

Children's Services Audit Tool

Early Help – Grade Descriptors

Every month, staff in Children's Services will undertake audits of current family work as part of the CS Quality Assurance Framework. Audits are an essential part of leadership and practice development and learning gained from these will lead to practice improvement and ultimately better outcomes for children and young people. This Document should be used alongside the Dorset Audit Tool (Early Help) when undertaking audits. From November 2019, all parts of Children's Services will audit work to the same timescales and use a consistent format.

The following pages set out the **grade descriptors** for each domain of the Audit.

This document must be read in conjunction with the Children's Services Quality Assurance Framework, which can be found on Tri-X:

https://www.proceduresonline.com/dorset/cs/user_controlled_lcms_area/uploaded_files/Children's%20Services%20QA%20Framework%20V1%2030.10.19.pdf

1. Are children safe?	
Judgement	Descriptor/ Evidence
Outstanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robust risk assessment and plan completed by worker and manager. Captures all risks/needs in the request for support and effectively manages the current risks. • Worker shares concerns openly with child/ family and has consent to make onward referrals when necessary. • Worker is able to reflect in supervision what they see, hear, think and feel. Worker and Line Manager jointly problem solve. • Relevant risks (such as exploitation, abuse) are identified quickly and responded to appropriately. • Safety Planning tools and Risk Assessments such as the CE Risk Assessment are completed appropriately and shared with relevant agencies and the child/ family.
Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main risks/needs have mainly been robustly addressed. • Identified risks are talked about with the child/ family and consent is sought to make onward referrals when necessary. • Safety Plans and Risk Assessments such as the CE Risk Assessment are completed and shared with relevant agencies, the child and family. • Worker talks about concerns in supervision and together with line manager, decides on next course of action.
Requires Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most risks/needs sufficiently responded to. • Supervision is directive, with line manager making decisions about next steps with little or no input from worker. • Onward referrals to other services often made without child/family knowledge or support.
Inadequate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No risk assessment and plan. • No identified risks/ needs evidenced or if identified, not addressed appropriately.

2. Is work child-centred?

Judgement	Descriptor/ Evidence
Outstanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment demonstrates a sense of the child. Child seen alone (where appropriate), spoken to and views are recorded. Views and wishes clearly reflected in assessment and taken into account as far as possible. Evidence of direct work tools used to engage with the child. Disclosures of a safeguarding nature are appropriately acted upon. Evidence that Assessment has been shared with parents and children (appropriate to age and understanding) throughout the assessment process. Feedback on assessment has been sought and evidenced within the assessment. Outcome of assessment is shared, and feedback is well evidenced. All case recording has been completed under the relevant headings hence it is very easy to locate information in the file. Case recording is well written, up to date, detailed and concise, providing a coherent account of issues and intervention and provides a narrative for the child's story. Case notes relate to the objectives/targets set out in the Plan. Case recordings are completed in a timely manner. Up to date Chronology and Genogram are available (where applicable). Children and parents have been visited regularly within timescales. Visit notes evidence the wishes, feelings and opinions of the children and parents. Clear evidence of direct work tools being used. Direct work with the child includes creative methods of ensuring age appropriate and purposeful interaction. Visit notes clearly outline the nature of the intervention, the outcome and what will happen next. Worker is able to provide a description of the child's experience at home and in relation to the presenting issues.
Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child seen alone (where appropriate), spoken to and views are recorded and reflected in assessment. Evidence of direct work tools used to engage with the child. Disclosures of a safeguarding nature are appropriately acted upon. Evidence that the Assessment and outcome have been shared with parents and children (appropriate to age and understanding). Feedback is sought. All case recording has been completed under the relevant headings hence it is very easy to locate information in the file. Case recording is well written, up to date, detailed and concise, providing a coherent account of issues and intervention and provides a narrative for the child's story. Case notes relate to the objectives/targets set out in the Plan. Case recordings are completed in a timely manner. Children and parents have been visited regularly. Visit notes evidence the wishes, feelings and opinions of the children, any siblings and parents. Clear evidence of direct work. Visit notes clearly outline the nature of the intervention, the outcome and what will happen next.
Requires Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child seen alone (where appropriate) and spoken to as part of family unit and views are recorded in assessment. Disclosures of a safeguarding nature are appropriately acted upon. Assessment and outcome have been shared with parents and children (appropriate to age and understanding). Case recording is mostly up to date, and shows sufficient quality Children and parents have been visited. Some evidence of child's voice and direct work.
Inadequate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child has not been seen during the assessment. Assessment and outcome not shared with the family Case recording is out of date, and there are significant gaps. Case file recording is difficult to understand, inconsistent or incomplete. Children have not been seen. Family not visited. No record of child's voice.

3. Are management oversight and decision making effective?

Judgement	Descriptor/ Evidence
Outstanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervision takes place with agreed frequency, is reflective, analytical and evidences issues which have been raised, setting clear parameters with a focus on the child’s Plan regarding required actions and outstanding work, addressing timescales effectively. Supervision captures child’s voice and clearly reflects on outcomes achieved and not yet achieved for the child. Supervision reviews the actions identified in previous supervision. Appropriate use of relevant theory. • Regular management oversight recorded on case file at the critical points such as case allocation, following the introductory visit, completion of the assessment, following the first Team Around the Family and completion of the first plan, following TAF Review Meetings and updating the plan, at case transfer and case closure. • Where a case has been audited in the past 6 months, evidence of management decision or supervision case notes showing discussion of “audit findings and improvement plan” by line manager and allocated family worker specifying clear actions and timescales as a response to audit recommendations. Evidence of subsequent management oversight on progress on the agreed audit action plan. • Throughout the course of working with a family, the line manager routinely sought feedback from the family about whether the help being provided is working well and ways practice could be improved. • Assessment/plan are checked within timescales and signed off by line manager with a management oversight case notes which includes clear analysis and decision making and feedback to the family worker. • The Plan is quality checked within timescales and signed off by the line manager with a management oversight case note with analytical and appropriate management comment and feedback to the family worker.
Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervision takes place with agreed frequency, is reflective, analytical and evidences issues which have been raised, setting clear parameters with a focus on the child’s Plan regarding required actions and outstanding work, addressing timescales effectively. Supervision captures child’s voice and clearly reflects on outcomes achieved and not yet achieved for the child. Supervision reviews the actions identified in previous supervision. Appropriate use of relevant theory. • Where a case has been audited in the past 6 months, evidence of management decision or supervision case notes showing discussion of “audit findings and improvement plan” by line manager and allocated family worker specifying clear actions and timescales as a response to audit recommendations. • Regular management oversight recorded on case file at the critical points such as case allocation, following the introductory visit, completion of the assessment, following the first Team Around the Family meeting and completion of the first plan, following TAF Review Meetings and updating the plan, at case transfer and case closure. • Throughout the course of working with a family, the line manager routinely sought feedback from the family about whether the help being provided is working well and ways practice could be improved. • Assessment/plan are checked within timescales and signed off by line manager with a management oversight case note.

Requires Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervision is not timely and has limited evidence of reflection and evaluation of early help work. Minimum focus on Child’s Plan. Previous actions are not reviewed. • Some management over-sight • Where a case has been audited in the past 6 months, evidence of management decision or supervision case notes showing discussion of “audit findings and improvement plan” by line manager and allocated family worker. • Some feedback from family obtained. • Assessment/plan are checked and signed off by line manager.
Inadequate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No supervision or limited supervision which lacks its required functions • No management over-sight • Where a case has been audited in the past 6 months, no evidence of management decision or supervision case notes addressing the audit findings. • No feedback. • Assessment/plan not checked by line manager.

4. Are Assessments timely, comprehensive and analytical?

Judgement	Descriptor/ Evidence
Outstanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request for support is uploaded in Mosaic. Management oversight is evident. Case allocated to family worker within one week. Manager decision is recorded re case allocation with summary of needs and actions required with timescales. Initial contact made with the family within one week of allocation, initial Home Visit undertaken within 2 weeks. Assessment is of high quality and well written, completed within 45 days. Includes detailed and robust analysis. Includes strengths/needs/risk/vulnerabilities in considering all children present in the household, and important adults in the child’s life. Sets out a robust plan which captures all risks/needs/vulnerabilities. Plan utilises local resources and is considered manageable. Initial and repeat Outcome Stars are completed. Child focused outcomes clearly identified. Signed consent is uploaded to Mosaic Diversity and disability issues identified and appropriately considered and explored within assessment/plan.
Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Timescales are mostly met, or out of timescales only a few days. Request for support information is available in Mosaic. Manager decision is recorded re case allocation with summary of needs and actions required with timescales. Assessment is well written, completed within timescales. Identifies strengths and areas of concern and considers all children present in the household and most important adults. Sets out a plan which captures all risks/needs/vulnerabilities. Initial and repeat Outcome Stars are completed. Child focused outcomes clearly identified. Signed consent is uploaded to Mosaic. Diversity and disability issues identified and considered within assessment/plan.
Requires Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Timescales not always met. Request for support information is not clearly provided in Mosaic. Manager decision is recorded re case allocation but without summary or clear actions. Assessment timescale not met. Identifies main strengths and main areas of concern and considers all children present in the household. Sets out a plan which captures all risks/needs/vulnerabilities. Most outcomes are identified. No signed consent uploaded to Mosaic Diversity and disability issues noted, but not considered
Inadequate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant delay in case allocation Assessment is significantly out of time-scale. Assessment does not capture risks and strengths. All children present in the household not considered. Lack of analysis and lack of sufficient plan. Outcomes are not clear. No signed consent uploaded to Mosaic No evidence of diversity or disability issues having been noted or considered.

5. Is co-ordination between agencies effective?

Judgement	Descriptor/ Evidence
Outstanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment includes historical and present multi-agency information which is utilised appropriately within the case analysis to inform decision making and planning. • TAF meetings were regular, purposeful, minuted and shared in a timely manner. • Lead professional identified by family and effectively coordinating work. • Evidence that the worker used support and challenge appropriately within the TAF process. • Evidence of regular contact with agencies between meetings. • Outcomes are clearly moving forward and all partners, including the family are undertaking appropriate actions.
Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment includes multi-agency information which is utilised to inform decision making and planning. • Some evidence of liaison with agencies between meetings. • More than one TAF meeting held. • Attendance by agencies is mostly consistent. • All partners including the family are undertaking appropriate actions. • Most TAF actions are leading to demonstrable outcomes for the child and family.
Requires Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment includes some multi-agency information. • No evidence of liaison with agencies between meetings. • Key partners are missing from the TAF process. • Minutes are not shared with partners (or not in a timely manner). • Not all partners referred to are fully engaged with the TAF process. • Apologies received from the same partner each time are not followed up or challenged. • Lack of evidence of TAF progress
Inadequate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No multi-agency information included in assessment despite clear indication that other agencies are involved • No evidence of discussions with other organisations • No TAF meetings evidenced • Work undertaken largely in isolation

6. Are plans and planning timely and effective?

Judgement	Descriptor/ Evidence
Outstanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan completed within timescales. Plan is SMART, comprehensive and dynamic. Plan is robust and captures all risks/needs/vulnerabilities. Plan utilises local resources and is considered manageable. There is clear multi-agency input, and professionals are aware of the plan. Plan sets out clear targets. Plan is child-outcome focused. Outcomes are linked to family needs. Clear evidence that the Plan has been inclusive of all family members and addresses the diverse needs of the family. Clear evidence that the Plan has been shared with parents and children (appropriate to age and understanding). Feedback on plan has been sought and evidenced. Partners are held to account for their part in the Plan. Use of Outcome Star evidences clear progress. Plan includes clear 'next steps' where ongoing support might be required, and a new Lead Professional identified for outstanding outcomes/ monitoring sustained change.
Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan completed within timescales. Plan is SMART, comprehensive and dynamic. Plan is robust and captures all risks/needs/vulnerabilities, and there is multi-agency input. Plan sets out clear targets. Plan is child-outcome focused. Partners are mostly held to account for their part in the Plan. Plan has been inclusive of all family members and addresses the diverse needs of the family. Plan has been shared with parents and children (appropriate to age and understanding).
Requires Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Timescales not met. Plan is SMART, comprehensive and dynamic and captures most risks/needs with some multi-agency input. Plan is sufficiently focused on child's outcome, but limited outcomes identified, or is action- focused. Plan has been inclusive of all family members, and plan was shared with them.
Inadequate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No plan – work is happening with no apparent link to an assessment or plan (eg “we were told to put the parents on a parenting programme”) Significantly out of time-scale. Plan does not capture main risks/needs. No multi-agency input. No clear targets, not child-outcome focused. Not inclusive of all family members. Diversity not addressed. Plan not shared.

7. Is sustainability planning timely and well matched to need?

Judgement	Descriptor/ Evidence
Outstanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcomes identified through the Assessment and Plan have been met and clearly evidenced. • Family and enduring agencies each have accountability for actions supporting/ sustaining positive change. • Where appropriate, a DFM claim has been successfully made. • Closing TAF for family worker clearly sets out role for next Lead Professional, and a Lead Professional has been identified. • Ongoing needs have been clearly identified and agencies are clear on their role. • Child's needs and wishes have been clearly taken into account when planning for sustainability and have shaped ongoing work. • Children who are moving into adulthood are prepared for independence and support is clearly identified where it might be needed.
Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcomes have been met and consideration has been given to making a claim through DFM. • Family and enduring agencies each have accountability for actions supporting/ sustaining positive change. • Closing TAF for family worker has identified the need for the next Lead Professional. • Child's wishes and needs have been considered when planning for sustainability. • Children who are moving into adulthood appear to be prepared for independence.
Requires Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most outcomes met; some have not been and there might not be a clear plan for the future. • Either family or enduring agency have isolated responsibility for actions supporting/ sustaining positive change. • Ongoing needs have been missed or not understood fully. • Little evidence of child's needs or wishes being taken into account.
Inadequate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case has closed prior to all outcomes being achieved. • Neither family or enduring agencies have responsibility for actions supporting/ sustaining positive change. • Case has closed due to 'non-engagement' of child/ family with no evidence that tenacity or persistence was used. • Child has 'aged out' of service with no clear forward plans in place.

8. Do children benefit from regular and timely reviews?

Judgement	Descriptor/ Evidence
Outstanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First and subsequent TAF reviews completed within timescales. Review meetings involve all relevant professionals and the family. TAF Review meetings evaluate/update the Plan, and clear 6-12 week timescales are maintained. Needs/risks are responded to accordingly. There is good monitoring of child's welfare. There is a clear exit strategy in place. Final TAF Review meeting included the new lead professional, if applicable. Clear evidence of transfer to another service prior to early help closure, if applicable. • The timetable of parents and school/ pre-school/ childminder are considered in arranging time/date for reviews. Key family members and children (age appropriately) invited. Explanation is provided to the family of the TAF meeting. Emphasis is placed on participation rather than attendance. There is evidence to show imaginative and innovative ways of involving the child and their family in the TAF Reviews. When parents/child cannot attend, feedback is provided. Child's voice captured in TAF Reviews. • Records of Reviews are comprehensive providing details of the issues and actions that are required to meet outcomes, including timescales. The next TAF Review date set and clearly indicated on Mosaic. TAF Review meeting minutes available in Mosaic, and shared with professionals involved and with the family.
Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First and subsequent TAF reviews completed within 6-12 week timescales. Review meetings involve all relevant professionals and the family. TAF Review meetings evaluate/update the Plan, and clear timescales are maintained. Needs/risks are responded to accordingly. There is good monitoring of child's welfare • The timetable of parents and school/ pre-school/ childminder are considered in arranging time/date for reviews. Key family members and children (age appropriately) invited. Explanation is provided to the family of the Review meeting. Emphasis is placed on participation rather than attendance. When parents/child cannot attend, feedback is provided. Child's voice captured in TAF Reviews. • Records of Reviews provide details of the issues and actions that are required to meet outcomes, including timescales. The next TAF Review date set and clearly indicated on Mosaic. TAF Review meeting minutes available in Mosaic, and shared with professionals involved and with the family.
Requires Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TAF Reviews meetings held, but not always within 6-12 week timescales. Plan requires updating. There is adequate monitoring of child's welfare. Relevant professionals not always involved. • Key family members and children (age appropriately) invited. Lack of evidence re child's voice in the TAF Reviews. • Records of TAF Reviews set out key information.
Inadequate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant delays in TAF Review meetings taking place. Insufficient focus on needs/risks and child. Insufficient progress. • Key family members and children (age appropriately) not invited to TAF Review meetings. • There is no record of TAF Reviews on the child's file.

9. Are children living in a physical and emotional environment of good quality and in accommodation that meets their needs?

Judgement	Descriptor/ Evidence
Outstanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worker completes home visits regularly and regularly sees all areas of the house (eg child’s bedroom, kitchen, bathroom, garden) • Child is appropriately supported according to their assessed needs, including those of parents or family/friends. • Child is given support to disclose concerns and treated with respect and fully involved in any decisions taken. • Concerns identified by the worker are openly discussed with the child/ family who are included throughout any onward referral if made. • Interventions in place address areas of concern and progress towards outcomes is clearly measured (ie Outcome Star or use of other Tools) • Tools like the Graded Care profile, Clutter Image Tool are used where appropriate. • When necessary, appropriate referrals have been made to other services (e.g. Adult Services, Housing organisations, or drug and alcohol services) to address identified concerns. • Worker recognises own value judgements, and this is tested through supervision.
Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worker completes home visits regularly and has in the duration of the case seen all areas of the house (eg child’s bedroom, kitchen, bathroom, garden) • Evidence that barriers the family might face are being explored (e.g. appointments missed due to literacy or transport issues). • Workers value judgements are challenged appropriately through supervision. • Worker enables fair and reasonable adjustments to ensure engagement of all family members.
Requires Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worker completes home visits regularly however evidence is that they have only seen limited areas of the home (eg living room, dining room) • Lack of awareness by worker of their own value judgements. • Supervision does not sufficiently challenge assumptions or professional judgements. • Some evidence that worker used professional curiosity when challenging living conditions, and that this was unpicked in supervision.
Inadequate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worker does not regularly home visit • Little attention appears to have been paid to worker judgements such as ‘messy’, ‘seems unhappy’ – insufficient challenge in supervision. • No explicit link is made between lack of progress or lack of engagement with potential neglect. • No consideration given to use of Tools to back up/ test assumptions.