



Safeguarding children

Directors' summary **3** October 2009

Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services

It would be hard to overstate how significant the quality of leadership is in narrowing the gap for children and young people within a context of improving outcomes for all ...

Narrowing the Gap – Final Year Guidance 2

This summary gives directors of children's services and their Children's Trust partners the key findings from three research briefings on the topic of quality assurance for effective safeguarding practice.

The briefings consider the questions that help to inform senior managers about the quality of their organisation's safeguarding service:

- How can we recognise the interventions that are effective in protecting children, especially children living in complex circumstances?
- How can we ensure accountability in decision-making on child protection issues?
- How can child protection staff respond effectively to new and challenging information concerning children at risk?

Please go to www.c4eo.org.uk to download the briefings.

What do we know from the briefings?

Universal services are key to identifying and referring children and young people suffering significant harm. Children, teenagers and parents who are *hard to reach* or *hard to change* are likely to require long-term professional support which is dependable and encourages client engagement. Professionals working on complex case work require skilled supervision that is supportive and encourages reflective practice especially when evidence changes or new information is received. To ensure children and young people receive appropriate safeguarding services, organisations need to operate within a culture of performance built on quality assurance practices. It is also imperative that practice development is reported and shared in order to develop a sound knowledge base and creative options.

What do we know?

Access to specialist services and effective interventions

Develop capacity building within universal services so that staff can report early identification of children and teenagers suffering significant harm.

For complex case work establish a service:

- whereby professionals provide assistance that is timely, educative and supportive to clients
- providing opportunities for victims of maltreatment to seek help without being stigmatised and are non-judgemental
- providing a consistent ongoing professional relationship to those who are *hard to reach* or *hard to change*.

Establish links with or set up an information system whereby outcome-based evidence/data can be recorded on 'model' manualised interventions and solution-focused approaches.

Develop guidance for professionals to ensure services and interventions can be effectively matched to children and family circumstances.

Performance and accountability

Agree with partners a set of measures (PIs) that:

- capture the quality of safeguarding practices
- involve staff at all levels within partner organisations
- involve people who use services.

Develop local audits identifying areas within your organisation that:

- support good practice
- can identify where poor practice is likely to occur.

Ensure management action plans include shared practice developments, promote knowledge-based evidence and creative options.

Promote a shared learning culture within child protection services to encourage collective organisational learning.

Effective decision-making and reviews

Collaborate with partners to develop guidance on the identification of *hard to change* and *hard to help* parents, children and young people.

Establish performance outcomes focusing on the delivery of high-quality services and provision.

Collaborate with partners to develop guidance on collecting comprehensive multi-agency evidence for reviews and regular case work assessments.

Establish a management system that provides a supportive and positive environment for professionals working directly with complex families.

Create a learning culture that encourages staff at all levels to be reflective and errors to be acknowledged.

Develop opportunities for staff to learn from successes as well as from errors in serious case reviews.

Review and revise safeguarding policies to include opportunities for managers to take early corrective action.



What do you want to do next?

Indicators in the National Indicator Set do not directly address these topics. However, indicators that consider the realities and complexities of children's lives do provide a match from which to work. These include:

- NI 69: Percentage of children who have experienced bullying
- NI 70: hospital admissions caused by unintentional and deliberate injuries to children and young people
- Percentage of confirmed child abuse cases/neglect with protection plans
- Percentage of deaths of children as a result of domestic violence
- Number of children per 1000 in care
- Percentage of children who say they feel safe in their families, communities and schools

These may need to be added to and you will need to develop your own which are meaningful and work with partners to collect the data.

A knowledge review will expand on the topic of effectiveness in safeguarding practice and will be available in 2010. Findings from this review will be considered within the seven Outcomes-Based Accountability (OBA) questions to provide a catalyst for partnership action.

Review and revise safeguarding policies to include opportunities for managers to take early corrective action.

Directors' summaries

This summary is a concise and accessible overview of C4EO's current work in this theme for directors of children's services.

Please go to www.c4eo.org.uk to download full and in-depth versions.

How can C4EO support your vision?

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