

Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Service Practice standards



Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Services
Aspiring for Outcomes, Outcomes, Outcomes

Standard 1

Promote and drive lasting outcomes for Children in West Berkshire

Children will see quicker and fairer decisions about where they will live, who will care for them and an opportunity to achieve at school and in the community.

For children in our care

Parallel planning

- Ensure plans are outcome focused and evaluate effectiveness at all stages of involvement
- Confirm actions for the parallel plan to be implemented at first LAC Review to include FGC's, pre-adoption medicals, Best Interest decisions, parenting assessments, kinship assessments, needs and permanency planning meetings.
- Follow through on all actions for assessments and permanency and where there is drift raise disputes with the relevant teams.
- Track the timeliness of life story books, life story work, later life letters, letter box arrangements, birth parent counselling
- Ensure actions arising from health assessments are followed through.

Placement stability

- Where placements are at risk of disruption convene pre-disruption meetings to consider the underlying issues and how matching can improve to avoid multiple disruptions and instability.
- Where children are being rehabilitated to birth parents on Care Orders ensure that operational teams are following the Care Planning regulations and approval is sought from Head of Service prior to placement.
- When placements are made highlight the need for the frequency of visits to increase according to the regulations in the first month to support such placements.
- Where children are placed with kinship carers under regulation 24 in an emergency, monitor the approval of such placements by the Head of Service within 48 hours and if this has not happened escalate this.

Practice standards for Conference Chairs and IRO's

- Where children are placed in failing settings, ensure that issues are escalated via dispute resolution. Request risk assessments and support plans to mitigate any risks that may arise.
- Where there is an issue of standards of care in placements escalate issues via the Family Placement Team. These include cases where the Family Placement Team are not following their regulatory framework for support of carers, where they are not challenging issues in relation to the standard of care and where foster carers are not taken to panel for a standard of care review when this is required from the available evidence.
- Where Children in Care are missing for over 5 days chair the strategy meeting to ensure robust plans are in place.
- Where children are in secure settings ensure all secure reviews are chaired by the service manager.

Enjoy and achieve

- Where actions identified in Personal Education Plans are not implemented raise disputes both at operational and strategic level depending on where practice and delivery needs to improve.
- Ensure advocacy for both gifted children and those with Special Educational needs to support an environment for them to flourish
- Track children at risk of exclusion and ensure that Personal Education plans are reviewed at least every three months to ensure the education of young people is not undermined.
- Challenge placement providers and social workers to ensure the holistic needs of children are met to include out of school activities, membership of clubs, opportunities to develop hobbies and interests and development of life skills.
- Where young people are at risk of exclusion, anti- social behaviour, substance misuse and criminality ensure plans reflect early intervention to avoid escalation of behaviours.
- Where children are at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation ensure that targeted support is included in plans and the effectiveness of identified actions are robustly reviewed.
- Where children have contact with their birth families to include siblings ensure this is promoted and reviewed so that it remains in the best interest of that individual child.
- Promote the health of our young people to included timely health assessments, dental appointments and any other identified health need and where there is a gap in resource or provision ensure this is escalated.

Promotion of life skills

- Ensure Pathway plans are timely and include input from multi-agency partners to support preparation for independent living.
- Encourage an understanding of the young persons' preparedness for independent living skills, for example cooking, budgeting etc.
- Challenge teams to ensure Housing Plans are in place for all 16 year olds to include staying put arrangements, registration with local Housing providers or return to family.
- Ensure deficits in provision are identified to feed into wider strategic commissioning arrangements for partners.

Standard 1

For children subject to Child Protection plans

Children and young people will feel safe in their homes and communities and supported in their journey by trusted adults who they can rely on to provide an unerring focus on their needs.

- Ensure children and their families have been informed of and understand the concerns of the LA and have had a fair opportunity to put their view point forward.
- Strive for SMART outcome focussed plans which prioritise and indentify the key tasks to achieve outcomes, and which are accessible for children and young families.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the plan and escalate practice issues where there is insufficient progress.
- Encourage review of written agreements on a regular basis as part of the plan to evidence partnership working that is accountable and restorative in approach.
- Where cases are in pre-proceedings monitor compliance with the pre-proceedings protocol and escalate issues which impact on timely decision making and outcomes for children.
- Where chronologies are not updated prior to conference highlight the practice issue and record as a dip audit.
- If there is a lack of compliance with visiting and recording as set out in the regulatory framework then escalate the issues and record as a dip audit.
- If there is a lack of compliance with the frequency and recording of core groups then record as a dip audit and escalate the issues.
- Highlight complex cases at an early stage that may require in-depth parenting assessments and include as part of the plan at ICPC to avoid drift and delay at a later stage.
- Support all forms of advocacy arrangements for children and young people and vulnerable parents and include in plan. Where there is a service deficit highlight at operational and strategic level.

Standard 2

Encourage participation and engagement

Children will know that their wishes, feelings and experiences are heard and acted upon in their welfare.

- Always ensure that the young person and family have been consulted and seen information written about them. If necessary cancel the meeting and allow for additional time with the agreement of the service managers for operations and QA.
- Always check beforehand whether an interpreter/lip reader/signer are available for meetings if required and that they have been booked.
- Ensure all young persons 10 years upwards have been referred to the West Berks Advocacy Service Here for Me.
- Always check where there are parents with learning difficulties or mental health difficulties that they have advocates to support them.
- During meetings avoid jargon and strive for accessibility and inclusion but taking a straightforward approach to the presentation of information.
- Explore different and creative ways of consulting with young people and ensure this is recorded, for example, via apps on i-pad, written and verbal forms, using Signs of Safety 'Three Houses', or 'living on a desert island' to elicit views on contact etc.
- Plan for extra time for meetings where English is not a first language or where lip readers or signers are required.
- Plan for breaks to allow families and young people to absorb information.
- If key documents need translation advocate for this and make it an expectation of the plan.
- Encourage participation and engagement in R Vue or other forums which are planning to help shape service delivery including exploring a willingness to be part of focus groups, interview panels and corporate parenting panel.

Standard 3

Challenge practice to raise standards

Children and young people are confident that their social workers and Independent reviewing officers are always striving to achieve the best possible outcomes for them.

- Ensure that the regulatory framework for Looked After Children and children subject to Child Protection plans is followed and where deficits are identified these are the subject of robust challenge.
- Ensure that Berkshire online CP procedures are referred to at least every two months so that changes in policy and procedure are understood and integrated into practice.
- Ensure that the Independent Reviewing Officer handbook is referred to at least every two months and is used as a working tool to improve outcomes for our children and young people.
- Be clear on policy and procedure, why it is in place and when it is not followed the impact on safeguarding of children and their families
- Understand the structure of good case management, raise disputes or practice challenges with team and service managers where deficits are identified.
- Be clear on thresholds for intervention and challenge operational teams when there is ambiguity in relation to this.
- Always challenge lack of visiting, core groups and failure to implement the child protection plan according to statutory obligations with dip audits to record the challenge.
- Where there is drift and delay in what is promised and what is delivered ensure disputes are raised to allow for timely decisions and outcomes to be achieved.
- Whatever the challenge ensure restorative approaches are used to resolve disputes.
- Commit to being horizon scanners for the authority to improve practise.
- Commit to participating and engaging in professional networks to bring new ideas and innovative practise to the authority.

Standard 4

Build on the strengths of our multi-agency partnerships to promote resilience in our communities.

Children and young people are confident that all the professionals in their lives are working together to achieve the best for them and their families.

- Understand the core business of our partners
- Use their knowledge, skills and resources to ensure plans are multi-faceted and multi-layered to achieve the best for our children and families.
- Where partners are not meeting their obligations as part of planning raise challenges directly with them and provide a summary to the service manager to feed into issues for the LSCB.
- Where operational teams are not consulting with partners and involving them in plans raise issues with operational service managers.
- Where there are issues around attendance and provision of reports at conference, core groups and LAC reviews challenge the relevant agency directly and note for reporting purposes for LSCB.