



Children's Safeguarding and Social Care
Audit programme 2021-2022

The CSSW audit programme

Auditing is part of the CSSW quality assurance framework that sets standards, monitors achievements and uses information gathered from quality assurance activities like audits to make improvements to services, leading to better outcomes for children and families. Full details of the CSSW quality assurance framework is available at: [..\Quality assurance framework policy.docx](#)

Case auditing is a key quality assurance mechanism and is the main method for gathering direct evidence and information on the quality of social work practice, decision making and interaction with children, families and the professional network. CSSW uses a number of different audits in order to gain an extensive insight into different aspects of case management and outcomes from differing perspectives.

2 Aims of the programme

The audit programme aims to:

- provide assurances that practice positively influences outcomes for the most vulnerable children and young people;
- take into account the requirements of inspection bodies and ensure Camden is discharging legal duties and meeting required statutory standards;
- involve all children's social care staff in continuously seeking to improve their practice;
- ensure consistency and high standards of practice across children's social work and adherence to the Camden model of social work.
- embed a culture of learning, confident practice and feedback.
- identify areas of practice improvement.

The auditing programme contributes to a learning culture in CSSW and Camden's approach is to create dialogue between the auditor and the worker so that audits are done with, and not to, social workers.. Whilst the worker must be open to professional scrutiny and challenge as part of the process, it is important for this to be done in a way that is open, honest and transparent, so that everyone works together to improve the quality of services to children and families.

3 Cases and activity covered by audits

All cases, including child in need, child protection and looked after children cases are audited on a regular basis through an annual schedule of audits that focuses on the following core areas of practice:

- Front door activity and the application of thresholds (covering the MASH and Contact Service)
- Assessments of need and risk to children and young people
- Plans and the effectiveness of intervention
- Direct working relationships with children, young people & their families
- The child's journey and their experience of social work intervention in their lives
- Permanence
- Partnership working and effectiveness of multi-agency meetings and reviews
- Report writing and case recording
- Management oversight and decision making (including supervision).

The aim is to ensure that social workers have at least one allocated case audited within the annual cycle and this will be monitored by the audit team. Cases are audited with a view to understanding the child's whole journey through CSSW.

4 Overview of the audit process

An audit team consisting of the Heads of Services, service managers, team managers and IROs carries out all auditing activity in CSSW. The group holds monthly Audit Planning, Moderation and Learning meetings in order to analyse audit findings, plan forthcoming audits and quality assure the audit process.

Cases for audit are chosen independently by the Child Protection Quality Assurance Information Officer; selection is random but based on whether the case has been audited within the last 6-8 months (to ensure all cases are frequently audited) and taking into account any particular theme that is being audited, for example children living with domestic abuse. To ensure independence and objectivity of audits, cases for audit are allocated to auditors who have no involvement in the case, for example team managers will audit cases from another team.

During the audit process, the auditor will meet with the social worker to discuss the case and any outcome and findings. At the meeting, auditors will recognise good practice and help social workers to explore issues and help them improve practice. This meeting also contributes to the individual social worker's learning and development.

Following audits, a moderation meeting takes place with all the auditors and is overseen by the Director of CSSW and the Head of Service for Children's Quality assurance. The auditors group meet to discuss findings and identify any issues or themes and agree an action plan to address problems and improve practice. This is part of the organisational learning and development process.

The Head of the Quality Assurance Unit provides a practice week report on the outcome of audits to the Senior Management team setting out the organisational learning derived from the audit programme. This report is also shared with all teams within the division in order to share good practice.

5 Types of audit

Compliance audits

These are audits that check the case file to find recorded evidence that specific actions have taken place or specific documents have been completed within statutory timescales and that all aspects of practice complies with statutory requirements. Examples are whether there is a child's plan in evidence on the case record and whether the family has been visited and the child seen alone.

- Compliance audits should be carried out by the responsible team manager or supervisor whenever a case is transferred or closed.
- Each audit should be scored according to the level of compliance and following the guidance shown at: [Compliance Audit Guidance.docx](#)
- The outcome should be recorded on the Compliance Audit form available on MOSAIC and sent to the responsible IRO.

Front door Audits

These take place in January and September, with 30 cases selected that have been dealt with by the MASH, the Contact Service and the Brief Intervention team in order to check application of thresholds and quality of decision making. Audits may also be combined with a theme such as domestic abuse cases, and at least once a year audits are jointly carried out with Early Help.

There will be an audit of 30 cases twice a year chosen by the QA data and governance lead or with support from the Service managers. Audited cases will include cases within each of the RAG ratings, Red, Amber and Green.

Audits will focus on the quality and timeliness of decision-making and will include cases that have been transferred to CSSW social work teams via the child's journey meetings and step up and step down of cases to Early Help to establish the standard of decision-making and practice on transfer.

Audits are recorded on the standard audit template available at:

Practice week quality audits

Practice week audits are held quarterly involving up to 60 cases from the Family Intervention and LAC teams and covering child in need, child protection and LAC cases.

The practice week approach adopts a whole systems approach to identifying areas of good and weak practice on a particular theme and includes reflective case conversations/case file audits between front line social workers and auditors, observations of practice, and consultation with children and families. These audit the quality of the social work practice and intervention in all child in need, child protection and looked after children cases.

The focus is on identifying the quality of assessment; identification of risk, decision-making; impact of intervention and effectiveness of management oversight. Cases are chosen randomly and auditors audit cases across teams to maintain a degree of independence. Unless otherwise specified, the period of the case file audit should cover is the last year of a child's journey. Child/ young person and Family feedback must be sought and recorded on the separate feedback form. Cases are rated using the Ofsted descriptors: Outstanding, Good, Requires improvement and Inadequate.

Audits are recorded on the standard audit template that will be adjusted to support any chosen theme for that particular audit.

6 How audit information is used

Findings and accountability

Findings from practice week audits and the front door are collated into an audit overview report to inform learning and drive improvements. Team managers are responsible for reviewing the audit findings and recommendations and outlining actions to be completed to bring the case up to expected practice standards. Audit actions should be regularly reviewed in supervision, cross referenced until managers are satisfied the case meets expected practice standards.

Any audit or moderation that is graded *Requires improvement* or *inadequate* must have areas of improvement outlined to get be rated good. The auditor should recommend any actions they believe are necessary to bring the case up to a good standard of expected practice. The Head of Service for both the relevant services and the Quality Assurance Unit must be informed of all audits or moderations graded inadequate or requires improvement.

Heads of Service are responsible for reviewing the audit findings and recommendations of any audit graded inadequate and must be satisfied the actions outlined by the team manager are sufficient to bring the case up expected practice standards within a reasonable period.

Where will the information go and how will it be used?

The Quality Assurance Unit reports produced following practice week and other audits will be shared with the CSSW senior management team, Service and Team Managers and the whole service. The highlights and overall themes will also be shared with key stakeholders such as the CSCP, councillors and the Chief Executive.

This will enable the senior management team to identify what actions need

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to be implemented to improve practice, who will take the lead and the timescale for implementation.

The Quality Assurance Unit will also work closely with the Learning & Development team to contribute to the learning & development strategy for CSSW.

Other audits

Multi-agency audits

As a key safeguarding partner, CSSW takes part in themed multi-agency audits carried out by the Camden Safeguarding Children Partnership (CSCP). Themed audits are carried out bi-annually on 10 randomly selected children's cases across the children's workforce (that fit the profile of the theme). They may include child in need, child protection and early help cases where there is a multi-agency response in place to meet the child's needs.

Senior managers from each agency audit their own the agency's case records and records their findings on a multi-agency audit template. These audit records are given to a specially commissioned independent auditor to analyse.

The independent auditor facilitates a moderation meeting with the CSCP Quality Assurance sub-group and drafts a report of the key findings. The report's recommendations and action plan are fed-back to the CSCP. The statutory safeguarding partners and the independent scrutineer monitor the progress made against the action plan and advise on the next steps.

Section 11 audits are undertaken yearly, as part of the CSCP Quality Assurance sub group's programme of audits, with each audit focussing on a specific service. A section 11 audit tool covering the required areas of scrutiny is sent to each organisation within scope and a multidisciplinary panel meets to review the responses.

The aim of the Panel is to hold each other to account for safeguarding responsibilities. Following completion of the toolkit and challenge panel, organisations produce an action plan outlining those areas where additional work is needed to ensure full compliance with the requirements of section 11. Progress with implementing action plans is monitored and reported to the Quality Assurance Sub-Group and good practice is shared across organisations being audited.

Fostering audits

Fostering cases are audited separately because of the distinct nature of work. Cases of all approved Camden foster carers are audited on an annual basis by the service manager, fostering manager and fostering senior practitioners using a specialist template.

Themed, "deep dive" audits

Where there are concerns about practice and performance, CSSW may decide to carry out a specific "deep dive" audit to look at specific aspects of practice, for example supervision, or to explore emerging problems or patterns. As a result of the audit, an action plan is put in place to address weaknesses and improve practice and performance. The Audit Planning, Moderation and Learning meeting is responsible for identifying and planning for these audits.

CSSW Annual Audit Programme 1ST APRIL 2021 - MARCH 31ST 2022

MONTH/DATE	TYPE	THEME	NUMBER OF AUDITS PROPOSED	OTHER ACTIVITY
MAY	AUDITS	DEEP DIVE THEME TO BE IDENTIFIED		
JULY	PRACTICE WEEK		60	Service user feedback forms to be completed
SEPTEMBER	AUDITS	FRONT DOOR DECISION MAKING	30	
NOVEMBER	PRACTICE WEEK		54	Service user feedback forms to be completed
JANUARY/FEB	AUDITS	FRONT DOOR DECISION MAKING	30	
MARCH	PRACTICE WEEK			Service user feedback forms to be completed