

Safeguarding OPG

Peer Review and Performance Update

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Peer Review Focus

The Peer Review Team focused on front line practice relating children in need, those subject to a child protection plan and protection of disabled children including:

- Effectiveness of management and supervision
- Public Law Outline
- A validation exercise of internal audit methodology

Peer Review Method

- Spent 5 days onsite at Bury Council (plus 2 days in advance file auditing)
- Spoke to more than 90 people
- Attended more than 35 meetings, focus groups and site visits
- Reviewed documents and performance analysis
- Collectively spent nearly 300 hours (plus extensive reading time)
- Reviewed 30 case files plus 9 audited cases
- Interviewed 13 allocated social workers/managers
- Observed 3 child protection case conferences

Key Messages

- The Local Authority has good insight and understands its strengths and weaknesses.
- There has been a gradual improvement in performance and practice following a decline which has been aided by a robust Quality Assurance & Performance Management Framework.
- Plans were not always consistently SMART or sufficiently outcome focused.
- Partnership working on the whole was found to be strong and effective both operationally and strategically.
- Staff consistently fed back that Bury is a nice place to work with good team working and a management culture that is open and supportive, morale was high.
- No cases reviewed resulted in escalations because all children reviewed were deemed to be safe and secure.

Key Findings – Part I

Case Planning

- Plans are not consistently SMART – template does not help

Visits to Children & Families

- Visiting frequencies are not adhered to consistently
- The purpose of the visit is not always clear

Public Law Outline

- There is drift in PLO cases; the process needs to be reviewed

Multi Agency Working

- There are good working relationships
- The use of 101 phone number to contact the police to arrange a Strategy Meetings was seen as an issue

Key Findings – Part II

Thresholds

- The application of thresholds by Social Care and partners is not always appropriate and can be overcautious

Resources

- There is a need for a Social Work Practice model
- Underdeveloped IT arrangements are a “blocker” to effective agile working
- Bury is seen as a good place to work – there is high morale

Management Oversight

- Some work is signed off by Managers when it is not clear that our own standards have not been met
- Managers are seen as approachable and supportive

Response to Peer Review

Continuing with what we were doing

- A number of issues raised were known and in the process of being addressed; this will continue (i.e. review of template for Plans; new PLO process; improvements to case management and planning process; quality assurance audit template)

Improvement Plan

- An Improvement Plan has been drawn up and shared
- Weekly progress meetings chaired by DCS and AD

Resources

- Funding for Social Work Practice model (Signs of Safety)
- Discussions regarding IT; infrastructure and agile working

Update on Performance

Item	August 2018	November 2018
Contacts progressed within 1 working day	63.9%	74.1%
Referrals progressed within 2 working days	38.1%	44.7%
% of Referrals which were repeat Referrals	25.0%	33.5%
CiN Visits – child seen in last 6 weeks	56.5%	81.2%
ICPCs which resulted in a CP Plan	64.9%	95.8%
CiN Visits – child seen in last 6 weeks	56.5%	81.2%
CLA Visits – child seen in last 6 weeks	66.4%	72.4%

Workforce

- Current Social Work establishment:

- 11 x Team Managers

- 5 x Assistant Team Managers

- 2 x Advanced Practitioners

- 55 x Social Workers

- 7 x Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO's)

Use of Agency Staff:

- 1 x Team Manager (covering sickness)

- 13 x Social Workers (covering 4 vacancies, 5 secondments and 4 maternity leave)

Recruitment

- Local Authorities across England are struggling to recruit experienced Social Workers.
- Bury has a fairly stable workforce who report feeling supported by Managers.
- Successful targeted recruitment has taken place during 2018 resulting in 8 experienced Agency staff being appointed to permanent positions. This approach will continue.
- Bury continues to offer good quality student placements and students have moved into permanent posts once qualified.

Retention

- Increased support to newly qualified Social Workers during their first year in employment.
- SMART phones provided to all staff – all will have IT equipment for mobile working shortly.
- Advanced Practitioner posts used to support less experienced workers.
- Monthly staff consultation group with the Principal Social Worker.
- Caseloads monitored by Team Managers/Strategic Leads.
- Alignment between practitioners and Workforce Development – Research in Practice (RIP) launched and practice forums established.
- National Assessment & Accreditation System (NAAS) – Bury was one of 5 LA's to pilot the scheme. Staff embraced this opportunity and with support from Management 16 of our Social Workers are now accredited.