

For more information on Cornwall's Children and Young People's Safeguarding and Improvement Plan visit our website:  
[www.cornwallchildrenstrust.org.uk](http://www.cornwallchildrenstrust.org.uk)



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## Cornwall's Children and Young People's Safeguarding and Improvement Plan

# The Busy Person's Guide

July 2011

# Introduction

The 2011/12 Children and Young People's Safeguarding and Improvement Plan outlines how we are addressing the outcomes of the 2011 Ofsted inspection and prioritises action for safeguarding and looked after children's services.

Key actions arising from the 2011 inspection include:

- A relentless focus on the quality of children's safeguarding practice and providing better support for our staff, so that services continue to improve.
- Continuing to improve our services to looked after children and care leavers.

There are some things left over from the 2009 Improvement Plan, including transitions and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. We are committed to improving these services, which continue to be as relevant for children today as they were in our original plan.

Whilst there have been improvements in many areas, this refreshed plan will enable us to address the longstanding and complex issues, which have resisted previous attempts at change, alongside the new priorities identified in the January 2011 inspection.

This new plan is about a relentless focus on the standard of front line multi-agency practice. It is about providing support to front line staff and having systems in place to identify poor performance – in real time – and take remedial action to rectify any shortfalls quickly and effectively. This approach keeps children safer.

We see the ability to embed organisational learning across the system as the key to realising our goals, which are to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families. We are mindful of the risks of 'vulnerable system syndrome':

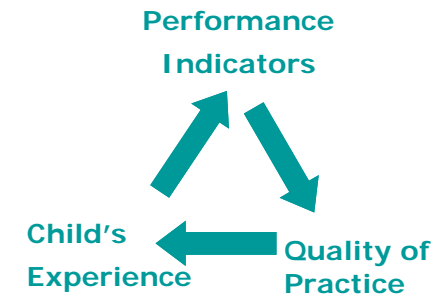
*'Blame, denial and the single minded and blinkered pursuit of the wrong kind of excellence—the latter usually takes the role of seeking to achieve specific performance targets'* Reason. J, 2009, 'The Human Contribution'.

Our revised performance management system is increasingly based on the quality of practice, customer feedback and outcomes for children.

## Performance Management

Performance management practice is an integral part of delivering the Safeguarding and Improvement Plan and it is being embedded as part of day to day management practice.

The model below shows how three forms of information which, taken together, give a more accurate picture of performance, focussed upon children's outcomes:



This approach to performance management ensures that we:

- Focus on practice standards.
- Identify shortfalls and take action.
- Embed learning into practice.
- Take into account the child's experience.

The approach is forensic and relentlessly focussed on:

- Individual children.
- Case work practice.
- Team performance.

The Local Safeguarding Children's Board will increasingly monitor the quality of practice and service delivery through independent audits.

## Workforce Reform and Development

We are implementing a workforce strategy aimed at raising the expertise of all those involved in protecting the most vulnerable children and young people in Cornwall.

### Professional Supervision, Coaching and Mentoring

- The standards are being reset for the quality of supervision that supports front line staff to do their job.
- The capacity to provide supervision for front line social workers is being increased so that it is more frequent.
- A tool box for critical reflection is being developed.

### Embedding a Learning Culture across Organisations

All agencies are committed to developing a learning culture. This is being supported by:

- A real time audit system that provides front line practitioners and their supervisors with a learning loop.
- Multi-agency safeguarding training commissioned and evaluated by the Local Safeguarding Children Board.
- Access to the latest guidance and work-based research in health and social care—web based.
- An extended qualification and career pathway for social workers that includes advanced skills practitioners.
- An expanded professional trainee scheme.
- An increase in the number of practitioners undertaking post qualifying awards.



## The Munro Review

The Munro Review of Child Protection published in May 2011 sets out proposals for reform which will create '*a system that values and develops professional expertise and is focused on the safety and welfare of children and young people*'. This is our aim too.

The review focuses upon the child's journey through the whole system, the child's experience of the help provided and the tangible outcomes achieved. It sets out the following principles and recommendations that have been welcomed by government and embedded throughout Cornwall's Safeguarding and Improvement Plan:

- Developing a system that respects and values professional expertise.
- Sharing responsibility for the provision of early help.
- Improving the status and expertise of social workers.
- Creating a learning organisation.
- Clarifying accountabilities and holding agencies to account.
- Reforming our approach to performance management.

## Our Strategic Priorities

1. The Provision of Early Help
2. Partnership Working
3. Participation
4. Multi-Agency Practice Standards
5. Workforce Reform
6. Performance Management

## Provision of Early Help

All professionals working with children, young people and their families have a shared responsibility for the provision of early help. Children, Schools and Families and partner organisations are working together to identify the current and future needs of families that require early help and then coordinating services to meet these needs more effectively.

- We are ensuring professionals working at the frontline of universal services are able to identify vulnerable children and young people through professional development and processes that bring them together, using the Common Assessment Framework and Team Around the Child.
- We are continuing to implement the Healthy Child Programme and the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Healthy Weights' Strategy.
- We are embedding the Family Nurse Partnership programme and increasing capacity to support the most vulnerable new parents.
- Whilst ensuring that Children's Centres are accessible to all families, we are focusing upon those with the greatest need.
- We are targeting support where there are parental problems that impact most upon children: particularly parental mental health, substance misuse and domestic violence.
- We are ensuring a coordinated approach to services that support families, to address wider problems such as social and geographical isolation and a family's ability to access employment.
- We are embedding and quality assuring key processes that help identify and secure support for vulnerable families, including the availability of information, advice and guidance. We are also making Family Group Conferencing more available to families under stress.
- We are integrating Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and ensuring effective services are accessible at an earlier stage by developing capacity at Tier 2.

## Multi-Agency Practice Standards

Work is advanced to improve the quality and consistency of practice standards and to ensure that any exceptions can be justified. A 'Core Audit System' has been put in place that focuses on the quality of practice in real time. As far as possible, bureaucracy is being reduced so that front line workers can spend more time working face-to-face with children and families.

- Multi-agency training has been provided so that the quality of referrals to the Single Referral Unit meets the required standard for decision making.
- The new Core Audit System is focussing on ensuring that social work assessments are undertaken in a timely way, children are seen quickly and their views are taken into account.
- Supervision is focussing on improving the quality of assessments and ensuring that every case has a distinct risk assessment, and that the rationale for decisions is always recorded.
- Staff are being supported to ensure that child plans are specific and measurable in terms of spelling out what needs to be done and how, who will do it and by when.
- Expectations have been clarified that safeguarding tools - like chronologies of significant events in a child's life and genograms of their immediate and wider family - are used more consistently when making decisions.
- The quality assurance and performance management process now focuses on exceptions and checks that action is taken to rectify shortfalls promptly.



## Participation

Children and young people are individuals with rights, including their right to participate in decisions about the services they receive and their future. The views of parents, families and professionals come together to shape the support plan, as well as the design and delivery of services.

### Children and Young People

We are implementing the Active Involvement Strategy to ensure a coordinated approach to providing opportunities for children and young people to be actively involved in the planning and development of services that affect them, ensuring their voices are listened to and acted upon.

In particular:

- We are working to ensure children are more aware of their entitlements by providing information and advice and also advocacy where appropriate.
- We are continuing to invest in the Children in Care and Care Leavers Council by providing members with training to strengthen their skills to represent themselves and others.
- The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) Young People's Board is playing a key role in the wider CAMHS Partnership Board to help improve the quality of services.

### Parents and Families

We are embedding a process of service user feedback, particularly from parents and carers, about the services they receive as part of our new quality assurance and performance management framework.

### Professionals

We are also embedding a process to find out what other professionals within the organisation and other agencies think about services, and their ideas for improving collaborative working and the quality of service delivery.

## Partnership Working

Both formal and informal mechanisms for working together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children are available to all those working with children and young people, along with clear accountabilities.

- We are developing sustainable partnership arrangements that discharge statutory functions appropriately through the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB), Children's Trust and Health and Wellbeing Board.
- We now have an agreed framework for joint commissioning services for children, young people and their families in order to deliver the best outcomes and secure value for money.
- The threshold policy has been refreshed and agreed by the LSCB, and promoted through multi-agency training that has included risk assessment and standards for making a referral.
- We are working to ensure that the Common Assessment Framework and Team Around the Child are used consistently, so that children who do not meet the threshold for statutory social work intervention receive multi-disciplinary support at an early stage.
- We are working to improve transition arrangements between children's and adults' services, particularly for disabled young people, so that as they move into adulthood they are supported to stay in education or training, or helped to secure employment.
- We are developing a strategy to strengthen the quality and accessibility of Child and Adolescent Mental Health services at a preventative level, through the integration of psychological services.



# Cornwall's Approach to Improving Safeguarding: Some of Our Goals

| Working Together and Multi-Agency Partnership   | Participation and Prosocial Learning   | Systems and Processes  | Workforce Reform and Development  |
|---|--|--|---|
| <p>The multi-agency threshold policy is clear and agreed and used by all partner agencies.</p> <p>Information in inter-agency referrals is of a high quality and meets the agreed standards.</p> <p>The Common Assessment Framework is used consistently. Professionals come together in Teams Around the Child to support families at any early stage.</p> <p>Multi-agency contributions to child protection plans are of a consistently high standard.</p> <p>Professional differences are acknowledged and resolved quickly.</p> | <p>The views and experiences of those receiving services inform performance management and learning.</p> <p>Family group conferences are commonplace in understanding needs and agreeing a plan in which the wider family take an active part.</p> <p>Parenting programmes are made available to support parents / carers under stress and improve their parenting skills.</p> <p>Children and young people are helped to manage their feelings and their behaviour.</p> <p>Family Support is based on empowerment not dependency.</p> | <p>Key systems and processes are streamlined in order to reduce bureaucracy and enable professionals to spend more time in direct work with families.</p> <p>Children and families can access information, advice and guidance quickly.</p> <p>Service users do not need to tell their story over and over again before they get help.</p> <p>Quality Assurance and Performance Management are focussed on exceptions and prompt action is taken to rectify shortfalls.</p> <p>Customer feedback plays a bigger part in judging the quality of the service we provide.</p> | <p>The knowledge and skills of practitioners working directly with children and families are developed through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• a common core induction;</li><li>• active participation in multi-agency safeguarding training;</li><li>• access to professional guidance and research resources;</li><li>• an expectation to undertake post qualifying awards and specialist training;</li><li>• an extended qualification and careers pathway for advanced skills practitioners.</li></ul> |

