

Deep Dive Audit Process, Template and Guidance

This guidance covers –

1. Audit expectations
2. Audit process
3. Use of the child's journey file audit tool
4. Appendix A – Ofsted Grade Descriptors

AUDIT EXPECTATIONS

Deep Dive audits will be undertaken by members of the Self-Assessment Group three times per year. Audits will give a sense of the history of the case from your reading of the files and will go back to examine in some detail the past two years of social care involvement with the child/family.

Deep Dive Audits will not be completed alongside the allocated worker but feedback will be given at the end of the process.

Audits need to be completed by the end of the month for which they were requested.

AUDIT PROCESS

Before the audit

Cases to be audited will be allocated in advance in order for the activity to be scheduled before the end of the month.

Carrying out the audit

These audits will normally take 1.5 – 2 days to complete. The audit should look back over the record to obtain understanding of the history to the case. The focus is then on the past two years of involvement. The aim is to form a view about the quality of the work, whether the record reflects the practice undertaken and the impact of the intervention.

Any actions required should be clearly set out at the end of the audit.

Once the Audit is complete

The auditor must:-

- Complete the Audit Form and ensure that the audit is typed up within the timescale available for completion.
- Feedback the findings and actions from the audit to the Team Manager and send them a copy of the completed audit.
- Send the Audit to Alex Hobbs and Julie Morris for collating.

Themes

Completed Deep Dive audits will be collated and recurring themes will be identified and feedback to the Self-Assessment Group by Julie Morris to raise awareness and for an Action plan to be drawn up to address any areas of recording or practice that require improvement.

GUIDANCE ON USING THE AUDIT TOOL

Case profile

This box is used to give a very brief summary of the case history– the ‘story’ of our intervention in this child/young person’s life and the journey of the child through the Service.

1a Early Help and Protection

This section should normally only be completed when early help has been provided within the period of the audit – the last 2 years.

1b Assessment

This must be completed for all audits. If there has been more than one assessment, the most recent single assessment should normally be the one that is audited. It will be relevant however, to refer to other assessments that have been completed over the audit period.

The expectation is that all children/young people will have a single assessment completed within the last 2 years, although this should be related to changes in the child’s circumstances, needs/risks and other types of assessments that may be undertaken in some teams.

1c Children in Need

This section should normally only be completed when the child is receiving or has received social care support as child in need (not child protection, in care or care leaver) within the audit period.

1d Child Protection

This section should normally only be completed if the child is on, or has been subject to s47 and/or a child protection plan within the audit period.

General areas of the Audit Tool

These sections must be completed for all cases.

2 Child’s Voice and Understanding

3 Decision-making and Management oversight

4 Information sharing and Partnership working

5 Understanding and Practice in relation to Diversity and Culture

6 Plans and Reviews

7 Direct work and Recording

8 Service user feedback

9 Permanence and Placement Planning

This must be completed for all children who are or have been in care, or care leavers during the audit period, but should also include the planning to prevent drift and achieve permanence arrangements for all children including how permanence can be achieved for children within their own families.

10 independence

This section should be completed for young people aged 16+ in supported or independent living, including children in care, care leavers and young people who have left home or been homeless.

Actions following audit

In the event that any urgent/immediate child protection concerns arise about the case during the audit this must be raised directly and immediately with the line manager for the case.

Actions required may be discussed and agreed during the audit with the practitioner.

The responsible people for ensuring actions are completed are the line manager/supervisor for the case.

Best practice will be to agree the actions and timescale as part of feeding back the audit.

Judgements

Ofsted Grade Descriptors

Ofsted Grade Descriptors are used to rate Local Authorities but are adopted here to rate the quality of work seen, described and documented during the file audit. Please see Appendix A for information about the grade descriptors.

Please find below and extract from the Ofsted's SIF Inspection Framework August 2016.

A local authority is likely to be judged good if:

Children and young people are listened to, practice is focused on their needs and experiences and influenced by their wishes and feelings or, where they cannot represent their view themselves, those advocated on their behalf. They are consistently seen and seen alone by social workers where statutory guidance requires that this should happen and it is professionally judged to be in the best interests of the child. (*Evaluation schedule number (ESN) 01*)¹

Children, young people and families benefit from stable and meaningful relationships with social workers. They are engaged in all actions and decisions and understand the intentions of the help they receive. Where families refuse to engage there are continued attempts to help them to do so. However, where there are concerns about the safety and protection of children and parents do not engage, there is a full risk assessment and urgent involvement of a senior manager in all decisions about next steps. (*ESN 02*)

Children, young people and families are offered help when needs and/or concerns are first identified and, as a consequence of the early help offered, children's circumstances improve and, in some cases, the need for targeted services is lessened or avoided. The interface between early help and statutory child protection work is clearly and effectively differentiated. (*ESN 03*)

Information-sharing between agencies and professionals is timely, specific and effective and takes full account of the requirements set out in legislation and guidance about the need to obtain parental consent for enquiries to be made, except where in seeking that consent a child is likely to suffer significant harm or further harm. (*ESN 04*)

Children and young people in need of help and protection are identified by professionals, including those in adult services, and appropriate referrals are made to children's social care. Social work expertise and advice is available to support other professionals in determining the best steps to take next. There is a timely and effective response to referrals,² including out of normal office hours. (*ESN 05*)

¹ The *evaluation schedule numbers* (ESN) are a referencing system to support inspectors when they record their findings in evidence records. *ESN 01* refers to the first characteristic for a good service in the local authority key judgement *the experiences and progress of children who need help and protection*. The bullet points in the framework are numbered sequentially thereafter (including the criteria for a good LSCB). The numbering excludes the bullet points that describe a service that is outstanding, requires improvement or is inadequate.

² This includes referrals to the Local Authority Designated Officer.

Thresholds³ for intervention accord with the requirements of legislation, are appropriate, understood by partners, consistently applied, well embedded, reviewed and updated regularly. Drift and delay are avoided. (ESN 06)

Children and young people receive help that is proportionate to risk; children and families are not routinely subjected to formal child protection investigations if these are not necessary. (ESN 07)

Child protection enquiries are thorough and timely, informed by a decision made in a strategy meeting, except in emergencies where there must be evidence of immediate risk of harm to a child, and always led by a suitably qualified and experienced registered social worker. Findings in relation to significant harm are clear and result in urgent action to protect children and young people. (ESN 08)

Decision-making is undertaken by suitably qualified and experienced social workers and managers, with decisions, all actions and engagement with the family and other professionals clearly recorded. (ESN 09)

For children who need help and protection, assessments (including common or early help assessments) are timely, proportionate to risk, and informed by research and by the historical context and significant events for each case. They result in direct work with families, develop in response to that direct work, and they address all domains of the local framework for assessment. Senior managers have responsibility for authorising the recommended next steps. (ESN 10)

Assessments⁴ (including children in need assessments) result in a direct offer of help to address any identified needs. Assessments and plans are dynamic and change in the light of emerging issues and risks. Authoritative action is taken where change is not secured and the risk to children intensifies or remains. (ESN 11)

Children in need have a plan setting out the help that is offered. Children and young people who need protection are subject to a child protection plan that clearly identifies the work that will be offered to help the family and the necessary changes to be achieved within appropriate timescales for the child or young person. Social workers engage with the family who understand the help they will receive, what has to change and the options for the future. (ESN 12)

Plans and decisions are reviewed and alternative authoritative action is taken where the circumstances for children do not change and the risk of harm or actual harm remains or intensifies. (ESN 13)

³ Children Act 1989; www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents and *Working together to safeguard children*, Department for Education, 2013; www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children. This includes children covered by the Southwark Judgement.

⁴ Assessments and local protocols for assessments should be in line with *Working together to safeguard children*.

Children and young people are protected through effective multi-agency arrangements. Case conferences, strategy meetings, core groups and multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARAC)⁵ are attended by key participants and are effective forums for timely information-sharing, planning and risk-based decision-making. (ESN 14)

Children and young people who live in households where at least one parent or carer misuses substances or suffers from mental ill-health, or where there is domestic violence, are helped and protected. Incidents are monitored and multi-agency responses are effective and coordinated between agencies, including management through MARAC. (ESN 15)

Children and young people who are missing from home, care⁶ or full-time school education⁷ and those at risk of sexual exploitation and trafficking receive well-coordinated responses that reduce the harm or risk of harm to them. Risks are well understood and minimised. Local authorities, schools and local police are aware of, and implement in full, the requirements of the statutory guidance for children and young people who are missing.⁸ Comprehensive records are held and shared between agencies to help and protect children and young people. Together they take steps to ensure that all children, including those who are excluded from school, are safe and that for those who are missing or often missing there is a clear plan of urgent action in place to protect them and to reduce the risk of harm or further harm.⁹ (ESN 16)

Children and young people who are privately fostered are identified by the local authority, in conjunction with partners. Once they are identified, the local authority discharges in full its statutory responsibility to ensure that they are safe and that their health and well-being are properly promoted. (ESN 17)

⁵ Multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs) are meetings where information about high-risk domestic abuse victims (those at risk of murder or serious harm) is shared between local agencies. By bringing all agencies together at a MARAC, a risk-focused, coordinated safety plan can be drawn up to support the victim and their child/ren.

⁶ This refers both to local authorities' responsibility for all of their own looked after children, whether they live within or out of the local area, **and** their responsibility as a host authority with a duty to safeguard and promote welfare for children and young people living in the local area.

⁷ The authority has arrangements in place to identify the number of children not in full-time school education and to respond where there are concerns about their welfare.

⁸ *Interim guidance on the management, recording and investigation of missing persons*, Association of Chief Police Officers, 2013; www.safecic.co.uk/news/348-misper, and *Statutory guidance on children who run away and go missing from home or care*; www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-who-run-away-or-go-missing-from-home-or-care.

⁹ Inspectors will make enquiries about local practice in respect of responses to children who are absent as well as those who are missing. Where this is not robust, consistent or focused on the need to protect children and young people, this will be evidenced in the inspection report and will directly influence the judgement.

Allegations of abuse, mistreatment or poor practice by professionals and carers are taken seriously. Steps are taken to protect children and young people and the management of allegations is robust and effective. (ESN 18)

Practice is informed by feedback from children and their families about the effectiveness of the help, care or support they receive from the time it is first needed until it ends. (ESN 19)

Children, young people and families have timely access to, and use the services of, an advocate where appropriate. (ESN 20)

Help and protection for children and young people is sensitive and responsive to age, disability, ethnicity, faith or belief, gender, gender identity, language, race and sexual orientation. (ESN 21)

Where protection and support is provided by a third party provider to which statutory functions have been delegated, children and young people receive the same high quality services that they could expect from the social work service provided directly by a local authority. (ESN 88)¹⁰

Outstanding

'The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection' is likely to be judged outstanding if, 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 their 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.

Requires improvement

'The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection' is likely to 'require improvement' if there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. However, the authority is not yet delivering good help and protection for children, young people and families.

Inadequate

'The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection' is likely to be inadequate if there are widespread or serious failures which leave children being harmed or at risk of harm.

¹⁰ Evaluation scheduled number 88 is numbered out of sequence intentionally as this is a new criteria added to this framework in September 2015).