



Early Help; How well do professionals engage in Early Help and the Role of the Lead professional?

13 February 2017

About the audit?

As part of the SSCB multiagency audit calendar for 2016-2017 the audit took place on Monday 13 February 2017 on Early Help as this is a SSCB 2016-2017 priority. The purpose of the audit was to assess 'How well do professionals engage in Early Help and the role of the Lead Professional?'

Additionally, as the refreshed Early Help Strategy was in the early stages of being launched, this audit would provide a baseline against which the strategy could be measured in the future.

The audit purpose was to assess how well professionals engage in early help and the role of the lead professional.

The overall goal was to answer the following questions:

- How well does the multi-agency partnership recognise and work together to deliver a provision around families?
- How well do staff in universal and targeted services understand and undertake the Lead Professional role where that is appropriate?
- How effective are local systems and mechanisms to assess a range of intelligence about concerns for a child?
- How far do services commission/provide accessible, high quality targeted support for children/young people and parents/carers with additional needs

What did the audit tell us; What went well...

From the audit responses, it is clear that all agencies involved were engaging in early help and often were undertaking good work that fits within their service remit however in some cases there could have been greater multi-agency coordination which would have ensured that all of the child's needs are met.

What did the audit tell us; what needs to improve

The audit found that the role of the lead professional is not always fully understood and embedded across the partnership, an example highlighted during the audit was that the School was leading on the multi-agency coordination of a complex case but were not seeing this as the role of the lead professional.

The family history was not routinely discussed or thought about by all agencies involved in relation to the current concerns and whether this is impacting or not on the child now.

It is also clear from the audit responses; the more complex a child's needs are the likelihood a more agencies are involved and this can impact on the co-ordination of services. Some services do a lot and bear the load of all the families troubles rather than using other services and the extended family and friends to work with the family. If all agencies worked in partnership within a multi-agency forum and fully utilised information available on the multi-agency system (e-caf) then children could be further supported and it would ensure the best possible outcome for their emotional, health, education and social needs.

The refreshed early help strategy 2017-2019 has been agreed by SSCB and a new Early Help sub group will be driving forward the implementation of this across the multi-agency partnership therefore a further audit in 12 months will evidence if the learning from this audit has been embedded through the effectiveness of the strategy implementation.

Summary of Recommendations, agreed by agencies

1. The lead professional to ensure when coordinating TAF meetings that, where relevant, representatives from emotional, social, educational and health agencies are invited to ensure all needs of a child are discussed as part of a multi-agency forum
2. The Lead Professional to ensure that early help cases are not closed at TAF meetings without considering if a) which agency will remain involved as an exit strategy b) the timing of when a case closes if the child is not going to be seen
3. SSCB to remind agencies that whenever there is a transition point between services, that this is pursued promptly to avoid delay
4. The Lead Professional to ensure that extended family networks, family history and detailed genograms are routinely discussed at TAF meetings
5. SSCB to further promote the use of the common multi-agency system e-caf within the training catalogue for 2017-2018
6. CAMHS, DECCA, School Nurses and Police to provide assurance that they are using the e-caf system to coordinate services and inform themselves as to what is being provided to families
7. SSCB Early Help Sub Group to provide assurance that the new early help strategy is effectively implemented across the partnership

Following on from the recommendations, what can we do now?

When coordinating a Team around the family meeting ensure all children's representatives from emotional, social, educational and health agencies are present

If you are Lead Professional, ensure that children are not closed at Team around the family meetings without considering if a) which agency will remain involved b) the timing, if the child is not going to be seen

Remember that whenever there is a transition of a child to your team they are picked up in accordance with your service timescales

Ensure there is a standing agenda item to discuss the genograms, family history and networks at Team around the family meetings

Ensure you use the e-caf system to co-ordinate services to children and inform yourself as to what other services are involved and what is being provided to families