

London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham

Evaluation of Assessment Framework Pilot

Introduction

This report details the initial evaluation of the implementation of a single assessment framework in Hammersmith & Fulham which is being undertaken as part of the Department of Education's pilot concerned with testing more flexible assessment processes.

This pilot replaces the use of the 7 day initial and 35 working day core assessment process and assessment framework form with a 45 working day process, using one form for all assessments and initial child protection conference reports. It did not include section 47 enquires and strategy meeting processes and forms.

We began the first phase (relaxation of timescales) in October 2011. The introduction of the single assessment record however did not commence until February 2012 because of the need to develop the new format and make the necessary changes to our ICS system.

Quantative Information

The following table provides information as to the number of Family Assessments that have been completed since the pilot began.

Completed Child and Family Assessments from 06/02/2012-25/04/2012					
	0 - 10 days	11 - 20 days	21 - 44 days	45 + days	Total:
Contact and Assessment Team 1	26	3	7	4	40
Contact and Assessment Team 2	21	6	11	1	39
Contact and Assessment Team 3	39	15	3		57
Contact and Assessment Team 4	23	9	17		49

Disability Services Team 1	1				1
Disability Services Team 2	2				2
Family Support and Child Protection Team 1	1	1			2
Family Support and Child Protection Team 2	1		1		2
Family Support and Child Protection Team 3	2				2
Looked After Children 4	1				1
Looked After Children 5				1	1
Total	117	34	39	6	196

There have been 196 Family Assessment, 117 have been completed within 10 working days with a further 73 within 44 working days. There are 70 assessments currently underway and as they have no end date they do not show in the table above. This then gives a total figure of 266 family assessments.

The tables below illustrate the numbers of Initial and Core assessments previously undertaken within the same reporting period in 2011 in order to contrast assessment activity.

Initial Assessments completed over same period last year (2011-12)					
	0-7 days	8-10 days	11-20 days	21-50 days	Total:
Contact and Assessment Team 1	75	7	3		85
Contact and Assessment Team 2	61	33			94
Contact and Assessment Team 3	55	10	16	1	82
Contact and Assessment Team 4	50	31	1		82
Total:	241	81	20	1	343

Core Assessments completed over same period last year (2011-12)				
	0-35 days	36-50 days	51-99 days	Total:
Contact and Assessment Team 1	26	2		28
Contact and Assessment Team 2	43	1	7	51
Contact and Assessment Team 3	32	7	6	45
Contact and Assessment Team 4	15			15

Disability Services Team 1	2		2	4
Disability Services Team 2	4			4
Family ASSIST	2			2
Family Support and Child Protection Team 1	5		1	6
Family Support and Child Protection Team 2	2			2
Family Support and Child Protection Team 3	2			2
Family Support and Child Protection Team 4	3	4		7
UASC Team	1			1
No longer allocated to team (worker has left LBHF)	1			1
Total	138	14	16	168

There were a total of 343 assessment carried out of which 168 were core assessments.

For both reporting periods there were approximately 1800 contacts. However in 2012 there were 76 fewer child referrals. Taking this into account, proportionately there has been no discernable change in the overall ratio of assessment activity in comparison to the same period in 2011.

There is a ratio decrease in assessments lasting more than 10 days. Although it is too early to consider this as a pattern further quality assurance work will be undertaken in order to understand this change.

Quality of Assessment

It is too early in the pilot to be able to provide a view that is richly evidenced by qualitative data; however the early indications are as follows:

- Assessments are easier to read and provide a narrative that covers observation, assessment, intervention and analysis in a more focussed and concise format.
- Each assessment prompts the social worker to consider the tool and scales issued with the Assessment Framework as aids to the

assessment thereby enabling each assessment to be better tailored to the needs of the family and individual child. This being done without compromising the 'flow' of the narrative style that we are aiming to achieve.

Workforce Implications

- Social workers report satisfaction with the new single assessment format in that it gives them more time to concentrate upon doing the assessment rather than data entry onto separate forms. This, as evidenced by the quality assurance audits being undertaken, indicates that that social workers are able to function more efficiently and are adopting a more reflective and family/child centred approach to the work being undertaken as they have more time to do so.

Parent and Child Views

- Parents and children have reported that they are able to understand and follow what is being written about them and their children easily. Initial feedback also indicates that parents have been able to engage with the social worker more effectively partly because the social worker has more time to undertake the assessment.

Multi-agency Implications

- We have had some encouraging feedback especially with those family assessment reports that are presented at children in need and child protection meetings. We are in the process of setting up a formal feedback system with our key stakeholders to take place over the next 3 months phase of the pilot to evidence this more fully.

Assessments over 45 Days

- A small number of assessments (3% of the completed total) have exceeded the benchmark of 45 working days. These have been analysed and we are satisfied that the level of complexity warranted the extra time it took to complete the assessment. We will continue to monitor this through the fortnightly performance and quality assurance meetings.

Performance Management/Quality Assurance Systems

- Despite the relaxation of the traditional timescales, all Family Assessment are required to have a “health check” within 10 working days where the manager considers, comments and provides direction as necessary. This includes what is required in further assessment activity in order to ensure a clear picture of the issues being considered and outcomes being sought. This is recorded on our ICS system.
- The Safeguarding Unit completes a quality assurance check on all assessments that are presented to initial child protection conference. So far child protection conference chairs have welcomed the assessments and the format for discussion at initial conference. Parents are better informed about the reasons why conferences have taken place making some conferences easier to manage.
- A random audit of cases has also shown that assessment quality has improved as the intervention quality has increased due to social workers having more time to consider and reflect upon planned or ongoing interventions. This has also led to closer multi-agency working especially where needs are assessed a complex rather than where needs are considered as ‘at risk’

- There is a fortnightly meeting chaired by the Assistant Director where reporting on numbers of assessments and timescales are monitored and where timescales appear to be outside of acceptable tolerances an interrogation of those cases is undertaken.