

A better start for Children and Young People

'Every conversation starts with the child'



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## ADVICE FOR UNDERTAKING AUDITS

Auditing our own work is crucial to ensuring that the Local Authority knows itself. All audits undertaken are including in a monthly report which is sent to senior managers and the Improvement Board. The themes from audits are shared with colleagues in order to support development and learning.

### SETTING UP

- Set a date and time which works for you and the social worker. Consider when booking in a date that you need to return the audit to the Advanced Practitioner team by the end of the month so, try and give yourself time for typing up and any further discussions/clarifications.
- Ask the social worker to review the audit form before you meet in order that they have they know what will be asked
- Pick the right audit template for the nature of the audit you are undertaken. For example, if you are undertaking a fostering audit, you need the fostering audit template. These are stored here: S:\Childrens\_Services\Children's\_Social\_Care\CSC\_All\_Staff\Procedures and guidance\Casefile audit tools
- Remind the social worker that this is an audit of the file – of the whole approach by Children's Social Care – and not of them as a social worker. Their practice will be considered but the overall judgement will be about the file and not necessarily a reflection of them.
- Please ask social workers to prioritise the audit wherever possible and, if for some reason they cannot attend due to an emergency situation, ask them to re-arrange as soon as possible.
- If there is another colleague co-working the case, please ask the social worker to invite them to the audit too. The work of our Child In Need, Hamilton House, Pathways, Fostering Support Workers and Immediate Response teams needs to be acknowledged and considered in audits too.

### DURING THE AUDIT

- If you encounter actions which, without being actioned, put the child at risk of significant harm, escalate these to the manager and group manager immediately. Do not wait until you have written up the audit – send them on.

- Do not feel you need to fill in every box - fill in the boxes which are relevant to this case (for example, if the child is on a child in need plan, the section about accommodation, placements and family time is likely to be irrelevant)
- Consider carefully which area of service the child is supported by. For example, young people who are supported by the Pathway team are over the age of 18 and therefore responses to their support need to be proportionate to their age and stage of development and Children's Social Care's role and remit within their lives.
- Start by asking the social worker if there is anything they are worried about in terms of the work on the file i.e. do they know their visits are out of timescale? Have they recently been allocated this case and can see that core groups haven't taken place prior to their involvement? Can they recognise what could be better on the file?
- Include a rationale for what you are saying and your judgements and scoring.
- Identify positive practice and highlight it to the social worker and their manager
- Identify what needs to be improved on the file and how this can be achieved
- You could ask the social worker what score they would give to the section being considered and then discuss whether you agree or disagree
- In the "Experience of having an audit" section, you could ask the social worker; what would you like to have done differently on this file? What do you think went well? What didn't go so well? How did it feel taking part in this audit?

## A REMINDER; SCORING

### Outstanding

In addition to meeting the requirements of a 'good' judgement, there is evidence that professional practice **exceeds** the standard of good and results in sustained improvement to the lives of children, young people and families. Research-informed practice, some of which will be innovative, continues to develop from a strong and confident base, making an exceptional difference to the lives and experiences of children and young people.

### Good

Children and young people who are, or who are likely to be, at risk of harm or who are the subject of concern are identified and protected. Help is provided early in the emergence of a problem and **is well coordinated and recorded** through multi-agency arrangements. Records of action and **decisions are clear** and up to date. **Children and young people are listened to and heard.** Social workers build effective relationships with them and their families in order to assess the likelihood of, and capacity for, change. **Risk is well understood**, managed and regularly reviewed. Children and young people experience timely and effective multi-agency help and protection through risk-based assessment, authoritative practice, planning and review that secures change.

### Requires Improvement

Not meeting all good grades, but there are **no widespread or serious failures** that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. Assessments should be timely with risk and protective factors identified and action taken to safeguard children. Risk and protective factors are identified. Conclusions flow from analysis and findings in relation to significant harm are clear. **All statutory case file requirements are met.** However, the case file is not yet at a Good standard and does not provide sufficient assurance that we are delivering good protection, help and care for children, young people and families.

### Inadequate

The file **does not demonstrate a suitable level of assurance.** There are, or appear to be, widespread failures or serious failures that leave children harmed or at risk of harm. Response to referrals is not timely or effective, Section 47 investigations insufficiently planned, poor quality assessments, insufficient involvement of family and children and poor managerial oversight. Case file is not able to evidence compliance with statutory requirements or local procedures.

- It is difficult to give specific guidance around scoring and if you are unsure about what overall score to give to an audit, it is worth seeking a colleagues' support and discussing the rationale
- Hypothetically, if the case has 4 RI sections and 1 inadequate section, it could be RI overall however, if the inadequate section is extremely concerning and impacts on the safety of the child, then the file will likely need to be scored inadequate overall.
- Similarly, a file may feature many 'good' sections but one RI section which is of concern could result in an RI judgement.
- You should include a rationale for your overall scoring of the file.

## SETTING ACTIONS

- Set a date by which actions should be completed (instead of – “within 5 working days” say “by 04.06.2020) agree the date with the social worker and ensure they know that this will be tracked
- Set actions which are in relation to the case file and are realistic
- Make actions Specific, Measured, Achievable, Realistic and Timely (SMART) and also agree them with the social worker
- Actions around development for the social worker should be shared with the social worker and their line manager but should not recorded on the audit document as this will be entered on to the child's file. For example – if the social worker says this was their first pre-birth assessment and they need more guidance – encourage them to attend the Assessment skills workshop on pre-birth assessments or point them in the direction of some reading. You might want to email their manager and say you have recommended this but, do not record this on the audit document.
- Managers need to ensure they use the audit tracker to ensure that actions are completed. S:\Childrens\_Services\Children's\_Social\_Care\CSC\_All\_Staff\Audit actions spreadsheet

## FINISHING UP

- Send the audit to the social worker, their manager, the group manager and the AP for your area.
- Attach the audit to the child's Mosaic file under "documents > general documents > audit"

## WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

- The AP team have a meeting once a month where we consider all of the audits received; any emerging themes, any changes to practice, any issues which need raising
- We write a report which is shared with Improvement Board and Senior Management Team.
- Issues arising from audits are translated in specific workshops, fed back to Workforce Development to inform training needs and are included in the Principal Social Worker Blog.
- 10% of audits received are moderated each month by the AP team. If your audit is moderated and there is disagreement in regard to the scoring, the outcome of the moderation will be discussed with you and the moderated report added to the file.

## USEFUL READING:

Coverage of Reading Local Authority who brought in an approach they are calling "Beyond Auditing"

<https://www.communitycare.co.uk/2017/11/30/auditing-live-cases-social-workers-helping-council-improve-practice/>

Article by London School of Economics about the impact of audits

[http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/523/1/Audit-SocialWork\\_05.pdf](http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/523/1/Audit-SocialWork_05.pdf)

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