Safeguarding, Quality & Assurance Learning Bulletin

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LISTENING · LEARNING
determined to make a difference

Case File Audit Programme

Calling all practitioners! Make sure you are not missing out!

We undertake casefile audits to learn about the quality and impact of practice, and we want to ensure that we make the most of the opportunity for both organisational and individual learning. Our process expects managers to undertake the audit with practitioners, as doing this provides an opportunity for a restorative conversation that will give you support and challenge, recognise good practice and identify areas for improvement.

LOOK OUT for the NEW and IMPROVED programme coming in January 2019
Why the change?

The changes to the process for routine case file audit have been made in order to:

- Ensure all managers take part in the process; and
- provide better information for teams and services about the quality and impact of social care services.

What auditors have told us about the current audit programme:

- The audit tool was repetitive, auditors often had technical difficulties using the electronic tool and the tool was sometimes not suitable for the type of work undertaken by the team;

- Barriers to completion of audits included competing demands and short turnaround after the name of an audit is notified in a monthly audit cycle. Whilst the manager can put time in their diary to complete their work, they do not know who the worker/s are until the sample is circulated for that month.

- Issues with grading files and social work practice. This is a combination of being unclear how to apply the RAG scale, some uncertainty about what constitutes 'good', and some reluctance to grade because it is uncomfortable to do.

What's changing:

- A suite of new tools will be launched in January which are tailored to the different types of work undertaken in the Business Unit. Separate audit tools will be used for CiN/CP; looked after children and care leavers; LADO; fostering and MASH. The revised tool reduces the number of responses auditors need to make, is less repetitious and should make completing audits less onerous.

- The audit cycle is to be extended to 6 weeks. In order for routine audits to contribute to learning at all levels of the organisation they need to consistently involve front line practitioners, and they need to be completed by all managers - lengthening the audit cycle will reduce the demand on auditors and provide a longer window to book in time with the worker/s.

- The audit tool also provides links to relevant guidance to assist auditors to judge whether departmental standards have been met. Audits should assess the quality and impact of the whole service provided to the child or young person, i.e allocated social worker and specialist interventions.

- The guidance for applying RAG ratings on the current audit tool does not make it clear if the quality of recording is being assessed, or the quality of practice. In reality there is something of both, and the revised tool attempts to be clearer about which applies. The revised audit form therefore contains links to relevant procedures, and uses the Ofsted grade descriptors as these are widely understood.

Moderation of case file audits

The purpose of moderation is to quality assure the standard of audit practice. In the new model, moderation will primarily be undertaken by senior managers to enable them to oversee and support the quality of their managers' audit practice.

Reporting of case file audits

More detailed team level reports will be provided to Operations Managers, which should be useful for local improvement activity. In addition there will be summary, high level information for SLT and to inform WCC's Ofsted self-evaluation.

On the twelfth day of Case file audits
Wendy said to me
12 triumphant completions
11 nearly there,
10 late submissions
9 lame excuses
8 files for moderating
7 social workers sweating
6 terse reminders
5 days have gone
4 suppressed complaints
3 wrong forms
2 cases closed
Here we go again, what glee