

Children's Safeguarding and Family Support Services

Practice Learning (Audit) Guidance

Guidance for Practice Learning Session Activity for Children’s Safeguarding and Early Help Services Policy Governance

Title	Name of Policy
Purpose/scope	Guidance for the Practice Learning Session Activity in the Service Area
Subject key words	QA Audit Activity
Council Priority	Protect and Support our vulnerable children and adults
Lead author & contact details	Helen Smith, 01952 385090
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Approver	Tilly Heigh, SDM, ISQAS

Introduction

This Guidance and tips have been developed to support auditors who are completing practice learning review tools (audits) with Children's Safeguarding.

Process

- E mail sent to auditors from the QA Team providing the ID and Practice Learning Tool. The worker is also copied in to identify which child's record is to be discussed.
- Auditor to contact worker directly to arrange a date. This to be done at the earliest point possible and a telephone call may be the best method. Check with the worker if they are happy to meet at deskside or if they would prefer a room to be booked. If for any reason it is not possible to meet with the worker, the auditor should undertake the process alone – this should be a last resort.
- Auditor prepares for the session making notes if helpful – look at around the last 6 months – Ofsted want to see recent practice. It may require looking further for the context but the audit should focus on the recent period. Note any particular periods or gaps.
- Meet with the worker and complete the practice tool, gaining and incorporating their views but ensure that you ask them to show you their recordings when they are describing practice.
- Ensure that comments are evaluative and provide learning where possible for the worker. Compliment any areas of good practice.
- Add a case-audit case note – do not comment on the score etc but add any achievable actions.
- Return the tool to the QA Manager via the Quality Assurance inbox.
- If the overall score is inadequate/child not deemed to be safe, send the tool to the QA Manager but also to the Team Manager and SDM, highlighting the concerns you have. The case should be reviewed and management oversight added to the system.
- The QA Team will send audits to the Team Manager and SDM. Any actions should be discussed with the worker by their manager and a case note summary of the discussion should be added to Protocol as management oversight.
- Where the Team Manager does not agree with the outcome or comments of the audit, they should speak to the auditor directly. If changes are agreed the tool should be returned to the QA Manager. Should agreement not be reached, SDM for QA will review.

Top Tips for practice Learning Sessions

- ✓ When getting in touch with the worker ask them if they are happy to meet at their desk, as some workers would prefer to talk to you in a room away from their desk.
- ✓ If asked to audit a child's record which is not in your service and you need any clarity about processes/timescales etc please ask the worker themselves or a manager.
- ✓ Prepare prior to meeting with the worker by looking through the latest recordings and note any queries you might have of the worker.
- ✓ Always complete electronically and please be clear about scoring. Only one score per area of practice please.
- ✓ Please complete within the timescale requested
- ✓ Some auditors go back in time for far too long – the guidance advises around 6 months, although accepts that you may have to look back further for the context of the case.
- ✓ Do not copy and paste the history or all your own “workings out” - make succinct points linking to the guidance provided and brief examples to demonstrate activity.
- ✓ Remember to include what you see that shows that it is good practice? (eg. If there is a good assessment with a clear analysis say so)
- ✓ You need to be able to demonstrate how you have reached your scores.
- ✓ Some tools provided suggest that the auditor has taken just what the worker has told them rather than checking any evidence out – if evidence is found then comment on what specific piece of evidence demonstrates thinking/viewpoints - ask the worker “where can you demonstrate this in your recording?”
- ✓ Don't repeat the same evidence for different sections
- ✓ Please only add actions that are achievable. Anything else should be learning.
- ✓ There should always be some learning even if it is to point out how a really good piece of work has been achieved so that others can learn from it.
- ✓ The worker should be able to take something from the process to assist them, even if it is to say that their practice is exemplary.
- ✓ The overall score is not always reflective of individual scores throughout the tool – look back and remind yourself of your findings.

- ✓ Where the worker disagrees with your outcome tell us why.
- ✓ Remember to remark on any really good pieces of work.
- ✓ Consider a balance between the focus on compliance and evaluation of practice
- ✓ If the case is closed but you feel that an explanatory note needs to be added to the case recording please add to the actions – if you feel that action is needed please speak to the manager directly
- ✓ Management oversight should include significant decision-making/supervision/rationale for decision making and closure.

Guide for Scoring - LAC and Care Leavers

Exceeds Good

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. *In addition for Care Leavers, the local authority is assertive and proactive in keeping in touch with all young people who have left care and, as a result, young people have a sense of security and connection with adults who they know well.*

Good

Decisions about children and young people becoming looked after are made using high-quality assessments about the risk of harm or actual harm to them and the likelihood of change in their family. Thresholds are clear and applied appropriately. Children and young people are listened to by social workers who know them well. Adults working with children and young people help them to understand and manage their early childhood experiences, to progress well and achieve educationally, and to influence decisions about their future. They return home with the support they need and when it is safe for them. If this is not possible, they live in stable placements where they are helped to build positive relationships and maintain contact with their family and friends where this remains in their best interests. Care plans are regularly reviewed to ensure that the child or young persons' current and developing needs continue to be met. Permanent homes and families are found for children and young people without unnecessary delay. Their needs are met and they live with their brothers and sisters if that is assessed as being in their best interests. They do not experience placement moves unless they are part of a planned return home or in accordance with plans for their future. Their education is not disrupted unless it is in their best interests and plans for their schooling provide any extra help they need to make up time and learning that has been missed. They develop safe and secure relationships with adults that persist over time. When support is needed, children, young people and families are able to access it for as long as it is needed throughout their childhood and beyond. In addition, young people who are preparing to leave care receive support and help to assist them in making a successful transition to adulthood. *Plans for them to leave care are effective and address their individual needs. They are safe and feel safe, particularly where they live. Young people acquire the necessary level of skill and emotional resilience to successfully move towards independence. They are able to successfully access education, employment, training and safe housing. They enjoy stable and enduring relationships with staff and carers who meet their needs.*

Requires Improvement

When there are no widespread or serious failures or unnecessary delays that result in the welfare of looked after children *and care leavers* not being safeguarded and promoted. However, the authority is not yet delivering good help and care for looked after children and young people (*including care leavers*) and their families.

Inadequate

If there are widespread or serious failures, including unnecessary delay in identifying permanent solutions for them and which result in their welfare not being safeguarded and promoted.

If there are widespread or serious failure that results in care leavers not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted but the characteristics of a good judgement are not in place.

Notes for Auditor

All comments boxes must be completed – there must be sufficient information to evidence the grades and inform improved practice or comment on good practice. If there are immediate concerns the manager must be notified. **The child must always be at the centre of the audit. What is the child's journey? Does the child have a voice?**

Guide for Scoring – CP and CIN

Exceeds Good

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.

Notes for Auditor

All comments boxes must be completed – there must be sufficient information to evidence the grades and inform improved practice or comment on good practice. If there are immediate concerns the manager must be notified. **The child must always be at the centre of the audit. What is the child's journey? Does the child have a voice?**