

# Supporting and promoting vulnerable children and their families



## *From Possibility...*

### **BACKGROUND**

The London Borough of Merton Council (Merton) is one of 26 four star councils in England and Wales. It has a strongly improving direction of travel, strongly performing services and performing well in its use of resources.

In the budget round for 2010/2011, the initial budget gap, between funding resources & financial commitments, was over £14m.

To date, Merton has been able to meet its 4% annual efficiency savings target, but they now need to make a step change to the way they do business. The council has embarked on a transformation programme in order to make this change. This means analysing processes to ensure money is only spent on things which directly add value to the customer using "Lean" thinking principles.

### **OUR APPROACH**

A diagnostic, across the whole council, was used to help clarify the main project themes and to begin to engage senior managers. From this, different areas were selected for more detailed service reviews.

The Children, Schools and Families (CSF) Directorate was selected as it was viewed as a 'difficult' service.

***The goal was to demonstrate the applicability of Lean where the organisation has multiple interlocking functions.***

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consulting

## To Actuality...



**The Lean Service Review looked at some of the processes in place that provide the services to support and promote the well-being and care of vulnerable children and their families.**

Each service review started by identifying key processes and defining who the process exists to serve (the customer) and what value is to them.

Who are the Customers for CSF?

- Children and young people
- Parents, Relatives, Adopting Parents, Fostering Families, Potential Foster Carers
- Recipients of post process services (e.g. birth families)

What is Value in the customer's eyes?

- Meets their needs (safety, emotional, culture, race)
- Timely service & support
- Timely and appropriate information/ advice
- Being matched / satisfactory outcome at panel / approved
- Being supported

**The teams focused on high volume or poor performing processes where improvements would have the biggest impact. The Adoption and Permancy team chose to look at Domestic Adoptions and the family finding process. The Fostering team worked on the recruitment of foster carers' process.**

Examples of some of the process waste found within CSF:

<b>Rework</b>	Reports rewritten due to failing the quality assurance checks Standards not clear for report writing
<b>Overproduction</b>	Inappropriate referrals
<b>Over Processing</b>	Management checks of decisions made Duplicate recording
<b>Waiting</b>	Scheduled allocation of work Handovers between admin workers and social workers
<b>Inventory</b>	Batching of systems recording of data Reports waiting to be checked and amended
<b>Transportation</b>	Sending copies of completed reports to panel members
<b>Movement</b>	Travelling to and from customer meetings and interviews

The newly mapped processes were transformed into implementation plans and rolled out with Lean foundation tools such as information centres, 5S (a workplace organisation tool) and standardisation to support and sustain change within the teams and their processes.

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## CHANGES & BENEFITS

### Adoption & Permancy Team

A key issue that emerged was the inconsistency in the content of the Adopters Reports. This resulted in a series of management checks being added into the process, multiple management sign offs and modifications before the report could be submitted to the Adoption Panel for approval.

These checking, amending and sign-offs were adding more than eight weeks to the cycle time and wasting approximately 30 hours of Social Worker and Management time per cycle.

***By agreeing a standardised format of the report with all relevant parties and replacing the checking stages with individual performance management, the team were able to:***

- ***Increase the team capacity by 15%***
- ***Reduce Placement Process end to end time by 8 weeks***
- ***Improve the quality (and ensure the standard) of the Adoption Placement Reports***

### Fostering Team

The key process area that was addressed in the Fostering Service review was the recruitment of Foster Carers, an issue most local authorities have in common.

***Through a process re-design incorporating more assessment of individuals and information for potential foster carers up front, the team was able to:***

- ***Eliminate waiting times***
- ***Reduce cycle time in the recruitment process by 20%***
- ***Immediate 10% increase in team capacity***

### Children In Need Team

The Children in Need service review was on-going at the time of writing. Initial investigations indicate that the team have complicated and detailed processes, with corresponding high levels of process waste.

***In addition to reducing waste in the processes, the team examined the relationships with their partner organisations to see where these interactions could be streamlined and duplicated activities removed.***

## FURTHER INFORMATION

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