

AUDIT COMMITTEE UPDATE – 31 MARCH 2014

Adoption Allowances – Audit Statement March 2014

An internal audit follow up report was completed in September 2013 on Adoption Allowances. This report was commissioned to ascertain the progress made on the implementation of the recommendations from the full audit undertaken in July 2011. The follow up report provided substantial assurance over the systems in place to manage Adoption, SGO (Special Guardianship Orders) and RO (Residence Orders) systems.

Sufficient progress has made on the implementation of the recommendations. The revised Adoption Allowance Procedures are in the final stages of development, with robust monitoring systems in place to manage the provision of adoption allowances. All allowances now have a signed agreement between the authority and recipients. Adopters are also informed that any changes in circumstances must be reported to the authority and any overpayment would be returned. All families receiving an allowance are reviewed on annual basis and families are informed in advance of this review if any of the children are reaching sixteen years of age. School or college declarations are now sent out routinely to establish evidence of children who have been placed for adoption attend the respective establishment.

The adoption service will continue to review progress against the recommendations in line with the new procedures.

An internal audit was taken on Fostering Allowance in July 2011 and provided substantial assurance at that time of the controls in place. A follow up report was undertaken which reported two outstanding recommendations required implementation. These have subsequently been progressed. Namely, that Social workers in the Fostering Service obtain receipts for discretionary items from carers where appropriate and where items have been routinely purchases. There are situations, for example, in a school, where it would not be appropriate for a carer to draw attention to a child's status by requesting a receipt when they would not otherwise do so. In relation to the scheme of delegation, this has been reviewed as part of the new case management system. Fostering managers have received financial training and are responsible for budget management. Finally, the types of payments awarded to foster carers are managed through the Service Manager in line with the foster carers' annual review.

Actions to track the high priority ('starred') recommendations for Children's Social Care made by Independent Reviewing Officers – Audit Statement March 2014

Starred recommendations are now fully detailed in the problem resolution log. One Quality and Review Manager now has lead responsibility for overseeing and auditing starred recommendations on a monthly basis. Discussions take place with the responsible Senior Manager within Children's Social Care regarding any outstanding starred recommendations and escalated if the need arises via the Dispute Resolution

process that is in place. This arrangement commenced in November 2013. Recording of audit activity is retained in the IRO Team, Starred Recommendations folder on the 'R' Drive.

Starred recommendations are also a standard item on the agenda of the monthly Quality & Review Management team meetings. They are also reported to the Safeguarding Inspection & Audit SMT meetings. Work has commenced in respect of a Quarterly IRO report which again will include information in respect to monitoring and tracking of 'starred recommendations'. The first Quarterly IRO report will be completed in March 2014.

The increased demand on CSC and IRO services by the increase in CLA and Children & Young People being subject to CP plans continues to have an impact in some areas of meeting timescales. These continue to be monitored by managers and options looked at to address these

Working Together With Troubled Families (WTWF) – Audit Statement March 2014

A report has been issued and was discussed with the WTWF Governance Group in December 2013 and March 2014. Progress has been made in addressing the actions agreed following the first and second phase of the audit in 2013/14. Audit previously provided a limited assurance over the processes in place supporting the operation of the programme, in particular, data management and the need to obtain access to data from different organisations, including central government. Although significant steps have been taken to improve data extraction for the payment-by-results claim and to maximise the claim, certain criteria for the Troubled Families Unit (TFU) programme have yet to be finalised and agreed by central government. Our WTWF target is to have begun working with 1,841 families by 31 March 2014. As at 31st December 2013, we had begun working with 1,369 families and were therefore at risk of receiving delayed or reduced funding for 2014/15. Throughout the three-year programme, £8.7 million of funding will be made available, £3.5 million of which is made through a payment-by-results scheme. Further, families participating in the approach should, where appropriate, provide written consent that their details can be shared with partner organisations, and audit found inconsistencies in the processes to obtain and record consent. Tracker forms should also be completed by the lead professionals as an assessment tool to identify initial needs and then to track performance against agreed targets.

In response to the above an action plan has been developed and implemented accordingly with current progress outlined below. Given the progress made on the issues identified we would expect a revised assurance level to be secured shortly. Internal audit are planning a follow-up review in late March/ April 2014. Any opinion level obviously depends on controls that were previously in place also continuing to be in place.

Case File Audits – Audit Statement March 2014

The relevant audit reports have been issued and discussed with the children's social care management team in December 2013 and February 2014. Progress has been made in developing systems with additional business support managing some audit activity to improve performance.

There are risks linked to service demand alongside the impact of the introduction of protocol. Regular audit systems introduced supports management of those risks.

The case file audit reporting system continues to be refined in order to provide an accurate picture of the range of auditing that is taking place across all the Directorate services. In addition our emphasis is on obtaining qualitative data from audits rather than just increasing the numbers of audits being completed.

A monthly report on audit activity, including case file audits completed is sent to the relevant Directors and Heads of Service who chase any outstanding or deficit areas. A quarterly report is also presented to the Directorate Leadership Team (DLT) for reporting and monitoring purposes. A monthly summary report is sent to each Senior Manager which includes a breakdown of cases audited and themes, trends and areas requiring action. This also identifies those managers completing or not completing audits. An annual report is also planned to be completed in April 2014, although this will not cover a full year of auditing activity.

The case file audit framework is being updated to reflect the continuous improvement changes outlined above. This will incorporate the capturing of audits completed by senior managers and how these will be recorded and reported. The file audit framework will again emphasise on who and how many audits are to be completed.

The recording of case file audits is presently completed via a click web process and self reporting of any additional audits completed. The plan is for the audit tools to be fully integrated within the new LCS Liquid Logic system. Unfortunately this will be delayed and not in operation until September 2014. Therefore the interim arrangements will remain in place. This provides the opportunity as outlined above to review and refine the audits tools prior to full integration. The recent quarter three report showed that there were 2322 audit activities undertaken, although a significant number of these were other audits that were completed against an expected total of 1782. This shows that audit activity is taking place but we are looking at gaining a consistency in the same audit tools being used. The increased demand across services continues to have an impact in some areas in the completion of case file audits using the formal case file audit tools. These continue to be monitored by managers and options looked at to address these.