

Leicester City Council



Children's Social Care and Early Help Assuring Quality of Practice

Quarterly Reports (Q1 & Q2) to
Lead Member, Executive and Scrutiny Commission
April to September 2020



Shared Goals & Common Purpose

Supporting children, young people and families to be safe, be independent, be ambitious for themselves and live the best life they can

Evaluating our impact

Through:

- Quality of practice system checks and evidence (*QA spotlights, audits and observation of practice*)
- What children, young people and families tell us (*in reviews, complaints, compliments, bespoke feedback exercises*)
- Our workforce
- Checks against regional, good and outstanding authorities and national
- Evidence-based practice, research and innovation



Highlights Q1 & Q2

- COVID 19 Pandemic and additional local lockdown during Q1&Q2 - Services' resilience and adaptability was tested and evident across the division
- Minimal alternations to practice across the division (in line with the national guidance) with bespoke QA activities to understand the impact of these modifications and the overall practice/ service delivery , during these exceptional times
- Direct, face to face visits to the most vulnerable and at risk families continued throughout the period alongside virtual visits when this was assessed as safe to do so

Highlights

“Back to the drawing board”
Isn't the drawing board
the place where all
the best work happens?
It's not a bad thing to go back
there. It's the entire point.
- Seth Godin

- All meetings moved to virtual arrangements
- Aspects of routine QA framework had to be paused during the Q1
- Q2 saw the restart of the audit programme, practice observations, the completion of the first Success review and further QA activities to test the service delivery across the division
- 2x Staff Wellbeing surveys were completed during the period with coaching sessions initiated for all Tier 4 and above Managers
- Cultural change and new discussions following in the context of Black Life Matters

The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection

Key message: Children have continued being protected from harm - 'Their Door is Shut. Ours is open'

- Beginning of the pandemic saw a significant decrease in the number of contacts at the front door – swift LLR response via [‘Their door is shut. Ours is open’](#) campaign
- All multiagency meetings (Children in Need Meetings and Child Protection Conferences) have been held virtually. Despite some technological challenges these arrangements led to high rate of participation and engagement from parents and partner agencies .
- Q1 & Q2 Spotlight on early help and social work practice identified a number of positives regarding the services’ resilience and adaptability during exceptional times.
- Inclusive practice, with social workers and EH practitioners visiting children on regular basis using a range of PPE equipment; most cases reviewed included mixture of home visits and virtual contacts with the children and families;
- The current restrictions around social distancing have had an impact onto the quality of the direct work with children. The lack of direct involvement from other agencies whose service provision has been on hold - e.g. Jenkins Centre has limited progression for some families. This has also meant in many cases that the social worker has increasingly been the only person progressing the plan / seeing children

The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection

Spotlight on repeat Child Protection Plans (CPP)

Practice strengths	Areas for focus
<ul style="list-style-type: none">The decision to end the CPPs at a time was a safe decision. The previous child protection plan included evidence of reasonable period of stability and reduction of risk which concluded with the child protection plan ending.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Assessments - on ending child protection plans the audits showed, in some cases, a reduced use of specialist risk assessment (.ie. Persons posing a risk to children, DASH assessment) to further evidence the reduction of risks
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Good quality effective working relationships apparent with SWs, edge of care practitioners and young people, parents / carers are apparent. The majority of cases identified the current practice as being of good standardRobust and timely response to current concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Limited networks for children and families in safety planning

The experience and progress of children who need help and protection

Early Help and Prevention

Practice strengths	Areas for focus
<ul style="list-style-type: none">QA spotlight in relation to the virtual service framework provided by clusters found the response to risk' category was graded at Good or better in 100% of audits completed and management oversight is judged to be of high quality and regular	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Youth Justice Service completed audits of all cases opened to service with CIN, CP or LAC Plans. The findings were very promising with evidence of good communications between professionals (team around the young person); the work undertaken being appropriately recorded and reflected on both systems
<ul style="list-style-type: none">92% EHA caseload families received either face to face contact, regular phone calls or regular video calls in May/JuneMST Case file auditing continues each week, Most file audits completed in the period were graded good or outstanding	

Experiences and progress of children who need help and protection

Practice strengths

- 91% of the conferences had information to help to understand 'What life is like for the child/YP'
- good quality chronology was available 81% of the time
- 88% of reports received by parents 2 days prior to the conference enabling a better parental preparation and participation
- Parents engaged and attended the conferences

Areas for focus

- In 31% of CP assessments it was identified the need for more focused understanding of the impact of diversity and equality factors on a child
- Use of family network being explored in 67% (previous Q4 79%) of children's cases. The significant benefit to children from their network is known and hence capturing the quantity and quality of interventions with the network. The available family support is an area impacted upon by the COVID restrictions

Safeguarding & QA Unit
Independent Chairs

Period: October 2019 to March 2020

The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers

Spotlight Stats (last 6 months)	Q
Children looked after (as of 30.09.2020)	601
Care Leavers	283

- Social Work and Agency reports to meetings enable a good contribution from all in the meeting including child/family
- Agency representation has improved over the period
- Care leavers in appropriate accommodation sits at 98% - the 2% of YP are currently in custody

Key message: 601 children were in LA's care at the end of Q2 – vast majority of them in settled placements

- IROs have continued to engage with parents at the start of the child's care journey and thereby this has had rewards in ensuring meetings are better attended by parents along with them being supported by their advocates

The experience and progress of children in care and care leavers

Practice strengths	Areas for focus
Examples of some creative bespoke work with young people to ensure their effective participation and input to assessing their needs and informing their plans.	Planning for transitions to adulthood is not consistently beginning for young people as they reach 14
Good quality effective working relationships apparent with SWs and young people, parents / carers are apparent.	Th YP Care Plan and EHCP are seen in siloes as opposed to complementary, dynamic documents, therefore all audits were graded as RI

Spotlight on quality of service provided to young people referred to Transitions service

Experience and progress of children in care and care leavers

Practice strengths	Areas for focus
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 100% of the sample recognise the capacity of carers to respond to the changing needs of children as they grow	Supporting the kinship cares to attend ongoing training
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kinship placements are evidenced to be subject to regular review. Reviews are well informed with key network (personal and professional) informing these.• IRO & FIRO offer appropriate monitoring and escalation if required.• SW visits / communication with the child / young person are regular and evidence good practice (statutory visiting levels and above) in most of the sample	Consistency of supervision across Fostering Service

Spotlight on children in kinship care

Good standards of practice identified in 26 out of the 31 cases sampled



Children's participation during COVID

- Young people created 'Quaranteen's' – a social media campaign aimed at supporting living in lockdown.
- We created 'Quarantweens' for new groups for working with younger children in care

The programme has been nominated for 'Best Project 2020 by National Leaving Care Bench Marking Forum'

- We joined forces with participation leads from Leicestershire and Rutland to develop and promote an online survey of young people exploring issues around mental health and wellbeing during and leaving lockdown. The survey ran for two weeks. The average age of Leicester City respondents was 14 years with 455 young people taking part in the survey.



Cards from care

- Participation Service and our children looked after after an 'Cards from Care' where
- We collected messages of hope and turned it into a piece of art to display



Welcome to a special edition [#Quaranteens](#) video in honour of [#MentalHealthAwarenessWeek2020!](#) YPC members speak about why [#KindnessMatters](#) now more than ever! 🌟

@BezMartinYthWrk @Hanniya23
 @raakheevaria @RichardJM_Arens
 @LeicsCares @Leicester_News
 @YouthLeicester @ninaspey

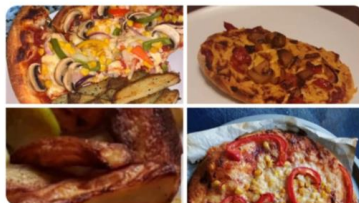


250 views



A lovely evening with the CEC group for Monday Night Dinner 😊 check out some of the amazing finished dishes 😊 Please let us know if your interested in getting involved in our Monday Night Dinner and keep an eye out for our next poster!

@BezMartinYthWrk @raakheevaria @LeicesterYpc



Our amazing children also....

- **CEC ran Monday Night Dinner, a live cooking session on facebook for care leavers.**
- **We ran music sessions for children looked after.**
- **Quarantweens launched Children in Care Generation Select, planning their first inquiry into 'What makes a good corporate parent'**

Period: July to September 2020

Participation and Parental Coproduction

We have built a number of safeguards within our system to ensure children and parental participation and co-production throughout all stages of interventions .

- The new SoS system does not allow completion of assessments/ plans without the views of parents/ carers and children being clearly captured; this includes securing the views of non-resident parents
- The role of Independent Chairs has been adjusted to ensure opportunities for parents/children to have their views shared before and after meetings;
- Advocacy offer is fully utilised to ensure the children's views are championed
- Regular reviews of our statutory complaints – in Q1 the main reasons for complaints (29) are linked to disagreements regarding to decisions made in relation to the children as opposed to parents not having the opportunities to express their views/ contribute to assessments/plans

Participation and Parental feedback

- Q1 -a focused survey was completed to gain parental feedback on the experiences of parents when attending virtual child protection conferences.

In summary some parents found the conference easier to be part of as they said they were in their own home:

'I could walk around and get a coffee'. Many parents said that they were listened to and everyone had their say *'I was worried about it being on the phone but was not a bad thing in the end.'* Parents appeared patient with the use of technology and in the main reported that there were no issues with technology and when there was the SW or chair sorted it quickly. *'Use of interpreter was fine and the conference was not rushed. We were heard and the good things we do were spoken about.'*

- Q2 - feedback was gained from parents in relation to their views on the current outcomes from a child protection conference and their views on how best the outcomes can be presented to enable them to understand and use them to safeguard their children. The views of parents have influenced the presentation of the 'new' forms

Our partners are saying...

- Safeguarding, Participation and QA Unit has continued seeking feedback from our partner with 52 forms returned by agencies following attendance at a child protection conferences.
- The feedback has been useful to understand how others experience the meetings, to provide their views, analysis and planning. Overall the feedback has been positive about the management of the meeting, ensuring confidentiality, ensuring the safety and well being of the children and family during the conference and afterwards. The IC's response to technology failing and any issues arising that warrant extra support to the family.


Impact of Leadership on social work practice:

Workforce Profile and Activity

- TWO staff wellbeing surveys completed across the Department. In excess of 400 returns, with the feedback being mainly positive regarding the communications and managerial support. Challenges identified in relation to the IT equipment and individuals missing the informal support provided by office working.

Key message: *We continue our investment in developing and supporting our workforce*

- Minimal movement of staff with very few leaving the services during the period
- In September 2020, 9 ASYEs started their employment with LCC and 9 Apprentices entered their second year
- Training offer was put on hold at the beginning at the Pandemic. However, towards end of Q2 training started to be facilitated virtually with a full and comprehensive induction programme for the new starters. Training recovery plan is currently being implemented



Testing the system next quarter

- The recovery plan and ensure quality assurance activities across the division remain relevant and provide a clear indication in relation to the quality of practice and services delivered by Children Social Care and Early Help Services



Period: October 2019 to March 2020