Surviving an unannounced Ofsted inspection: What does a ‘good’ authority look like?
Redbridge

- Outer London Borough in North East London
- Population of 281,600
- 64,500 aged 0 - 15
- Fourth most diverse borough in the country
- Fourth largest family size in the country
- 66% of population come from an ethnic minority

At 31st March 2013
- No of contacts: 7,030
- No of referrals: 3,648
- No of Children In Need: 1,159
- No of Looked After Children: 239
- No of CP plans: 182

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Question

Who here has had an Ofsted inspection?

What was the worst aspect and why?
In 2009, following an adequate safeguarding inspection, Children’s Services realised that if there was going to be an inspection there needed to be substantial investment by the Council in order to improve. We were and still are a very poorly funded area in the country.

The Director of Children’s Services and the Lead Member for Children championed the cause of children’s social care by raising our profile with members and more widely across the council.
Before we could invest we realised we had to establish our starting position

We evaluated our services and identified the gaps in:

- Data collection
- Service provision
- Quality of social work practice
What do you think should be the priorities for development in your local authority?
So how are we going to do this?

Firstly we focused on:

- A high number of No Further Actions following assessment
- High numbers of re-referrals
- How we deliver services recognising that we had a number of gaps which led to the development of our targeted Early Intervention Services
- We recognised that whilst processes had been developed, we needed to drive up quality across the Children's Social Care workforce
- We also needed to improve our data collection and reports to establish our position
- We embarked on Audits and if you stood still for longer than a minute you were audited
- From here we gained an honest picture of where we were warts and all!!

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- Increased numbers of social workers with smaller caseloads
- Increased numbers of Family Support Workers to take forward Early Intervention
- Development of the CAF co-ordinator posts
- Development of the Principle Social Worker Post
Early Intervention Services

Alongside our Redbridge picture were drivers from the Government:

- Munro Report
- Lord Laming
- Graham Allen Report
- Rising Contacts into Children’s Social Care
- Social Work interventions
- Rising costs of long term work

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Early Intervention

Early Intervention services were created to work at Level 1 & 2 of Redbridge Thresholds. In brief there were 4 Pathways into the service:

- Below threshold cases ‘Diverted’ away from CPAT at contact screening stage
- CPAT ‘Step Downs’ where no on-going statutory intervention required but family support needed to ensure sustainability of change
- Community Social Work Teams ‘Step Downs’ for families coming off a CIN Plan and again family support needed to ensure sustainability of change
- A monthly Multi-Agency panel where cases are referred by a wide variety of agencies and then decisions are made on the best agency to manage the case.
Early Intervention

Since 2004 Early Intervention Services in Redbridge include:

- CAF Co-Ordinators – progress CAFs from initial stages, through to TACs and closure
- Parenting Group Staff – develop courses directed at emerging issues – Domestic Violence, Mental Health, Disability as well as standard Evidenced Based Parenting Programmes such as Webster Stratton
- 2 Family Support Worker Teams – work directly with families, children & young people
- 1 specialist team of Family Support Workers – that deal primarily with DV and other more complex cases
Early Intervention

Productivity:

Current annualised throughput – 2,700 cases

Current average weeks involvement per case – 10.5 weeks

Toxic Trio – 40% of cases

Housing – Currently 9% of cases

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Transfer Process

- The Transfer Panel was introduced in 2010 across all service areas to promote effective case transfer between service areas using one agreed process.

- The Transfer Panel is chaired by Service Managers from the Child Protection and Assessment Teams (CPAT); Community Social Work Teams (CRC’s), Children Living Away From Home (CLAFH) and Fostering.

- Private law cases i.e. section 7, section 37, private SGO applications and private adoptions do not go via the panel. They are sent to the relevant service area by the Screening Manager for immediate action.

- The principal is that there is a throughput of work.
Transfer Process

Transfer Panel Flow Chart

CPAT  CLAFH  CWD  CRC  Court Team

Transfer in Audited Cases to Panel

Transfer Panel
Attendees: Chair (Service Manager, CPAT, CRC's)
CLAFH, CWD, CRC/COURT TEAM, EIFSS

Transfer Out

CLAFH  CWD  CRC  Court Team

EIFSS
Having established the vision and plan for an Early Intervention Service we began to look at our own front door and Community Social Work Teams
We set up a daily divert meeting between the Early Intervention and Screening Team to consider all cases that did not meet threshold for statutory intervention but required additional support (level 1 & 2).
We set up a weekly step-down meeting to consider all cases that have had statutory intervention but no longer require social work intervention. These cases are considered for Early Intervention and Family Support input.
The Journey to ‘Good’ for the Child Protection and Assessment Team (CPAT) has taken the Service three years to accomplish and has been achieved by:

- Introduction of Senior Practitioner role in the Screening Team to support the screening Team Manager in timely decision making at the point of contact

- Introduction of 2 social work roles in the screening team to support decision making of contacts to determine if an assessment of need is appropriate

- Development of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (M.A.S.H)
Child Protection and Assessment Team

- Introduction of non case holding senior practitioners in the CPAT Duty Social Work teams to strengthen management oversight of casework and effective supervision of staff

- Increasing Social Work Capacity in each Duty Social Work Team by adding an extra Social Worker per Team

- Re grading Social Work Posts and increase in the Recruitment and Retention package across Children’s Services
CPAT and Community Social Work

In order to standardise the threshold for intervention and decision making across the Service we:

- Introduced monthly threshold meetings for Team Managers and Non Case Holding Senior Practitioners using London Child Protection Procedures, Working Together, Redbridge Threshold document, Barnardos Risk Matrix and live case examples. These meetings explored threshold for referral, section 47 enquiry, core assessments and CIN.

- Scrutinised performance data to identify trends leading to deep dives to improve decision making, i.e. large number of section 47 enquiries that lead to No Further Action. The Head of Service and Service Manager in CPAT took over responsibility for decision making for 3 months leading to standardised decision making.
CPAT and Community Social Work

- Held weekly performance meetings with Team Managers which looked at all aspects of individual teams performance, such as volume of cases, cases in the team for over 3 months, prevention of drift, re referral rates, number of section 47 enquiries, number of core assessments and staffing issues and proper maintenance of case records

- Standardised casework allocation. All assessments were to have clear direction and guidance as to the issues and what areas the assessment should focus on
- Established standards for quality of assessments; minimum number of visits, visits undertaken in timescale and recorded, proportionality, analysis timescale for passing to managers for approval, QA by Team Managers, no assessment to be authorised without the voice of the child being evident

- Observations of staff in the community, to feed into staff performance management and personal development plan (golden thread)

- Monthly supervision with staff and supervision files are audited

- Evidenced engagement with other agencies

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CPAT and Community Social Work

- Mentoring for Team Managers and Non Case Holding Senior Practitioners

- Peer audits of casework within the service, with SMART management actions

- Direct work packs for all Social Workers and Outreach Workers, to enable direct work with children to be undertaken and ensure the voice of the child is captured

- Group Supervision

- Service away days focusing on particular issues such as service plans

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How do you bridge the gap between strategic and operational goals?
Strategic Development

- Strengthening Families
- Domestic Violence Strategy
- Joint working with partner agencies
- Missing and Child Sexual Exploitation
- Development of Direct Work
- Establishing Thresholds
- Mentoring Service
- Transformation Meetings (Annex A)
Strategic Development

- Strengthening the LSCB
- Case management Direction on all cases
- Chronologies
- Establishing the Golden Thread
- CYPP/ Service Plans/ Report Cards
- Performance management/Supervision
- Evidenced Based Practice
Principal Social Worker

- Background to the role – Social Work Reform Board and Munro Recommendations
- Link to the new Chief Children and Families Social Worker, Isabelle Trowler, direct link to government
- An independent “change agent” to question status quo and improve ways of working
- Voice of frontline staff up to senior management
- Supporting excellence in practice – workshops and briefings for social care staff
- Promotion of evidence based practice and use of research
Principal Social Worker

- Voice of the Child monthly multi-agency meeting with young people in care to discuss feedback from children and young people and devise actions for services
- Promotion of more direct work with children and young people and families
- Recruitment and retention of experienced social workers range of initiatives being consulted upon
- Pilot new ways of working to streamline and simplify processes, less bureaucracy
- Children’s advocate in Child Protection Conferences
- Sounding board for complex case discussions

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Workforce Development

- Workforce development is key to developing a strong learning culture and is crucial element of an effective local system of any learning organisation. (See Munro, Final Report, 2011)

- Workforce Development Strategy needs to be linked to the Children and Young People’s Plan (CYPP) and other strategic plans – to form the ‘golden thread’ linking back to individual performance plans. This is crucial to workforce engagement.

- The workforce need to be offered a varied menu of learning and development activities including coaching, mentoring, shadowing, peer support as well as training.
Workforce Development

- It is essential that workforce development staff are involved in any new initiatives from the planning stage e.g. MASH, Troubled Families etc

- Standards for Employers of Social Workers and Supervision Framework needs to be embedded and standards met, with clear evidence as to how this is being monitored and what difference it makes to outcomes

- A question repeated during the inspection by inspectors was – Why do we do what we do? The answer is evidence informed practice.
Workforce Development

- Learning from quality assurance audits, complaints, staff feedback, and the voice of the child should clearly feed into workforce development and the planning and content of learning and development activities.

- Support to the workforce through partnerships with organisations that support evidence informed practice e.g. Research in Practice (RiP), Community Care Inform (CCI) and Making Research Count (MRC) provides access to research and other resource materials.
Supporting Staff

- Direct observation of practice
- Observations of conferences
- Mock social work interviews
- Staff are involved in service development
- Training and professional development
Question

How do you sustain ‘good’?
Presenters

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