



Social Care Services Board
25 January 2016

QUALITY ASSURANCE ARRANGEMENTS

Purpose of the report: Scrutiny of Performance Management was requested following the findings of the Internal Audit of June 2015 in respect of the work of the Quality Assurance Team.

Introduction: Internal audit findings in June 2015 noted that “The same recurring issues have been recorded by the QA Team over a number of years and many of the actions agreed had not been fully implemented”. Ofsted have also commented on this; indicating that they did not see the impact of audit on learning and improving practice. In the last six months the approach to quality assurance has undergone significant change and is now focussed on regular peer auditing and a programme of specific thematic audits.

Background – Children’s Improvement Plan and QA

1. The [Children’s Improvement Plan](#) published in September 2015 included a specific work-stream to strengthen Quality Assurance (QA). As a first step we reviewed best practice from other local authorities rated as “good” for safeguarding, alongside the existing feedback from Ofsted and our own internal audits.
2. The result of this review was a strong commitment and plan to implement a revised QA Framework with a focus on Children’s Services and also the wider Children, Schools and Families Directorate. In short, we are seeking to shift towards a more integrated QA approach which encourages stronger ownership among practitioners and is more sharply focused on outcomes for children.
3. The work is in progress and a number of key changes have already been made. There is though further work to do over the coming months to embed the new QA approach.

Work completed to date

4. Key changes already made include:
 - **Developed a set of practice values**

Through September and October 2015 a series of workshops were held which involved over 300 practitioners, young people, families, carers in developing a revised core set of practice values. The result is a short list of agreed practice values that are now being embedded into our practice. They include how staff work together and the expectations that children, young people, families and carers have of us. The standards and a short accompanying video have been published online (see **Annex 1**).
 - **Introduced monthly peer auditing**

Since September 2015 all managers in the service have started to complete a case audit each month (on a colleague's case) and all the results are collated and circulated back to managers. Peer auditing is recognised as an integral part of improving practice as it widens ownership of the auditing and learning process.
 - **Introduced a new programme of thematic audits**

The QA team is now supporting the area and county teams in carrying out monthly thematic audits which began in September 2015. These are linked to monthly Ofsted monitoring visits and typically focus on one of Children in Need, Child Sexual Exploitation, and Looked After Children and Care leavers.
 - **Stated dip sampling to ensure learning is put into practice**

To support the new audit programme dip sampling has been introduced. The QA sample cases to ensure lessons from previous audits are being put in place and are achieving the improvement in quality of practice sought.
 - **Started to refresh the programme of practice workshops**

For lessons from audits to be embedded they need to be shared, discussed and acted on across teams. To strengthen this, a new programme of practice workshops is being established. One element already underway is a standing item on practice learning at a monthly workshop with all the team and assistant team managers from across children's services (the "Children's Extended Leadership Group").
 - **Improved audit forms**

To support the audit programme the QA team have updated the audit forms used to ensure they better reflect the practice improvements sought.
5. The revised QA programme is beginning to evidence a better understanding of the principles of quality assurance and its importance in underpinning and evidencing good practice.

What next

6. We continue to develop the QA arrangements and will publish the overall revised QA Framework in February 2016.

7. Meanwhile we will continue to ensure lessons are acted on through the development of better ways of sharing and embedding learning into practice. This forms part of the wider work-stream to improve “Culture and Practice” and next steps to be completed in February 2016 include:
 - Publication of a new online practice manual tool
 - Working with Ofsted to deliver audit workshops that develop our audit skills
 - Starting a new programme of practice workshops through 2016
8. As part of that process the QA team in conjunction with the Performance Team will develop a range of performance measures against which the practice values and standards can be assessed.

Conclusions:

9. The QA work of the service is currently being strengthened as part of the wider Children’s Improvement Plan. This work is now well underway in developing the new Framework and approach to QA across the Service and Directorate.
10. The QA Team will continue to focus its attention on bringing about continuous improvement in the service and meeting the recommendations of Ofsted. The team’s role and focus will be providing challenge to the areas through the audit process and assist them in driving up standards in practice.

Recommendations:

11. That the QA Team provide a report to the Social Care Services Board in six months updating on progress on the implementation a revised QA Framework.

Next Steps:

12. Key next steps include:
 - Published revised QA Framework in February 2016
 - Publish practice manual in February 2016
 - Continue to implement the new cycle of monthly audits (peer, thematic, and dip)

Report contact: Julian Gordon-Walker Head of Safeguarding

Contact details: Julian.gordon-walker@surreycc.gov.uk

Tel: 01483-519275

Sources/background papers:

- Practice values
- [Children’s Improvement Plan](#)

Annex 1: Practice values and standards co-design work

1. WHY WE DID IT: A FOUNDATION FOR IMPROVED PRACTICE

One of the first key actions for “Culture and Practice” and “Quality Assurance” in the Improvement Plan is to “develop key practice standards through co-design with children, young people and practitioners” (action 2.1).

As this is a key foundation to our overall work on culture and practice improvement we prioritised the completion of this task. We also sought to gain value from the process of engaging in co-design, as well as the end product itself.

2. WHAT WE DID: THE VALUES ROAD-SHOW

To enable input from a large number of people and fit around people’s day-to-day responsibilities we designed a 1.5 hour long workshop and took it on road to teams in 26 different locations¹. All in all over 340 people were involved.



The format involved a ‘panel’, usually made up of two young people (apprentices in the children’s rights and/or CAMHS rights service) and two foster carers, along with two practitioners who volunteered themselves at the beginning of the session.

After an explanation from a facilitator about the purpose of the session and discussion about ground rules, the panel introduced themselves and talked about their experiences delivering and receiving services from Surrey County Council. Everyone at the workshop then answered the following questions:

¹ CAMHS Social Work Team, North East Child Protection / LAC Team, North West RAIS Team, South West LAC Team, Fostering East Team, Fostering West Team, North West Child Protection (2 cluster meetings), North West LAC Team, South East combined RAIS, Child Protection and LAC Teams, Woodlands Community Home Team, Burbank Community Home Team, Holland Close Community Home Team, Karibu Community Homes Team, Libertas Community Home Team, Cheyne Walk Community Home Team, Faircroft Community Home Team, Adoption Team, ACT, North East RAIS Team, HOPE Team, Ruth House Team, Disability West Team, Countywide Care Leavers’ Service Team, Disability East Team, Consort House, Extended Hours Team

- What is your motivation for doing your job?
- What do you consider to be the most important part of your work?
- Why did you make specific career choices?
- What work values will make you happy and successful?

Although only one question uses the word 'values', the above are all **values-based questions**. Asking the questions opened people up to sharing their values, and put them in a good place to then move on to work in breakout groups to design standards in the following three areas:

- How we work with children and young people
- The way we work and what we do
- How we support staff

The young people and foster carers were very much part of these breakout groups, and included in designing the standards with practitioners. At the end of the session we explained that the outputs from the workshops across children's services would be themed to form one set of values and standards.



3. THE FEEDBACK: MAKING A DIFFERENCE

(Q) *What is your motivation for doing your job?*

- An overwhelming amount of motivation related to achieving **positive outcomes for children, young people and their families**.
- People said they wanted "to protect children and ultimately help them reach their full potential", whilst also "provid[ing] hope for the future and empower[ing] families to make the right choices".
- Staff want "**to do a job that makes a positive difference** to people's lives", and empower those they work with – for example, saying "I wish to make a difference and to give vulnerable children a voice to empower them in their lives".

- Another theme was people's **personal motivations** for working in children's services. These personal motivations often related to experiences staff had as children and young people themselves e.g. "coming from a care background, if I can support one young person going through care, that's all good".
- Many wanted to support young people to have positive experiences like their own – for example, one member of staff wrote "I had a great and loving family and childhood and I want others to have that too".
- Staff also like "sense of belonging within the team" within their part of children's services.

(Q) Why did you make specific career choices?

- Again there was an overwhelming amount written about **helping and supporting children, young people and families**. Some staff chose to work in children's services because it's something they really want to do, and they wrote things like "it's what I have always wanted to do. I love helping people, especially young people" and "[I] like working with kids" and "I knew I wanted to work with young people".
- Staff give themselves to the job - "**to offer my support and skills to benefit others**", or "fostering – [an] opportunity to achieve positive outcomes for children in care".
- As with motivations, there were **some people who made choices because of their own experiences** - "[I] had an hard early life thought I could use my experience to help others", "to give back to the system that I grew up in, in whatever small way I can and to help continue the work that the services provide and aid improvement" and "Own bad experiences growing up - had good family and support, but understand that not everyone has that so want to be that support for other young people".
- Again there was a theme of **making a difference** - "I could not stand doing a boring, meaningless job regardless of how much it paid – I have to do something meaningful" and "[I want] to feel that my working days are spent making the world a better place".
- Foster carers shared that they "became full time foster carers to change my lives and hope to change the lives of those I care for" and "**to make a difference to young people**".
- Along the same lines, people made the choice based on **what they value in life** - "my career need to reflect my personal values and personality, hence career choice" and "from the desire to help others but keep a good work life balance for my family".
- A theme of **social justice** came through very clearly, with people writing answers like "I've always believed in social justice and equality. I think everyone wants to contribute positively to society, but they sometimes need additional support to feel empowered to achieve this" and "I felt like care leavers were over represented in the criminal justice system but many had the potential to have a happy, successful future given the right support and opportunities".
- People also had **personal motivations**, such as "to improve my life", "[a] desire to work with people" and "I had lots of energy that needed a focus and I liked young people".
- For some people it was not a deliberate choice, instead it was **something they tried out and then found to be a good fit** – for example, answers like "[I] fell into the job but haven't looked back" and "I found that I was good at working with challenging CYP".

(Q) What work values will make you happy and successful?

Theme – trust and respect

- "Stop changing what we do right"
- "Respect of my work and professional integrity, honesty and a wish to strive for better"
- "To be heard, to be valued, to be respected, to be supported, team to have my back, trust and honesty"
- "A supportive staff team, that respect and value my opinion and honesty and openness"

Theme – training and support

- "Supervision and appraisal"
- "Support, reward enough, good supervision, training offered, proven outcomes, and it being a good organisation"
- "Feeling well supported and protected as a social worker"
- "Respect and feeling listened to by management"

- “The most important part of my work is to have the necessary tools and support to meet the needs of the young people assigned to me”
- “Simplify paperwork and IT process”
- “Recognition of the work well done”
- “Supportive peers and managers, less paperwork and more time spent with families”
- “Promoting career development”

Theme – team work

- “People doing what they say they will, all working together for the same purpose, ensuring processes are not at the expenses of people”
- “Have a sense of belonging in a team. Pride in what I do”

Theme – impact

- “Keeping children at centre of work at all times”
- “Reliability – doing what you say you will. Always returning phone calls. Being respectful. Being timely.”
- “To work holistically with the clients’ needs”
- “To be there for our young people”
- “Making young people happy – value themselves”

(Q) What do you consider to be the most important part of your work?

Theme – being children, young people and family focused

- “Happy young people”
- “Advocating on behalf of carers”
- “Keeping children safe within their families wherever possible and being accountable when decisions about them are made”
- “To help children and young people know there’s a different way and people do care”
- “Enabling and empowering families”, and “Ensuring I have never missed the child’s story and they are central”

Theme – team work and support

- “Joint working”
- “Supporting children and young people”
- “Supporting social workers in their role – providing good supervision”
- “Building relationships and trust and getting things done e.g. following through on what is asked/needed from me by carers and young people”
- “Relationship building and maintaining these”
- “Trusting relationships”

Theme - making a difference

- “Making life changing decisions”
- “Seeing young people developing through overturning past trauma”
- “To make a difference to somebody’s life and help them to move on in a positive way”
- “Improving lives, giving children the best possible start”
- “Positive impact on the lives of children and adults”
- “Working with young people and wonderful colleagues to affect positive change”

Theme - honesty and trust

- “Being a good role model”
- “Do my job properly and the best I can”
- “Respect each other, listen to the views of others”
- “Be open to new ideas”
- “Listening, show I care (empathy) not just a tick box activity”
- “Being a good listener”
- “Being able to engage with families and develop relationships”
- “Being non judgemental”
- “Being open and honest with the people I work with”

Values and Standards

Having explored the values-based questions in each workshop there was a breakout activity with groups coming up with three standards in one of three areas.

- How we work with children and young people
- The way we work and what we do
- How we support staff

The 26 workshops generated 78 standards – these were then analysed and grouped by a small working group to come up with a draft set of values. These were then played back to a selection of the young people, carers and practitioners involved to check and validate them.

The final values are listed in the table below:

Practice values

They are written as things ‘we’ do – everyone in children’s services takes responsibility for doing them.

This is how we do things around here – Surrey Children Service

How we work with children and young people

- We build relationships with children, young people and their families as people
- We believe in children, young people and their families to make positive choices
- We are open and honest, doing the best we can with children and young people to keep them safe and well, without making promises we can’t keep

The way we work and what we do

- We respect the skills and resources each person brings to their work, listening to and learning from each other
- We support each other, regardless of team or organisation, and focus on working together in a holistic way (including resources)
- We make processes as simple as possible, allowing some flexibility to change them to meet the needs of children, young people and families
- We take responsibility for mistakes, and say sorry.

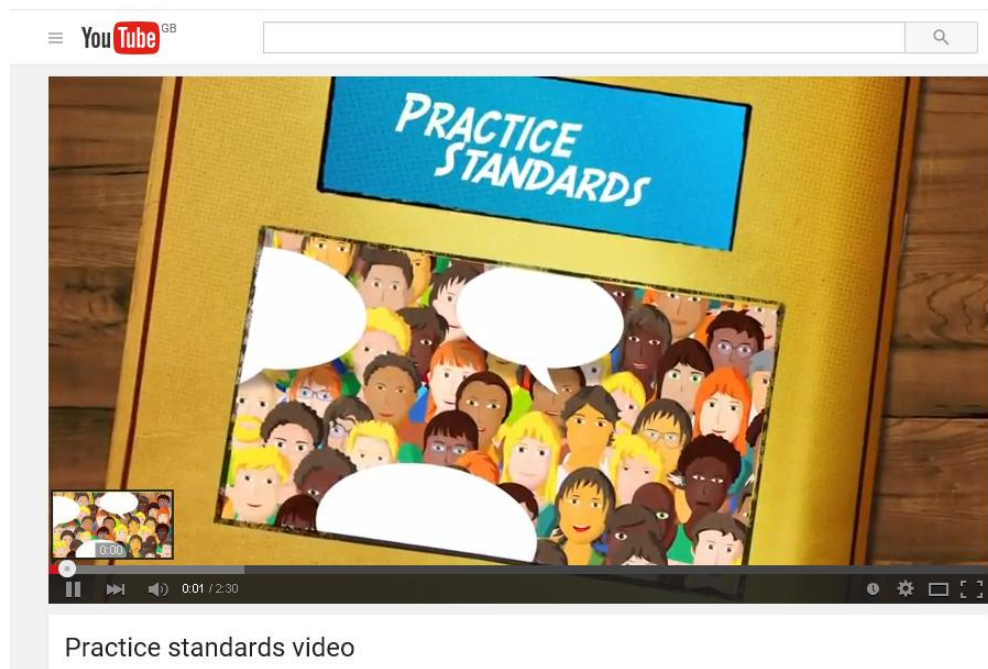
How we support staff

- We make sure everyone is working with a manageable amount of children, young people and families
- We make sure everyone feels well, safe and secure, reassured we have ‘got their back’ (especially during difficult times)
- We supervise staff, allowing time to share and reflect on our work, and recognise success stories
- We provide chances to take a next step in a career here, including steps which are not into social work

4. WHAT NEXT: EMBEDDING THE VALUES INTO THE WAY WE DO THINGS IN SURREY

The outputs were being communicated widely to practitioners, including through short video clips from the young people and foster carers involved.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IT4OMhePiMo>



As part of “the way we do things in Surrey” the values will inform the ongoing work on culture and practice. They will form the basis of a “Practice Manual” that will pull together examples of good practice.

This page is intentionally left blank