



MULTI AGENCY CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING AUDIT PACK

PURPOSE OF MULTI AGENCY AUDITING



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1. OVERALL PURPOSE:

The multi agency children's safeguarding audit pack comprises a set of audit tools for auditing case records of work with children and their families in the categories of child protection, children in need, early intervention and children in care. It also includes a practical guide to using the audit tools, tables of gradings to ensure consistency, an example overview report and this document on the overall objectives of multi-agency audit and how it fits into the improvement cycle of Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) work.

The purpose of the audit tools and accompanying guidance is:

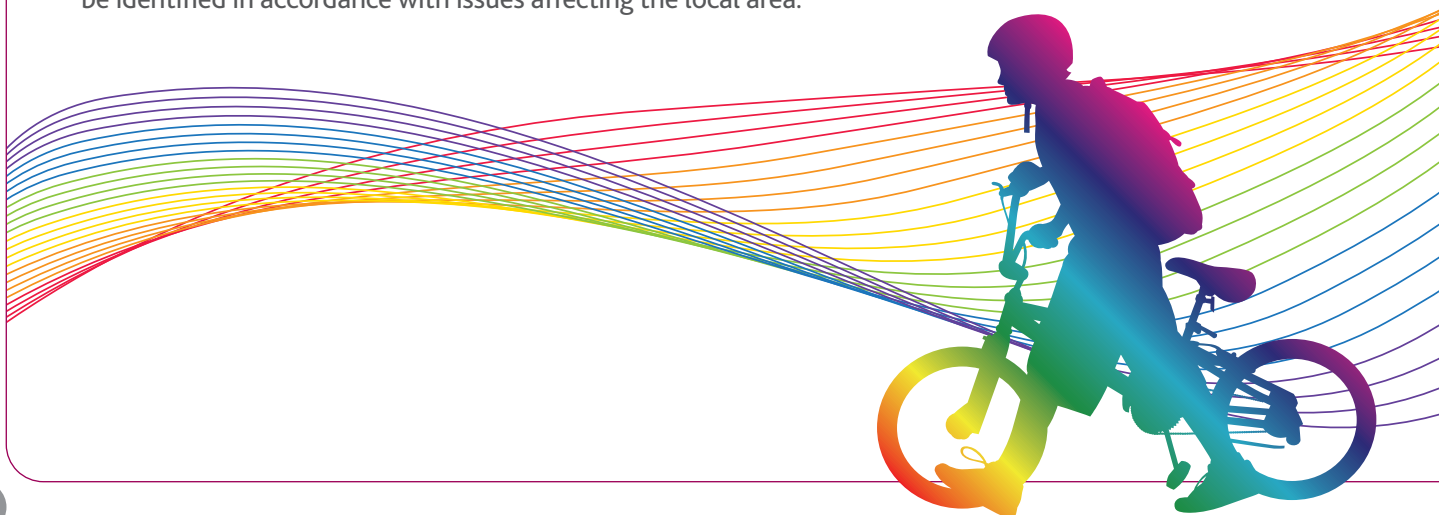
- To provide a stringent and consistent approach to assessing work undertaken on a multi-agency or single agency basis with a child/young person and their family through an audit of case records, particularly in relation to the safeguarding role of both specialist and non-specialist practitioners.
- To enable identification of and learning points from areas which are working well and those which need improvement.
- To enable local areas to prepare for Ofsted's full inspections of safeguarding and looked after children, with its particular focus on outcomes for children.
- To enable outcomes from a set of individual audits to be drawn together into an over view report, which will:
 - Enable the LSCB to carry out its function of monitoring the effectiveness of what is done to protect children and promote their welfare.
 - Promote service improvement through identification of key practice issues so that recommendations can be drawn together and action plans implemented.
 - Feed into policy and practice protocols and learning and development activity.

2. LSCB AND ITS ROLE IN THE IMPROVEMENT CYCLE

Activities like auditing should not be seen as once off events but as part of a continuous cycle of **planning, acting, doing and reviewing** or from the learning perspective, **identifying, capturing, sharing and using** the new or refined knowledge. All elements of LSCB activity, including auditing should inform and be informed by all information sources and elements. The diagram at the end of this document shows how multi agency audit fits with some of the other key components of LSCB activity and information.

The LSCB will be the main commissioner of multi-agency audits, particularly for audits of Child Protection, Child in Need and Early Intervention cases. Multi-agency audits of Children in Care cases may be commissioned through other routes.

LSCBs should establish a regular programme of multi-agency audits. The audit programme should be decided for each year and publicised. Workers across agencies would be aware of forthcoming scrutiny and rise to this challenge through being on their mettle and carrying out work in line with good practice. Audit priorities will be identified in accordance with issues affecting the local area.



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Priorities may be identified through the following routes:

- Serious Case Reviews.
- Performance indicators.
- Drilling down into known areas of concern, including those highlighted through previous audits.
- Feedback from learning and development, management forums, or policy implementation.
- **Or**, general audits within a category of case may be undertaken to establish a baseline assessment of performance.

The role of the LSCB is crucial in determining the attitude of agencies towards improving practice on a multi-agency basis. Effective partnership working through the LSCB, a robust and systematic approach to quality assurance and the modelling of a cycle of continuous learning through constructive challenge will establish a culture which will permeate through to front-line practice. Undertaking multi-agency audits is a resource-intensive activity but will pay dividends in terms of service improvement if conducted in a robust manner. Multi-agency audits should be solution-focused and conducted in a spirit of open learning with the intention of further improving outcomes for children. Action points from audit will be rooted in practice, so any changes arising are more likely to be owned and complied with by practitioners. Using audit as a cycle of improvement and not as a way of allocating blame will also have a beneficial effect on everyday interactions between practitioners from different agencies and will encourage challenge on 'live cases' to take place in an open-minded way.

3. OUTCOMES FOCUS AND PREPARATION FOR INSPECTION

The Ofsted inspections on safeguarding and looked after children will have a clear focus on outcomes, and the impact of agencies in achieving those outcomes. This must therefore be a clear focus within audit activity. When undertaking an audit, the auditor will need to consider the impact on the child of the particular failed process or other issue they have identified. However, this needs to be placed within a context, the failing may not have impacted on a child in the particular case under scrutiny but will undoubtedly do so if the failings continue. Auditing cases in terms of impact will also assist the learning process for all practitioners and enable them to take this on board in their everyday practice. Recommendations will also need to be framed in terms of the improved impact for children and their families.

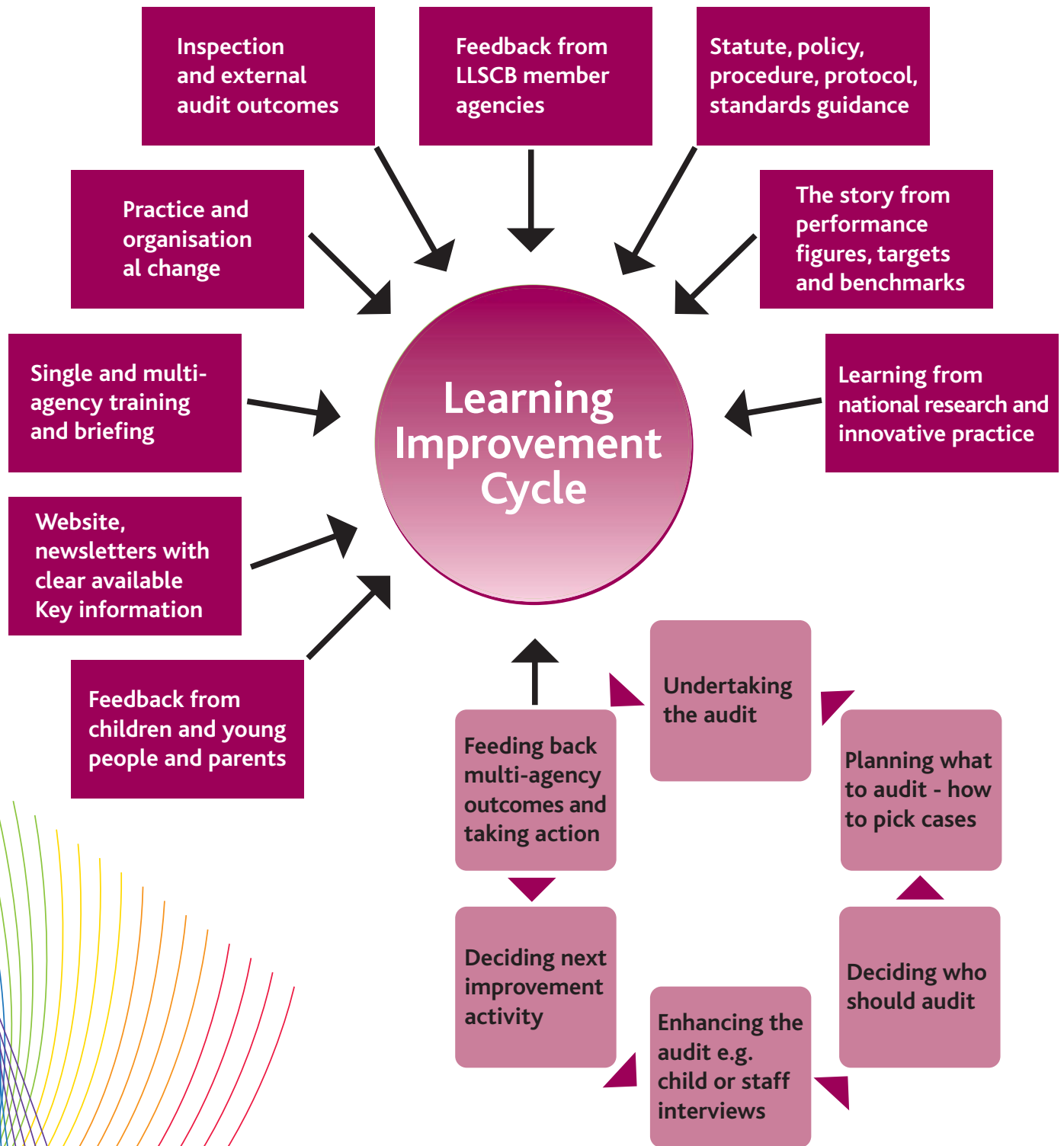
4. THE MULTI-AGENCY AUDIT TOOLS

The audit tools have been designed by drawing on good practice in auditing and also by drawing on the standards within the Ofsted Inspection Framework for Inspections of Safeguarding and Looked After Children. They have been refined further through consultation during the series of London-wide workshops in September/October 09.

The audit tools require judgements to be made about different areas of work within each case. This will enable both a quantitative and qualitative assessment to be made, judgements on each area of work will identify areas of good practice across agencies as well as highlighting areas of concern. Learning from good practice identified through audit and how this can be consistently achieved in order to make a difference for children is at least as important as learning from shortcomings.



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