

**Victoria Climbié Audit Tool : 2002-03 : Performance Evaluation
for Herefordshire council. (415)**

Audit of services to Children in Need in response to the practice recommendations of the Victoria Climbié Inquiry
Spring 2003

Name of Inspector completing evaluation	Date of completion
Graham Woods	27-May-2003

Please complete the relevant tick box to identify this evaluation phase.

a) Completed after the evaluation of the audit	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Completed after a follow up visit	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Completed after an inspection	<input type="checkbox"/>

STANDARD 1 - REFERRAL	Evaluation
Referral and initial response, including those provided outside office hours, safeguard and promote the welfare of children and are convenient and user-friendly	Most
Text box explaining evaluation particularly if evaluation does not agree with the council's self audit.	
<p>The council's audit is consistent with the recent Joint Review(JR) report. The JR report confirmed the improved performance of child protection systems as shown in the 2001-02 PAF PIs. However, it expressed concern about the lack of clear eligibility criteria for children in need, the high threshold for intervention and , in particular, the lack of a mechanism for managing cases of concern that fell just below the threshold. Additional information from the council has demonstrated that work with partners on these issues is well advanced.</p>	

STANDARD 2 - ASSESSMENT Assessment of children in need, focus on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child by addressing their developmental needs and the capacity of the primary carers to meet those needs	Evaluation Most
Text box explaining evaluation particularly if evaluation does not agree with the council's self audit.	
<p>The council assessed this standard overall as 'very effective', consistent with the scores against each criteria. However, the standard refers to children in need (not just CP cases) and the JR report raised a number of relevant concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the threshold for services was high and the safety of children just below the CP threshold was questioned; the Assessment Framework was not always used ; some assessments lacked focus; and 'what needs to change' to protect a child was not always clear'. <p>In 2001/02, the council was above the W Midlands average for completion of initial assessments in 7 days but a little below the unitary and England average , but was performing less well on core assessments in 35 days. 2002/03 targets predicted a relatively good performance.</p> <p>The level of repeat referral was relatively high suggesting lack of sufficient focus in some assessments and care plans.</p>	

STANDARD 3 - ALLOCATION, SERVICE PROVISION AND CLOSURE Where a child is identified as being in need councils provide a service appropriate to the level of assessed need. Closure is only considered following an full analysis of need and such action is deemed to be in the child's best interest.	Evaluation Most
Text box explaining evaluation particularly if evaluation does not agree with the council's self audit.	
<p>The council's evidence and overall score are consistent.</p> <p>The Performance Improvement Group(chaired by a senior manager and attended by all operational managers) meets fortnightly to assure equity of access and workloads(geographical location is not the overriding criteria for locating case responsibility and allocation) and to oversee performance information returns</p>	

STANDARD 4 - GUIDANCE Social services has effective policies and procedures in respect of children in need consistent with local ACPC arrangements and monitors the implementation of them	Evaluation
	Uncertain
Text box explaining evaluation particularly if evaluation does not agree with the council's self audit.	
<p>The council's evidence and overall score are consistent.</p> <p>The council has established clear accountabilities and these are reflected in updated job descriptions. However, the revision of the Children's Services procedures, inherited from the previous authority, still remains outstanding. A target date of September 2003 has been set for completion.</p>	

STANDARD 5 - TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT Social services ensure that all staff working with children in need are suitably skilled and qualified to undertake appropriate continuing professional development.	Evaluation
	Promising
Text box explaining evaluation particularly if evaluation does not agree with the council's self audit.	
<p>The council's judgement against this standard is inconsistent with the evidence and judgements against the individual criteria, which indicate a better overall score.</p> <p>The JR report shows that the staff review and development system is working positively and for the majority of staff. Completion rates are now a internal performance indicator. The next step is to aggregate the results and express these needs within the training plan.</p> <p>Routinely assessing the impact of training on practice is an ambitious but necessary target.</p>	

STANDARD 6 - ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT	Evaluation
Social services has performance management arrangements within which all staff understand their responsibilities for delivering the services supported by regular supervision and appraisal.	Promising
Text box explaining evaluation particularly if evaluation does not agree with the council's self audit.	
<p>The council's evidence and overall score are consistent.</p> <p>The Performance Improvement Group is playing an important role in ensuring a consistent approach to managing the service.</p> <p>The JR report confirms that the supervision policy has been positively implemented and that there is a system for management oversight of compliance with the policy and with procedures.</p>	

STANDARD 7 - GOVERNANCE	Evaluation
Councillors and Chief Executives have clear accountabilities for social services for children in need including arrangements for the review of policy and practice and strong scrutiny arrangements.	Promising
Text box explaining evaluation particularly if evaluation does not agree with the council's self audit.	
<p>The council's overall judgement is inconsistent with the evidence and scoring against the individual criteria. Six of the 10 criteria are in the higher categories, of which four are fully reaching the criteria. All but one of the Laming timescales will be met. Allowing for a weighting on the importance of workforce strategy and quality assurance systems, overall this standard is on the cusp and therefore 'promising' prospects.</p> <p>The Performance Improvement Group has ensured that all CP and LAC cases are allocated to social workers.</p> <p>Arrangements for reporting to councillors on core child care responsibilities are robust.</p>	

Overall Assessment : Serving People well?

Evaluation - Serving people well	Most
----------------------------------	------

Text box explaining evaluation particularly if evaluation does not agree with the council's self audit.

The aggregation of the council's overall judgements on the three relevant standards results in an overall assessment of 'serving most'. This is so even with the downgrading of the overall assessment of Standard 2 . There is clear evidence of good compliance with CP procedures and all CP and LAC cases are allocated to social workers. There are issues about the timeliness and quality of assessments for children in need. This is a particular issue for those not reaching the threshold for CP procedures, but whose safety is cause for concern. Work is, however, advanced in clarifying eligibility criteria and thresholds for services.

Overall Assessment : Capacity for Improvement?

Evaluation - Capacity for improvement	Promising
---------------------------------------	-----------

Text box explaining evaluation particularly if evaluation does not agree with the council's self audit.

The council's capacity to improve is 'promising' .The council had underscored itself on two of the four standards, because its overall judgements were not consistent with those made against the individual criterai in those standards. The JR report confirms the council's implementation of the changes recommended in the SSI children's services inspection. Performance management arrangements are largely in place both at operational level and to councillors. Developments in auditing the quality of practice and case recording are well advanced. Sixty-nine percent of the criteria are on target.

Follow up visit to take place?	No
--------------------------------	----

Strengths and areas for development

Description of Issue	PAF Domain	Strength/ Area for development?	Highlight for Annual Review?
The Performance Improvement Group ensures equity of service and routinely monitors referral and assessment performance.	Fair Access	Strength	0 - No
The Council had established an independent Planning, Review and Audit Unit and its work was being extended across agencies.	Quality	Strength	0 - No
The planned upgrading of the information system will enhance the performance management and auditing systems	Quality	Strength	0 - No
The supervision policy has been implemented and is monitored.	Effectiveness	Strength	0 - No
There is a need to ensure the application of the Framework for Assessment and the quality of assessments and care plans.	Quality	Area for development	1 - Yes
The eligibility criteria and revised thresholds for services need to be implemented and monitored, especially to ensure appropriate responses to children who cause concern.	Effectiveness	Area for development	1 - Yes
A standard approach to case closure is needed	Effectiveness	Area for development	1 - Yes
The target for the revision of the Childrens Services procedures is Spetember 2003.	Effectiveness	Area for development	1 - Yes

Standards for case recording have been devised. A Framework for routine auditing of case records was being devised for implementation this year.	Quality	Strength	0 - No
Individual staff development reviews have been positively implemented and the results now need aggregating as a contribution to developing the training plan.	Effectiveness	Strength	1 - Yes