



Lancashire Safeguarding Children's Board Audit 1 Summary Report Children in Need and Prevention & Early Help Audit

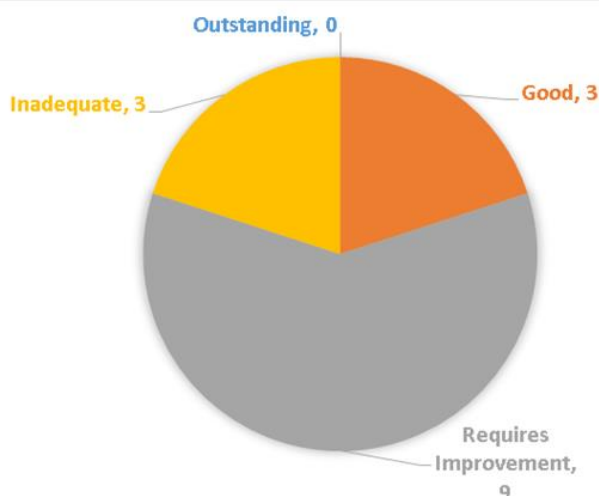
Introduction and Background

The LSCB have recently introduced a new scheme of multi-agency audit activity and this piece of work was the first audit undertaken using the new method. Audits are coordinated by the Quality Assurance and Performance Improvement (QAPI) sub-group. The theme for the first multi-agency audit was 'Child in Need and Prevention & Early Help', which was identified as a priority by the Local Authority's Ofsted Improvement Board Action Plan.

15 cases were audited, with 5 cases included from each of the Lancashire-12 areas (East, North and Central). Completion of the audits was requested from all agencies involved with each case and included input from Children's Social Care, Health Providers, CCG's, Education, Police, Probation, SEND, VCFS organisations and wellbeing, prevention and early help. The purpose of the audit was to identify good practice and to highlight areas for concern and development both on a single agency and multi-agency basis.

Each agency was asked to rate their involvement with the case by providing a grade (in line with CQC and Ofsted grading criteria). Completed single agency audits were combined into a multi-agency document which summarised each case in its entirety. Auditors then met to evaluate the cases on a multi-agency basis and suggest themes emerging from the audit work carried out. The final report was written based on all information collected, including single agency audit returns, case summaries and the discussions held at the auditor meetings.

Scoring



Cases were given an overall score (in line with CQC/Ofsted grading criteria), the score given was based on the single agency audit returns and was ratified by contributing agencies via the multi-agency audit meetings.

Of the 15 cases audited, 3 cases were deemed 'good', 9 cases 'required improvement' and 3 cases were considered 'inadequate'.

Themes

1. Information Sharing and communication – evidence of limited information sharing between health and children's social care; consistent issues with information with GP's.
2. Mental Health Service Provision – evidence of cases not accepted for CAMHS and a lack of clarity as to whether there is a consistent alternative service provision for cases that do not meet the CAMHS threshold.
3. Thresholds within Children's Social Care / CAF processes – Complexities evident with regards to detecting emotional abuse and how such issues can be sufficiently proven to meet S47 threshold. Clarification also required with regards to the purpose of CAF and successfully managing cases at this level when there are consent issues.
4. Engagement with child and family – Importance of good relationships between families and single agencies was evident. Cases where there was a lack of engagement tended to lead to no further action, which limited the help that could be offered.
5. Child Sexual Exploitation – Some evidence to suggest that subtle indicators of CSE had been overlooked.
6. Wellbeing, Prevention and Early Help – evidence of services within WPEHS working in isolation. This issue should be overcome by the 'WPEHS Universal Offer' (April 2017), which aims to offer a 'holistic plan for the whole family'.
7. Elective Home Education – some audit activity suggested a rise in Elective Home Education rates. How can elective home education be effectively safeguarded, especially in cases where school has previously acted as a protective factor for a child?
8. Domestic Abuse – Clear links in some audits between domestic abuse and emotional abuse (which links in with point 3 (above) and the potential difficulties in proving emotional abuse to meet S47 thresholds).

Next Steps

The findings of the audit have been shared with the LSCB Board and Lancashire County Council's Ofsted Improvement Board. Recommendations to meet the themes addressed above have been made, these will be shared with the single agencies concerned and actions will be monitored by the LSCB's quality assurance and performance improvement sub-group.