

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE – 18 MARCH 2004

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE APPROACH TO QUALITY IMPROVEMENT AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT WITHIN EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Report by Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To inform Committee of developments towards a common approach to quality assurance and performance management within the Department of Educational and Social Services.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 On 6 November 2003, Committee approved a progress report on *Working Together to Strengthen Services*, detailing progress to date and setting out a programme of targets for improving joint working within the Department in the future.
- 2.2 One of those targets related to the development of a common approach to quality assurance and performance review across educational and social care services.
- 2.3 This report seeks to define the core features of quality improvement activity across the Department and to set out a common approach to putting those values and principles into practice.

3. CORE FEATURES

- 3.1 The core features of quality improvement within the Department may be summarised as:
 - Systems of quality assurance reflect the different needs of the range of services delivered by the Department;
 - Core data sets are established to allow measurement, benchmarking and trends analysis;
 - Priority is given to engaging with all stakeholders, in particular service users, their carers and staff , including ensuring their participation in the evaluation of the services in question;

- Practical arrangements are made to embed quality assurance activity into the day to day delivery of services at operational level;
- Accountability to key stakeholders is given high priority, with feedback being given at a range of levels and in a variety of formats.

4. QUALITY IMPROVEMENT IN PRACTICE

- 4.1 The practical application of quality improvement activity will necessarily reflect the wide range and type of services which the Department provides, the complex legislative basis for the work undertaken and the differences in stakeholder interests from service to service. However, a common approach will be followed, as set out below.
- 4.2 Clear, published standards will be developed for all services, co-ordinated by quality improvement/quality assurance staff but defined and formulated in collaboration with the relevant operational staff. The standards will reflect national standards where such have been established. Otherwise, local standards will be set.
- 4.3 In setting local standards, care will be taken to ensure an appropriate balance between challenge and achievability – standards need to stretch and improve performance but remain realistically achievable in order to avoid the danger of staff disillusionment.
- 4.4 At workplace level, mechanisms will be established to keep quality improvement at the forefront of staff attention on a day to day basis, thereby enhancing ownership of the quality agenda and ensuring that quality improvement standards and initiatives were grounded in a realistic understanding of the operational reality of the service.
- 4.5 In framing standards, care will be taken to allow the impact on outcomes for service users to be assessed/measured.
- 4.6 Performance in respect of quality improvement and standards will be recorded by operational staff and forwarded to quality improvement/quality assurance staff on a regular basis. The information will be analysed and collated for reporting to a number of key stakeholders and interested parties, including:
- frontline staff;
 - senior managers;
 - elected members;
 - central government;
 - Accounts Commission/Audit Scotland;
 - general public.

- 4.7 The reporting of performance will centre on annual reports to the Education and Social Work Committees, reflecting the views of service users and staff and focusing on the recognition of achievements. The report will link to overall planning processes and serve as a major component of the Department's evidence to external auditing processes.

5. POLICY/LEGAL/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no policy, legal or financial implications for the Council arising from this report.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Committee is requested to:

- (i) note the developments in the approach to quality improvement and performance management set out in this report;
- (ii) instruct the Director to report annually to the Committee on performance in respect of quality improvement activity within Social Work services.

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Director of Educational and Social Services

2 March 2004

For further information, please contact John Alexander, Principal Officer (Quality and Planning) on ext. 6978

IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER: GRAHAM SHORT