

Eyes on – Enhancing our Practice

Learning from the audit: Multi-Agency Audit

A summary:

Within Oxfordshire the importance of multi-agency working is recognised amongst professionals working to support vulnerable children and families.

As part of Ofsted's inspection of services for children, Children's Social Care are required to audit case files and provide the results with supporting documentation to the inspection. Ofsted chose cases which include: children in need of help and protection; looked after children; and care leavers. Interagency working is assessed as part of this.

In March 2014, as part of the preparation for the inspection, Oxfordshire undertook a multi-agency audit of 6 case files of young people ranging from age 2 to 18. The aim was to gauge areas for improvement and weaknesses. Two audit tools were developed, one for the services who have had on-going complex involvement, and a second shorter audit tool for agencies providing focused support. It involved each partner completing an audit of their files followed by a multi-agency meeting to discuss the conclusions of the audits. The partners were:

- Youth Offending Service
- Early Intervention Service
- Children's Social Care
- Health
- Special Education Needs Service
- Virtual School

Findings:

The strengths identified on the individual cases could be grouped into six areas:

- Timely assessments,
- Effective planning and decision making
- Proactive implementation and review of plans
- Regular management oversight and challenge
- Good recording
- Effective working between social care, community and universal services to support looked after children

Key areas for improvement were:

- Ensuring relevant information relating to risk is shared when appropriate
- Strengthening multi-agency input to child protection conferences

Themes in common with other audits in Oxfordshire

- ✓ Neglect tool kit to be better embedded
- ✓ Joint planning could be stronger



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- ✓ Managing risk on a multi-agency basis could be improved
- ✓ Holding partners to account is in everyone's interest

Three learning points for managers

- **Direction:** ensure that practitioners are using all available tools especially the threshold of needs matrix and 'neglect tools' [Awareness of Neglect | Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board](#) and plan actions reflecting on these
- **Reflect and Evidence:** Seek to examine case management processes and ensure that management decisions and oversight are clearly evidenced and recorded
- **Check:** that there is good information sharing of minutes and that step up / down processes include all services and agencies

Action points for practitioners

- **Remind yourself of the Threshold of Needs Matrix** to ensure you make the right kind of referral and know what to expect
- **Understand** when you need to consider a CAF, and refer to the early intervention service for advice
- **Use the referral form** and provide complete information to the best quality that you can
- **Be consistent** support a family throughout the time that they receive safeguarding support, contribute to decisions, help determine risk and think through contingency plans

Key messages for inter-agency learning

- Promote the guide to good multi agency working and check procedures
- Reinforce a shared use and understanding of the threshold of need matrix.
- Embed a shared use and understanding of the neglect tool

Take the time to reflect...

- Make decisions that you have confidence in. A reflective approach enables the decision maker to examine why the decision was made and based on what information. It should also help workers to explore their feelings and ideas about what is happening

Reminder to practitioners

- **OSCB online training** – the OSCB offers a variety of face-to-face and online courses to suit most safeguarding needs. If there is a course you feel we should be running, tell us!
- **Multi-agency safeguarding procedures** – The OSCB multi-agency procedures cover a wide variety of situations you may encounter. You can access them at <http://oxfordshirescb.proceduresonline.com/>



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- **Thresholds document** – Professionals need to know the thresholds for accessing services within Oxfordshire. The OSCB has on the website a copy of the Thresholds document. You can access it here: [The OSCB Thresholds of Needs Matrix](#)
- **Good multi-agency practice guidance** – The OSCB have created a model of good multi-agency practice incorporating the Local Assessment Protocol. [Good multi-agency practice guidance](#)
- **Seven Golden Rules for Information Sharing** – Professionals should familiarise themselves with the golden rules for sharing information. There is a downloadable flyer available on the OSCB website: [7 Golden Rules.pdf](#)
- **No Names Consultation** – Use the no names consultation service for advice and information on a child or young person, without having to divulge full information. Contact your Locality Social Worker who will advise you on next steps and whether you need to make a referral

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