

Children's Social Care

The way we do things here

Core principles

Four years ago we set out to increase the number of children who we could assist to be safely maintained within their families and community networks. We have achieved this. Our aim now is to continue to safeguard children at home by valuing families' experiences, insights and wisdom and by mobilising their own resources. We want to provide families with the least intrusive intervention possible; proportionate to our duty to safeguard and protect children. We want to support families to sustain long term change and to secure the best outcomes for their children.

For those children who must enter the care system, we will work as quickly and effectively as possible towards reunification or permanency; ensuring links to extended family and community are nurtured throughout the child's stay with us. Sometimes children need to remain in our care until they become adults. We commit to nurturing and educating our children and young people with determination and warmth; ensuring that we support them to maintain important family and community networks wherever it is safe to do so.

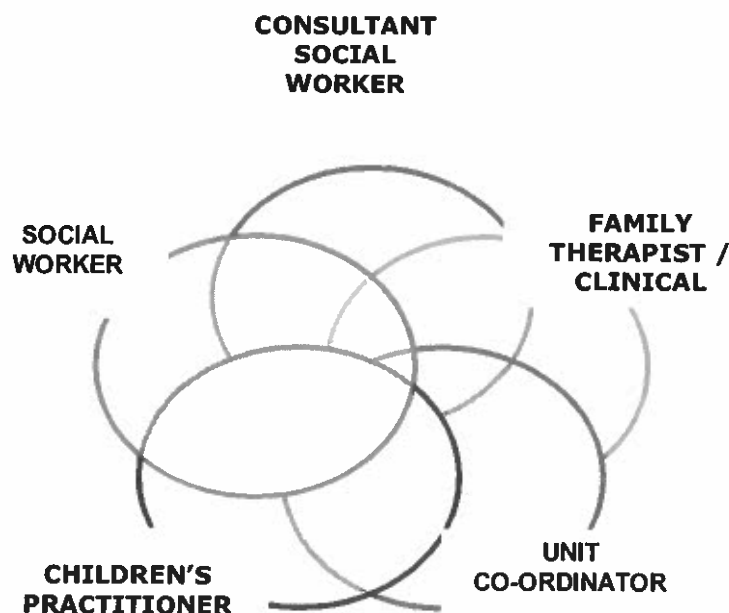
We will always try to explain to children, young people and families what we do, why we do it and how we do it, in a way that is comprehensible and transparent. We will make every effort to understand the child's experience from their perspective and to pay careful attention to the insights that this gives us when we are considering how we can best assist them.

We will create opportunities for families to join with us in the most inclusive way possible to promote transparency in risk assessment and intervention, and to encourage parents and carers to participate in developing plans for their children. We do this through our “Strengthening Families” approach to Child Protection Conferences and Looked After Children Reviews.

Our model of service delivery

We have placed appropriate responsibilities within appropriate roles and salary grades. We encourage a strong sense of ownership of casework amongst those who best know the children and families; the practitioners. We set this commitment within a culture of generosity of knowledge and skills which allows people to share, to learn and to step in to assist colleagues whenever it is helpful to do so. This extends across our services and partner agencies.

Units are led by the Consultant Social Worker (CSW) and all cases within the unit are allocated to the CSW. Delegated authority for each role is set out in our *Matrix of Responsibility*. Casework tasks are delegated according to role, skill and relationship with families; shared work is the norm. Unit coordinators are integral to the model, focussing on administrative tasks and freeing up practitioners to spend more time with families.



Weekly unit meetings are the space where practitioners take the time out each week to think about individual cases and to ensure how best to keep children safe. It is here where we expect practitioners to manage the tensions inherent in our work. Monitoring progress, performance management, decision making and accountability are achieved through thoughtfulness, creativity, warmth and reflection.

Unit Meetings are a place where we organise, slow down, support and manage. We aim to provide opportunities for colleagues, partners, foster carers and, when appropriate, children and young people, to join the discussion, thinking and planning. We believe that difference when openly discussed and negotiated produces better informed analyses of risk and planning of interventions.

Evidence base

As an organisation we have embedded a systemic approach to our work with families. We believe it is important to understand not just 'what works' but also 'how it works'.

We continue to explore, deliver and review practice interventions with as robust an evidence base as possible. We also recognise that success is highly dependent on the quality of our relationships, the skill and commitment of our practitioners and the best fit for each child, family and situation.

A Learning organisation

Hackney is on a journey towards excellence in its delivery of social care. The political, financial and social landscape is ever changing and we need to be responsive and well informed. We want to be a highly adaptive organisation, committed to hearing from children, young people and their families, practitioners, managers and partners about the impact we are having. Just as we expect our practitioners to be reflective about their work with families, we expect everyone in the service to be reflective about how we perform, interact and learn - internally and externally.

Details about our strategy for organisational learning are set out in our *Quality Assurance Framework*.

Service Expectations and Aspirations

We will strive to understand and respond to how children, young people and their family's experience our services.

We will hold in mind and explore with each other the meaning of our accountability as a public service to the community

We will create opportunities for modelling, reflecting and learning as professionals

We will join with our partners in striving to deliver the right services, at the right time, by the most appropriate people.



Sheila Durr
Assistant Director
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