

# Worcestershire Children First

## Annual Review Audit Procedure

### **Introduction:**

This guidance runs in conjunction with our Audit Procedure for new EHCPs, this guidance specifically focuses on Audits of Annual Reviews. Each quarter a sample of both new EHCPs and Annual Review Audits will be completed.

Audits are one of the most important elements of an effective Quality Assurance Framework. Audits allow us to recognise great practice and to take-action where improvements need to be made. They are a barometer of our service improvement progress.

By undertaking an audit, we can measure the effectiveness of our involvement in the lives of children and their families against our policies and procedures. Importantly, our Audit approach gives us the opportunity to engage with the parent carer (and the child or young person where consent has been given and it is appropriate to do so) to obtain their feedback as part of the audit – this is on how the family have experienced our services.

### **The whole Service learns from audits:**

- Messages from audits are fed back to the individual casework officer and their manager for any necessary actions to be taken and/or recognition of good practice; within the Audits, learning for partners may also be identified and how best to share this can be reflected and agreed by the Audit Moderator
- On a quarterly basis, learning from audits is brought together with an analysis of Service User Feedback, through a quarterly Quality Assurance Report prepared by the Quality Assurance Service
- This learning is disseminated across the whole Service through SEND Management Meetings, Newsletters and End to End Leadership presentations, in addition to feedback to professional teams contributing advice to the need's assessment process

### **Our Approach to Auditing:**

- SEND Team Managers are expected to complete at least one individual Case File Audit per month using the template that has been designed for the purpose. The QA Officer for Education will allocate Audits on the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month.
- The case file audit process should follow the 'looped audit' methodology. A looped audit is conducted by two auditors; this is when two managers are allocated to undertake a full audit independently on the same case.
- Senior Managers (SEND Group Managers) will moderate case file audits and agree the findings/learning and grades. Group Managers will cross reference the Annual Review documents and the Case Record as part of their Audit Moderation to ensure Auditing have captured evidence and have graded practice proportionately and appropriately; this is in addition to their review of the Audit Documents.
- The peer auditor will seek the views of the SEND Case Worker; this is to gain a perspective of the case and the role of the SEND Team within the Annual Review.
- Once the audit is completed, the lead audit, peer audit and the moderation form will be sent to the QA Officer who saves the audits centrally and will also save to the child/young

person's u-drive file, the QA Officer will create a sub-file in the child/young person's record called "EHCP Audit", this is where the Audit Documents will be saved.

- The Audit will consider the previous 6 months' worth of practice – a selection of Annual Reviews EHCPs from the previous 6 months.
- The QA Officer will circulate the completed documents to:
  - Allocated Case Officer and Team Manager
  - The Case Responsible Group Manager
  - Those who undertook the Audit
- The case responsible Senior Officer/Team Manager is responsible for ensuring that the Audit Feedback is discussed with the Case Officer and ensuring that this is recorded in Personal Supervision. They are also responsible for ensuring that the Audit Actions have been completed.
- The Peer Auditor for the case will review the case record 8 weeks after the audit is completed to ensure that all actions have been completed and will record this in the EHCP Audit file on the child/young person's record – this will be fed back to the QA Officer for Education to ensure the loop is closed on the learning. The QA Officer will trigger a reminder of this work being required; they will provide the Peer Auditor with the Review of Audit Actions template to ensure consistency of recorded. The QA Officer will save the final document in the child's sub-file called "EHCP Audit".
- Any immediate actions should be brought to the attention of the responsible Team Manager/Group Manager on the day of the Audit.

**\*\*See Appendix 1 for process flow chart.**

**Annual Review Audit Template:**

When a child or young person has an Education, Health and Care plan (EHC plan) there is an ongoing requirement for the EHC plan to be reviewed by the local authority at least annually. This is referred to as the Annual Review. The Annual Review is more than just a review meeting, it is a process that must be completed on or before the anniversary of when the EHC plan was first issued or the anniversary of the last review. An Annual Review must be undertaken in partnership with the child and their parent or the young person, and must take account of their views, wishes and feelings, including their right to request a Personal Budget.

The Audit is structured into 5 over-arching areas, each will be part of the Audit, with the Auditor giving evidence of the quality of the practice and a grade. The Audit is structured on the following thematic areas:

Child's Needs & Voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The views, interests and aspirations of the child or young person</li> <li>• The child or young person's special educational needs, their health needs and social care needs</li> <li>• Children &amp; young people are included within their annual review and contribute to the outcomes</li> </ul>
Parental Consultation & Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The views and aspirations of the parents and/or carers are obtained and clear</li> <li>• How have they been consulted and engaged for the review</li> <li>• Parent Carers are able to attend, contribute and participate in the Annual Review</li> </ul>

Quality of the Annual Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The overall quality of the Annual Review - how the plan has been shaped and updated</li> <li>• Outcomes within the plan are SMART - updates to the Plan are clear</li> <li>• We evidence impact and progress/outcomes for children &amp; young people</li> <li>• Annual Reviews have happened at the right time and frequency for child</li> </ul>
Partnership Working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How have agencies contributed to the Annual Review</li> <li>• The quality &amp; timeliness of their contributions and how this has been structured into the Plan - Compliance with Statutory Timescales of the provision of Agency Advices</li> <li>• The right agencies have participated/contributed to the Annual Review</li> </ul>
Management Oversight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of Management Oversight of the Annual Review by Senior Case Worker/Team Manager - specifically of their QA of updated documents</li> </ul>

The Auditor will review the record and the Annual Review information, the Audit Quality Standards will be used to inform the view of the Auditor of the quality of practice, this will enable them to give views on the quality of practice, identifying both strengths and areas for improvement. The Auditor will then give an overall grade on the Quality of Practice and where appropriate identify areas of learning and actions.

**Child/Young Person & Family Feedback:**

Feedback will be obtained on the case as part of auditing, the Parent Engagement Advisor, will contact parent carers to seek their feedback within the month of the audit and will record this, they will also seek consent to seek feedback from children and young people and wherever possible obtain this

**Audit Grades:**

Audits are made up of five Sections (as above), each sub-section of the Audit will be given a grade, the audit will then be given an overall grading. The gradings system is based on the Ofsted Grades of Outstanding to Inadequate. The definition of each of these Grades are:

Outstanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong consistent evidence in all elements</li> <li>• Practice is consistently of a high standard and exceptionally child centred</li> </ul>
Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of all elements</li> <li>• Practice is timely and evidences quality</li> </ul>
Requires Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of most areas but some gaps or inconsistencies</li> </ul>
Inadequate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procedures have not been adhered to and there are gaps in relation to practice</li> </ul>

**Quality Standards:**

A good review is supported by all those working with the young person. This 'team' around the child or young person has a good understanding and knowledge of them and recognises the importance

and values the review process. Collectively has a full picture of their strengths, abilities, and challenges, along with an understanding of their hopes and aspirations.

In Worcestershire we want children & young people to experience high quality service, clear and comprehensive EHCPs & Annual Reviews that capture their needs and support their aspirations, we aspire to this using the following Quality Standards:

- The plan clearly records the views, interests and aspirations of the child, young person, their parents, and carers and these are (a) fully represented within the plan and (b) inform the outcome of the plan.
- Plans are clear, concise, understandable, accessible and outcomes are SMART. In addition, they should be aspirational, person centred and identify prior attainment.
- Plans are holistic, all agencies involved with the child, young person, their parents, and carers have contributed to the plan within timescales.
- Plans are focussed on individual special educational needs and not medical diagnoses, highlight strengths and capabilities as well as the need for support or intervention.
- Plans specify the provision required and how education, health and care services will work together to meet the child or young person's needs and support the achievement of the agreed outcomes, including transition planning.

Throughout the Audit we want to evidence (as defined by the Department for Education) that the EHCP:

- Meets the requirements of the Act, Regulations and Code of Practice
- Describes positively what the child or young person can do
- Is clear, concise, understandable, and accessible
- Is co-produced (with the family, children & young people)
- Sets SMART outcomes
- Tells the child or young person's story well and coherently

#### Child/Young Person's Needs & Voice:

This section of the audit relates to how we have approached hearing the child/young person's views and voice within our work. It is essential that within this Audit Section we reflect on how the child/young person's needs and voice have directly impacted on the rest of the EHCP/Annual Review and informed the plan & outcomes. For young people who are aged over the age of 16, can we evidence how the young person's capacity has been assessed and how best they contribute into their Plan.

#### Parental Consultation & Engagement:

This section of the audit relates to parent carers' aspirations but also how parents' views have been captured and represented through the plan, how we have engaged with the family and our communication.

How have we engaged & enabled parent carers to attend, contribute and participate in the Annual Review.

#### Quality of the Annual Review:

This section of the audit relates to the overall quality of the plan, how the information brought together is assessed and analysed to inform the Plan and develop SMART Outcomes.

Compliance with Statutory timescales for Annual Reviews.

The EHCP annual review is a 12-month dynamic process cumulating into the meeting that summarises:

- What has been achieved and what hasn't?

- What has been learnt about what works?
- Understand and identify adulthood destinations of employment, purposeful life, wellbeing and living arrangements
- What do we want to achieve next?
- What do we need to change and do to achieve this?

Partnership Working:

This section of the audit relates to how agencies have worked together, the quality of advice, how these have then informed the plan and SMART Outcomes.

Compliance with Statutory timescales for Agency Advice.

How partners have attended, engaged, and contributed to Annual Reviews – dynamic information sharing that is relevant to the child and their progress. What has been achieved and what are the aspirations – what support and what is needed to achieve this.

Management Oversight:

This section of the audit relates to the quality of the management oversight of the plan, such as, Is there clear management oversight/direction to a SEND Case Work Officer?

- Is there evidence of clear, effective, and timely management oversight and direction on cases, and a clearly recorded rationale for decisions being made? Management Oversight of Annual Reviews?
- Is there evidence of supervision? Quality of supervision, to include clear decision making and rational
- If there has been drift and delay with the implementation of the Annual Review, was this identified and addressed by the Manager? Was this timely and were actions agreed to address this? (Delays in Annual Reviews)

***\*\*Refer to Appendixes 2-5 for Good Practice Examples and Guidance from the Council for Disabled Children***

**Appendix 1 - Process for undertaking EHCP Audits Flowchart:**

Step 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Case selection and allocation - 1st of each month</li> <li>• QA Officer will identify a case sample of children &amp; young people with an Annual Review Completed within the past 6 months from the Annual Review data set</li> </ul>
Step 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each SEND Team &amp; Group Manager will undertake 1 audit per month; using the the audit template - this will follow the Peer/Moderation Process</li> </ul>
Step 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Auditor will give a grade per sub-section of the Audit</li> <li>• The Auditor will give an overall grade, rational and provide key actions</li> </ul>
Step 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Auditor to submit completed audit to QA Officer - Lisa Richards</li> <li>• The audit is to be completed and submitted by the last working day of the month</li> </ul>
Step 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audits will be allocated to a Senior Manager for Moderation who will confirm key learning, actions and grade - moderations are due back 5 working days after initial submission date</li> <li>• Senior Manager to submit final audit back to QA Officer - Lisa Richards</li> </ul>

Step 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Audit Documents (Lead, Peer &amp; Moderation) will be sent to the responsible Team Manager to discuss the learning with the Case Officer and record in supervision</li> <li>• Any required Actions to be completed within 8-Weeks; the Peer Auditor will review after 8 weeks to ensure Actions have been completed</li> </ul>
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**Appendix 2 - Good Practice Examples:**

The Council for Disabled children has developed examples of good practice for EHCPs, and they can be found at:

[Education, Health and Care Plans: Examples of good practice | Council For Disabled Children](#)

**Appendix 3 – Fact Sheet on Annual Reviews:**

[ARfactsheets.general.cleancopy.FINAL\\_0.pdf \(councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk\)](#)

**Appendix 4 – Timetable for Annual Reviews:**

[ARtimetable.cleancopy.final.pdf \(councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk\)](#)

**Appendix 5 – Case Study: How Good Preparation Supports Effective Annual Reviews:**

[AR.Casestudy3updated\\_0.pdf \(councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk\)](#)