

Contents

Introduction to the Quality Management Framework.....	3
Principles on which the QMF is based	3
The Quality Management Framework.....	4
The auditing process.....	5
Learning audits	6
Introduction.....	6
Process	6
Venue	7
Audit Roles	7
Auditing Service Manager.....	7
Team Manager	7
Case Holding Worker(s).....	7
Social Work Support Officer (SWSO) / Business Support.....	8
Practice Consultant/ Unit Leader / Advanced Practitioner / Senior Case Worker.....	8
Quality and Improvement Group.....	8
Responsible Service Manager	8
Independent Reviewing Officer or Child Protection Co-ordinator.....	8
Other Attendees	8
Audit Tool.....	9
Feedback from Children and Parent / Carers	9
Actions and Learning Decisions.....	9
Grading the Audit.....	10
After the Learning Audit Meeting.....	10
Reporting on Learning Audits	10
Random sampling audits.....	11

Introduction.....	11
Process	11
Venue	11
Audit roles.....	12
Team Manager	12
Case Holding Worker.....	12
Practice Consultant/ Unit Leader / Advanced Practitioner / Senior Case Worker.....	12
Quality and Improvement Group.....	12
Independent Reviewing Officer or Child Protection Co-ordinator.....	12
Audit tool	12
Action plan.....	13
Grading the audit	13
After the random sampling audit meeting.....	13
Reporting on random sampling audits	13
Themed audits.....	14
Learning Visits	15
Learning workshops.....	16
Reflective supervision.....	16

Introduction to the Quality Management Framework

Looking at examples of work through a consistent framework provides an opportunity to monitor the quality of practice, identify positive progress and recognise where change is necessary. Qualitative aspects of practice (both positive and negative) can be identified, as can variations within and across teams. Audits help to identify examples of good practice to be shared and celebrated and help to inform a strategy of improvement.

A revised Quality Management Framework (QMF) for the Children, Families and Cultural Services department was introduced at quarter 1 of the 2019-20 financial year, aimed at reducing the previous volume of routine case file auditing and to focus more on practice learning and improvement using strength-based methodologies. It was also considered fundamental to include NCC frontline and multi-agency professionals in the new process, as their experience and knowledge are central to case progression and improving the lives of children and families.

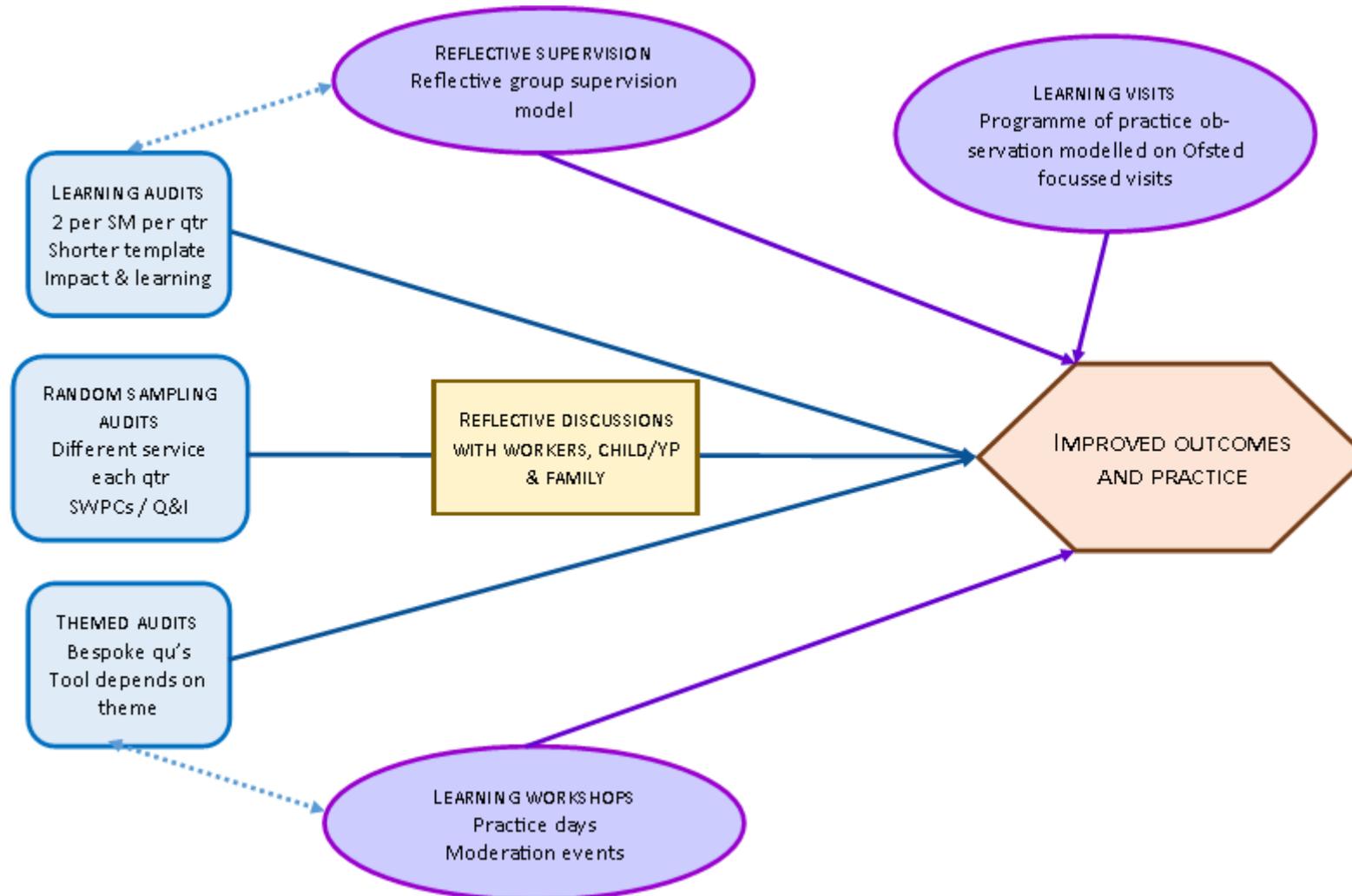
The framework itself focuses on a variety of elements of quality assurance and improvement activity rather than auditing alone. Each element also emphasises and facilitates a learning cycle to ensure that improvement activity is impacting the quality of practice.

Findings from audits are routinely fed back to practitioners on an individual and collective basis to all managers utilising existing forums, such as team meetings, strategy days, partnership boards, leadership meetings, continuous improvement boards and other improvement projects and programmes.

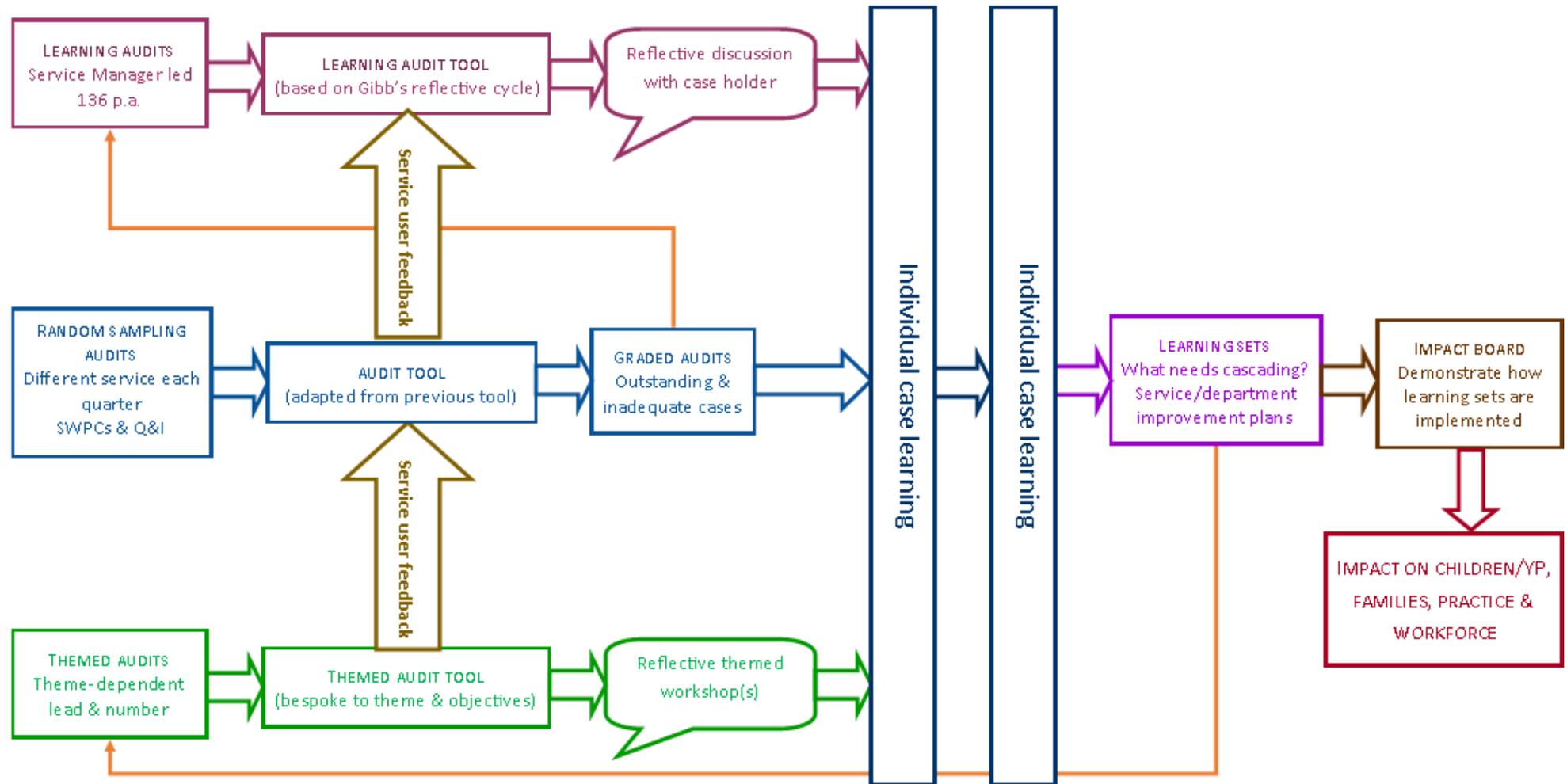
Principles on which the QMF is based

- “Less is more”: fewer routine paper-based and process-based audits alongside face-to-face discussions and the opportunity for peer and group learning are far more effective in developing practice than ‘top down’ cascading of remotely developed action plans.
- The emphasis of case audits should be to extract and develop learning and practice, allowing front line workers and their managers to discuss cases and glean alternative perspectives. This is intended as a restorative approach in order to acknowledge the intricacies of cases and the efforts of workers to achieve positive outcomes, rather than concentrate on compliance and processes.
- The nuances and variety of cases must be recognised, as opposed to the remoteness of desktop case auditing.
- The effect of planning, decision-making, case progression and challenges on children, young people, carers and their families is better able to be established through face-to-face discussion and supporting frontline staff to reflect.
- A positive ‘learning space’ is essential to allow workers and managers to discuss actions and decisions, and to be challenged in a supportive and non-judgemental environment.

The Quality Management Framework



The auditing process



Learning audits

Introduction

The process of learning audits will be effective from quarter 1 (April to June) of the 2019-20 year as a part of the Quality Management Framework (QMF) process within the Nottinghamshire Children and Families department. The learning audit process will be applied to:

- Children's Social Care
- Family Service
- Youth Justice Service
- Integrated Children's Disability Service

This new approach is intended to align with the strength-based approaches recommended in the re-modelling of children's services. The approach to learning audits aims to be strength based. The core objective of the learning audits is to encourage self-analysis and reflection by the parties directly involved with the case and to give an opportunity for wider discussion and learning with peers and colleagues to determine strength-based perspectives and action focused practice feedback. The learning audit process is not a performance management tool. Our working definition of strength based in this context is as follows:

- Promoting reflective practice
- Identifying any actions necessary to safeguard or protect.
- Identifying and celebrating communication, skills, tools, techniques and approaches which are person or child centred, restorative, co- producing or systemic.
- Highlighting practice which is considered, planned, analytical and rooted in evidence and outcomes.
- Promoting learning from successes and identifying practice themes for development.
- Identifying productive partnership working and effective communication between professionals

The learning audit process seeks to offer both high challenge and high support. Re-enforcing that quality assurance activity is working *with* staff and managers by encouraging them to be reflective about the learning and identifying factors that support positive practice but also recognise ways in which we can respond to emerging issues or continually improve.

Every other quarter, service managers will be asked to propose cases that they consider would offer significant learning through in a learning audit. Service Managers should ensure that the cases are selected for a variety of different reasons to reflect the system as a whole. The other quarters, cases will be determined by the Quality & Improvement Team either due to a departmental need to focus on a specific cohort or subsequent follow-ups from previous audits which have either been graded as 'Outstanding', 'Inadequate' or 'Requires Improvement'.

Process

A learning audit meeting will be convened for each case selected, arranged by the Quality and Improvement Team. Staff are expected to prioritise attendance at the learning audit meeting and to have familiarised themselves with the case notes and documents on MOSAIC beforehand. Invitations to the learning audit meeting will be circulated by the Quality and Improvement Team at least four weeks in advance.

It is expected that this audit covers contemporary practice. The Service Manager should base their judgements on practice that has an impact on the child's or young person's current situation but

will also need to read some historical information to understand the child's journey, their progress and how this relates to the plans for their future.

In cases where services have had long standing involvement, multi stressed characteristics or when there are a wide range of partners with involvement over lengthy periods, we recommend Service Managers establish a time line of key moments or transitions in order to provide a shape upon which to focus the discussions. It would be ideal for the lead professional to create this in advance of the meeting, but it is accepted that work circumstances may prevent this from happening in every case.

Venue

The learning audit meeting will be convened, wherever possible, at the work base of the team managing the child's case.

Audit Roles

It is mandatory that the team manager, case holding worker and the reviewing officer or child protection co-ordinator attend the learning audit meeting. The responsible service manager will also be asked to name those individuals whose attendance are essential to an effective learning discussion of the case, this is encouraged to be as multi-agency as possible to encourage learning from all perspectives.

Auditing Service Manager

A service manager familiar with the same service area will be invited to lead the learning audit meeting. This will not be the service manager responsible for the case holding team, but one familiar with the work of the case holding team (for example, the service manager of the North Assessment Team will be asked to lead an audit from within the South Assessment Team). Prior to the learning audit meeting it is good practice that the service manager speaks to the relevant Team Manager & Social Worker to highlight key areas or clarify any queries with the case.

The service manager will chair the meeting and ensure that conversations are focussed on learning and solutions, rather than straying to general case matters and issues. It is the Service Manager's role to establish the parameters of the learning audit in respect of Strength Based evaluation and reflection. In the event that the case presents with characteristics of 'stuck' practice or features of 'drift', it is appropriate for the Service Manager to continue the strength-based learning audit process, but to additionally recommend a Complex Case Review or MAPS meeting. The service manager will also note actions, identify learning, and ensure that actions and learning are completed within a reasonable and agreed timeframe.

Team Manager

The case holding team manager will discuss the rationale of any decisions and actions, requested, and will support the case holding worker in presenting the case and the issues and outcomes that brought it to the learning audit.

Case Holding Worker(s)

The case holding worker(s) will be asked to present the case, giving their perspective and an outline of the decisions, actions and consequences that have brought the case to become the subject of a learning audit.

The learning audit is not a review of the case holding worker's performance or any individual's performance. It is a reflection on the impact of our outcome focused plans to address the issues faced by the child, young person, parent / carer / family (and the impact provided by all partners).

Social Work Support Officer (SWSO) / Business Support

In order to facilitate the full attention of the Service Manager being on the discussions of the case, the SWSO of the case holding team (or a business support officer, if there is no SWSO in the team) will be invited to make notes throughout the meeting to support the Service Manager in completing the audit tool template. These are not expected to be minutes as such, nor is it expected that the audit tool will be completed during the meeting; the notes are to act as a memory aid for the Service Manager and to capture the main points of the discussion within the learning audit meeting.

The Service Manager is asked to complete the learning audit tool using the notes as the basis for their analysis of the information gained. This is to ensure the tool is populated by the Service Manager's analysis of the information generated by the meeting rather than a record of what was said by whom.

These notes are to be sent to the Quality and Improvement Group with the completed audit tool by the auditing Service Manager (to facilitate comprehensive report writing). Themes arising from the collected and collated tools will inform the overall quarterly learning audit report alongside feedback from children and parent/carers.

The SWSO may also contribute to the discussions of the case where they have been involved in work associated with it.

Practice Consultant/ Unit Leader / Advanced Practitioner / Senior Case Worker

The practice lead will adopt a reflective and independent role within the learning audit meeting, supporting the service manager in keeping the meeting focussed on learning and solutions. The practice lead will also gather service user feedback from the young person and their parents or carers ahead of the learning audit meeting to be incorporated into the learning audit discussions.

Quality and Improvement Group

A representative of the Quality and Improvement Group will attend the learning audit meetings to monitor the effectiveness of the process from an organisational perspective, ensuring that the process remains fit for purpose and to report back any suggested amendments from learning audit attendees.

Responsible Service Manager

An invitation will be sent to the service manager responsible for the case holding team so they are aware of learning audit. The principal objective is for the responsible service manager to confirm that all relevant attendees have been invited or to suggest additional attendees who can contribute to the discussions. The Service Manager will then be required to sign off and agree the completed learning audit tool, in particular any actions or learnings identified.

Independent Reviewing Officer or Child Protection Co-ordinator

Where an independent reviewing officer (IRO) or child protection co-ordinator (CPC) has been involved in the case, they will be invited to discuss underlying rationale to their decisions, and the resulting actions and consequences.

Other Attendees

There may be other internal or external attendees invited to the meeting, such as a previous social worker, team manager or residential workers.

External Partners

If appropriate, representatives from external services such as CAMHS, Police, School, Children's Society should be invited if they have had relevant involvement with the child in order to create the most learning for the child and family. There needs to be reasonable grounds for not inviting professionals who are/have been working with the family (e.g. partners who have had little recent involvement with the child). Group Managers can be invited in instances whereby the learning audit has multiple involved professionals to co-chair alongside the auditing Service Manager.

Audit Tool

An audit tool will be circulated with the audit meeting invitations. This is intended as a guide for the learning audit meeting discussions only, not a prescriptive process document.

The tool invites consideration of a number of areas (including):

- Positive aspects to the case and progress made (toward the outcome focused plan)
- Challenges faced and strength-based approaches undertaken directly or indirectly
- If a similar case were to appear, what would be done differently
- Actions that move the case forwards towards positive case progression

Feedback from Children and Parent / Carers

Prior to the learning audit the child and family are offered the opportunity to provide their feedback by a Practice Lead who has had no previous involvement with the family, this can be done by a face-to-face visit or over the phone. It asks a number of questions:

- What is going well, and what is not so good about your social worker/s?
- What is going well, and what is not so good about meetings?
- Things I am worried about or struggling with.
- How can things be improved?
- If I had one wish, it would be...
- What would you tell other children?
- Would you like to send a Message in a Bottle to Steve Edwards?

Views from children or/and parent or carers should be attempted prior to every learning audit and only if this is judged to be appropriate by the current or last lead case holder(s). This feedback should be captured by the Practice Lead ahead of the learning audit meeting, in order that the views of the service user may feed into the discussions. Service Manager Chairs are asked to include the context of feedback in the learning audit, and to consider whether the content of the feedback is reflected in the views of the participants.

Actions and Learning Decisions

If there are any actions that the meeting discussions determine will enhance the case, these should be noted on the audit tool and fed back to the service manager responsible for the case holding team. Please ensure actions are dated and owned.

It will be incumbent upon the team manager and responsible service manager to ensure that these actions are progressed to the timeframe agreed and recorded in routine supervision notes.

The service manager should also confirm that agreed actions have been completed; the Quality and Improvement Group will also quality assure the overall action plan on submission.

Learning is any insight or theme which has emerged in the learning audit. It represents learnings that are relevant to practice within the organisation, team or service.

The Difference Between Actions and Learning.

Actions are those that arise out of the learning audit which are not included in any current plans of work. Learning is that which can be taken back to the team and/ or provide themes for consideration in workforce development and training throughout NCC Children's Services and partners.

Grading the Audit

Learning audits are not currently subjected to grading in the way that random audits are. The objective of the learning audits is to improve outcomes for children and young people through the celebrating of effective, evidence and strength-based practice, promoting strength-based approaches and providing learning for individuals, teams and service areas.

After the Learning Audit Meeting

Each service manager leading a learning audit will be given a date by which the learning audit tool should be returned to the Quality and Improvement Group, along with the note-takers notes and the worker summary of service user feedback. The SWSO or business support will agree on a deadline to provide the notes of the learning audit meeting to the Service Manager in order to support them in completing the audit tool. When sending the completed Learning Audit Report, it is best practice to copy in the Group Manager and share with the participants invited to the Learning Audit. The learning audit tool, worker summary and any copies of service user feedback should be uploaded onto MOSAIC to the young person's case file under the 'Case Audit' step.

Escalation Process

Within the audit tool there is a section to identify where a child or children are at risk of an immediate safeguarding concern. If the auditing Service Manager deems this to be the case the child/children will need to be escalated to the responsible Service and Group Manager with the rationale for this decision.

Reporting on Learning Audits

The audit tools and service user feedback from each learning audit will be collated by the Quality and Improvement Group at the end of each quarter and discussed with the relevant Service Managers & Group Managers to agree actions and agree where learning is to be fed into existing or new improvement workstreams. Any learning themes or actions which pertain to multi-agency's will also be agreed and disseminated through the appropriate groups, such as Nottinghamshire Children's Safeguarding Partnership, LAC & Care Leavers Partnership, Local Family Justice Board. A Learning Audit report identifying learning themes for all services will then be presented to the divisional leadership team and to subsequent senior leadership team meetings once all actions and learnings have been agreed.

Becoming Strength Based

We recognise that this approach to learning audits provides additional work for Service Manager Chairs. There is additional support in the way of guidance, and Quality & Improvement senior practitioners are each happy to provide verbal support or explanation to assist service manager preparation.

Random sampling audits

Introduction

The core objective of random sampling audits is to ensure that all aspects of practice are reviewed as remaining fit for purpose and that weaknesses are addressed as early as possible. Random sampling audits have been in place within the Children, Families and Cultural Services department since 2012. The previous process involved all managers and was criticised for demanding a significant time allocation and being too focussed on compliance, rather than the outcomes achieved for the child/young person and their family.

Process

This process revision has taken account of the Ofsted inspectors' proposal to a change to the *"quality and impact of audits so that they clearly evaluate the quality of social work practice"*¹.

Each quarter there will be a different Service and a particular service area elected for audit, with ten cases chosen at random for review. These ten cases will be audited as an independent and joint exercise by the Quality & Improvement Group in partnership with:

- Social Work Practice Consultants (Children's Social Care Service)
- Unit Leaders (Family Service)
- Advanced Practitioners (Youth Justice Service)
- Senior Case Workers (Integrated Children's Disability Service)

The paired auditors will individually review the case and then meet to moderate their findings to achieve an overall perspective.

It is a core part of the random sampling audit process that the two auditors jointly hold a discussion with the case holder and team manager, and (where relevant) the Independent Reviewing Officer or Child Protection Co-ordinator. The objective of the discussion is to contextualise the audit findings and allow the individuals directly involved in the case to reflect on case progress and plans. An action plan should be developed through the course of the discussion, which the team manager must ensure is executed to the agreed timescales.

The allocated partner is also required to seek service user feedback from both the child/young person and their parent/carer as a part of the random sampling audit process.

Venue

The two auditors will independently review the allocated case as a desktop exercise, coming together to discuss the case and compare findings at a convenient location. Following this discussion, the two auditors will meet the case holding worker and their manager, preferably together, to discuss the case and their findings. The venue for this should be the work base of the case-holding worker and the manager. It is advisable that the meetings be arranged as soon as practicable following case allocation to allow for mutually convenient dates to be arranged.

¹ Ofsted letter to Colin Pettigrew (1 February 2019): <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/44/891>

Where an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) or Child Protection Co-ordinator (CPC) are involved in the (Children's Social Care Service) case, a discussion should also take place between them and the two auditors.

Audit roles

Team Manager

The team manager is expected to make themselves available to meet with the auditors for the case discussion.

Case Holding Worker

The case holding worker is expected to make themselves available to meet with the auditors for the case discussion.

Practice Consultant/ Unit Leader / Advanced Practitioner / Senior Case Worker

The relevant service partner will arrange to meet with the child/young person and their parent/carer to gather service user feedback against a pre-set template.

The relevant service partner allocated the case is required to conduct an audit of the case and complete the audit tool despatched with the allocation, before discussing their audit findings with the Quality and Improvement Group representative.

Following the discussion, the service partner is expected to attend the jointly-arranged audit discussion with the case holding worker and team manager.

Quality and Improvement Group

The Quality and Improvement Group auditor will arrange a date to discuss the audit findings with the relevant service partner, as well as co-ordinate the dates, times and venues for the meetings with the case holding worker and their manager, and with the IRO or CPC as soon as possible after the audit cases are allocated.

The allocated Quality and Improvement Group auditor will review the case notes and complete the audit tool ahead of discussing the case with the relevant service partner.

Independent Reviewing Officer or Child Protection Co-ordinator

The Independent Reviewing Officer or Child Protection Co-ordinator is expected to make themselves available to meet with the auditors for the case discussion.

Audit tool

The audit tool has been developed to provide a consistent framework of analysis via a set of questions. There is a core consistency between audit tools, but some services require service-specific variations to derive the most value from their audits.

The common elements in the case file audit tool focus on:

- Risk*
- Appropriate involvement of children and young people, families and carers*
- Quality of decision making, assessment and analysis*
- Quality of information sharing and joint working
- Effectiveness of management oversight*
- Consideration of demographic factors
- Clear chronology and case recording
- Appropriate and timely visits to the child/young person*

- Quality of direct work
- Quality of plans*
- Effective and regular reviews*
- Quality of placement
- LAC and care leavers are supported to achieve their full potential
- Young people are prepared for independence

* = these factors lead to a limiting overall judgement (see below).

Action plan

The audit tools all have an action plan at the end, which is designed to allow the auditors to agree steps that would improve case progression and the situation of the child/young person, and which would move the case to the next higher grade (see below).

Grading the audit

Auditors are requested to give an overall grade is allocated, using the OFSTED grades and limiting judgements described:

Overall Grade	Description
Outstanding	This grade indicates the best outcome for the child/ young person, and that the case can be used as a best practice example.
Good	There has been a good outcome for the child/ young person, although there may be some minor actions required on the case.
Requires improvement	The outcome for the child/ young person could have been better and actions are required on the case.
Inadequate	The outcome for the child/ young person should have been better, and there are significant actions required on the case. The overall grade <u>must</u> be inadequate if an inadequate grade has been given to any of the questions highlighted with * above.

After the random sampling audit meeting

The two auditors will agree a joint grade and action plan, along with completing a combined audit tool. The audit tool will be uploaded to the child/young person's case notes on MOSAIC and sent to the Quality and Improvement Group for collation and reporting.

Reporting on random sampling audits

The output from the random sample will be a collated report of all the random sampling audits undertaken that will outline the grades and findings, as well as identifying themes or aspects of practice for commendation or further exploration.

This report will be presented to the Divisional Leadership Team (DLT) group in the quarter following the audits being undertaken.

Themed audits

Themed audits are exactly that, bespoke audits developed around a specific topic that may be commissioned and planned at any time and over any period. The identification of the focus theme will arise from a range of sources across the Children, Families and Cultural Services Department (such as the Remodelling Social Work Practice Board, Remodelling Children's Care programme, Divisional Leadership Teams or the Safeguarding Children Partnership) and will be aligned to already agreed improvement priorities and plans. Themed audits may not be a stand-alone piece of work but are more likely to be part of a much broader improvement programme.

The nature of themed audits will vary according to the topic and the objectives but will commonly entail investigating cases to gain closely defined data or to test a performance or change theory. Wherever possible, themed audits will include obtaining service user feedback to ascertain the perspective of children/young people and their parents/carers, as they are the ones ultimately affected by changes to practice.

The output of themed audits will be a workshop (or a series of workshops) for frontline workers and managers to facilitate reflective discussions and to share findings and service user feedback. Themed audit timescales will be developed around an improvement schedule that feeds into the relevant continuous improvement board.

Learning Visits

Learning visits are developed around bespoke themes and commissioned by the appropriate Service Divisional Leadership Team (DLT) based on identification of need or risk.

Learning visits are based upon the structure of Ofsted focussed visits and demand a significant level of preparation and data analysis. Led by the relevant Service, usually via an allocated Group Manager, learning visits will be closely supported by the Quality and Improvement group. The service lead Group Manager will work with the Quality and Improvement Group to agree the parameters of the visit objectives, the elements that will form the learning visit, the timelines required and the final reporting platform.

The Quality and Improvement Group will develop an outline framework for each element of the learning visit, including independent observers, and agree these with the relevant DLT.

Live practice observations will be undertaken by senior managers (independent of focus service managers) and will include a range of activities specifically tailored to the objective of the learning visit, such as focus groups, interviews, intelligence gathering and service user feedback.

The Quality and Improvement Group will work with the lead Group Manager to collate the independent observations, data and service user feedback and develop a feedback report including an action plan with timelines. This report will be presented at the relevant continuous improvement board

Learning workshops

Learning workshops will be convened for any aspect of the quality management framework where it is considered relevant and productive. The invited audience may be any or all tiers of the workforce of:

- Children's Social Care
- Family Service
- Youth Justice Service
- Integrated Children's Disability Service

The objective of a learning workshop may be:

- To facilitate a discussion around a particular audit theme
- To share outcomes from an audit
- To cascade practice development or service changes

Learning workshops will be organised by the Quality and Improvement Group, who will despatch specific invitations to targeted workshop attendees.

Reflective supervision

Reflective supervision is the regular collaborative reflection between a worker (supervisee) and their manager (supervisor) that builds on the supervisee's use of thoughts, emotions and values in relation to their workload and service.

In addition to regular practice supervision, in line with the Nottinghamshire County Council supervision policy, each frontline worker will be entitled to a regular structured conversation that give the worker an opportunity to reflect on particular cases, their relationship and progress with a service user and positives/negatives of their involvement in the case.

The cases for reflection should be determined by the worker.

The reflective supervisor will operate in a non-judgemental manner to agree changes of approach (where necessary) or agree good practice with the worker.