

**Report Title:
Quality Assurance
& Practice
Improvement**

Date of meeting:	12th November 2024		
Report to:	Overview & Scrutiny Committee (Children Services & Safeguarding)		
Report of:	Interim Assistant Director (Safeguarding & QA)		
Portfolio:	Cabinet Member – Children’s Social Care		
Wards affected:	All Wards		
Is this a key decision:	No	Included in Forward Plan:	No
Exempt/confidential report:	No		

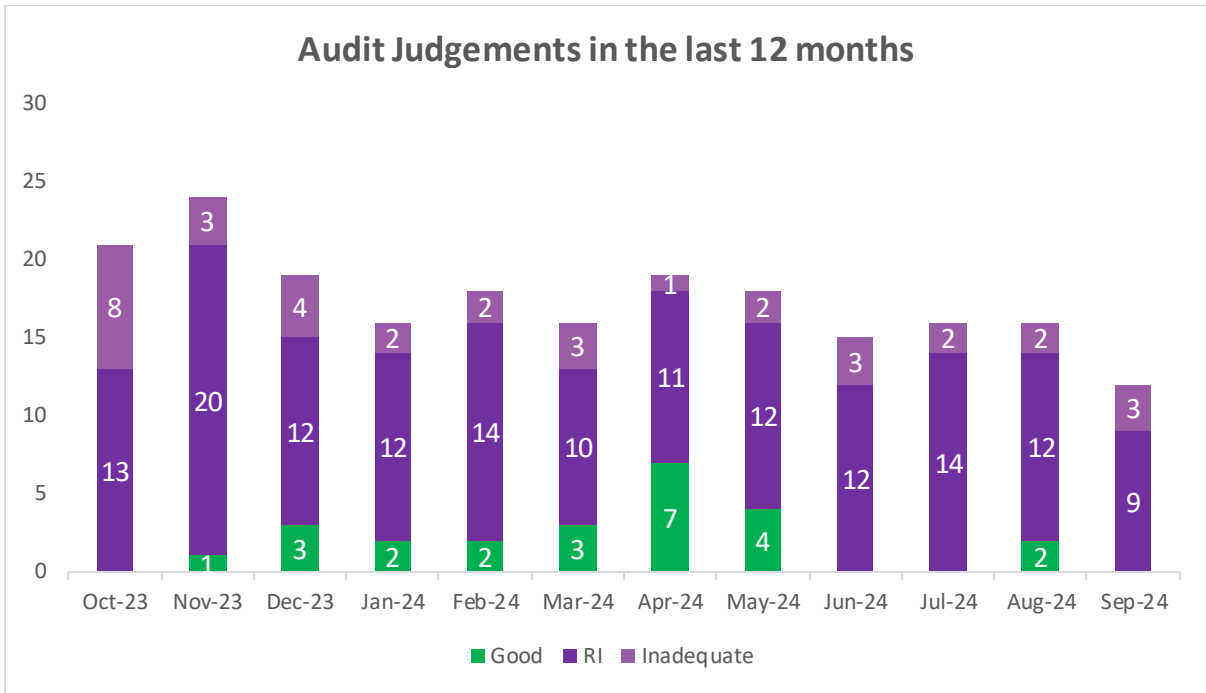
Summary:

This report will provide an overview of Quality Assurance and Practice Improvement activity during August and September 2024 in Sefton Children’s Social Care. In addition to this, it will set out audit performance over the last 12 months offering a view of direction of travel.

1. The Rationale and Evidence for the Recommendations

Key highlights and direction of travel

The chart below summarises activity over the last 12 months. Some good work was identified in August but **most work audited across the service continues to be considered ‘Requires Improvement to Be Good.’**

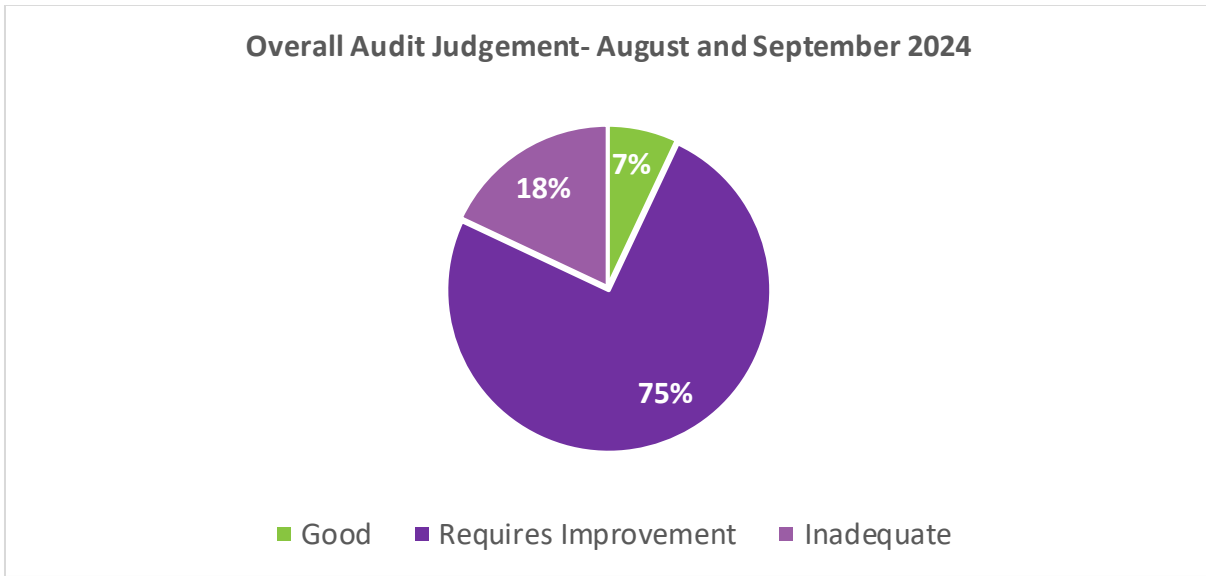


Audit judgements per practice domain

Current Picture- August and September 2024

28 deep dive audits

have been completed across Children’s Social Care in August and September 2024. **11** of these audits were moderated (**39%**) which resulted in **2** audits being downgraded from ‘Good’ to ‘Requires Improvement to be Good’ and 1 audit upgraded from “Requires Improvement to be Good” to “Good.”



August and September 24	Outstanding%	% Good	% RI	% Inadequate
Assessments		18%	61%	22%
Plans and Planning		13%	65%	22%
Relationship based practice and direct work	3%	25%	57%	15%
Management Oversight and Supervision		7%	71%	22%
Impact and Outcomes		0%	81%	19%

Overview of Key Findings

Relationship based practice remains a strength in Sefton and in audits judged 'good' or 'Outstanding'; children/young people/ care experienced young adults are benefitting from consistent and trusting relationships with professionals which has resulted in positive outcomes for them. Some parents/carers also commented during this audit period that their current worker was "reliable", "supportive," "always there;" speaking highly of the service they had received.

However, work remains to improve communication with parents, particularly when professionals end their involvement or workers change. Multiple changes in workers and poor communication hinder trust being built with families to enable meaningful work to be progressed. Also, fathers continue to feedback that they are not consulted in planning for their child and more steps are needed to build relationships with fathers/ other significant males to understand their role in the child's life and utilise strengths or increase support.

For some families, delay has been a feature, and despite plans being in place to support them, the child and family has not had the right support at the right time. Changes in professionals, irregular multi-agency meetings and gaps in multi-agency information sharing at key points contribute to these delays.

In audits judged 'Requires Improvement to be Good,' there are some examples of clear plans in place for children and families to reduce risk and improve outcomes, but some plans would benefit from being more specific to the individual child and include timebound actions to support the child and family and remove barriers to permanence including securing legal permanence when stability has been achieved. More reflection and challenge by the Team Manager in supervision would also support improved outcomes for the child and family and minimise any drift and delay.

In audits judged 'inadequate,' children have experienced significant delays in achieving permanence, or despite the high levels of intervention, risks have not reduced or there is little change to the child/young person's outcomes. Also, children who are privately fostered are not always identified at the earliest opportunity and this means that private fostering assessments are not always completed in a timely way to understand any vulnerabilities for the child/young person.

Practice improvement or learning activity underway

- A bespoke session 'Working Effectively with Fathers' was delivered by Research and Practice to 17 practitioners from across Children's Services. A Practice Improvement Manager and Learning and Development Partner will be rolling out this training across Children's Service from November 2024.
- Sefton Safeguarding Children Partnership training sessions on plans and planning were delivered in July 2024 to 31 partners and on 3 October 2024 to 21 partners. Further sessions are planned.
- In addition, Sefton Practice Month reached over 1000 people across Children's Services and the wider partnership. The focus was on increasing awareness and improving our response when Intra- Familial Child Sexual abuse is a worry. Speakers from Children's Service and partner agencies e.g. RASA, Education – Early Years, Schools and Colleges, Health and Research in Practice facilitated informative learning sessions with good feedback received.
- There is an intensive programme of practice improvement planned for the next 3 months in the Support and Protection teams to review all children subject to long term child protection planning. Improvement actions will be identified, and Practice Improvement Managers will work alongside Team Managers, Social Workers and Child Protection chairs to achieve these without further delay. There will be no audit work completed in Support and Protection teams during this period to allow this work to take priority. All Managers and practitioners have been briefed on this plan.
- There is a new dedicated Social Worker, Team Manager and Child Protection chair responsible for privately fostered children/young people to ensure that there is clear oversight for these children and young people and increased knowledge of private fostering across the workforce and wider partnership. A review of all privately fostered children/young people is currently underway, and a report of findings will be presented to senior managers by the end of November 2024.

2. Financial Implications

Not Applicable

3. Legal Implications

None Directly

4. Corporate Risk Implications

Not Applicable

5 Staffing HR Implications

Not Applicable

Equality Implications:

There are no equality implications.

Impact on Children and Young People:

Quality Assurance and Practice Improvement activity between August – September 2024

Climate Emergency Implications:

The recommendations within this report will have a Negative impact.

There are no climate emergency implications as a direct result of this report.

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?**(A) Internal Consultations**

The Executive Director of Corporate Services and Commercial (FD 7821/24) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD 5921/24) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

Not Applicable

Implementation Date for the Decision :

With immediate effect. The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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Appendices:

The following appendices are attached to this report:

- Children’s Social Care Performance Scorecard

