

DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: SOCIAL WORK AND HEALTH COMMITTEE - 22 MARCH 2010

REPORT ON: CASE FILE AUDITING - PERFORMANCE REPORT

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK

REPORT NO: 155- 2010

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To provide the Committee with the outcome of the first annual Performance Report on Case File Auditing within the Social Work Department.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee:

2.1 Note the overall positive findings from the Department's Case File Auditing activities and acknowledge the continuous improvements being achieved;

2.2 Remit the Director of Social Work to take appropriate action to address the areas identified for improvement;

2.3 Remit the Director of Social Work to present a further annual report on Case File Auditing activities to the Committee in February 2011.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 None.

4.0 MAIN TEXT

4.1 Case file auditing is a key tool in self-evaluation and will be an important piece of evidence for future risk-based and proportionate external scrutiny. The aim of case file auditing is to provide systematic evidence of the quality of social work practice and record keeping.

4.2 When the Social Work Inspection Agency (SWIA) carried out a performance inspection of the Department in 2007, they audited 100 case files. Overall, the results were positive and generally comparable with those found in the other authorities SWIA had previously inspected.

4.3 In order that any relevant practice and quality issues would continue to be identified and hence the best possible outcomes achieved for service users, the Social Work Department has continued to audit Community Care and Children's Services case files using the SWIA audit tool. Criminal Justice Service case files have historically been audited differently, using case type specific audit tools. (The SWIA tool is currently being piloted for Criminal Justice case files.)

4.4 To date, over 10% of the Department's currently active cases have been audited. This is a sufficient amount to reach a reliable judgement.

- 4.5 The results show that good progress is being made. All new staff have received 'ethical case recording' training since the SWIA inspection and there are clear improvements in recording practices. Most significantly, in 88% of the Community Care and Children's Services case files audited over the past six months, case recording was found to be continuous with no significant gaps. This compares to SWIA's finding of 65%, the current national average of 64% and West Lothian's 76% [West Lothian, to date, have received the 'top' SWIA Performance Report].
- 4.6 Assessment and care planning have also shown sustained improvement across the Department, one of the most significant improvements being in the percentage of assessments on file that have been completed in the past year. In over 93% of Community Care and Children's Services files audited the timing, type and level of assessment is in keeping with the needs of the service user and the quality of assessments is much improved
- 4.7 There has been a marked improvement in the percentage of case files that contain a care plan completed within the last year - up from SWIA's finding of 66% to 84% and close to the national average of 88%.
- 4.8 The files audited reflect improved sharing of key information with service users (96%) and improvements in efforts to take the views of service users into account at each key stage (94%). The level of contact between service users and their social workers /care managers has improved and there is evidence of improved information sharing.
- 4.9 Key outcomes show an improvement over SWIA's findings, the national average and those of West Lothian. A significant improvement is in the percentage of service users whose circumstances have generally improved in terms of reducing harm or risk, promoting independence or social inclusion: up from SWIA's finding of 72% to 87%.
- 4.10 Another significant improvement is in the percentage of files containing evidence that the objectives set out in care plans have been, or are in the process of being achieved: up from SWIA's finding of 83% to 94%. Where there has been an improvement in the service user's circumstances this is felt to be attributed 'mostly or to a greater extent' to effective social work services in 78% of cases: up from SWIA's finding of 57%. There is no significant difference between adult and children's case files.
- 4.11 The evidence shows that social work intervention is having a positive impact on service users. A number of key areas show sustained performance improvement since SWIA's inspection and are now better than the benchmark indicators used.
- 4.12 There are still areas for further improvement however and where necessary, individual case files have been identified for remedial action. 10% of these cases have been identified for further follow-up audit.
- 4.13 Team Managers will be instructed to ensure as a matter of course that:
- all file entries are signed and dated;
 - all case files include a chronology of key events;
 - care plans are updated at least yearly;
 - case files contain clear timescales for action;
 - young people, their parents/carers and all other relevant partners are involved in transition planning;
 - the Department's Formal Complaints Procedure is adhered to.
- 4.14 In analysing the findings, issues have also been raised in relation to the audit tool and auditing procedure. As a consequence, we will:
- review the target number of case file audits each reporting year;
 - review the auditing procedure to include a further step which closes the loop between identified remedial action requirements;

- review the current audit tool and database, taking account of SWIA's new guide to supported self-evaluation.
- 4.15 Case file auditing will continue throughout 2010. A half yearly report will be considered by the Department's Senior Management Team and a yearly report prepared for the Committee (February 2011).
- 4.16 Finally, whilst considerable efforts have been made to ensure that the auditing procedure is as rigorous as possible, conclusions about the Department's overall performance must rest on a range of evidence sources. The Department is committed to using a range of self-evaluation tools to improve our performance and the quality of life of people who use our services.

5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of Sustainability, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Anti-Poverty, Equality Impact Assessment and Risk Management.

There are no major issues.

6.0 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), Assistant Chief Executive and Director of Finance have been consulted in preparation of this report.

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

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Director of Social Work

Date: 26 February 2010