

Appendix 2a: Audit Assurances and Themes

Assurance



Adult Social Care Financial Assessments

Objective

To assess the robustness of the process that determines eligibility for financial support towards care needs to ensure it is accurate, transparent and accessible.

Audit Committee Summary

The Adult Social Care Financial Assessment process is clear in its aims to ensure that service users:

- receive the correct support required to pay for their care; and
- are charged the correct amounts to pay for their care subject to the requirements of the Care Act 2014.

The Council's website provides clear information relating to the financial assessment process and is accessible to end users. Furthermore, when an initial financial assessment form is sent to a potential service user, this is accompanied by a 'Care Charges' booklet which outlines who is liable for charges and sets out some payment examples.

The volume of outstanding Financial Assessments has been consistently high at the Council. This often means the income collection process cannot begin and as such each outstanding Financial Assessment increases the likelihood of outstanding debt – and has been identified as a reason for the increasing debt in the Adult Social Care Debt Collection review performed alongside this review. The ability to complete these in a timely and accurate manner will help ensure and inform suitable financial control, providing financial support where it is required and preventing financial loss to the Council.

Strengthening the arrangements identified below will contribute to progressing with the backlog of Financial Assessments whilst considering new assessments as they arise:

- formalising and agreeing the Council's expectations of staff and timelines to complete Financial Assessments;
- working to move all service users on ContrOCC to an automated Financial Assessment plan so that all changes to statutory amounts will be reflected automatically annually, reducing hours of manual input and changes; and
- using reporting functionality within ContrOCC to gain a better understanding of trends and reasons that may be root causes to delays in the Financial Assessments process and performance levels. This will allow reporting on team performance in a consistent and regular way.

Appendix 2a: Audit Assurances and Themes

Assurance



Introducing monitoring and reporting of the timeliness of assessments and reviews within ContrOCC will:

- give senior management assurance that performance of the adult social care Financial Assessments team continues as expected; and
- reduce the need to manually compile the data currently used for monitoring of assessment timeliness.

Management were aware of the need to improve the operational effectiveness across the wider Social Care team, including the use of the systems to inform efficiency and accuracy when completing Financial Assessments. Ahead of the audit, they had commissioned a 'health check' piece of work to map and review the current financial processes across Social Care and compare to expected good practice and alternative ways of working at a high level.

The results of this review have been under consideration by management in parallel with the completion of this audit. Management have stated that a number of the improvements have been implemented since this audit was completed and others planned for future.

This audit has complemented the health check by understanding and evaluating the detailed controls in place or needed to support the changes planned by management.

Management have taken the additional detail identified as part of this audit to further recognise benefits from those improvements, with specific changes being made to improve the Financial Assessment processes, staff roles and responsibilities, the use of the systems for efficiency and the use of data to effectively performance manage and monitor.

Number of actions agreed: 6

Data Quality – Children's Services

Objective

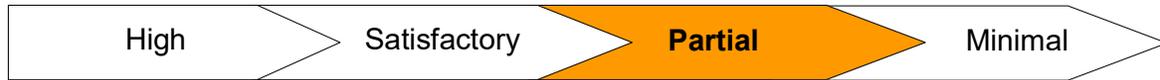
To assess whether the Council officers in Children's Services are accurately recording the required case data in a reliable and timely manner, to ensure appropriate case management and the proper completion of data sets by teams across the Council that informs accurate KPI reporting to Senior Management and Members.

Audit Committee Summary

The Social Workers & Social Work Administration team are responsible for contact with the children and their families. They record the data surrounding any incidents or activities that have taken place, including all relevant details of the child. This data includes their address, ethnicity, gender, parents and siblings. Any errors should be corrected by these teams through internal management review and dashboards on data completeness are reported to managers and heads of service as well as reported weekly to the Chief Executive. This is currently not taking place as there is a lack of

Appendix 2a: Audit Assurances and Themes

Assurance



knowledge over how to utilise an audit trail function in Liquid Logic (the service user data system).

The Operational Performance & Intelligence Team are responsible for the service performance KPI reporting which is created from the core data input by social workers.

Through review of the three policies provided to Internal Audit, there was no mention of the roles and responsibilities of the Council's Data & Management Information Reporting service.

From review of the current information and via discussions with key staff members within the Social Workers & Social Work Administration team, including Managers and Heads of Service, it was confirmed there are no formal reporting measures surrounding the accuracy of the children's data within Liquid Logic. KPIs are in place surrounding completion of the number of parents included in each case, that the ethnicity of a child is completed, that the nationality field is complete, as well as D.O.B and school details, however, there are no KPIs or reporting timescales to monitor the timely completion of updates to records or factual accuracy of the information input.

A monthly meeting is held between Social Work Heads of Service and Managers to discuss each service delivery performance indicator in turn and agree any action to be taken.

Meetings between Children's Services and data specialists are held on a regular basis, however, the governance of these meetings, particularly, the minutes and action tracking could be improved.

Children's data cannot be confirmed to an original source in most cases. This is because children's data is updated on a regular basis from when the original file was created and the manner in which changes are communicated is primarily verbal. Therefore, there is no formal record of the change, and there is no audit trail to determine when changes were made or by whom. This is non-compliant with the Records Management and Data Quality Policy.

It was also apparent that staff do not abide by the Records Management and Data Quality Policy requirement to ensure: "*Computer screens are not left as readable when absent from your desk or work area*". It is recommended that screens be locked using the Windows + L, or CTRL + ALT + DEL keys and then selecting the option to 'Lock Computer' when members of the team leave their desk.

Number of actions agreed: 6

Appendix 2a: Audit Assurances and Themes

Assurance



Adult Social Care Debt Collection

Objective

To assess the effectiveness of arrangements for the timely collection of adult social care income in line with the expectations set out in the Corporate Debt Collection and Recovery Policy (November 2017).

Audit Committee Summary

The Adult Social Care Debt process aims to ensure that people:

- receive the correct support required to pay for their care;
- are charged the correct amounts to pay for their care subject to the requirements of the Care Act 2014; and
- the Council demonstrates to elected members and tax payers that it collects all income due from the provision of Care Act Services as effectively and efficiently as possible.

The Council's website provides clear information relating to the financial assessment process and is accessible to end users. Furthermore, when an initial financial assessment form is sent to a potential service user, this is accompanied by a 'Care Charges' booklet which outlines who is liable for charges and sets out some payment examples.

The Audit Commission report on 'Charging with Care' states that income collected from charges can be used to protect services, extend access and promote independence and wellbeing of customers. Effective financial management is fundamental to being able to fund the quality of services the Council provides. The best method of debt collection is the prevention of debt arising and this policy covers both prevention and recovery.

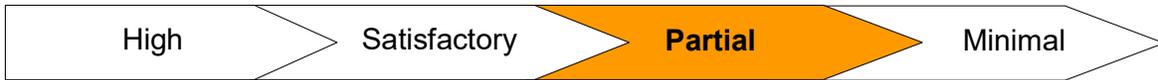
The Council raises charges for a wide range of services across the organisation and all debt owed will be pursued according to the Council's Corporate Debt Collection and Recovery Strategy (January 2017).

There is an Adult Social Care Debt Policy in place that is being followed by staff, however the department need to develop clear procedures to underpin this to ensure appropriate actions are taken consistently across the team when chasing and managing debt. Increased management oversight is required to ensure the debt policies are being followed appropriately in order to maximise the collection of debt in an effective and timely manner.

At the time of completing this audit, outstanding Social Care debt was rising for the Council. This was partially as a result of an increased number of financial assessments and related activity producing a greater volume of income for collection, but also the Council's ability to follow-up each case in a timely fashion through its system and operational procedures, as well as their use of data.

Appendix 2a: Audit Assurances and Themes

Assurance



Improving the understanding of the debt make up through analysis of the data available would allow Management:

- to gain a better understanding of the debt profile and allow improved targeting of resource; and
- to improve utilisation of staff, especially in times of increased absence.

Number of actions agreed: 14