

# Quality Assurance Unit Business Plan 2017 - 2020

Our vision is that Southampton is a city where children and young people (0 – 25) get a good start in life, are able to fulfil their potential and become successful adults who are engaged in their communities. Our priorities are that our children are:

**SAFE AND SECURE    HAPPY AND HEALTHY    RESILIENT AND ENGAGED    ACHIEVING AND ASPIRING**

The Quality Assurance Unit supports these priorities by championing practice excellence across the Children and Families Service; supporting both Education and Early Help and Children’s Social Care. We also ensure service compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements.

The unit comprises of: The Child Protection Conference Team, Children’s Workforce Development and the Principal Social Worker. There are close alignments with the Local Children and Adult Safeguarding Boards and the Independent Reviewing Officers for looked after children sit within the Unit.

## Our Priorities

Practice excellence	Service compliance	Continuous learning	Working with others
We will support better outcomes for children, families and vulnerable adults by championing practice excellence; supporting a stable, highly skilled workforce and ensuring that the unit is ‘fit for the future’.	We will support service compliance with statutory requirements, national standards and local performance objectives.	We will support services in Southampton to participate in inspections robustly and to develop clear responses to the recommendations arising from learning activity.	We will ensure that stakeholder engagement is central to the development of the unit; so that we can effectively meet the needs of service users, the teams that we support and customers.

## Our Successes 2016 - 17

Practice Excellence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Our workforce development team co-ordinated 4545 training bookings, which generated income of £125,781 over the year. In addition, the team delivered safeguarding training to 979 people and worked collaboratively with Solent NHS Trust to roll out the Solihull model of working with families to Early Help staff.</li> <li>Our new Principal Social Worker was appointed in November 2016, illustrating our commitment to raising standards in social work. The PSW is engaged with senior leaders and is working robustly with frontline staff to champion good practice.</li> <li>Our offer to social work students and newly qualified social workers is developing well and we were pleased to hold our first celebration event in March 2017.</li> <li>Our Local Authority Designated Officer supported colleagues in over 200 cases in the period, with consistently strong feedback from partners.</li> </ul>
Service compliance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We successfully implemented new performance improvement and quality assurance arrangements and our Continuous Improvement Plan; all of which are now monitored by our Performance Management Board.</li> <li>The Independent Reviewing Officer Team raised 85 alerts over a 12 month period. We are able to evidence that the team is providing the robust challenge that statute requires and that, as a result, outcomes for looked after children have improved. The Performance Management Board is briefed on trends by the IRO Team Manager.</li> </ul>
Continuous learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We supported the Ofsted and Care Quality Commission inspection of Southampton’s Special Educational Needs and Disabilities provision.</li> <li>We contributed to a range of activity co-ordinated through the Local Safeguarding Boards including monitoring and evaluation work, serious case reviews and the Child Death Overview Panel</li> <li>We have developed a targeted learning and development offer based on our analysis of audits across the service; including training for frontline practitioners and managers.</li> </ul>
Working with others
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We introduced a wide range of brand new training courses to the provision for foster carers. This included five completely new courses in 2016-17, and six new courses planned for 17-18. These include ‘Children with Harmful Sexual Behaviours,’ ‘Sensory processing difficulties for children who have suffered trauma,’ and ‘Parent and Child fostering training.’</li> <li>We developed a completely new programme of support workshops for adopters prior to a child being placed, and for adopters who have their child placed with them. These are growing in popularity as they become more established, and are now being accessed by carers from other authorities.</li> <li>Our Independent Reviewing Officers and Child Protection Chairs supported colleagues across the service; delivering bespoke training to meet their professional development needs.</li> <li>We have successfully promoted the Independent Visitor scheme and advocacy for our looked after children, increasing service capacity to meet the needs of service users.</li> </ul>

## Our Challenges

- After the last Single Inspection Framework inspection of Children’s Services and the Local Safeguarding Children’s Board in 2014, Ofsted rated Southampton as ‘Requiring Improvement’ with services for Looked after Children and Care Leavers rated as ‘Inadequate’.
- Although reducing, numbers of children looked after by the local authority and children subject to child protection planning are higher than national and regional averages and most statistical neighbours. There are high numbers of families affected by domestic violence, substance misuse and parental mental health in the child protection system.
- All local authorities are operating with smaller ‘financial envelopes’ and creative approaches are needed to ensure service effectiveness and efficiency in this challenging environment.
- Southampton has historically relied on high numbers of temporary and agency staff and has a proactive strategy in place to increase the number of full time, permanent social workers in the local authority.
- We need to improve compliance against statutory requirements for the care of looked after children and children subject to child protection planning. Specifically, we need to ensure that our work is timely and consistently ‘good enough’.
- We need to further promote access to independent visiting and advocacy for Looked after Children.

## What people in Southampton have told us

### Youth Forum Engagement Workshop (2017)

Young people told us that a great service should:

- Communicate well – with children and with each other.
- Is focused on our needs. Staff should be friendly and helpful and senior leaders should be well trained.
- ‘Does what it says on the tin’.

### Parent’s feedback from Child Protection Conferences (2016)

- Chairs were helpful in challenging circumstances
- Parents felt well – informed after the conferences

## What are we going to do?

Priorities	Key Actions	Lead(s)	Lead Partners	How we will measure success in March 2018?
<b>Practice Excellence</b>	We will monitor and co-ordinate the Children and Families Continuous Improvement Plan.	Service Lead Service Manager	Education and Early Help Children's Social Care	We will drive up the standard of practice through the implementation of a robust quality assurance framework; supported by the strategic application of audits, critical learning reviews, coaching and mentoring.
	We will develop a robust retention and recruitment strategy and a high quality training offer, based on analysis of workforce learning and development needs.	Service Lead Principal Social Worker	Solent and Winchester Universities	We will evidence the recruitment and retention of staff by supporting the ASYE, Step Up and Fast Track recruitment programmes, alongside management development.
	We will provide an effective service contribution to the Local Safeguarding Boards.	Service Manager	Local Safeguarding Children's and Adult's Boards	We will have set multi agency standards for safe and effective supervision through the work of the LSCB and LSAB learning and development group. We will have contributed to a needs led multi agency safeguarding training offer through the LSCB and LSAB; quality assured through the Boards' Learning and Development Group
	We will identify, review and promote examples of good practice implemented across the service and elsewhere; in order to drive up the quality of our service offer and its delivery	Quality Assurance Unit	Education and Early Help Children's Social Care Solent, Southampton and Winchester Universities	We will explore opportunities for Knowledge Transfer Partnerships with local universities. We will support the rigorous, independent assessment of service delivery to ensure that, wherever possible, local intervention work adheres to established quality marks. We will be 'outward-facing', using our professional networks to identify and share good practice. We will be able to evidence the consistent application of Strengthening Families and Restorative Practice approaches within our interventions with families; co-ordinated through a project team from across the Children and Families Service.
	We will develop our purchased services offer; as we look to innovate and create further opportunities to share our expertise	Workforce Development	Education and Early Years (including the Educational Psychology Service )	We will increase the income generated by our training offer by a minimum of 15% over three years.
<b>Service Compliance</b>	We will support the Children and Families Performance Management Board to provide rigorous, constructive challenge as we drive forward the service improvement priorities.	Service Lead Service Manager CPC and IRO teams.	Children and Families Data Team Education and Early Help Children's Social Care	We will be able to evidence that the Board reviews a comprehensive schedule of monthly performance data, local compliance information and quality assurance activity. This will include responses to alerts and complaints and scrutiny of our own unit. Outcomes for looked after children and children subject to child protection planning will improve. Numbers will reduce safely to levels that are appropriate for a city like Southampton. Permanence for Looked After Children will be achieved in a timely manner in more cases. Less children will be subject to repeat child protection planning and the numbers of children with plans over 15 months in length will decrease.
	We will work collaboratively with the Policy, Partnerships and Strategic Planning Service to support service compliance in respect of statutory requirements and adherence to local policies and procedures (including 4LSCB policies and procedures).	Service Manager	Policy, Partnerships and Strategic Planning Service Local Safeguarding Children's Board.	We will complete a review of policies and procedures, which will be accessed via the new Policy Hub. We will be able to evidence compliance with the requirements of national and local policy and relevant legislative change (for example, Children and Social Work Act).
	We will quality assure new developments within the service. These will include the transformation of the core social work teams, the new 'Edge of Care' service and the integrated Early Help offer.	Service Manager PSW Auditors	Education and Early Help Children's Social Care	Through audit activity we will be able to show how service transformation is improving outcomes for children and how we are responding to any further development needs identified.
<b>Continuous Learning</b>	We will collaborate with the Policy, Partnerships and Strategic Planning Service and those services that are subject to formal inspection requirements to ensure compliance with our local inspection framework.	Service Lead Service Manager	Policy, Partnerships and Strategic Planning Service	We will manage inspection compliance activity, ensuring that we can engage effectively with inspectorates through robust self-assessment and preparation. We will be able to evidence that inspection readiness is consistently included in partnership forward plans.
	We will work with areas of the service that have been inspected to plan their improvement journey and we will support peer review activity to pro-actively assess our effectiveness in delivering positive outcomes for children and families.	Service Manager Auditors Workforce Development	Policy, Partnerships and Strategic Planning Service Education and Early Help Children's Social Care	Improvement activity will be robust and consistent across the service; with a clear narrative of improvement through the Children and Families Continuous Improvement Plan.
	We will work collaboratively and strategically to ensure that opportunities for Continuous Professional Development meet organisational and professional requirements.	Workforce Development PSW	Capita Human Resources Educational Psychology Service	The CPD and training offer will have a proven impact upon practice and performance across the service. We will champion the consistent use of performance contracts and appraisals as foundations for effective CPD.
	We will ensure that findings from Serious Case Reviews and other learning activity co-ordinated by the Local Safeguarding Boards is acted upon by the Service.	Service Lead Service Manager	Local Safeguarding Boards	We will monitor recommendations arising from case reviews, audits and other professional engagement activity and ensure that relevant action plans are completed.
<b>Working with Others</b>	We will embed consultation with children, families and vulnerable adults as a key principle of service development.	QA Unit	Children's Participation Officers	We will be able to evidence routine consideration of service user views and action taken at the Performance Board. We will engage, as appropriate, with the Southampton Youth Forum and Children in Care Council.
	We will ensure high quality advocacy and independent visitor support for our looked after children and promote children's active participation in child protection planning.	IRO Team Manager CPC Team Manager	No Limits	We will ensure that our looked after children are able to access their entitlement of an independent visitor and advocacy. We will agree and monitor participation arrangements for children protection planning.
	We will ensure that the Local Authority Designated Officer function is robustly met in Southampton and referring agencies receive a high quality service.	Service Manager LADO	Transformation Board	Local provision will meet the requirements of Working Together 2015. We will be able to evidence consistent, robust advice after referral and the positive feedback about the service offered will continue.
	We will foster good relationships with all stakeholders so that we develop a strong reputation for service delivery.	Service Lead Service Manager	Transformation Board Local Safeguarding Boards Elected Members Schools	We will be able to evidence engagement with key stake holders, including senior managers, cabinet members and the partners attending the Local Safeguarding Boards in order to ensure that collectively we meet our objectives.