



Date of Meeting: 14 November 2019

Lead Member: Andrew Parry - Lead Member for Children's Services...

Lead Officer: Sarah Parker, Executive Director – People Children

**Executive Summary:**

This paper provides an update and overall conclusion of the Care and Protection monthly audit findings for July, August, September and October 2019. It also details any other audits, case or service reviews that have taken place within the time period.

**Equalities Impact Assessment:**

There are no equalities implications arising from this report.

**Budget:**

There are no budget implications related to this report.

**Risk Assessment:**

This paper does not require a Risk Assessment

**Climate implications:**

None

**Other Implications:**

None

**Recommendation:**

Members to actively consider and comment upon the adequacy of the plans/actions in section 12 'Moving Forward' to address the audit outcomes.

**Reason for Recommendation:** To be assured that the Quality Assurance Framework and auditing programme identifies gaps and areas for development and will drive learning and service improvement to strengthen outcomes for children.

**Appendices:**

Appendix A – Data tables.

**Background Papers:** None

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. Case audits help identify good practice as well as highlight areas for development, improvement and learning. Audits support our continuous professional development and contribute to learning across the whole organisation. Auditing is a crucial element of case and service improvement and identifies where we need to do things differently to improve practice. We want to be sure that both the impact of our work and the child's experience is both positive and sustainable.

## 2. Monthly Audit Process

- 2.1. The audit template has seven domains with each domain given a score of between 1 to 10 by the auditor, with 1 being no evidence found and 10 where good evidence has been found. The auditor will also make an overall judgement at the end of the audit using the Ofsted judgements which are: Outstanding, Good, Requires Improvement and Inadequate.
- 2.2. The auditor will consider: the child's voice, the impact of intervention on the specific child being audited, whether approaches have been effective and if policies and procedures have been followed appropriately. The auditor usually focuses on the last three months of involvement – the 'here and now' but where required the auditor will go back further.
- 2.3. The auditors are all peer auditors, so they do not audit their own team work.
- 2.4. The cohort of children's case files audited in the monthly manager's audit in August were from the Children Who Are Disabled Team (CWAD) and in September from the East and West Districts.
- 2.5. No audits were undertaken as part of the monthly manager's audit in October because 29 were carried out in preparation for and during the Ofsted Inspection that took place on 1 and 2 October 2019.
- 2.6. A different audit tool was used for these audits based closely on Ofsted's Annex F Case tracking template. The manager auditing was asked to make a judgement for each case audited. The final judgement reached by managers for these audits is captured in Appendix A in Table 3 A) under October. The cohort chosen was dictated by Ofsted and included: LAC, CIN and CP.
- 2.7. The fostering audit was developed based on the same model as the monthly manager's audit above with seven domains each with a score of 1 to 10. The domains are similar to the children's case file audit, but the perspective differs in that we are looking specifically at the impact of the

monitoring, support and guidance provided by the fostering social work team to foster carers. The auditor will also make an overall judgement using the Ofsted judgements as in the monthly audit above.

- 2.8. One of the Fostering Reviewing Officers had been auditing the fostering files but left recently, consequently the audit of fostering files did not take place in September.
- 2.9. The auditor involves the allocated social worker when auditing. The auditor contacts the social worker and agrees either to: audit the case alongside the social worker, get the perspective from the social worker prior to looking at the case on mosaic or speak to the social worker after auditing the case on mosaic if not possible to do together.
- 2.10. The conversation had with the social worker tries to obtain an understanding of context around practice and work undertaken. This supports a move away from a deficit model to that of a learning organisation with the objective being a supportive process for the social worker and an opportunity for case reflection. We know from feedback from workers that this style of auditing is a much-preferred method and one which workers feel they get value from.
- 2.11. The auditor should escalate any urgent safeguarding concerns with the Safeguarding and Standards Team. None were identified as requiring escalation for immediate attention in the August and September audits.
- 2.12. The case audits are uploaded to the child's file and shared with the social worker and their managers for reflection and learning in supervision.
- 2.13. The Family Assessment Specialist Team (FAST) audits are undertaken monthly looking specifically at the assessments and work carried out by the specialist workers in FAST. The overview and scrutiny of these audits is undertaken by the Operational Manager for FAST. They commenced in March 2018 and overall, they have been very positive. The audits have ten domains to enable month on month comparison and identify trends. These audits are shared with the social worker and team for reflection and learning.
- 2.14. The Child Protection (CP) Chairs undertake 10 peer audits each month looking specifically at the conference and CP Plan. The audit tool has 9 domains to enable month on month comparison as well as identifying trends much like the FAST audits above. The domains include the voice of the child and whether the child was subject to a plan previously. These audits are shared with the CP Chairs individually and as a team for their reflection and learning.
- 2.15. The CP Chairs also undertake 10 audits looking at LAC reviews. The audit tool has 8 domains similar to the above which includes the child's voice and the quality of the Care Plan. These audits are also shared with the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) individually and as a team for their reflection and learning.
- 2.16. Number of cases audited in this period:
  - **109** cases were audited in July, August and September as part of the monthly managers audit cycle.
  - **29** cases were audited relating to the October Ofsted Inspection.
  - **8** fostering case records were audited in July and August.
  - **9** FAST audits were completed in July and August.
  - **29** LAC Review audits were completed through July, August and September.

- **30** CP Conference audits were completed through July, August and September.

### **3. Audit Compliance** (see A and B in Section 1 in Appendix A)

- 3.1. Audit compliance was 89% in July and remained the same in August but dropped significantly in September to 59%. The Corporate Director follows up any non-compliance on an individual basis to consider any learning around the barriers that may exist for managers carrying out their audit.

### **4. Audit Scores** (see A and B in Section 2 in Appendix A)

- 4.1. The overall average score across all seven domains was in July and August which was 6.2 but fell to 5.5 in September which is very disappointing.
- 4.2. 'Evidencing that supervision takes place regularly and that management oversight has been used appropriately to ensure effective practice', fell again in August to 5.7 and dropped further still to 5 in September.
- 4.3. Although not the lowest scoring domain it remains a concern that this continues to score poorly, and it remains the case that the comments are around frequency and lack of reflection in supervision taking place. The lack of reflective supervision in complex cases will impact on the social worker's professional development. If there is no challenge it does not encourage professional curiosity and exploration of all aspects of the circumstances for each child and the work undertaken to prevent drift and delay.
- 4.4. The highest scoring domain for August was around equalities and diversity with a score of 6.9. It is often the case that auditors struggle to consider equalities and diversity if the child does not have a specific disability or come from an obviously different culture or ethnicity. It is therefore not surprising that this domain had a good score considering the cohort of children's cases chosen in August was from the Children who are Disabled Team. In September the score in this domain fell to 5.4 although not the lowest scoring domain.
- 4.5. Evidencing that the 'child's voice and their experience/needs were captured and understood and that this can be seen to have influenced the assessment, planning and interventions', bucked the trend for the last two months in that it scored poorly with a score of 6 in August and even lower in September with 5.6. Both scores being lower than they have been since October 2018.
- 4.6. The weakest area in July, August and September was 'Meetings' with a score of 5.6 and 4.6 respectively. This domain includes consideration of the quality of the meeting, if the right people were there, if it was purposeful and that the minutes were shared. Where this scored poorly the comments were again around the fact that the meeting may have taken place but was not written up and minutes distributed in a timely fashion.
- 4.7. It remains the case that when you speak to the worker it is often clear that work is taking place, but it is not always recorded consistently and in a timely way. This is evidenced with some back recording onto Mosaic taking place when gaps are highlighted in audits and reports. It is

important that there continues to be an emphasis on the expectation that work is recorded as soon as it has taken place, so that this becomes fully embedded.

## **5. Audit Judgements** (see A and B in section 3 in Appendix A)

- 5.1. Since April 2019 we are seeing an upward trend of cases being judged as 'Requires Improvement' reaching 64% in October 2019. This is the highest percentage since October 2018 and is concerning because it is not directly as a result of the percentage of those judged to be 'Inadequate' reducing.
- 5.2. In the monthly manager's audits, there has been little reference to chronologies in the audits which indicates a general culture of acceptance that one will not be found so no challenge is being offered by managers.
- 5.3. The overall themes generally remain similar to those of previous months. The audits carried out due to the Ofsted Inspection also revealed similar themes and confirmed areas for development including:
  - Chronologies
  - Supervision – timeliness, frequency and quality
  - Case Summaries
  - Plans are not always specific enough
  - Drift and delay in progressing plans
- 5.4. The 6 cases chosen by Ofsted as having been previously audited were discussed further at a moderation session with a group of managers before giving them to Ofsted. 5 judgements were moderated down, and one was moderated up. This suggests that it is likely managers undertaking the monthly manager's audit had been over optimistic when making a judgement on the grading.

## **6. Fostering Audit**

- 6.1. (See A and B in section 4 and 5 in Appendix A). August shows an improvement on the previous month for the overall average score from 7 to 7.3 which is good. This is a very small cohort, so hard to draw real conclusions however, there were no 'Inadequate' judgements again this month with 3 judged to be good which is positive.

## **7. FAST Audit**

- 7.1. The FAST audits overall continue to show positive results. There had been some issues with recognising where the reviews are recorded on mosaic but there is now a mechanism in place to more easily identify the recording of these and as a result in August, we have seen the anticipated increase which is very positive.
- 7.2. Gathering feedback from families was an area for development identified in August with feedback from professionals remaining an issue. No FAST audits were received in September.

## **8. CP Conferences Audit**

- 8.1. The July, August and September audits generally show a positive picture. The rate of children placed on a CP Plan for a second or subsequent time has been higher in Dorset than our comparators so there is a focus on this to better understand why. In August 3 cases audited had been on a CP plan previously with the auditor concluding that 1 had been previously de planned inappropriately. In September, there were again 3 that had been on a CP Plan previously but all 3 were considered to have been previously de planned appropriately by the auditor.
- 8.2. The audits continue to identify that capturing and recording the child's voice needs to improve and that in September the auditors highlighted that the Outline Plans were not always specific enough.

## **9. LAC Review Audit**

- 9.1. Generally, these were also positive. In August, Care Plans were graded with 2 Outstanding, 7 Good and 1 Requiring Improvement and similar in September with 1 Outstanding, 8 Good and 1 Requiring Improvement but there was evidence of challenge by the IRO in that case. It was identified that SW reports and consultation forms are not always received in a timely way for the LAC Review.

## **10. Children Subject to a CP Plan and Looked After Children Statutory Visits** (See A and B in section 5 in Appendix A).

- 10.1. Previously, the need for improvement was highlighted in terms of LAC and CP statutory visits and this continues to remain an area of focus. The data shown in the table in the appendix leaves a clear month for any late recording on Mosaic to have less of an impact on the accuracy of the data available each month.
- 10.2. There continues to be a consistent gradual improvement for LAC Statutory Visits completed on time although it did fall very slightly this last month from 86.11 % to 85.73% completed on time for April through to August.
- 10.3. The same improvement had not been evidenced for children subject to a CP Plan which had remained almost static or dropped. It is important to note however that of those completed late (33.46%), almost half (17.04%) were overdue by 1-3 days.
- 10.4. The new reports now more accurately reflect when the child was actually seen as previously, it would have included a child that was not seen when the siblings were visited and seen. This impacts more on the CP Stat visit data as LAC stat visits are less often carried out for sibling groups and may account for the more recent drop.
- 10.5. It is important to understand that for CP statutory visits the reporting timescales are at the discretion of the Local Authority. This is set so that weekly or fortnightly visits are measured within the required days (7 or 14) and not weekly or fortnightly. What this actually means is that if a visit is required weekly for example, and the first visit is made on a Monday one week and on a Tuesday the following week, it will count as late, but they will have been visited once per week. There is a piece of work currently being undertaken to try to resolve this issue.

## **11. Actions Identified in Audits**

- 11.1. The South West Audit Partnership (SWAP) has completed an audit on actions that were identified in the monthly manager's audits where the judgement was Inadequate or Requires Improvement from January 2019. The report is currently with the Executive Director.
- 11.2. In September, in addition to the above, all audits completed in the last 6 months with a judgement of Inadequate were reviewed by social work managers. They found that not all actions had been followed up and that not all managers were following the correct process to monitor and track the actions until completion.

## **12. Moving Forward**

- 12.1. The audit tool has been redesigned so that it can more effectively identify good practice and areas for development with a plan to roll out for the November audit.
- 12.2. The Quality Assurance Framework has been reviewed following the recent Ofsted Inspection in October and a system of regular moderation is being built in to the audit programme with a plan to roll out in November. Closing the loop on any learning from good practice and identification of areas for development has been strengthened with regular workshops and study groups being set up for all staff to attend commencing in November.
- 12.3. A more effective system of tracking actions identified in audits has been set up to ensure that these are monitored appropriately and completed in a timely way with immediate effect.
- 12.4. We will know when we are making improvements when the monthly audit returns consistently show a percentage increase in those that are graded 'Good' and 'Outstanding', with fewer 'Requires Improvement' and no 'Inadequate' judgements. We will also know from feedback from Children, young people and their families as well as seeing improvements in our general performance data.