried out its functions. The LSCB Serious Case Review sub-group analyses the learning from the Serious Case Review, and develops and monitors the implementation of an action plan to achieve improvements. Serious Case Reviews are conducted under the guidance contained in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015. The LSCB needs to demonstrate that all partner organisations have learnt from Serious Case Reviews and that practice has evolved as a result of the review.

Learning and development

2.13 The supervision and appraisal processes are tools to plan an employee’s professional development. The Royal Borough is committed to ensure all staff are

supported to develop professionally within the organisation, in line with the business need. There are a range of organisational policies supporting learning and development including the Supervision Policy, Appraisal Policy, Learning and Development Policy.

2.14 Supervision and appraisal form the key mechanism for staff and managers to monitor and practice across the directorate against a range of standards and professional capabilities framework. The intention is to adhere to the frameworks for the relevant professional groups.

3. QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESSES

3.1 A range of information is used to inform the Directorate, the wider Council and its partners about the quality and effectiveness of Children's Services, including:

- User feedback from children, young people and their parents/carers.
- Staff feedback.
- Workforce information - vacancies, sickness, workloads etc.
- Financial information - placements, commissioned services etc.
- Performance indicators and analysis.
- Audits and deep dive reviews into specific areas of practice.
- Independent Management Reviews and Serious Case Reviews.
- External inspection of regulated services – children in need of help and protection, children in care and care leavers, schools and colleges.

3.2 Additional information is available to the Directorate to assess quality, including:

- Complaints and compliments.
- Reviewing Officer/Child Protection Conference Chair quality assurance reports.
- Adoption Panel and Fostering Panel quality assurance reports.

Complaints and compliment monitoring

3.3 This function is provided under Regulation 13 of the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure 2006. Complaints and compliments are monitored quarterly through the Performance Meetings and issues raised with the relevant manager. An annual complaints report is produced and shared with the Directorate Management Team, the Lead Member for Children's Services and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

Staff feedback

3.4 The Director of Children's Services has regular dialogue with staff in Children's Services, including through the Staff Forum, to gather views/comments on practice issues, in a range of for a, for instance, regular focus groups, staff briefings and Induction of new starters.

User feedback

3.5 It is essential that children, young people and their families' views about the services that they received are sought and captured within the quality assurance process.

This ensures services are matching needs. Their comments/feedback is obtained through a range of methods, including:

- User groups.
- Quality assurance audit tool.
- Spot questionnaires and surveys.
- Focus groups with Director of Children's Services and Lead Member for Children's Services.
- Feedback from Child Protection Conferences and Children in Care Reviews.

4. QUALITY ASSURANCE IN EDUCATION

Practice standards

4.1 There are a number of practice and professional standards that govern work in education, including:

- Ofsted Frameworks for the Inspection of Education Providers¹.
- Ofsted Framework for the Inspection of Local Authority arrangements for supporting school improvement².
- Professional Standards for Education Improvement Professionals (2005).
- School Leadership Standards³.
- Teachers Standards for teaching staff employed within Cognition and Learning and Ethnic Minority Achievement.⁴

4.2 All educational psychologists are registered by law with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), which has strict requirements for professional work, continuing professional development, and ethical standards. The HCPC monitors the work of a random sample of educational psychologists every three years, and failure to demonstrate evidence of these standards would result in removal from the register and an inability to continue to practise as an Educational Psychologist.

Quality assurance of practice

4.3 Practice of all staff in Education is assured in the following ways:

- All staff are appraised annually and reviewed at six monthly intervals according to the Royal Borough's standards and school leadership standards so that their work reflects the priorities and overall objectives of the Council.
- Supervision and appraisal processes include regular reviews of individuals' professional development portfolios. These demonstrate that staff are up to date with local and national education policy and that learning and development feeds through to have a positive impact upon the achievement of children.
- A regular programme of practice observations.
- Training event evaluations.
- Comments, compliments and complaints.

4.4 Individual areas within Education have further measures in place to quality assure their practice:

School
Improvement

- Quality of education provision monitored through a risk assessment tool, quantitative data in the Royal Borough education data pack, outcomes of Ofsted inspections and intelligence gathered as part of the core allocation of adviser time to education providers.
- Education Improvement Advisers are held to account by the Director of Children's Services and Elected Members for: the accuracy of judgments made on education providers, meeting education targets in the Children's Services

¹ [http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/framework-for-regulation-of-provision-early-years-register /](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/framework-for-regulation-of-provision-early-years-register/)
<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/framework-for-school-inspection>

² <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/framework-for-inspection-of-local-authority-arrangements-for-supporting-school-improvement>

³ <http://www.nationalcollege.org.uk/national-standards-for-headteachers>

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teachers-standards11>

Business plan and the impact on education priorities outlined in the annual “Standards and Quality of Education report”.

- Joint visits to Early Years settings are undertaken to observe officers’ direct work with providers.
- The service regularly monitors its impact through Self Evaluation based on the Ofsted Handbook for the inspection of Local Authorities arrangements for school improvement.
- School leaders and governors are surveyed annually to gain feedback on service delivery, which feeds into the self evaluation process.

Virtual School

- Annual reporting to the Corporate Parenting Forum.
- Virtual School Governing Board and Leadership Team: monitoring and evaluating standards of attainment, progress, attendance and impact of interventions.
- Analysis of achievement of targets within Personal Education Plans (PEPs); moderation of PEPs and case studies.
- Evaluation of training events.

Cognition and Learning/ Ethnic Minority Achievement Team

- Activity monitored in schools and impact evaluated through testing pupils prior and post interventions; school surveys which include pupil voice.
- The team manager monitors the impact of their training in schools via school leaders asking if course participants are able to improve their practice following training by the team.

Education Psychology and Behaviour Support Service

- All casework of a statutory nature is peer-reviewed. This means that statutory reports are read through in detail by a fellow educational psychologist so that all test results are checked, reporting style is checked for consistency and suitability for audience, and recommendations are based on assessed needs and evidence of impact where available.
- At two yearly intervals, parents and young people are asked for their views on the effectiveness and quality of the service they have received through random sampling over a three week period.
- At the end of every long term, educational psychology and Behaviour Support Service files are audited in order to decide on whether a case should be closed and documents archived. This process highlights both good practice and any areas requiring improvement.
- Periodic auditing of statutory casework takes place in order to discern trends and to learn lessons in terms of how the Royal Borough is spending funds to meet special educational needs (SEN).

5. QUALITY ASSURANCE IN EARLY HELP

Practice standards in early help

- 5.1 Within teams and services in Early Help, there are high expectations on the quality of practice. Practice standards are informed by the principles outlined in the Early Help Strategy. These are:
- Family engagement and participation.
 - Doing what works.
 - Integrated working.
 - Reducing dependency.
- 5.2 Practice is supported through regular supervision, monitoring of workloads and encouraging professionals through training. Practitioners are supported through team meetings, team development days and management oversight to ensure the right resources are in place to enable staff to undertake their job to their potential.

Quality assurance of practice

- 5.3 All aspects of practice are monitored and scrutinised on a regular basis. This includes, through the normal line manager arrangements; case file audits, supervision records audits and practice observations of group sessions at Children's Centres or Youth Centres.
- 5.4 Audits assure good case planning and confirm actions have been completed and received appropriate management oversight to ensure the needs of children and young people are being met. The Head of Commissioning – Adults, Children and Health is responsible for an annual auditing programme, inclusive of case files, supervision and themed audits where required.
- 5.5 Practitioners' performance is measured against their job accountabilities, professional standards, objectives and indicators. Measurement occurs in supervision, through audits and annual appraisal. The measurement of performance is designed to identify areas of successful delivery and areas for improvement. The performance of all practitioners as a whole group is scrutinised at Directorate, service and team level. Scrutiny is focussed on developing understanding and ensures a proactive approach to identifying themes/areas requiring action and themed audits. Performance monitoring provides evidence about the elements of practice, which are leading to positive outcomes for children, young people and their families.

Monthly case audit programme

- 5.6 The purpose of audit is to monitor the service provided to children, young people and their families with particular reference to practice standards, policy and regulation identifying where corrective action is required. The Royal Borough operates a monthly case file audit schedule.
- 5.7 Case file auditing occurs across all areas including Youth Offending, Youth Service, Education Welfare, Children Centres, Parenting Team and Intensive Family Support to ensure a consistent and embedded approach to quality assurance.
- 5.8 Auditing is undertaken using the electronic care record held on the Integrated Children's System (ICS) Paris and/or case notes held in other computer systems. All case file auditing includes auditing of supervision and management decisions.

5.9 Team Managers undertake two case file audits per month with a total of 14 cases audited each month. Cases are identified for audit on a random basis every month. If any concerns are identified regarding a child's safety or wellbeing, the auditor is responsible for ensuring that the case holding professional and their manager are notified as a matter of urgency. Auditors must not wait until auditing is completed before raising their concerns. The completed audit tool must be kept on the child's record.

Practice observations

5.10 Practice sessions such as Stay and Play and Youth activities are observed routinely by each Children's Centre and Youth Service manager, to ensure quality of provision. These observations are recorded and used by each practitioner and team to improve practice. This may include identifying training needs or additional resources to improve the activity.

Early Help Assessments

5.11 The Early Help Assessment (formerly known as Common Assessment Framework) is now well established within the Royal Borough and used to assesses and identify early help support needs. Arrangements for quality assuring early help assessments are in the process of being developed.

Comments from children, young people and families/stakeholders

5.12 Customer feedback is crucial to informing the effective development of early help services. Feedback and involvement of children, young people and families is encouraged in a mixture of ways. Formal one off consultations undertaken on significant changes, e.g. a change of provision, and ongoing consultation and engagement to inform delivery with both families and stakeholders such as:

- Young people's assessments of Youth Activities.
- Feedback on sessions from young people and their families.
- Advisory Boards for Children's Centres and Youth Centres.
- Youth Council.

5.13 The results of this ongoing consultation and engagement inform developments and how the service is delivered. Through feedback and posters such as "You said We did", children, young people and families are able to see their views are valued and have an impact on service delivery.

6. QUALITY ASSURANCE IN SOCIAL CARE

Practice standards for children's social care

- 6.1 Significant legislation and regulation provide the main context within which Children's Safeguarding Services provide services to children, young people and their families in the borough.
- 6.2 The Social Work Reform Board has developed practice standards for employing social workers; adherence to standards supports structure of a high quality service. The standards are grouped into eight themes. They are:
- Have in place a social work accountability framework informed by knowledge of good social work practice and the experience and expertise of service users, carers and practitioners.
 - Use effective workforce planning systems to make sure that the right number of social workers, with the right level of skills and experience, are available to meet current and future service demands.
 - Implement transparent systems to manage workload and case allocation in order to protect service users and practitioners.
 - Make sure that social workers can do their jobs safely and have the practical tools and resources they need to practise effectively. Assess risks and take action to minimise and prevent them.
 - Ensure that social workers have regular and appropriate social work supervision.
 - Provide opportunities for continuing professional development, as well as access to research and practice guidance.
 - Ensure social workers can maintain their professional registration.
 - Establish effective partnerships with higher education institutions and other organisations to support the delivery of social work education and continuing professional development.

Quality assurance of practice

- 6.3 All aspects of social work practice are monitored and scrutinised on a regular basis, through the normal line manager arrangements, case file audits, supervision records audits and deep dive audits.
- 6.4 Audits assure good case planning and confirm actions have been completed and received appropriate management oversight to ensure the safety and welfare of the child/young person. The Head of Commissioning – Adults, Children and Health is responsible for the annual auditing programme.
- 6.5 Practitioners' performance is measured against professional standards, objectives and indicators. Measurement occurs in supervision, through audits and annual appraisal. The measurement of performance is designed to identify areas of successful delivery and areas for improvement. The performance of all practitioners as a whole group is scrutinised at Directorate, service and team level. Scrutiny is focussed on developing understanding and to ensure a proactive approach to identifying themes/areas requiring action and themed audits. Performance monitoring provides evidence about the elements of practice, which are leading to positive outcomes for children, young people and their families.

Monitoring Child in Care Reviews and Child Protection Conferences

- 6.7 The purpose of auditing children in care reviews and child protection conferences is to ensure the quality of practice against specified standards and statutory guidance, local procedures and policies.
- 6.8 The Quality Assurance Team has a central role in the quality assurance process and specifically in assuring the quality of child protection planning and review. The Reviewing Officers are pivotal in quality assuring practice. They are the 'eyes and ears' of the organisation. If they become aware of practice concerns that are placing a child/young person at risk, they are required to raise an alert and notify the relevant Service/Team Manager immediately. The Service/Team Manager will investigate the issues raised and take appropriate action. If the Reviewing Officer becomes aware of a serious issue or one that involves a management decision they will raise a management alert which will be sent to the relevant Head of Service/Service Leader.
- 6.9 In addition at the completion of each child in care statutory review, it is the responsibility of the Reviewing Officer to complete a monitoring form. This contains information relating to the quality of social work practice both leading up to and during the review. This information is shared with Service Leaders/Heads of Service.
- 6.10 The Senior Quality Assurance Manager:
- Provides social workers with a consultation document so they can monitor and report on the quality of the Chairing of the Child Protection conferences and reviews.
 - Observes a minimum of two Child Protection Conferences a quarter to measure whether the chairing is robust and safeguarding issues are appropriately addressed within the conference.
 - Samples child protection minutes and child in care reviews to ensure the quality of minutes, evidence that the conferences/reviews have considered all relevant information and the quality of multi agency decision making, establishing that the threshold has been met for an ongoing child protection plan or removal of the plan.
- 6.11 The Reviewing Officers' primary focus is to quality assure the care planning and review process for each child and young person and to ensure that his/her current wishes and feelings are given full consideration. The Reviewing Officers should identify areas of good practice as well as areas that need to be improved.
- 6.12 In some instances, the Reviewing Officer may enter into dispute with responsible officers in relation to care planning. In such circumstances an effective process is essential to aid the prompt resolution of the dispute, to get the care plan back on track and to maintain healthy work relationships. A dispute resolution meeting allows the Reviewing Officer to resolve disputes in relation to the care of children/young people in care at the very earliest opportunity. In all circumstances, disputes in the first instance, should be resolved with the responsible Social Worker or Service/Team Manager. Situations concerning safeguarding issues should be escalated immediately and not delayed.
- 6.13 Service/Team Managers ensure that all matters identified through the dispute resolution process are addressed through supervision and appraisal arrangements with responsible Social Workers and line managers.

Monthly case audit programme

- 6.14 The purpose of audit is to monitor the service provided to children, young people and their families with particular reference to practice standards, policy and regulation identifying where corrective action is required. The Royal Borough operates a monthly case file audit schedule, see Appendix 1. The random monthly audit schedule takes place for 10 months of the year. The remaining two months each year is used to undertake deep dive/themed audits
- 6.15 Case file auditing occurs across all frontline social work to ensure a consistent and embedded approach to quality assurance. Case auditing includes auditing of supervision and management decisions and is supported by a range of audit tools.
- 6.16 All managers undertake case file audits across children's services, including:
- Director of Children's Services.
 - Acting Head of Safeguarding and Children in Care.
 - Acting Head of Early Help and MASH.
 - Service Leaders.
 - Service/Team Managers.
 - Assistant Team Managers/Consultant Practitioners.
 - Quality Assurance Team.
- 6.17 Cases are identified for audit on a random basis every month. Auditors' findings are collated and submitted to the Heads of Service and Service/Team Managers for action. If any concerns are identified regarding a child's safety or wellbeing, the auditor is responsible for ensuring that the case holding Social Worker and their Service/Team Manager are notified as a matter of urgency. Auditors must not wait until auditing is completed before raising their concerns. The completed audit tool should be kept on the child's record. On closure of any case the whole case should be re audited by the Service/Team Manager.

Themed audits

- 6.18 The primary purpose of themed/deep dive audits is to explore in more detail themes that have come to light through the random monthly auditing system or in response to any other issue of concern. Themed audits take place as required.
- 6.19 All audits include seeking service users and staff comments, attending meetings and tracking the child's journey through the child protection process. The desired outcomes of themed audits are:
- To provide evidence based robust self-assessment of critical areas of service.
 - To identify areas of good practice for dissemination.
 - To identify areas of ongoing weakness and potential risk for further targeted improvement work or intensified management direction.
- 6.20 The result of a themed audit is a report that provides an effective evaluation of the quality of the area of service audited. Where appropriate it addresses the relationship with partner agencies and identifies strengths and barriers to effective interventions.
- 6.21 At the completion of each audit an action plan is developed by the relevant Service Leaders, Team Managers and staff from the Quality Assurance Team to address

areas for improvement. The action plans are monitored and the area may be re-audited to ensure that there has been a sustained improvement in practice.

Comments of children, young people and their families

- 6.22 When a decision is made to convene an initial child protection conference, children, young people and their families are offered the opportunity to have a pre meeting with the Reviewing Officer prior to the conference. The purpose of this meeting is to ensure that they are fully engaged in the conference process. The social worker, or identified professional, will ensure the child/young person's views are represented at the meeting if the child/young person does not attend.
- 6.23 Parents and carers are provided with leaflets explaining the child protection conference process. Following a child protection conference a consultation document will be shared with children, young people and their parents and carers to obtain their views on the child protection conference process.
- 6.24 At the end of a Child Protection Conference or Child in Care Review, the Reviewing Officer will obtain comments from children, young people and their families by way of a questionnaire. It is the responsibility of the chair to gather this information in person either at or following the conference.
- 6.25 All children and young people of an appropriate age are invited to attend their review and are offered the opportunity to meet with the Reviewing Officer if they wish. For those children and young people who do not attend their Child in Care review, they are offered the opportunity to provide feedback via the consultation form to ensure their views are considered as part of the review process.
- 6.26 Children and young people are consulted via a leaflet, which they can give to the Child Protection and Reviewing Officer or the social worker prior to their review. Parents are given the opportunity to speak separately to the Reviewing Officer when required.
- 6.27 The Corporate Parenting Panel consults with children and young people through Kickback the Children in Care Council.

Comments from Foster Carers

- 6.28 Foster carers' views are obtained via two separate processes, their annual review and the bi-monthly Foster Carer Forum.

Appendix 1: Annual Case Audit Programme (Social Care and Early Help)

Month	Social Care	Early Help
January	Managers' case file audits – 25	Managers' case file audits – 14 (own service area)
February	Managers' case file audits – 25	Managers' case file audits – 14 (peer service area)
March	Managers' case file audits – 25	Managers' case file audits – 14 (peer service area)
April	Deep dive audits – 10	Deep dive audits – 10
May	Managers' case file audits – 25	Managers' case file audits – 14 (own service area)
June	Managers' case file audits – 25	Managers' case file audits – 14 (peer service area)
July	Managers' case file audits – 25	Managers' case file audits – 14 (own service area)
August	Deep dive audits – 10	Deep dive audits – 10
September	Managers' case file audits – 25	Managers' case file audits – 14 (own service area)
October	Managers' case file audits – 25	Managers' case file audits – 14 (peer service area)
November	Managers' case file audits – 25	Managers' case file audits – 14 (peer service area)
December	Managers' case file audits – 25	Managers' case file audits – 14 (own service area)

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