

How good is our delivery of key processes of assessment, action planning and review?

A self evaluation tool for children and families social work to take a closer look at the Performance Improvement Framework: *How good is our delivery of key processes?*

Introduction

This self evaluation tool supports the implementation of the Performance Improvement Framework for Children and Families social work. Having taken a broader view, it helps us to take a closer look when answering the key question

How good is our delivery of key processes ?

Key processes in children and families social work are assessment, action planning and review. We are moving towards integrated assessment, action planning and review across children's services with the aim that for one child there should be one assessment, one action plan and one series of meetings to review progress in implementing the plan and to evaluate the impact on the child. This will create a streamlined system enabling us to focus our efforts on activities which make a positive difference to children's lives. We know that if we can improve our performance in relation to these key processes we will improve outcomes for children. Other social work processes are detailed in the Performance Improvement Framework and the self evaluation tool *How good is our team?*

The tool is intended to support us in self evaluation and continuous improvement. It provides some questions for us to ask about the delivery of our key processes and examples of very good practice so that we can evaluate our strengths and identify areas for improvement. We can then determine our priorities for making improvements and make an action plan as to how we will do this. This action plan should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timebound) as should action plans for children. We should set ourselves realistic targets for improvement on an annual basis and not try to do everything at once. Success in bringing about improvements in one area will build confidence to tackle new areas. The important thing is to be able to evidence progress over time.

How good is our delivery of the key process of assessment ?

Questions to ask	Suggested evidence	Self evaluation	
	<i>Very good practice:</i>	Strengths	Areas for Improvement
<p>1. Are the criteria for initiating an assessment clear? Are assessments proportionate to the likely level of service required to meet the child's needs? Are any resulting reports completed within specified timescales?</p>	<p>Procedures are in places which specify criteria for different levels of assessment and timescales for the completion of resulting assessment reports. Assessment reports are monitored on a monthly basis in relation to these criteria and specified timescales. Appropriate action is taken to address any outstanding assessment reports.</p>		
<p>2. Are assessments holistic, involving all the relevant agencies in one assessment process? Do assessments take full account of the child's family history and current circumstances, the child's developmental needs, the care being afforded to the child and the impact of their wider world ? Does the assessment identify needs, risks, strengths and potential ?</p>	<p>Integrated assessments take place involving an assessment co-ordinator from the lead agency and named people from all relevant agencies in contributing to one assessment format and process. Each child, including those in sibling groups, has an individual assessment. The Scottish assessment triangle is used to identify needs and risks and also to identify the positives in a child's life including resilience and any protective factors.</p>		

<p>3. Does the assessment gather all the relevant information from records, interviews, direct work with and observations of the child, their parents and other significant people in the child's life (eg fathers, mother's partners, siblings, extended family members, friends and neighbours)? Is there an analysis of this information?</p>	<p>There is an integrated chronology of significant events for each child. Relevant information is shared between the agencies involved in accordance with information sharing protocols. Significant adults in the child's life are interviewed. The assessment includes direct work and/or observations of the child in the family home and other situations. The analysis of the information leads to sound conclusions based on professional judgement.</p>		
<p>4. Are the child, their parents and other significant people in the child's life actively involved in the assessment? Have their views been ascertained and recorded ?</p>	<p>The views of the child, their parents and those of other significant people in the child's life are recorded in assessment reports in relation to the presenting concerns, wherever possible using their own words. The analysis and conclusions of the assessment are explained and understood by the child, according to their age and level of understanding and their parents/carers.</p>		
<p>5. Are the needs and any risks to the child or from the child to others clearly identified and fully explored ?</p>	<p>Unmet needs and any risk factors are clearly described, analysed and contained in a summary within assessment reports. Assessment reports are quality</p>		

	assured.		
6. Has the assessment identified what outcomes should be improved for the child?	Outcomes are identified for improvement which are intrinsic to the child and contribute to the 7 vision statements.		

How good is our delivery of the key process of action planning ?

Questions to ask	Suggested evidence	Self evaluation	
	<i>Very good practice:</i>	Strengths	Areas for Improvement
1. Does the action plan for the individual child incorporate all relevant agencies? Are there specific actions in relation to each of the needs and risks identified from the assessment?	There are explicit links between the assessment and the resulting action plan covering each of the needs and risks identified in the assessment. Actions that cannot be delivered due to shortfalls or gaps in services are recorded and aggregated to inform planning processes.		
2. Are the proposed actions based on best evidence about what works ? Does the plan specify who will do what by when and involve named staff from all the relevant agencies? Are the child (where appropriate), their parents and other significant people in the child's life fully involved?	The action plan explicitly links to research findings about what works. The actions are SMART. The action plan states what each person will do including what, if appropriate, the child/young person, their parents and other significant people in the child's life will do to effect change? The plan is signed denoting agreement by all parties.		
3. Does the action plan identify an action plan co-ordinator from the lead agency ? Is the cost of the action plan recorded and does it represent best value ?	There is a named action plan coordinator from the lead agency who takes responsibility for co-ordinating and monitoring the implementation of the plan. The plan is costed in terms of provision and services. Where appropriate,		

	there is an option appraisal to show how alternative plans were considered in relation to best value.		
4. Does the action plan state what interim measures (success criteria) will be used to indicate that the plan is progressing towards achieving improved outcomes for the child?	Interim measures (success criteria) that indicate progress in the right direction are stated and how these will be evaluated. The cost effectiveness of action plans are analysed in terms of achieving the success criteria, aggregated and reported annually.		
5. Is there a contingency plan and a date for a review?	The minimum measures of progress to consider that the plan has been effective are stated in the action plan and known to all involved parties. There is an explicit contingency plan if these are not met within specified timescales. There is a review date scheduled		

How good is our delivery of the key process of review ?

Questions to ask	Suggested evidence	Self evaluation	
	<i>Very good practice:</i>	Strengths	Areas for Improvement
<p>1. Is there one series of multi agency meetings to review the action plan? Do review meetings comply with statutory requirements? Are they chaired by an objective person who is competent and has authority to undertake this role?</p>	<p>There is only one series of review meetings about a child chaired by an independent manager who has the necessary authority to challenge practice and overrule recommendations. There are systems in place to quality assure reviews. Chairs ensure that reviews keep to a schedule and meet statutory requirements. Chairs monitor the implementation of action plans and address any issues where actions have not been carried out as agreed.</p>		
<p>2. Does the review meeting have a high level of participation from the child/young person, their parents and other significant people in the child's life ?</p>	<p>Review meetings are kept as small as possible and take place at times and in locations to suit the child, their parents and other significant people in the child's life. Attendees produce reports which are circulated in advance of the meeting, The child, their parents and any other significant people in the child's life are supported in producing reports for the meeting, prepared in advance of the meeting taking</p>		

	place and supported in understanding the content of tabled reports and expressing their views. Chairs monitor attendance and participation of all invitees to reviews and late reports. They take any necessary action where issues arise.		
3. Does the review meeting consider the progress of the action plan against the identified success criteria for the child?	The agreed methods of evaluation are used to determine whether the action plan has effected change and achieved the success criteria. This is recorded in the minute of the review which is distributed to all attendees within 5 working days of the review taking place.		
4. Is it clear why the action plan has been continued, varied, replaced by a new action plan or ended?	The minutes contain decisions about changes to any future action plan linked to the success or otherwise of implementing the action plan.		
5. Is information about review meetings aggregated to show the effectiveness of the system in supporting the implementation of action plans to improve outcomes for children?	There is clear evidence from reviews that the implementation of action plans is improving outcomes for individual children. This evidence is aggregated into an annual performance report on the review system as a whole.		