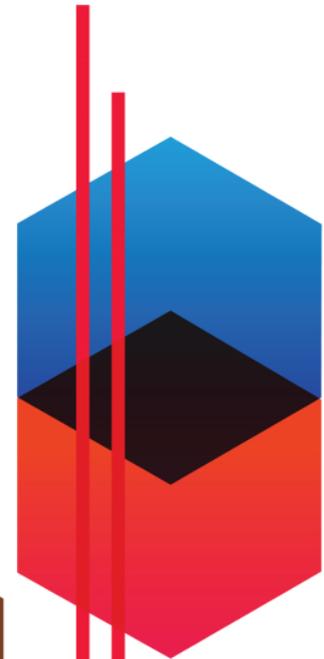
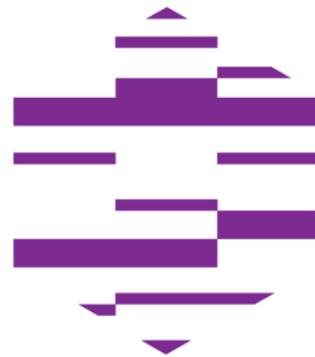


Blackburn with Darwen LGA Care Practice Diagnostic (CPD) Feedback



Background

- Time since last external scrutiny:
 - Safeguarding & Looked After Children Inspection (January 2012, judged good)
 - Thematic inspection of assessments (July 2014)
 - Thematic inspection of young girls in the Youth Justice Service (November 2015)
 - Short Quality Screening of the Youth Justice Service (June 2016)
- LGA link with Ofsted

The Peer Review Team

- Jane Humphreys – Director of Children's Services, Stockton on Tees Borough Council
- Deborah Ramsdale – Strategic Lead for Looked after Children, Staffordshire County Council
- Sally Pillay, Tri-Borough Head of Service – Fostering & Adoption
- Trish Stewart, Head of Safeguarding, Central London Community Health

All from areas recently inspected and judged to be at least good by Ofsted inspectors under the current Single Inspection Framework.

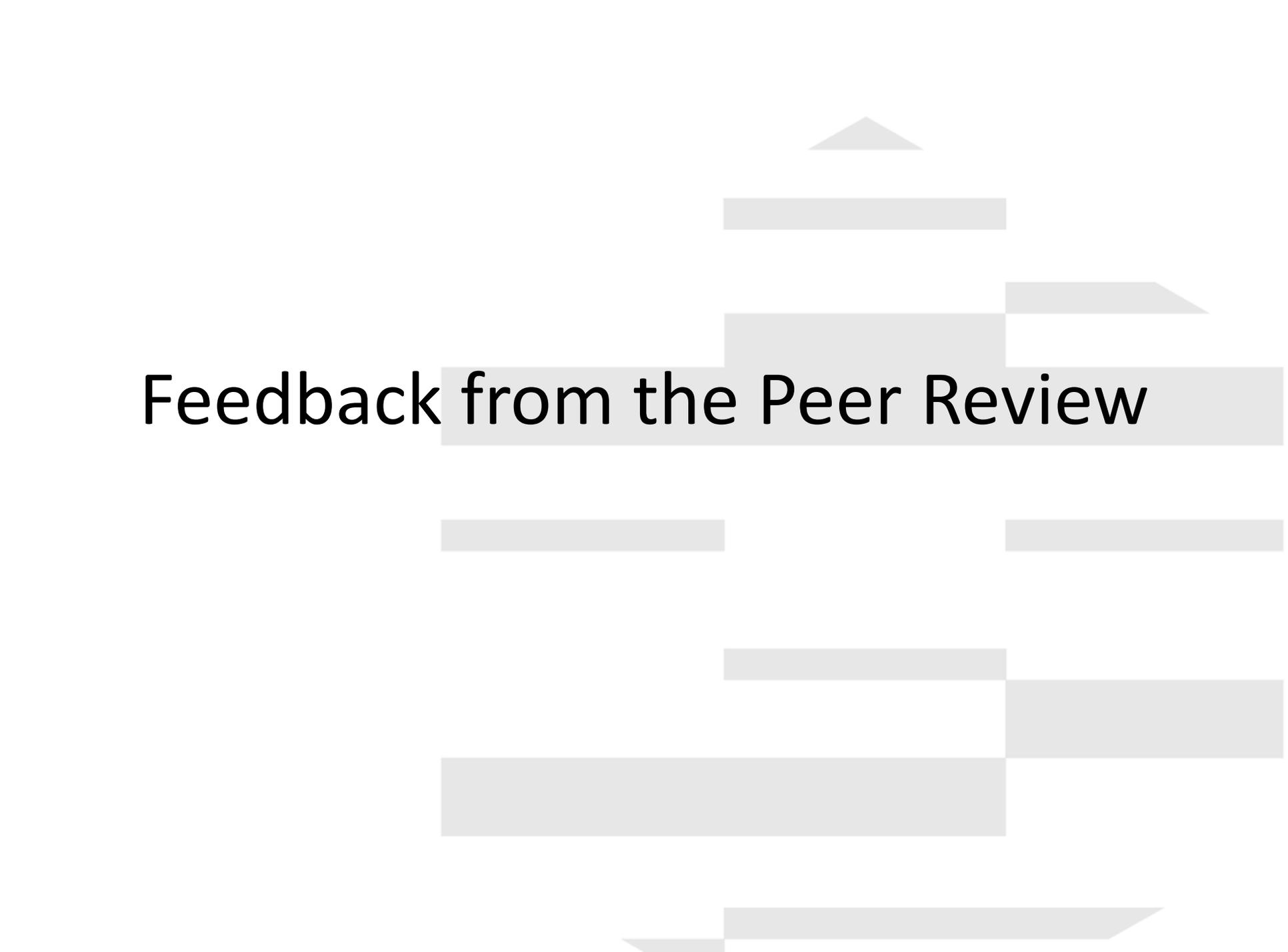
The Process

- Pre on-site activity:
 - Initial evidence submission and review.
 - Case records review (8 cases reviewed in depth plus 'dip sample' of 3 cases during 'real time' review on-site).
 - Case mapping exercise undertaken by council and partners.
- On-site – 1 week:
 - Interviews, focus groups and practice observation.
- Peer Review methodology examined four broad themes:
 - Effective practice and service delivery
 - Outcomes for children, birth parents and adopters
 - Vision, leadership and strategy
 - Managing resources and workforce

Scope of Diagnostic

In addition to the 4 broad themes, each LA is asked to choose a number of specific areas. These were:

- Entry into care and transfer into longer term arrangements
 - early planning in relation to permanence and transitions between Safeguarding team and Children and Care team
- Children who have been in care and then return home
 - quality of planning for children (under 16 years) who return home to parents and effectiveness of step down arrangements in these cases
 - also effectiveness of placements with other family members
- Diversity
 - how well assessment and planning considers all aspects of diversity, including children with disabilities



Feedback from the Peer Review

Overall Summary View

- Strong political commitment to children and young people
- Everyone works together with a real commitment to children and young people
- A number of good outcomes for children and young people
- Innovative use of specialist resources, good practice in a number of areas
- Positive, can-do culture

However.....

- Some areas of vulnerability which may impact significantly on the very positive work which has taken place over previous years – especially in the Assessment and Safeguarding Teams

Effective practice and service delivery

Strengths

- Quality of risk assessments
- Local authorities' case file auditing suggests 70% of cases good or better
- Children in care receive a good service
- Innovative resources and services eg. Appletrees, Adolescent Support Unit
- Investment by health in key posts
- Good single and multi-agency training

Effective practice and service delivery

Areas for consideration

- Supervision in the Assessment teams – quality, frequency and timeliness of actions
- Variability of practice
- Timeliness of Single assessments, Initial Child Protection Conferences and Looked After Child reviews
- Young people report a number of changes of social worker and lack of contact with social workers
- Consider the effectiveness and impact of intervention strategies for domestic abuse – are the right children entering the system quickly enough?

Outcomes for children, birth parents and adopters

Strengths

- High numbers of looked after children and young people are placed in the Borough
- High levels of children and young people in family-type placements
- Keeping children with family members where possible
- Large proportion of children exit the care system into adoption
- Low level of disruption of adoptive placements
- Good levels of CAMHS support
- Good educational outcomes for looked after children
- Good engagement with children and young people, which contributes to service re-design
- Achievement events for children and young people at all levels

Outcomes for children, birth parents and adopters

Areas for consideration

- Children who remain at home where there are known incidents of domestic abuse
- Timeliness of health assessments for children looked after needs to be sustained and quality assured
- Engaging with the judicial system and partners in improving outcomes from judicial proceedings
- Improve key performance indicators
- Utilising family group conferences to prevent entry into care and to support exit from care – Troubled Families monies have been used in other local authorities to resource this area of work

Vision, leadership and strategy

Strengths

- Visible, accessible and supportive senior leadership
- Commitment to children's services at all levels
- Good partnership working internal and external to the council
- Effective scrutiny and challenge
- Leaders know their staff and children

Vision, leadership and strategy

Areas for consideration

- What is the strategy to improve performance and meet rising demand in the system?
- Is the Council responding promptly enough to the increasing demand?
- Is there a shared understanding of current performance embedded at all levels?
- Potential impact of changing NHS landscape on current resources
- Strengthen joint commissioning
- Strategy for engaging the VCS
- Evidence of management oversight

Managing resources and workforce

Strengths

- Dedicated and committed workforce and partners who want to work in the Borough
- Evidence of succession planning
- Children's services have managed spend within budget in previous years
- Innovative approaches to meeting specific need
- Good QA systems
- Good use of volunteers across a range of services
- Highly effective fostering, adoption and leaving care services
- Goodwill of staff – but how long will it last?

Managing resources and workforce

Areas for consideration

- Impact of council and partner budget reductions
- Impact of high caseloads across a number of areas
- Have you got the right resources in the right place across the council?
- Have you got enough resources to meet increasing demand?
- Children's Services re-structure has been welcomed, but too soon to see impact - is there an over-reliance on this?
- Workload allocation system
- MASH - are you dealing with work that single agencies themselves should be doing?

Observations on areas of focus - 1

Entry into care and longer term arrangements

- Children in Our Care teams have manageable caseloads
- Approval for entry into care is clear
- Good outreach and short breaks with children and families to prevent entry into care
- Good support to foster carers to prevent placement breakdown
- Good matching of children with long term carers

Those who return home

- Evidence of regulation 24/connected persons and support to families to apply for SGOs
- Good outreach work with children who have returned home
- Number of children being placed at home by courts and impact on children – how can you raise and challenge this where necessary?
- High numbers of older children into care, despite a number of good services

Observations on areas of focus - 2

Diversity

- Council has done its own analysis of diversity across the Borough and resources generally meet need
- Resources meeting diverse needs of children
- Community-led, innovative approaches to meet need
- Good services to meet the needs of children with disabilities
- CAMHS – working to break down the stigma of mental health problems across communities
- Diversity of communities reflected in front line teams

Key issues to address

- Increasing demand
- Resources – are they in the right places and is there enough?
- High and increasing workloads
- Performance is deteriorating
- Evidence of management grip

Suggestions for improvement

- Redistribution of resources to those experiencing most pressure and re-evaluate the effectiveness of the recruitment strategy to fill vacant posts
- Consider multi-agency approach to domestic abuse, and how demand can be reduced through a more effective response
- Monitor and evidence compliance with the new supervision policy
- **Develop a wider understanding of performance with middle management and front-line staff**
- Continue to monitor the effectiveness and impact of the new structure
- Develop joint commissioning arrangements
- **Ensure all staff and managers are 'Ofsted ready'**

Actions Taken Before & After Peer Review

- Additional investment provided in July 2016 following Safeguarding Assurance Meeting, with Leader, Lead Member, Chief Executive, DCS and Chair of LSCB
 - Extra social work team
 - Extra IRO post
- Restructure of AST teams into assessment and longer term teams in November
- Further investment provided from January 2017
 - Skylakes – immediately providing additional capacity to reduce caseloads
 - Recruit additional case holding advanced practitioner posts
 - Recruit an additional IRO
 - Additional Business Support for CP conferences/Reviews (Feb 2017)
- Detailed performance reports provided weekly
 - Caseloads
 - CP and LAC statutory visits on a case by case basis
 - Supervisions on a case by case basis
 - Super report covering visits, supervisions, management oversight, case by case
 - Performance monitoring of key indicators
- Development of an invest to save bid based on 'Child Friendly Leeds'
 - Increase in Family Group Conference capacity
 - Build a restorative approach
- Review Adolescent Strategy (and reducing teenage demand)

Impact to date

Monitoring of the Impact of AST Team Restructure - Key Measures - current as at 22/2/17

Measure	Baseline Source	Expected change	Baseline	Month End Statistic				Direction on baseline	Target Range
				Nov-16	Dec-16	Jan-17	Current		
Number of Referrals per 10k child population	2016/17 til end of Oct	Steady	689	698	703	692	683	Steady	575 to 695
Percentage of Assessments completed within 45 days	2016/17 til end of Oct	Increase	65%	73%	82%	89%	92%	Increasing	>90%
Percentage of Assessments completed within 15 days	2016/17 til end of Oct	Increase	13%	16%	28%	11%	21%	Increasing	>30%
Percentage of open assmts over 45 days	Snapshot start Oct 16	Decrease	12%	7%	6%	4%	3%	Decreasing	<10%
Percentage of open assmts over 20 days	Snapshot end Oct 16	Decrease	54%	54%	44%	56%	36%	Decreasing	<45%
Percentage of referrals that were repeat referrals within a year of closure	2016/17 til end of Oct	Steady	16%	15%	15%	15%	15%	Steady	14% to 21%
Initial Child Protection Conference held in timescale	2016/17 til end of Oct	Increase	62%	61%	62%	62%	62%	Steady	85%+
# Children Subject to Child Protection Plans	as at end October 2016	Steady or Decrease	270	296	318	309	328	Increasing	210 to 260
% CP Reviews within timescale	as at end October 2016	Increase	76%	74%	73%	68%	67%	Decreasing	95%+
% CP Plans that are 2nd or subsequent	as at end October 2016	Steady	15%	16%	16%	16%	15%	Steady	10% to 20%
# Open Cases in AST	as at end October 2016	Decrease	1,230	1,271	1,317	1,195	1,124	Decreasing	1050 to 1150
% of SWs in AST with more than 30 cases	as at end October 2016	Decrease	42%	48%	41%	32%	19%	Decreasing	<5%
# Open Cases (all teams in CSC)	as at end October 2016	Decrease	1,803	1,847	1,876	1,800	1,809	Decreasing	1600 to 1700
Additional Indicators									
% of AST cases with a supervision in last 2 mths	Figure for mid Jan 2017	Increase	52%			60%	72%	Increasing	65%+
% of all CP children visited in last 3 weeks	Figure for end Dec 2016	Increase	60%			69%	85%	Increasing	95%+
% of LAC with a visit recorded in the last month (AST)	Figure for end Dec 2016	Increase	55%			71%	78%	Increasing	80%+
% of LAC with a visit recorded in the last 2 mths (AST)	Figure for end Dec 2016	Increase	89%			96%	97%	Increasing	95%+
% of LAC placed at home visited in last mth	Figure for end Dec 2016	Increase	57%			64%	59%	Steady	75%+
% of LAC placed at home visited in last 2 mths	Figure for end Dec 2016	Steady	100%			97%	93%	Steady	95%+