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Safeguarding in TWO

Multi-Agency Case Audit and External Audit of Multi-Agency Meetings

1. Background

- This audit round focused on Child in Need (CIN) meetings and Core Groups.
- For Hackney cases, it involved audits undertaken by both an external auditor and audits undertaken by the CHSCP's Quality Assurance leads.
- In total 40 Hackney cases were audited.
- The case list comprised a proportionate range of ages, sibling sizes and ethnic backgrounds.
- A multi-agency case audit of three additional cases in the City of London was also undertaken (with the external auditor providing the children's services return).

2. Areas of Identified Strengths and Areas for Improvement

Attendance

Whilst attendance at multi-agency meetings was generally good, some agencies were not being routinely engaged. Identified areas for improvement related to the scheduling of meetings, where invitations were being sent and how opportunities to facilitate attendance could be enhanced. The audits also identified the need for all practitioners to have access to available support following their attendance at these often challenging meetings. The following recommendations are made:

- Hackney CSC, the City of London CFS and relevant agencies should work together to improve the consistent attendance of adult practitioners, GPs and the extended health network at CIN meetings and Core Groups. This should also include a focus on how to use innovative solutions to better engage practitioners, such as through virtual attendance / defined time slots etc.
- Hackney CSC and the City of London CFS should clarify with Homerton Healthcare that invitations are being sent to the correct inboxes (i.e. meeting invitations should be sent to generic health mailboxes and not individual practitioners).
- To facilitate the attendance of education practitioners, the scheduling of multi-agency meetings should avoid school holiday periods where possible.
- The City of London CFS should consistently record meetings attendees and absentees on the Mosaic CIN review record.
- The City of London CFS to arrange for social work attendance at the Neaman Practice multi-disciplinary team meeting.
- The CHSCP to share external audit findings with the CHSAB to support engagement of adult services in meetings for children, young people and families.



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Information Sharing / Provision of Written Reports

The audits demonstrated that professionals are proactively sharing information and updates during and between multi-agency meetings. Identified areas for improvement related to the sharing of reports with families, the sharing of minutes and ensuring that information requests made by Children's Social Care to other agencies were clear in explaining the reasons why such a request was being made. The following recommendations are made:

- The CHSCP should seek reassurance that clear guidance is in place that sets out agreed standards covering requests for information being made to other agencies. This should include a requirement to share the detail of why the request for information is being made and the nature of the concern involving the child(ren).
- All agencies should ensure that all written reports are shared with families in advance of meetings and recorded on file.
- Social workers should share any developed genograms within meetings to support partners having a full understanding of the extended family network.
- The City of London CFS to develop a mandatory Mosaic section to document recipients of minutes.
- The City of London CFS to develop an internal practice standard covering the sending of all CIN and Core Group minutes to GP practices.

Records

The audits found inconsistency in how meetings were being recorded. In examples of good practice, some minutes had woven narratives around the plan into the minutes whilst in other cases, minutes were brief and it was not possible to discern exactly what information was shared and whether the plan had been discussed in detail at the meeting. Issues were also identified around capacity and skill sets for organising, chairing and minutes of the meetings, which were often undertaken by Local Authority staff. The audits identified the need to review sharing the resourcing for these meetings within the wider partnership. The following recommendations are made:

- Hackney CSC and the City of London CFS should:
 - Ensure Core Group / CIN meetings minutes explicitly set out the professional judgement as to whether sufficient progress has been made against the CP or CIN Plan prior to the next meeting (i.e. Review CP Conference or CIN meeting).
 - Ensure updates and discussions about the plan are clearly recorded in CIN meetings and Core Groups minutes.
 - Ensure a record of all invitees (attendees and apologies sent) is recorded in all CIN meeting and Core Group minutes.
 - Ensure that risk assessments are routinely updated based on information shared at Core Groups / CIN meetings.
- The CHSCP to explore how multi-agency contributions to the facilitation of multi-agency meetings can be widened.
- The City of London Corporation to review the format of their multi-agency risk assessment.



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Plans

The audits evidenced that plans were clear and supported good practice. In general they were multi-agency in focus and it was clear who tasks were allocated to. Areas for improvement were identified around plans being more focused on the outcomes trying to be achieved, ensuring there was a sufficient focus on all children in a family and ensuring actions were explicit for all parents / carers - as opposed to these being heavily weighted towards mothers. The following recommendations are made:

- Hackney CSC and the City of London CFS should:
 - Ensure the relevant templates allow for the SMART recording of actions (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timely).
 - Ensure plans detail child-centred outcomes with a focus on individual children in larger sibling groups.
 - Provide a summary of how the plan has been developed e.g involvement of family, direct work with children and young people, a multi-agency risk assessment based on all professional perspectives.
 - Ensure that all parents / carers are considered when prescribing actions in a plan.
 - Ensure that meetings agendas/minutes place focus on the progress of the plan rather than general updates. Recording should be able to demonstrate the shared understanding across the network (including the parents) about what changes are needed for the plan to be successful.

Anti-Racist Practice

The audits demonstrated that in Hackney, practitioners were exploring issues around diversity. In the City of London the external audit provided evidence of exploration around issues arising from diversity and this was also evidenced as happening within 1:1 and group supervision sessions. In both local areas, there was good use of interpreters where necessary. The audits identified that support is needed to help professionals explore the impact of racism with the families with whom they work. The CHSCP's Active Anti-Racist Charter is intended to help in this regard and will be released shortly. The following recommendation is made:

- The CHSCP to review its resources and training to ensure these are sufficient to support professional awareness of cultural practices across the broad range of families living in the City of London and Hackney.

Escalation

The audits did not identify any issues around use of escalation. Auditing in the City of London identified an area of support for professionals in both local areas and it is recommended that:

- Details of the Homerton Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust Vulnerable Child Clinic should be shared via the CHSCP TUSK to encourage professionals to arrange a holistic assessment of a child's health needs for cases which are unlikely to progress via criminal prosecution routes.



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CYP / Family Voice and Working with Families

The audits demonstrated that in both Hackney and in the City of London professionals were actively engaging children, young people and family members. Contributions from parents (mostly mothers) were included in the minutes and they were allocated tasks in the plan, along with other members of the network. The audits also demonstrated that the lived experiences of children (where age appropriate) were being explored with children and young people and that the voice of the family was being recorded in meetings.

Where appropriate interpreters were used to engage families. A focus on fathers was demonstrated, in particular in Hackney where work with male perpetrators of domestic abuse was featured in plans. Overall, the audits demonstrated that despite some parental non-engagement, practitioners continued to work together and to build bridges with families. The audits identified that children could be better engaged to attend meetings or for advocacy arrangements to be used. The following recommendations are made:

- Hackney CSC and the City of London CFS should ensure that the direct work undertaken with children (and any tools used) is also uploaded to a child's record.
- The CHSCP should explore the development of child friend plans (using words or pictures) to help children understand what a plan means for them and what they might like to see on it.
- To ensure a consistent approach to risk management, all agencies should ensure their recording systems can capture the decisions about family members being excluded from meetings and the reasons for this.
- Hackney CSC and the City of London CFS should explore the potential use of advocates for children and young people in Core Group meetings.

An action plan (monitored by the CHSCP Quality Assurance Sub-Group) will be developed to detail recommendations / actions against identified areas for improvement.

