



Application of Threshold Standards

Audit Summary

Objective

- The purpose of this audit was to find out the extent to which thresholds for referral to social care and early help were understood and applied consistently and appropriately to children and families, with specific focus on the following:
- The quality of the referral and whether there is sufficient information to make a well informed decision
- The appropriateness of the way in which thresholds are applied in decision making
- The appropriateness of the outcome of intervention and the impact on the child of that outcome.

Recommendations

- Urgent improvements to the quality of record keeping across the partnership should be linked to activity to respond to recommendations in previous audits and serious case reviews.
- Record keeping should be secure, searchable and electronic for ease of access. Records made by one agency or service should be easily cross referenced to another.
- Children in families should not be open across multiple processes. They either all should be open to early help or to children's social care. The only caveat being if the children reside in different homes due to reconstituted family arrangements.
- Develop and implement clear and simple threshold guidance and support professionals to improve their knowledge and application of threshold levels.
- Develop the professional curiosity, relationship building and questioning skills of front-line staff to prevent unnecessary referrals to social care and to increase the number of families that are willing to consent to early help work.
- Create a referral culture which is focused on ensuring that all children and families receive the right help at the right time. This should include putting in place a clear and simple system which provides families with access to the range of support available from different threshold levels.
- Ensure that all professionals understand the early help offer within Coventry, both what is available and how it can be accessed. Agencies and professionals should also understand their role in leading early help work through the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) process and increase the number of cases they hold.
- Review and improve the step up and step down processes between social care and early help, building on current good practice, to ensure all children and families receive the support they need.
- Redesign or refresh the multi-agency referral form and current referral process to ensure there is a single simple, clear, secure and consistent route for making a referral. The redesign should also be done in a way that assists referrers to provide the necessary information to the correct level of detail, for example presenting issues, reasons for concerns and expectations for required action
- Improve the clarity of FGM reporting procedures to allow a more nuanced and sensitive response by agencies.