

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN EDUCATION AND EARLY HELP

TO:	AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE		
DATE:	19 APRIL 2016	AGENDA ITEM:	3
TITLE:	QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK REFRESH		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	CLLR JAN GAVIN	PORTFOLIO:	CHILDREN'S SERVICES
SERVICE:	CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND EARLY HELP	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Adult Children and Education Committee received a paper from the Managing Director in June 2015 recommending that a Children's Services Improvement Board be established. This was agreed and the Board has had oversight of the quality of service provision in order to support the service in driving forward improvements. The refreshed framework was presented to Adult Children and Education Committee on 3 February 2016 where it was agreed and the recommendation of that Committee was that it should be presented to Audit and Governance for information.
- 1.2 This report builds on the emphasis of quality and refreshes the directorate's approach to performance and to quality assurance. It outlines how we will assure ourselves, the elected members and service users that the services we deliver are of high quality.
- 1.3 It contains a refreshed audit programme for the directorate which will ensure that we are auditing approximately 100 case files per quarter and using the findings from those audits to deliver improvements and to share best practice.
- 1.4 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.

1.4 It is important for this framework to be agreed by members both as part of their corporate parenting responsibilities and their democratic accountability.

1.4 The Quality Assurance Framework is attached as Appendix 1

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee notes the Quality Assurance Framework for use in Children, Education and Early Help Directorate and that it notes that the Annual Report should be added to the forward plan.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 Quality Assurance is part of a continual cycle of improvement. Whilst audit is one component of quality assurance, it is one of a number of tools we can use to evaluate our understanding of how we are delivering services and understand the experience of the service user. Surveys, consultations, focus groups and direct observations are other ways in which we can establish a baseline understanding of our services.

3.2 The Directorate has agreed that in order to deliver the framework they will have operational boards that fit neatly into the performance and business planning cycles.

3.3 A series of monthly operational performance boards will be summarised and themes fed into a quarterly operational quality assurance board. At the quarterly board, Heads of Service and key service managers will receive feedback from performance reports, audits, complaints, IRO escalations, service user feedback, quality of commissioned provision and themes arising from supervision.

3.4 The themes will be collated from this information and will be prioritised into a workplan that will inform the service plans and will input directly into the Learning and Development framework to secure continual improvement. It will also determine what activity needs to take place, for example, whether

we need to refresh a process, to undertake a multi-agency audit, or to undertake further consultation or focus groups with service users.

- 3.5 Quality Assurance and performance reports will be available through the normal Corporate Performance Reporting systems.
- 3.6 The Annual Quality Assurance report will however be reported formally to the Adult Children and Education Committee.

4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 4.1 This proposal is in line with the overall direction of the Council by meeting two of the following Corporate Plan priorities:

- 1. Safeguarding and protecting those that are most vulnerable;
- 2. Providing the best start in life through education, early help and healthy living.

- 4.2 Delivery of the Quality Assurance Framework will demonstrate the delivery of the Corporate Values and it is expected that the Quality Assurance Board will ensure this is done taking into account how we deliver on equalities.

- 4.3 The directorate's deliver of the Strategic Aim "To promote equality, social inclusion and a safe and healthy environment for all" will be monitored through the Quality Assurance Framework.

- 4.4 **Community Safety Implications** - Under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1988, the Council must consider the following in the exercise of its duties and decision-making:

- crime and disorder
- anti-social behaviour
- behaviour adversely affecting the environment
- substance misuse reduction

- 4.5 The Quality Assurance Framework will be an additional mechanism for improvements and dissemination of best practice in relation to all service delivery areas within Children, Education and Early Help, including monitoring how the Directorate responds to youth offending, domestic violence and anti-social behaviour issues including substance misuse.

- 4.6 A regular quality assurance and performance monitoring framework will assist in addressing health inequalities for our service users and will help us to identify and address with partners how they can assist in addressing this issue.

5. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 5.2 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is not relevant to the decision as a good overview of the quality of service delivery will address any inequalities and seek to remove them.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Whilst there are no legal implications in relation to this report, it is important to note that under Children's Services legislation, we are required under a general duty of the Children Act 2004 to address the quality of services and to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. This framework establishes a clear mechanism for doing so.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.