

**Has the Help Helped?**

Camden Early Intervention and Prevention
Quality Assurance Policy Statement

August 2017

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Introduction

In line with Camden’s vision of a “place where everyone has a chance to succeed and nobody gets left behind” and guided by the Resilient Families Framework, Camden early help services identify children, young people and families requiring additional support at the earliest opportunity.

Early help staff hold the whole family in mind, using a partnership and strengths based approach and evidenced-informed interventions to improve outcomes. Early help teams across serviceswork to the same core principles, using the Resilient Families Framework as our foundation, providing the right help at the right time to prevent problems escalating and help families become more resilient.

The focus of this Quality Assurance policy statement is on the quality of practice in line with the six key principle of the Resilience Families programme:

This policy statement also mirrors the QA policy in Childrens Safeguarding and Social Work service, to ensure a seamless approach across Camden’s services for children and families, and to ensure learning can be shared to improve our systemic practice wherever possible, regardless of discipline or profession.

Because Early Intervention and Prevention (EIP) is a diverse service group, with a range of connected but unique services and teams within it, each Head of Service will compliment this policy statement with QA tools and recording systems that are pertinent and relevant to that service. Every service group in EIP subscribes to the ethos of this policy statement. EIP will use its fortnightly managers meeting to share learning from QA processes, and identify where teams and services have strengths or areas for improvement in common.

1. Definition of quality assurance

Quality assurance is a dynamic process that sets standards, monitors achievements and uses information from this process to make improvements across the service that can translate into better outcomes for children and families.

A quality assurance framework sets out how this is achieved by providing a consistent set of standards against which service performance is measured. The information is then fed back into the system to produce a “virtuous cycle” of improvement.

Improved outcomes

Early help quality assurance achieves this through:

* Measuring and monitoring performance against required standards for individuals as well as service as a whole
* Identifies strength and shortfalls in practice at all levels
* Adopting a whole system approach, linking individual supervision training, planning to the findings of quality assurance activities
* Helping staff understand their quality assurance role and responsibilities, and that everyone has a role to play in improving quality
* Providing a feedback cycle that drives a learning culture where problem areas addressed openly and honestly.

2 Purpose of quality assurance

The early help quality assurance policy has been designed to ensure that information about service delivery, practice standards, outcomes and service user’s experiences is collected at regular intervals by a wide variety of means. This information is then used to make improvements to practice and service delivery to ensure services can meet the needs of children, young people and families, are delivered in an efficient and effective manner, and enable staff to learn and develop.

The main outcomes of quality assurance are to enable managers and staff to:

* measure outcomes and consider whether the Service actively “makes a difference” to children, young people and families lives
* understand and quantify the impact of our Resilient Families systemic approach on children and families
* set appropriate standards and benchmarks and model excellence
* recognise the strengths and weaknesses in service provision and identify actions to develop and improve services
* reflect critically on the quality of work practice and services
* encourage and inform debate, discussion and challenge so the division can address issues, find solutions and ultimately improve services and outcomes
* become a learning organisation where staff are aware of expectations and feel supported to work to a high standard of practice
* provide ownership for standards and a shared common purpose so that all staff know what is expected of them and can take responsibility.

3 Standards we work to

* Legislation and guidance such as the Children Act 2004 and Crime and Disorder Act, the Equality Act etc. provide the framework for Camden’s powers and duties relating to children and families and that set out important procedural processes and timescales.
* Ofsted publication – ‘Early help, whose responsibility’ provide guidance on standards of practice and best practice evidence and findings from research that inform Early help services work practice.
* National Occupational Standard (NOS) for Children and young people’s workforce and NOS for work with parent that set out professional standards of practice for work with children and families.
* Camden’s corporate standards of behaviour for council staff and service delivery.
* Ofsted inspection frameworks that contain evaluation statements for children’s services.

Camden’s own standards for children and families services are:

* The welfare of the child is paramount and the child will be central to all our activity
* We will work in partnership with parents to support them in caring for their child at home where this is consistent with the child’s welfare
* We will work to the legislative framework using evidence of best practice and current research to inform our decision-making
* Decisions on interventions will be proportionate and timely, and informed by high quality assessments based on the most up to date research available
* We will work with families in a respectful and non-judgemental way and will empower families to find their own solutions to difficulties
* We will remain professionally curious at all times, keeping an open mind and constantly reviewing our professional judgements
* We will ensure our professional knowledge and skills are continually developed and that we keep up to date with new research, using all available resources and taking opportunities to reflect critically on our practice so that there is a culture of learning in all EH services
* We will work closely with the professional network to ensure good information sharing and a high quality of multi-agency working that can deliver integrated services
* When working with service users we will promote equality and embrace diversity and ensure that all service users have equal access to services and do not experience discrimination or inequality

4 How we quality assure

Every EIP service will consider:

* **Feedback and comments from children and fa**milies about their journey with us, what they found helpful and what could have been better
* **Service specifics:** information from teams around workloads, staffing levels and how teams are coping, including any external pressures on the service and how these may be affecting standards of practice and levels of efficiency
* **Early help processes:** information on key work tasks such as assessment, timescales and caseloads and review, and other processes relevant to individual services and teams, to find out how efficiently we carry out these processes and whether we need to change our procedures to improve the way we work
* **vulnerable children:** information on groups (for example repeat young offenders) so that we are aware of how and why they are vulnerable, what we can do to reduce their vulnerability and how we can improve outcomes for them;
* **specific risks and issues:** information on issues impacting on children’s welfare such as parental mental ill health, parental substance misuse and domestic violence, so that we have an understanding of how it affects children’s welfare, how prevalent the risk is in the borough and how we can reduce associated risks
* **partnership working:** information on how we work with other agencies, including feedback from partners, and how we can improve multi-agency working and joint agency responses
* **staff and the working environment;** information that allows us to plan for the development of the workforce and ensure we can provide a safe working environment and a high quality service that keeps children safe
* **outcomes;** information on how we are making a difference to children’s lives, including direct feedback from service users
* **specific feedback and QA pertinent to each service group** in Early Intervention and Prevention

**QA Service Contacts in Early Intervention & Prevention**

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