



# Adult and Safer City Scrutiny Panel

11 June 2019

<b>Report title</b>	Update on file audits: 2018-2019	
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Cllr Linda Leach, Cabinet Member for Adults	
<b>Wards affected</b>	All	
<b>Accountable director</b>	David Watts, Director of Adult Services	
<b>Originating service</b>	Adult Social Care	
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<b>Report has been considered by</b>	Adult Management Team	14 May 2019
	SEB	21 May 2019

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## Recommendations for action:

The Scrutiny Panel is recommended to:

1. Note and comment on the progress of file audits carried out in 2018-2019 in adult social care.
2. Provide comment and challenge on areas of strength identified in 2018-2019
3. Provide comment and challenge on plans to improve practice in the following areas:
  - a. Evidence of evaluation, reflection and analytical thinking
  - b. Evidence that the person has been fully involved in the process

## 1.0 Purpose

1.1 Wolverhampton introduced an on-going file audit schedule for adult social care from March 2017. This report presents an overview of the findings of the audits carried out in 2018- 2019, identifying improvements and areas for further development.

## 2.0 Background

2.1 Sector-led improvement was put in place by local authorities and the Local Government Association (LGA) when the previous national performance framework was abolished. This was set out in the LGA's document '*Taking the Lead*', published in February 2011. The approach is based on the following principles:

- Local Authorities are responsible for their own performance
- Local Authorities are accountable locally not nationally
- There is a collective responsibility for the performance of the sector as a whole

2.2 Quality Assurance is crucial to sector led improvement, as it enables local authorities to measure performance and identify areas for improvement. The City of Wolverhampton Council has implemented a Quality Assurance framework for adult social care which sets out all of the activity that relates to quality assurance across the service.

2.3 The purpose of audit is to retrospectively examine practice against service standards, policy and legislation and take remedial action where required.

## 3.0 Audit activity in 2018-2019

3.1 In 2018-2019 there has been continued use of qualitative evidence to drive cultural change and improve practice and performance. As well as over 120 file audits, the following audit activity has also been carried out:

- Two Audit the Auditor audits have checked the quality and consistency of the bi-monthly file audits.
- Dip sampling audits have been carried out as and when required to measure quality or address specific issues as part of the implementation of the 3 Conversations approach. More than 50 dip samples have been carried out for this purpose in 2018-2019.
- Two thematic audits.

3.2 This means that almost 5% of people who receive a service from adult social care in Wolverhampton have had some form of qualitative audit in 2018-2019.

## 4.0 Progress update on file audits in 2018-2019

4.1 File audits form a key part of the LGA's approach to supporting sector led improvement in adult social care, as they provide a mechanism for monitoring quality in frontline practice. A thematic review from the LGA led adult social care peer challenges

undertaken between 2012 and 2014 has identified that file audits are a robust and effective tool to support effective practice (*Adult social care peer challenges: sharing the learning*, LGA, 2015).

- 4.2 File audits in adult social care in Wolverhampton take place bi-monthly. Each auditor is assigned one file each and uses the regional West Midlands file audit tool, developed by the Principal Social Worker network.
- 4.3 Cases are randomly selected by the Insight and Performance team based on certain parameters. All files have had an assessment, conversation record or review in the last three months. A proportion of files are selected because they have had a safeguarding enquiry in the last six months, as well as a Care Act assessment, conversation record or review. More files are selected from older people's services as it is the largest group. The breakdown is as follows:
- 12 cases from Older People
  - 7 from Disabilities
  - 7 from Mental Health

## 5.0 Findings of file audits in 2018-2019

- 5.1 In 2017 changes were made to the file audit tool to enable auditors to make judgments about the standard of the audit in line with CQC ratings. The aim of this was to improve the quality of the audits, as well as provide a way to benchmark performance.
- 5.2 Audit ratings for 2018-2019:

	Q1	Q2		Q3	Q4	
Rating	May 2018	July 2018	September 2018	November 2018	January 2019	March 2019
Outstanding	2	2	0	0	1	1
Good	17	13	16	11	16	13
Requires Improvement	2	5	9	9	4	5
Inadequate	0	0	0	0	3	0
Total	21	20	25	20	24	19
% rated "Good"	90%	75%	64%	55%	71%	74%

- 5.3 There has been some fluctuation in ratings this year, with a slight decline in performance in quarter two and three, however numbers have risen again from January 2019. The rollout of a new approach called 3 Conversations from May 2019 in some teams could account for some of this variation as employees adapted to a new way of working as well as new forms and processes. However, in September and November there was little difference in the quality of 3 Conversation files compared to non-3 Conversation files.

In November work was undertaken with managers to discuss the findings of an audit the auditor audit carried out in July 2018, which may have led to a more critical approach being taken in November's audit in response to the feedback that some auditors were rating files as "good" when a lower rating would be more appropriate.

- 5.4 There has been a significant investment in addressing any areas identified as requiring improvement over the last 12 months. The improvement in performance at the end of the year seems to suggest this is having a positive impact.
- 5.5 The Audit the Auditor work carried out in July 2018 identified that around half of file audits tended to take an overly optimistic approach, which called into question the accuracy of the ratings. These findings were shared and discussed with auditors. A second Audit the Auditor session took place in March 2019 which concluded that there had been significant improvement in the quality of audits as only three were found to be overly optimistic compared to eight in July 2018. This provides a level of confidence that the findings of audits are reliable, and ratings are consistent with what "good" is considered to look like in adult social care.

## **6.0 Areas of strength**

- 6.1 There were a number of areas of practice where adult social care performed well in 2017-2018 which have been sustained in 2018-2019. The areas include:
- Making Safeguarding Personal (MSP)
  - Demonstrating dignity and respect
  - Timeliness and responsiveness
  - Continuity of support
- 6.2 There have been several other areas of practice which have become areas of strength from quarter one this year:
- Effective multiagency working
  - Clear and detailed eligibility determinations
  - Involvement of family members/carers

## **7.0 Areas showing improved performance**

- 7.1 In 2017-2018 there were a number of areas identified as requiring further development. This included evidence that carers assessments had been considered and offered if appropriate, with 54% of audits rated as "good" at the end of 2018. This year there has been a significant improvement with 78% of audits rated "good" in quarter four.
- 7.2 Other areas which have seen an improvement in performance in 2018-2019 are:
- Consideration and use of advocacy
  - Risk assessment and analysis

## **8.0 Areas requiring further development**

- 8.1 There has been an improvement in the use of strengths-based approaches when compared to 2017-2018. However there has been a decline in quarter three and four which suggests that further work is needed to sustain the quality of practice in this area. A dip sampling audit in March 2019 identified that review activity in particular could be more strengths based and teams who were audited have produced action plans to address these findings. Other actions to improve practice in this area includes a workshop designed to support the roll out of 3 Conversations and embed strengths-based thinking as part of Taking Stocks (reviews).
- 8.2 Reflective and analytical thinking is an area that requires further development. The use of “huddles” in teams implementing the 3 conversations approach has been particularly effective in fostering a reflective practice culture. However, practitioners are not always recording their reflective discussions or thinking on people’s files. A revised recording policy was disseminated to teams in January 2019 which contains a section on reflective recording to support practice and improve worker confidence. Another action to address this includes the introduction of a monthly manager support programme from April 2019 which will cover areas identified by audits. The aim is to support frontline managers improve quality and practice in their teams. Reflective recording will be the focus of the session in June 2019.

## **9.0 Financial implications**

- 9.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.  
[AJ/29042019/Y]

## **10.0 Legal implications**

- 10.1 The actions from the audits will ensure that practitioners are confident and compliant when implementing duties under the Care Act 2014. Improving practice and standards in this area also reduces the risk of judicial review.  
[TC/31052019/M]

## **11.0 Equalities implications**

- 11.1 There are no direct equalities implications arising from this report.

## **12.0 Environmental implications**

- 12.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from this report.

## **13.0 Human resources implications**

- 13.1 There are no Human Resource implications arising from this report.  
HR/JF/JR/080

## **14.0 Corporate landlord implications**

14.1 There are no specific Corporate landlord implications arising out of this report.