



Centre for Professional Practice

Audit Framework

Revised August 2017



Introduction

The Audit Framework is led by the Centre for Professional Practice which is made up of the Lead for Professional Practice (Principal Social Worker), 1 Lead Auditor and 5 Advanced Practitioners who will be responsible for undertaking the audit activity.

This Audit Framework is written to support the Quality Assurance and Performance Framework updating report July 2017 and supports the Local Authority's journey of improvement and capacity to understand itself and improve its practice and interventions.

The Audit Framework aims to provide a platform of leadership and management to aspire and inspire the service to achieve a consistent level of quality standard auditing. In turn this will contribute to the overall leadership of Dudley MBC's improvement journey.

Case file auditing is a critical method within quality assurance and the key aims are:

- To support the evaluation of practice.
- To recognise and acknowledge good practice.
- To ensure that case file records are maintained in accordance with "Dudley's Practice Standards".
- To assure that children and young people have a good quality assessment and analysis of their needs on record.
- To assure good planning for children.
- To evidence that children are listened to and their wishes and feelings impact upon services.
- To assure management oversight and scrutiny.
- To assure children are safeguarded.
- To address drift and delay.
- To generate learning.

The following **Audit Framework** will set out –

- The approach
- The audit tool that will be used
- How audits will be allocated and scheduled
- How concerns will be escalated to the right people to ensure actions are taken to improve practice
- Who will have responsibility for undertaking audits and how often
- The moderation process
- How findings will be reported and the learning implemented

Approach

Dudley will be implementing the 3 R's approach to the auditing programme we implement:



Robust

Our audit activity is open and accountable. It is moderated and will be robust to ensure that practice meets quality standards, and if not, that immediate actions are taken to put this right.

Reflective

Audit activity's primary purpose is to engage the practitioner and manager. Audit activity will be undertaken wherever possible in partnership with the case-holder, or team manager, and to improve skills and practice.

Auditors will support other manager's audit activity to support the achievement of consistent quality standards with internal audit.

Restorative

Audit activity aims to understand and evaluate the child's journey. Audit activity will contribute to the improvement of outcomes and will where necessary seek to improve where practice, planning or decisions have not achieved the intended quality.

Case File Audits

Case file audits are undertaken according to a defined and routine schedule by a cross section of staff across the service. The outcomes of these audits are reported through the Performance Dashboard and provide an indicator in respect to the quality of provision.

In order to build a picture of the effectiveness of practice and intervention within Dudley MBC a long term audit cycle process will be implemented which will follow the child's journey through each part of the service. The Centre for Professional Practice will then return to each service as part of the review cycle to ensure change is sustained and maintained.

A sample frame of 300 audits per year will be required, based on the population size of 2000 children open to the service at any one time. Within service or intervention specific audit cycles a sample frame of 10% minimum of open cases will need to be audited in order to reflect an authentic view of the team or service.

Dudley's case file audit tool has been developed in line with Ofsted's own audit tool (Annex F, Feb 2017). This audit tool brings together the main relevant criteria from the evaluation schedule set out in the OFSTED framework in relation to their definition of "good". The criteria in this template help capture the experiences of children and young people at each key stage of the child's journey. The evidence auditors look at will enable them to identify the quality of different parts of the service and their impact on individual children as well as ensuring children's outcomes improve and the right decisions are being made.

The links throughout the audit template provide guidance in relation to what the auditor should be looking for and where the relevant information should be held. The basis of the audit has been adapted for use across different specialist areas such as Early Help and Youth Offending.

The auditor will evaluate practice that has occurred within the **last 12 months** immediately preceding the audit, or from the point at which the case was opened if within the last 12 months.

The audit tools will be stored on the Tri.x Policy and Procedures portal.

Allocation of Case File Audits

The vision and ethos for the Centre for Professional Practice will be to support the workforce to ensure that they are having a positive impact on social care interventions and outcomes for children, young people and their families

The Centre will aim to achieve this by auditing in partnership with practitioners, managers and leaders. The focus of audit will always be to inspire positive change through coaching and mentoring in order to achieve quality outcomes

The audit process will be as follows:

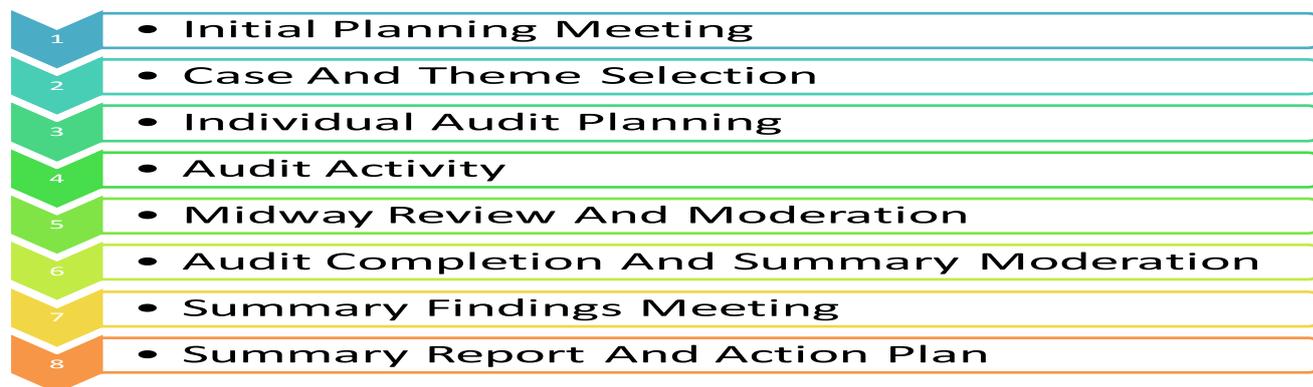
Firstly the Centre for Professional Practice workers will undertake individual audits as part of the long term cycle of the child's journey.

Secondly the Centre for Professional Practice will carry out joint auditing with managers and leaders from across the whole service. The focus of audit will always be to inspire positive change through preparation, coaching and mentoring in order to achieve quality outcomes.

It is the responsibility of the Centre for Professional Practice to facilitate the audit activity. This will involve issuing, collecting and analysing the findings of audit activity. All of the audit activity will take place within a carefully planned programme of audit (see below in figure 1). When each audit cycle is started the Centre for Professional Practice will engage with the relevant Head of Service and Service Manager to plan the audit programme for the specific service area.

The Centre for Professional Practice will re-engage with the relevant Head of Service and Service Manager at key stages of the audit cycle. Completion of the audit cycle will be demonstrated by a summary report and action plan. Implementation of audit findings will be the primary responsibility of the service and the role of the Centre for Professional Practice will be to support, scrutinise and evaluate the service's responses to and progression of audit findings and actions plans. Once each audit cycle is completed a Centre for Professional Practice Advanced Practitioner will remain the link to that service to support development as part of the action plan.

Figure 1: Audit Cycle Flowchart



Raising a Concern

Where serious issues of concern are identified – for example, a failure to follow child protection procedures and/or where a child is discovered to be at immediate risk of significant harm – the Service Manager should be notified by email with a copy of the completed audit. This should be immediately followed up in person to ensure that the Service Manager has received the concern. Escalations should not be used to refer all cases where poor practice is identified; it applies only to those cases falling into categories one and two outlined below:

Category 1 (Inadequate Critical)

Category 2: (Inadequate with action required)

Key audit recommendations will be located on the audit form. Addressing concerns and recommendations from audits will be the responsibility of the manager with oversight from Service Managers.

The status of an audit will be as follows:

Category 1: (Inadequate Critical) A case that suggests a child is at risk and the practitioner needs to act immediately within the next 24 hours.

Category 2: (Inadequate with action required) A case that suggests the service offer/risk assessment for a particular child is not appropriate to their needs and urgent consideration is required.

Category 3: The audit is recommending actions that will be required for the case to be in good order.

Category 4: The case is in good order.

The Centre for Professional Practice along with the relevant Head of Service and Service Manager will track all audits where category 1-3 has been determined. They will do this with a view to re-checking the file to ensure that recommendations have been followed and completed. Where there is delay in progressing recommendations the following escalation to the relevant Head of Service schedule will apply.

Category	1	2	3	4
Recommendations Checked and Escalation if required	48 Hours	10 Working Days	20 Working Days	N/A

Recording Audit Outcomes

All audit activity should be recorded on the case management system by the professional completing the audit. This will be a brief entry setting out the date of the audit and who completed it. Any recommendations or follow up activity relating to the child's case file will also be recorded on the case management system.

The audit document should be completed in compliance with the Centre for Professional Practice's quality of standards. The document should also be written in a way that it always starts with a clear pen picture of the child's journey and experience and that any audit findings are clear and understandable to any professional or layperson who has no previous knowledge of the case.

The completed audit document will then be stored locally by the Centre for Professional Practice and will also be available upon the child's electronic file.

Who will complete Case File Audits

Audits will be across all tiers from team manager through to the Strategic Director of People. The following schedule sets out the required numbers of Audits for each tier.

Role	Number of Audits
Strategic Director	A Minimum of 2 Assisted Audits per year
Chief Officer	A Minimum of 6 each year
Heads of Service	A Minimum of 6 each year
Service Manager	A Minimum of 8 each year
Team Manager	A Minimum of 1 per audit cycle
Advanced Social Work Practitioners	A Minimum of 7 per audit cycle

Moderation

Achieving a consistent level of audit is crucial to the quality of service improvement. The Centre for Professional Practice views moderation as central, crucial and equal to overall quality of primary audit activity.

A sample of 20% (approximately 60 per year) of the audits will be selected for moderation, which will be undertaken by the Lead for Professional Practice and Lead Auditor. The aim of this moderation is to ensure consistent judgments across the audit programme.

All moderated audits will be recorded on the audit tool and shared with the auditor including where differences in grading are found.

Where differences are found, the Lead for Professional Practice and Lead Auditor will work with the auditor in a coaching and mentoring role to reconcile perspectives and implement learning.

Learning from Audits

The Centre for Professional Practice will take a lead role in coordinating case file auditing activity and will work alongside the Performance Information Unit to ensure that the outcomes of audits are reported to DMT on a monthly basis through the **Quality Assurance and Performance Dashboard**. The learning themes emerging from audit reporting and agreed at the Action Plan stage will inform the basis of the service's training within the Children's Services Learning & Development Programme Plan.

Where needed, bespoke training for individual practitioners, teams and service areas will be developed and delivered via workshops, staff briefings and team and management meetings.

The advanced practitioners will provide direct feedback to social care practitioners and offer support through coaching and mentoring in response to specific learning arising from the audit activity.

The offer will therefore be twofold:

- The provision of development opportunities in response to broad themes identified.
- Coaching and mentoring for individual staff where specific findings have emerged.