

**Children and Young People's
Overview and Scrutiny Committee**



7 February 2020

**Children's Social Care Quality
Assurance Framework**

**Report of John Pearce, Corporate Director of Children and Young
People's Services**

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an overview of the Children's Social Care Quality Assurance Framework.

Executive summary

- 2 In 2017 a Quality Improvement Framework was presented to Members of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Since this time there have been significant developments in relation to how we use our performance management information and to our collaborative case file audit programme. These developments have been underpinned by the implementation of Liquidlogic electronic social care record system and as a result our knowledge of the quality of social care practice is continuing to improve. We know that there is an overall improving trajectory in the quality of our practice and we know where we need to target our improvement activity.

Recommendation

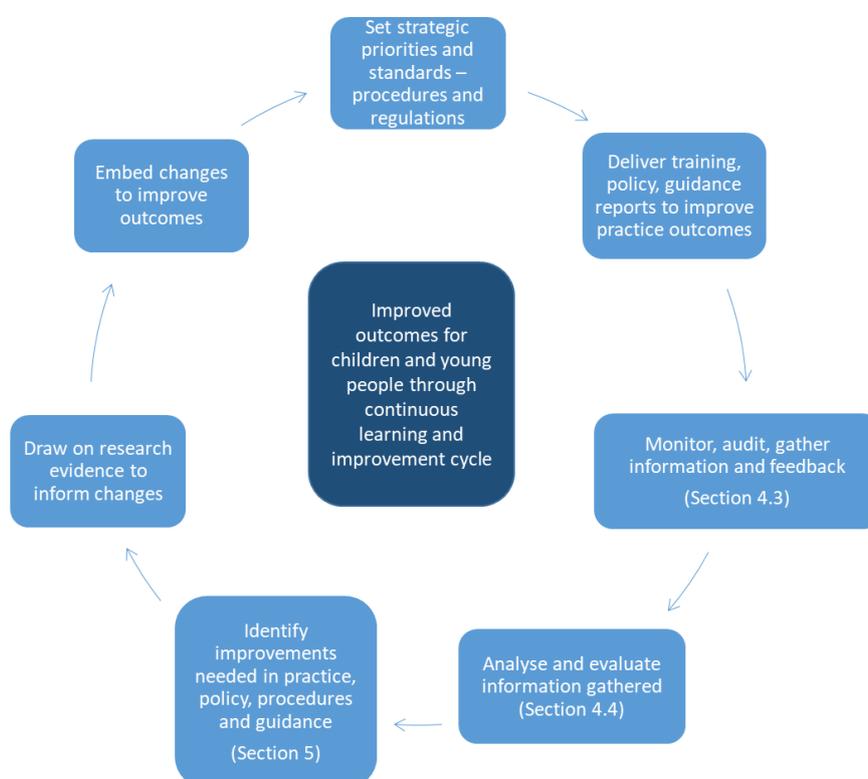
- 3 Members of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:
 - (a) Note the contents of the report

Background

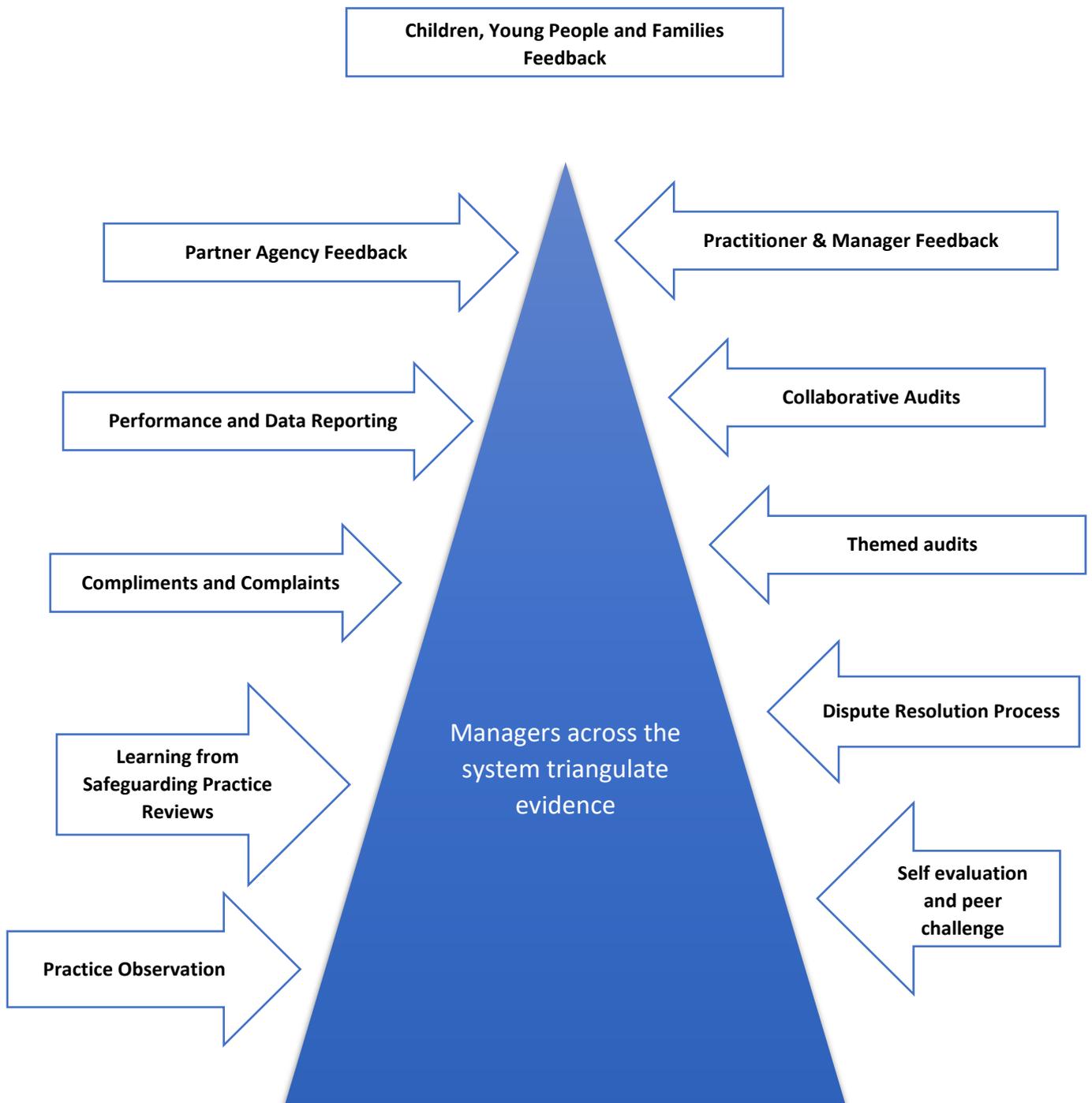
- 4 In November 2017 a presentation was given to Members of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee providing an overview of the Quality Improvement Framework and associated audit programme that was implemented at that time.
- 5 Since this time this framework has been strengthened and now evolved to integrate our Performance Management Framework and Audit Framework.

Quality Assurance Framework

- 6 The Quality Assurance Framework sets out how Durham Children's Social Care Services will ensure a focus on a single framework that continuously drives improvement in the quality of practice which in turn leads to improved outcomes for children and families in Durham.
- 7 We understand that improvement is a continuous process and this framework sets out mechanisms that support the improvement cycle that is shown below.



- 8 The ultimate aim is to accurately understand what the quality of practice is in Durham and what difference this is making to outcomes for children and families. The framework below illustrates the key sources of information that we use to do this.



- 9 The Quality Assurance Framework document attached at appendix 2, sets out how each of these sources of evidence is gathered. Since the last report to Members of Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny there have been some significant developments in relation to our use of performance management information and our collaborative case file audits.

Performance Management

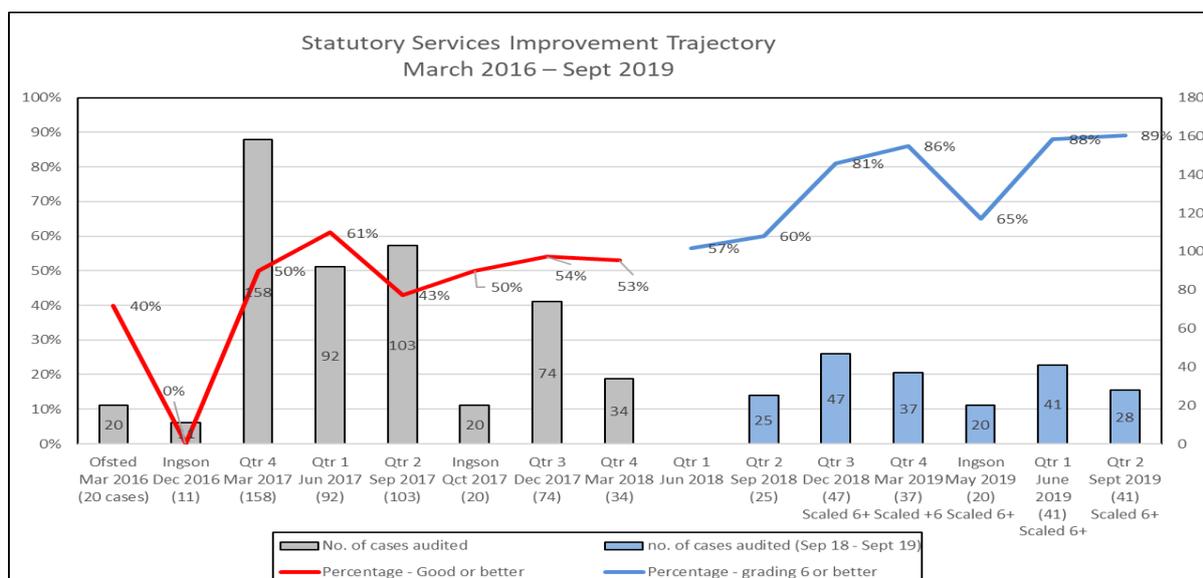
- 10 The implementation of Liquidlogic electronic social care record system has been transformational in our ability to accurately record information and subsequently report it.
- 11 All managers at every level of the organisation now have access to electronic dashboards that provide them with real time performance management information.
- 12 The ability to report performance information efficiently has supported a revised structure of monthly performance meetings. At the beginning of each monthly cycle Team Managers are supported to respond to key performance questions and performance exceptions and are given the opportunity to provide additional information about the quality of practice within their respective teams. This information is then presented to the Children's Social Care Performance and Outcomes meeting which provides a forum for effective scrutiny and challenge.
- 13 This scrutiny and challenge by senior managers is then continued as the outcomes of the Children's Social Care Performance and Outcomes meeting are presented to the CYPS Senior Management Team and subsequently to the Chief Executive Performance and Outcomes meeting.
- 14 The effective challenge and scrutiny on a monthly basis ensures that performance issues that are specific to individual teams can be addressed and supported in a timely way. It also provides a forum to identify potential systemic issues that require further exploration via a themed audit, or that need a service wide response. Additionally, it creates a forum to identify areas of best practice that need to be celebrated and shared widely to support the continuous improvement of practice.

Collaborative Audits

- 15 The collaborative case file audit tool used within Children's Social Care has been revised so that it is aligned to our Signs of Safety framework and is now integrated into the Liquidlogic system, enabling audits to be attached to individual children's records in real time.

16 Having introduced the audit programme and continued to strengthen it we have been able to effectively target our improvement activity. Graph 1 below shows the numbers of collaborative audits that have been completed since the introduction of the Quality Improvement Framework and a summary of outcomes.

Graph 1



17 The improvement trajectory is clearly positive and was recognised by OFSTED during the ILACS inspection. However, we know that there continue to be areas of practice that require improvement and we want to ensure that our audit practice is consistent and accurate. Ofsted found that, “audit activity is at times over optimistic and needs to be more sharply focused on the experience of the child”. In response to this, we have reduced the number of auditors and have established a training programme for them to ensure that the quality of our audits is consistently high. We currently have 29 auditors who will complete 50 audits each quarter. The audit process has been strengthened so audits are now completed in the same location and at the same time which provides peer support and challenge to auditors and will increase consistency.

Themed audits

18 In addition to the collaborative audits we have undertaken Themed Audits over the past 12 months focusing on the following areas: Chronologies; Core Groups; Private Fostering; Supervision; Strategy Meetings.

- 19 These audits have allowed us to either develop a greater understanding of a particular issue or measure the impact of targeted improvement activity. The programme of thematic audits for 2020-21 is currently being developed and it will be one of the key mechanisms by which we measure the impact of the improvement activity identified within the Quality Improvement Plan.

Multi-agency audits

- 20 A programme of multi-agency audits has been developed and is co-ordinated by the Embedded Learning Group which is a sub-group of the Durham Safeguarding Children's Partnership (DSCP). The learning from these audits is disseminated back out to all agencies. The focus of this activity in 2019-2020 includes our response to children missing from home and the effectiveness of our response to safeguarding non-mobile babies.

Feedback

- 21 The feedback from children, young people and families that we seek via a survey, via the collaborative audit programme and the compliments and complaints we receive, is all now shared at the Social Care Quality Improvement Board so that the learning can be used to target our improvement activity.

External Moderation

- 22 Throughout 2019 we have encouraged external scrutiny and challenge to ensure that our internal quality assurance mechanisms are accurate. We have worked with North Yorkshire and South Tyneside Councils as Partners in Practice. We have also been part of a peer audit programme which has involved Hartlepool Council undertaking a small peer review of Durham and Durham undertaking a small peer review of Gateshead Council.
- 23 We have commissioned an independent consultancy, Ingson, to provide some specific input in relation to moderating our auditing practice. We have commissioned them on four occasions now, first in late 2016 and then at intervals since then. They have been able to provide a consistent external view of the progress that we have been making. Most recently they have provided training to our pool of auditors and we have commissioned them to work with this group twice yearly to ensure the quality of our auditing remains high.

Conclusion

24 The Quality Assurance Framework itself and the improvements made to both the performance reporting arrangements and the collaborative case file audits has meant that leaders have an increasing oversight of the quality of social work practice. OFSTED acknowledged this in concluding, “A new quality assurance process is increasing the oversight of the quality of social work practice”. This increasing oversight has enabled us to target improvement activity appropriately and achieve the rapid pace of change acknowledged by OFSTED in October 2019.

Background papers

- Quality Assurance Framework 2019

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

The Quality Assurance Framework will assist CYPS to comply with their statutory duties under the Children Act 1989 and the Adoption and Children Act 2002.

Finance

The report has no direct financial implications.

Consultation

No implications

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

No implications

Climate Change

No implications

Human Rights

No implications

Crime and Disorder

No implications

Staffing

No implications

Accommodation

No implications

Risk

No implications

Procurement

No implications