Social Care Governance
Everyone’s Responsibility

A seven step guide for care workers
“As a Director who was previously involved in the commissioning of the social care governance practice workbook I am delighted with this initiative to produce this guide. The social care workforce is a critical resource providing vital services to some of the Trust’s most vulnerable clients. The guide is a very practical tool to assist social care workers to play a key role in service improvement and social care governance.”

Cecil Worthington, Director Children’s Services/Executive Director Social Work
Introduction

Social Care Governance has been defined as ‘a framework within which Health and Personal Social Services organisations are accountable for continuously improving the quality of their services’ (Best Practice Best Care 2002). It is often described in language which may not feel relevant to staff working in front line services. This guidance has been developed to help all social care workers reflect on their role in ensuring that services are continuously improving. Social Care Governance is simplified into seven core elements:

1. Ensuring you have the knowledge and skills for your job;
2. Involving service users and carers;
3. Supervision and performance appraisal;
4. Sharing information and working with others;
5. Making effective use of resources;
6. Managing risk; and
7. Standards and audit.

The guidance and audit questions can be used by teams to discuss how services can be improved. Actions required to improve services can be recorded on the template on the last page of the guidance and managers can use this audit tool to inform service planning.

The Social Care Governance Practice Workbook (DHSSPS, SCIE 2007) should be used for additional references. A copy can be obtained from http://www.scie.org.uk/publications/misc/governance.pdf
1 Ensuring you have the knowledge and skills for your job

Services provided are only as good as the people who deliver them, therefore training and development of staff is central to ensuring safe and effective services. The Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC) will register all social care workers and ensure that they keep up to date with the knowledge and skills relevant to their job. It is your responsibility to register with NISCC and to ensure you meet the post registration training and learning requirements. To remain on the social care register it is your responsibility to demonstrate that at least 15 days (or 90 hours) of training or learning having been completed over a three year period. It is important that the decisions that you make about service users’ lives are based on knowledge of good practice.

Examples of where this knowledge comes from:

- Service user/carers views
- Research
- Legislation and policy
- Inspection/inquiry reports
- Your experience and the experience of others

Audit Questions

1) Are opportunities available for you to keep up to date with new knowledge?
2) What arrangements are in place for you and your colleagues to share learning about practice which is good or when things go wrong?
3) Have you been inducted into your current post and do you have arrangements in place to meet the post registration training requirements?
4) Are you aware of the Trust Whistle Blowing Policy and how to report poor practice?
2 Involving service users and carers

By involving service users in planning their care we can ensure more effective services. One example of this is involving service users at reviews of their care. Information about how complaints and compliments are managed in the Trust can be found in the ‘Tell us what you think’ leaflet which should be available in your work-place.

You are often on the receiving end of feedback about the services provided by the Trust. Complaints and compliments give the Trust valuable information for improving and developing services. Service users have a right to complain and when appropriate should be supported to do so.

When problems do arise it is important that these are resolved as quickly as possible. Should you find yourself as the subject of a complaint then you should be reassured to know that the processes of investigation are fair and transparent. We can learn and improve from every complaint and compliment.

Audit Questions

1) How do you know what service users/carers feel about the care you provide?
2) Can you give examples of how you involve service users and carers in the services you provide?
3) Have you shared the ‘Tell us what you think’ leaflet with people who use the service? Has this helped influence practice?
3 Supervision and performance appraisal

Good leadership and management should ensure a competent workforce to support the provision of good quality services. This may often require us to change the way we do things. Your manager will use supervision with you to support you to do your job and will help you to identify any training needs to improve the service provided. Supervision may be provided on a one-to-one basis or in a group and should always be recorded.

Annual staff appraisals will allow you and your manager to review your performance and will support your development. Where appropriate this process will be used to make decisions regarding your KSF gateways.

Audit Questions

1) Are you familiar with the Trust Supervision Policy for Social Care Staff?
2) What are your expectations of supervision and how is it helpful to you in doing your job?
3) Are you clear about the lines of accountability from your position to your Director?
4) Do you receive regular supervision with your manager?

Suggested Activity
Starting with you and your colleagues complete a flow chart of the organisational structure of your service
Sharing information and working with others

Working with others effectively to meet service users’ needs relies on good communication and record keeping; if it’s not written down it didn’t happen. You, as a social care worker, are expected to keep records relating to the service you provide. These records are legally required and are the property of the Trust. In some situations records may need to be shared with the relevant service user, other professionals and other organisations for example nurses or agencies such as the Housing Executive and voluntary groups. The key to integrated working is good communication and understanding your role and the role of others.

Legislation and Trust policy on recording require that the records you make must be factual, legible, dated and signed by you. Records must be stored confidentially.

This information may be used to assist others with planning and providing care.

Audit Questions

1. What type of records do you keep and why?
2. Are all of your records up to date?
3. Where are the records stored?
4. How does this information get shared with others when appropriate?
5. Who are the other professionals/services that you work with?
5 Making effective use of resources

Social care staff are crucial to providing a safe and high quality service on behalf of the Trust. You are therefore a vital human and financial resource. The Trust must ensure that there are sufficient numbers of appropriately trained staff to deliver its services. Your manager is allocated a budget for human and financial resources and the best use has to be made of these. We are all accountable for how we use our time at work and other resources. Sometimes we will be required to change the ways we do things to get better results therefore staff need to be flexible and open to change. The Trust has policies and procedures in place to ensure human and financial resources are used effectively.

Audit Questions

1. What are the resources for which you are responsible?
2. Which policies and procedures do you think of when managing resources?
6 Managing risk

Risk is an essential and unavoidable part of everyday life. It is important for us to be able to take risks and to understand that this can have both negative and positive consequences. It is important to be alert to risks that could cause harm and report these to your manager. An ‘adverse incident’ can be defined as any event or circumstances that led to or could have led to harm, loss or damage to people, property, environment or reputation.

When something that could go wrong is identified and prevented this is considered a ‘near miss’ and can be used to help us to learn. We can all learn from these incidents or near misses to minimise the possibility of a reoccurrence. It is therefore important to share our learning to help changes and improvements in the service.

(Reference Northern Health and Social Care Trust Risk Management strategy; Incident Management Policy and Procedure, including procedure for serious adverse incidents)

Audit Questions

1. What could a near miss or adverse incident be in your setting?
2. Have you had any experience of either an adverse incident or a near miss? How have things changed to help reduce the chances of this happening again?
3. How and where do you record this information about adverse incidents/near misses?
4. Where does the information you record go and what feedback do you get?
7 Standards and audit

There are a range of standards that have been developed to ensure that services provided are consistent. Standards are there to help you provide services of high quality. An audit is a method of checking how the services we provide match up to the standards, targets and objectives of the organisation. Audits allow us to review if services could be improved.

Audit Questions

1. What standards do you work to?
2. How do these standards help you in your day-to-day work.
3. How is the service you provide measured against standards?
4. How are you involved in this process?
5. How are results of audits shared with you to help improve services?

Audits may involve:
- Questionnaires
- Service user feedback
- Check lists
- Interviews with staff

Examples of Standards:
- RQIA: Care Standards for NI 2004-05
- NISCC Induction Standards
- NISCC Code of Practice
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Where are they now?</th>
<th>What do we want to achieve?</th>
<th>What are the steps?</th>
<th>By whom and who else needs to be involved?</th>
<th>By when?</th>
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Assessment and action plan template
Project Team
Eileen McKay APSW Training Department
Heather Allison HOU Rosedale
Cheryl Donaldson Deputy Manager Inniscoole
Colette Fairley Manager Wilson House
Andrew Jamison Manager Moylinney
Heather McElwee Home Care Manager
Rosemary Wray Manager Clogrennan

e-mail: info@northerntrust.hscni.net

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