

Children and Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Children's Services Inspection Preparation



2019 Inspection



- Inspection took place in June 2019 following two years of intensive intervention due to an inadequate rating in 2017.
- Outcome was the services were good in all areas

Judgement	Grade
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Good
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Good
The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers	Good
Overall effectiveness	Good



Improvement Infrastructure



- Continuous improvement board (CSCIB) – chaired by the Director of Children’s Services and attended by Director of Supporting Families, Heads of Services and other LA staff
- Improvement plan developed – monitored via the CSCIB. Ofsted have also had sight and consider it has the right areas of focus.
- Detailed management information report prepared and scrutinised monthly
- Bi-monthly audit cycle to look at the quality of practice. Cases audited and moderated using the Ofsted gradings.
- Regular reports to the Corporate Safeguarding Board, chaired by Deputy CEX
- Monthly performance surgeries using live, child level data- chaired by the Director of Supporting Families.



Inspection Preparation



- Fortnightly planning meetings, chaired by Director of Supporting Families and attended by Heads of Service.
- Annexe A data lists prepared
- Trial run took place in July 2023 to identify any possible gaps and issues. This also involved colleagues from IT and Facilities Management. Highlighted that our preparation was on track. Further work was completed over the summer to ensure that we were ready for when the notification comes.



Children's Services Inspection



- Inspected by Ofsted – last inspection in 2019 – next expected in the next year.
- Currently rated Good – Second highest rating
- This means our next inspection will be a short inspection – 1 week
- New judgment specifically for care leavers
- Focused visit took place in July 2022 – focus on children we care for and the report was very positive.
- Planning ongoing, regular internal and external reviews of progress.



Children's Services Inspection



- Call is made to the DCS on a Monday morning to announce the inspection.
- Data and documents are sent to Ofsted on Tuesday and Wednesday.
- A list of audited cases is sent to Ofsted from which they select up to 12 cases for detailed cases analysis.
- Inspectors arrive on site on the following Monday and will be with us for 1 week.



Key numbers (August 2023)



- Number of allocated children – 2336
- CP Plans – 274
 - Rate per 10,000 42.6 (in line with national and regional)
- Children in our care – 291
 - Rate per 10,000 45.3 (lower than national and regional)
- Children in need – 790



Key Performance Indicators



- Contains 17 key metrics – intended to give a snapshot indication of performance.
- 3 are numbers of children. In the latest report, of the other 14, 3 are RAG rated green (above target), 6 are amber (between minimum and maximum target) with 5 red (below target)
- Of the 5 reds, 4 miss the target by less than 3%. The number of CIN visited in the past 4 weeks is 8% below target. This reflects the summer period when visiting is a little harder but this will be closely monitored to ensure improvement.
- All will be addressed and monitored at the next meeting of CSCIB.



Children's Social Care Highlight Indicators

This report provides summary overview of KPIs linked to child-centred performance management data being used in support of performance improvement across CSC

Performance measure title and reference			Performance from previous financial year	Performance for current period (either snapshot, YTD or rolling year depending on measure) - plus last six monthly performance outturns (where available)									Agreed targets (using corporate minimum/upper model)	Trend line for last 6 months performance	
Ref	Performance Measure	2022/23	Current Performance									Target		Trend	
			Num	Denom	Current	Period	Six Month Trend						Min		Upper
							Mar 23	Apr 23	May 23	Jun 23	Jul 23	Aug 23			
Management Oversight															
1.1	% cases with Management Oversight recorded in past 8 weeks	90%	1,958	2,165	90.4%	Snapshot	89.5%	87.6%	92.9%	90.9%	92.9%	90.4%	90%	95%	
Cohorts															
1.2	Number of CIN (exc. LAC, CP, Care Leavers)	738	n/a	n/a	790	Snapshot	738	757	812	819	777	790			
1.3	Number of children subject to CPP	214	n/a	n/a	274	Snapshot	215	234	224	246	253	274			
1.4	Number of LAC	301	n/a	n/a	291	Snapshot	301	295	297	289	288	291			
Front door / assessment															
2.1	% of contacts completed within 1 day	98.3%	6,015	6,417	93.7%	YTD	97.3%	98.3%	96.5%	87.9%	89.3%	99.1%	90%	95%	
2.10a	% of single assessments completed within 45 working days	89.7%	1,725	1,900	90.8%	YTD	89.3%	93.3%	88.2%	91.2%	93.0%	88.5%	90%	95%	
Plans															
3.1	% of children in need with CIN Plan completed	86.3%	691	790	87.5%	Snapshot	86.3%	86.5%	85.6%	87.1%	88.5%	87.5%	85%	90%	
Visits															
3.3	% of CIN children visited within the past four weeks	84.0%	615	790	77.8%	Snapshot	84.0%	84.5%	82.8%	83.3%	84.0%	77.8%	85%	90%	
4.7.2	% of children on a child protection plan receiving a visit within 10 working days	95.3%	245	274	89.4%	Snapshot	94.9%	89.7%	89.7%	93.1%	89.3%	89.4%	92%	95%	
5.10	% of CLA Single Assessments not yet completed or outside the one year timescale	29.6%	34	291	11.7%	Snapshot	29.6%	17.8%	9.3%	8.8%	11.3%	11.7%	10%	5%	
5.11	% of CLA with visits in last 6 weeks	92.0%	259	291	89.0%	Snapshot	92.0%	82.9%	82.7%	88.1%	88.4%	89.0%	90%	95%	
Reviews															
3.2	% of children with CIN Plan with reviews within last 3 months	87.8%	601	691	87.0%	Snapshot	87.8%	86.7%	88.3%	86.1%	90.4%	87.0%	85%	90%	
4.8	% of CP reviews carried out within statutory timescales	96.6%	168	176	95.5%	Snapshot	96.6%	96.5%	95.9%	97.2%	96.8%	95.5%	96.5%	98.5%	
5.18	CLA cases which were reviewed within required timescales	100.0%	328	328	100.0%	Rolling Year	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		95%	100%	
Care Leavers															
6.1	% care leavers "in touch" (17,18,19,20,21 yr. olds with activity updated within last year)	98.1%	256	268	95.5%	Snapshot	98.1%	95.5%	92.9%	95.6%	95.9%	95.5%	90%	95%	
6.2	% care leavers EET	77.3%	185	268	69.0%	Snapshot	77.3%	72.1%	70.0%	69.7%	70.8%	69.0%	65%	75%	
6.3	% care leavers in suitable accommodation	94.4%	243	268	90.7%	Snapshot	94.4%	92.1%	89.9%	91.5%	92.3%	90.7%	85%	90%	

What our data tells us



- The number of families requiring support is broadly stable
- Contacts to our front door are responded to in a timely manner.
- Cases are signposted to Early Help when appropriate
- When required, child protection conferences are convened quickly and reviewed regularly
- Most of the children in our care have had review annual health and dental checks
- We are in touch with most of care leavers and most are in Education, Employment or Training
- Most children who go missing are offered a return home interview within 3 days of their return.



Areas of focus



- Initial Health Assessments for children we care for – All children who come into our care should have a health assessment within 20 working days. Due to capacity issues within the health system, this can be challenging.
- Care and Pre-Proceedings timescales are longer than we would like. Some of this is out of our control due to court delays.
- Placement stability – we are working hard to prevent placements from being disrupted and that we minimise the amount of times that children in our care have to move. Recent data suggests significant progress here and we are optimistic of further improvement
- Re-referrals was an area of concern but the concerted focus on this area has brought this figure down to below regional and national comparators



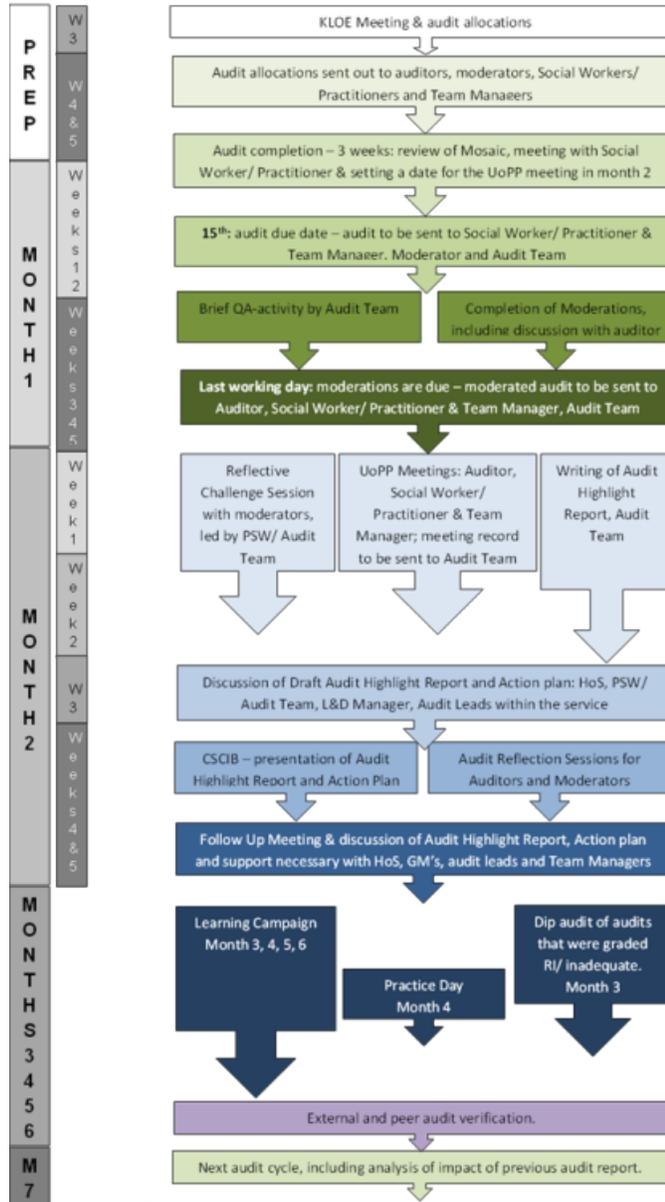
Internal and external assurance



- We have a well developed and robust process of internal quality assurance using a variety of methods including audits, dip samples and thematic reviews.
- These are carefully moderated to ensure consistency and that auditors are correctly assessing the quality of practice.
- We have commissioned external reviews by highly qualified and experienced practitioners to provide further assurance as the quality of our practice.



Internal and external assurance



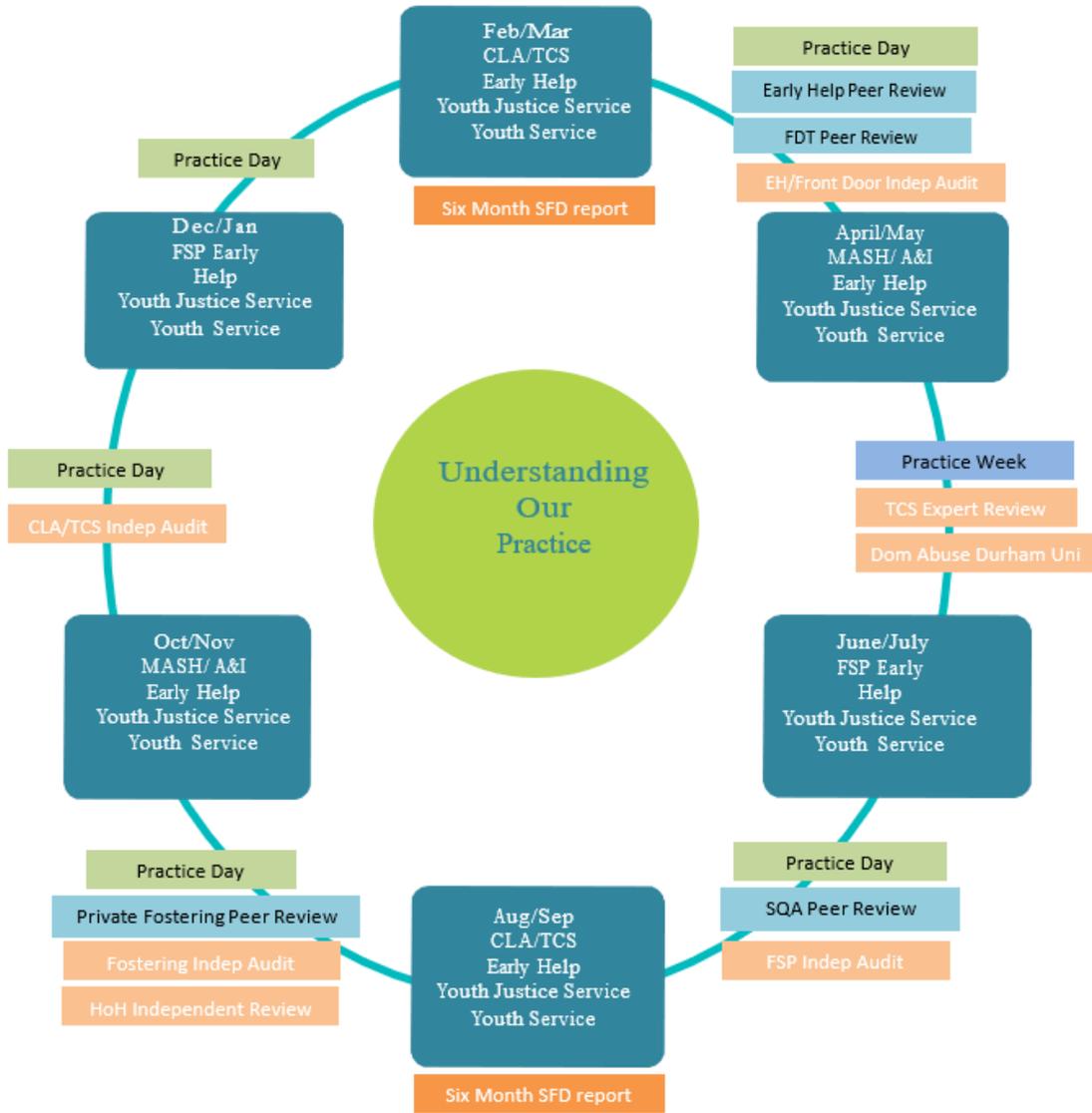
Any safeguarding concerns to be immediately escalated to the TM, GM & HoS; Audit Team to be cooled in

Disagreements with the audit/moderation to be raised with the PSW/ Audit Team

- We have a well developed and robust process of internal quality assurance using a variety of methods including audits, dip samples and thematic reviews.
- These are carefully moderated to ensure consistency and that themes and learning are understood at every level to ensure practice development with a focus on assessing the quality of practice.
- We have commissioned external reviews by highly qualified and experienced practitioners to provide further assurance the quality of our practice.



The Audit Cycle 2023



- The Quality Assurance Framework utilises a blended approach of Generic Auditing, Dip Sampling and Thematic audits to Understand Our Practice.
- Robust system to ensure learning is shared and actions are progressed.
- Our practice model "Better Together" is embedded within the QA framework and the 6 C's feature throughout. Most significantly 'Collaboration' through undertaking audits with practitioners and managers and 'Checkback' where a sample of audits is re-audited and dipped to understand the impact of the audit undertaken.
- To ensure we apply the same principles of QA to our own systems we invite a selection of external auditors and Peer Reviewers to verify our QA framework on a 6 monthly cycle



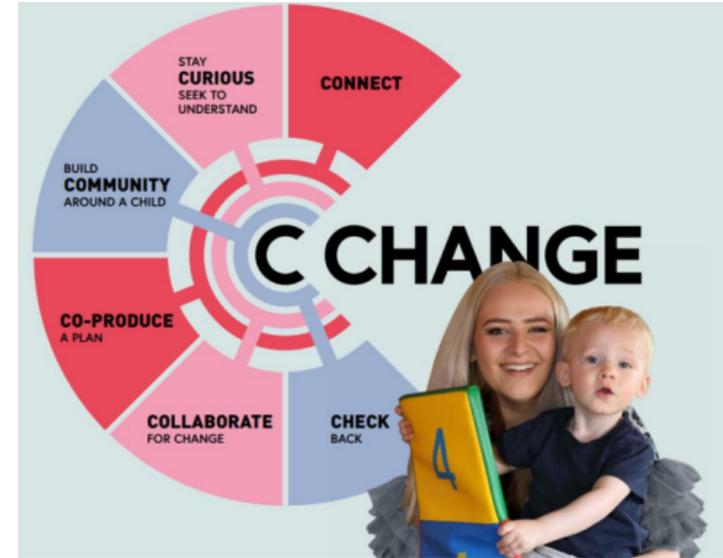


Robust training and moderation processes have been implemented since the introduction of the revised Audit framework to embed the revised audit tools. Over the last three cycles, variability of audits with moderations changing the original auditors grading in over 30% of audits has been an issue. As a result a programme of audit training and reflection exercises have been initiated both for auditors and moderators which is beginning to yield results.

The introduction of Understanding our Practice Progression meetings In Early Help and CSC further increases opportunities for collaborative interactions to maximise the impact of audit through strength based reflective discussions based on appreciative enquiry. With the introduction UoPP meetings recommendations from audits early signs appear to indicate progression within the 6-week review timescale.

Audit cycles comprise of a generic audit completed by TM's with a thematic collaborative Audit by AP's

- 118 Team Managers collaborative case audits
- 64 Advance Practitioners collaborative thematic case audits
- 717 Dip Sampling of specific key areas



Internal Assurance



Key Findings

- Risk is consistently identified and responded to in a timely manner. Referrers consistently receive feedback and understand the outcome of referrals managed by the MASH
- Partnership working is good and continues to develop etc
- Childrens voices are consistently seen on files.
Families consistently report that they feel well supported and interventions help them to understand what risks are and how to deal with them.

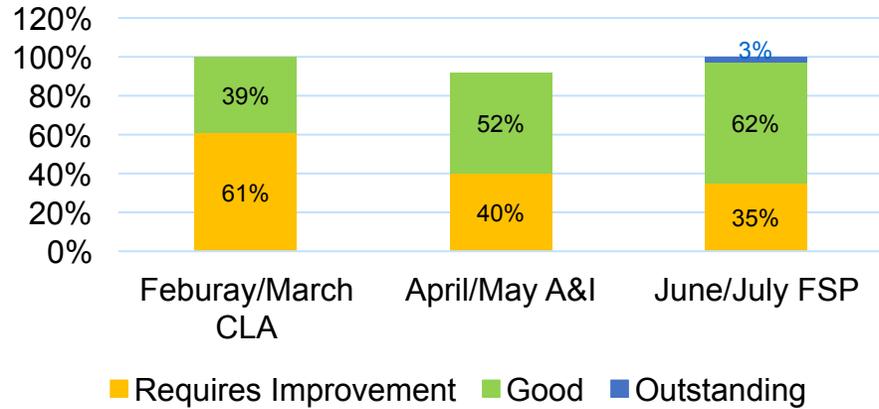


- The Relational approach is well embedded; growing evidence of use of direct work with children. Clear focus on domestic abuse, neglect and exploitation as priority areas.
- All avenues of familial and community placements are explored effectively before children are placed in Care. Social Workers consistently spend time with children in care to understand their needs and respond to them appropriately.
- Children are placed with carers who reflect or understand their identity, cultural and religious needs; Practitioners are being supported to further strengthen life story work

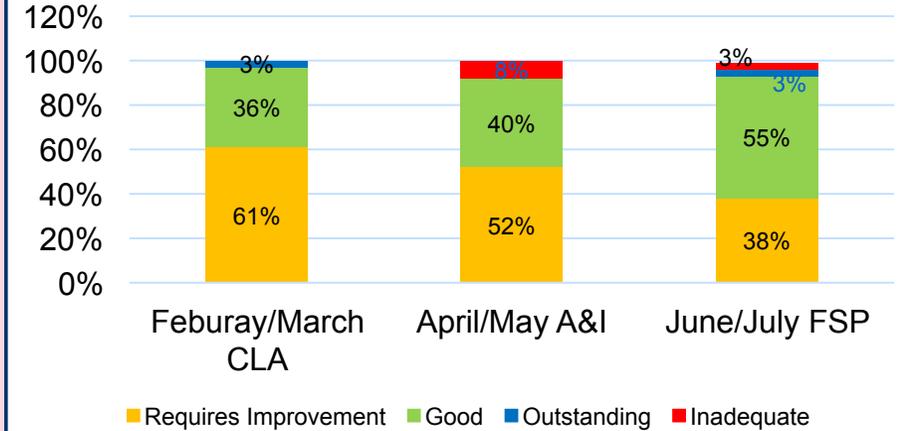


Impact Audits- an improving picture

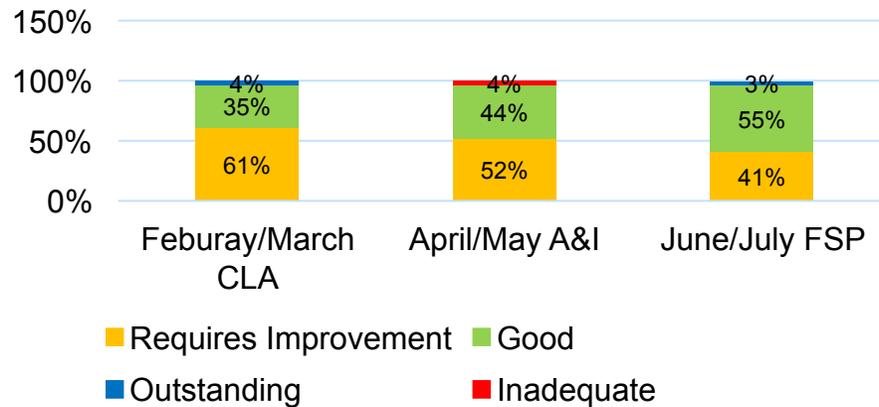
Increase quality of intervention and direct work (connect) over last 3 audit cycles



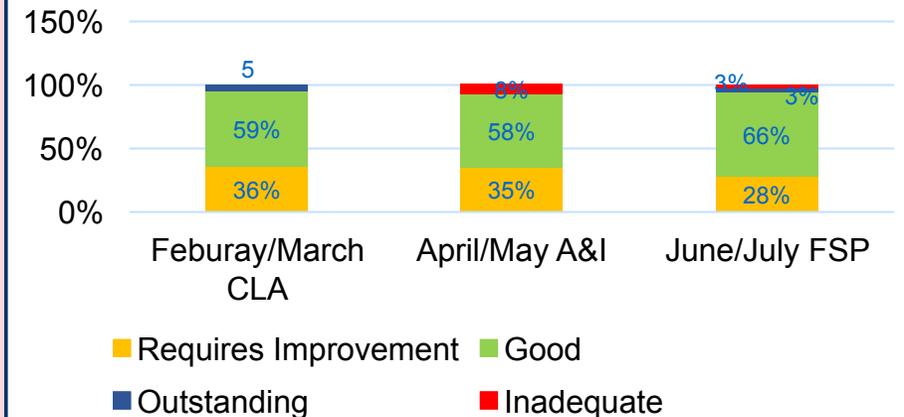
Increase quality of plans (Co-production) over last 3 audit cycles



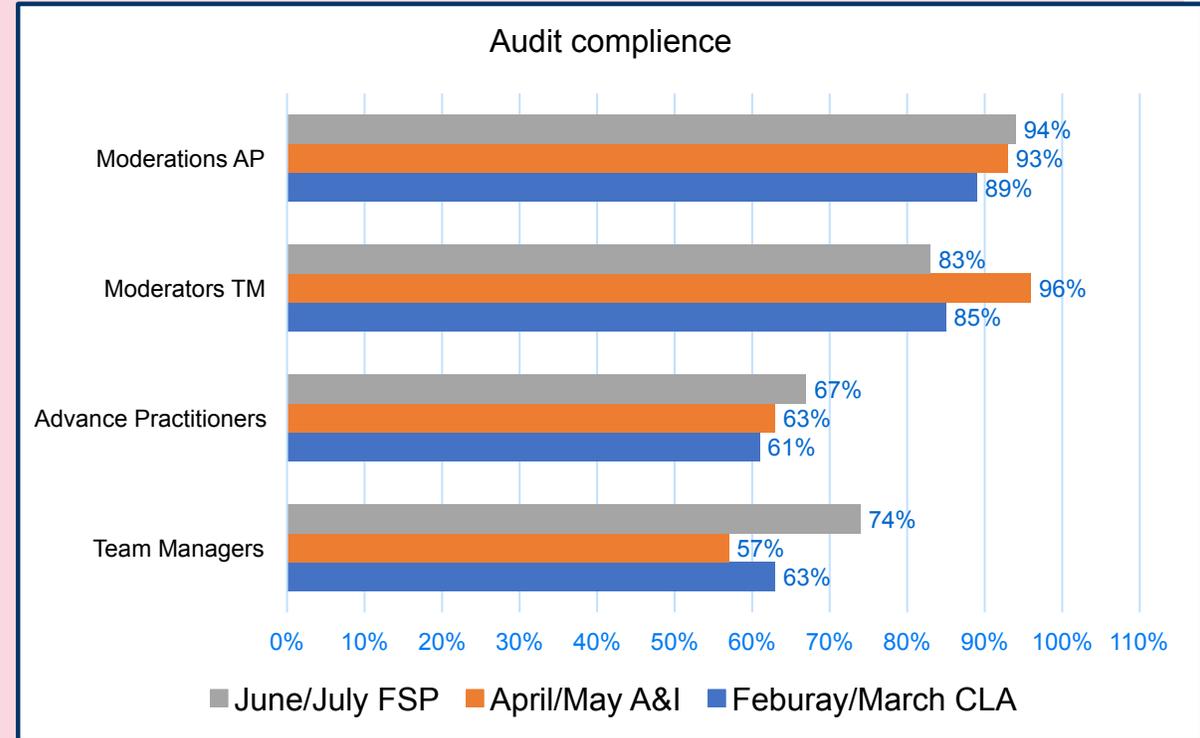
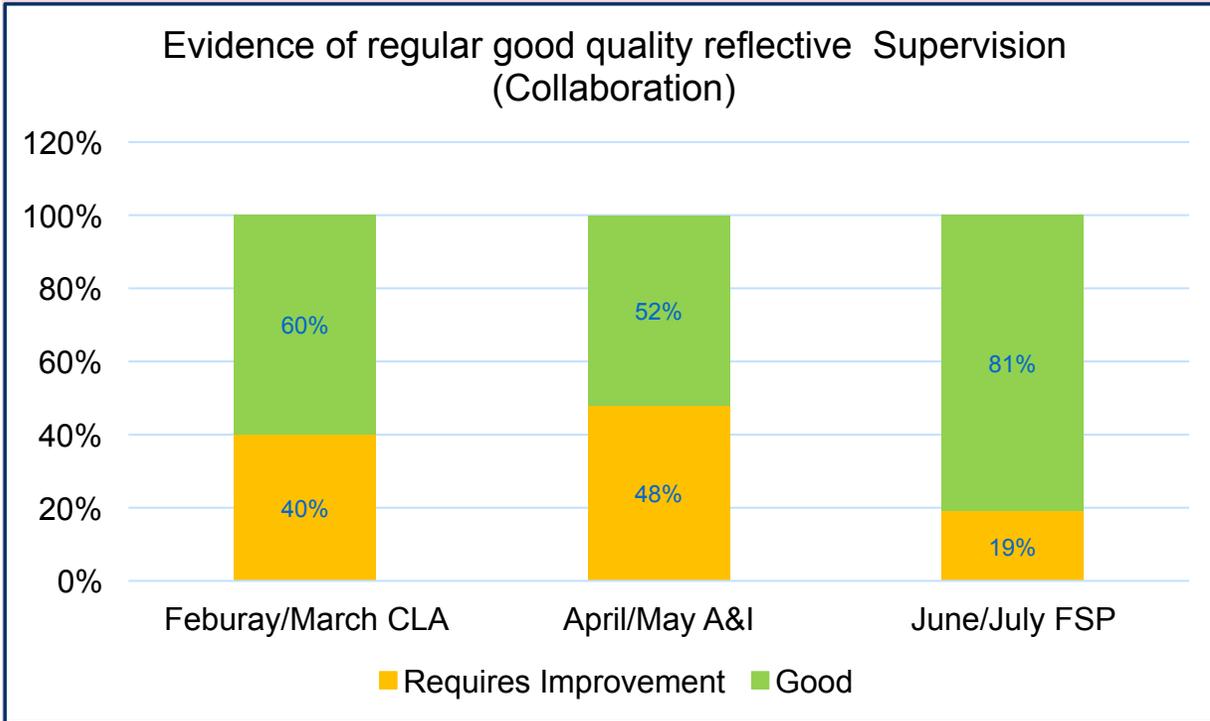
Increase quality of recording (curious) over last 3 audit cycles



Seeking to understand risk and thresholds (Curiosity) over last 3 audit cycles



Impact Audits- an improving picture



External Assurance



- Ofsted Focused visit – July 2022
- Ofsted Annual Engagement Meeting – January 2023
- Early Help Peer Review - March 2023
- Help and Protection Review – March 2023



External Assurance



- Since the last time this was presented at Scrutiny, we have had two further external reviews.
- Government Advisor for Care Leavers , Mark Riddell MBE
- Further review focusing on audit and quality assurance.



External Assurance – Care leavers



- Conducted by Government Advisor for Care Leavers , Mark Riddell MBE
- Was a very positive visit, highlighting a number of strengths. He commented that he “was very impressed by the leadership and management approach that was ambitious, aspirational and I got a real sense of passion and commitment to have a better offer for care leavers”.
- Met with senior leaders as well as groups of staff and care leavers themselves who offered vital feedback.
- Provided a number of helpful suggestions for how we can build on our offer.



External Assurance – Audit & QA



- Was a broadly positive visit. The external auditor commented that “The local authority has made significant improvements at pace in the last 18 months now has a solid structure in place and a strong learning culture with which to build effective quality assurance.”
- The practice model “Better Together” is at the heart of this which has been welcomed by frontline staff.
- The service has a strong learning culture and an emphasis on “closing the loop” to drive improvement, promote reflection and learning
- Highlighted the new Understanding our Practice Progression (UoPP) meetings as very positive way forward.
- The review also highlighted some areas of focus to continue to build on our progress.



Key strengths



- Our staff group remain strong, committed and there are many examples of high-quality work.
- Caseloads are generally manageable in most areas which ensures the best opportunity to affect meaningful change with families
- Senior leadership team is stable and functioning well.
- The quality of our relationship-based practice
- The support for the children that we care for
- A strong learning and development offer including for newly qualified staff and those undertaking their ASYE.
- The approach we take to keep children within their family networks is effective.



Risks and challenges



- We continue to see increased staff turnover in some areas (particularly the front door) of the service. This is in line with other LA's but this continues to cause some pressure
- Consistency of practice remains a focus. There are examples of excellent high quality practice that needs to be replicated across the board.
- As we move Early Help onto Mosaic (IT system) and the integrate our front door to create our Multi-Agency Support Team (MAST)
- Exploitation and serious youth violence remains a live issue, in line with many other LA's.
- In line with the new Ofsted judgement in respect to Care Leavers, there will be an increased focus on our support for our care experienced young people. Support is now provided until a younger person turns 25 increasing the numbers who need to be supported.



Divisional Priorities



- Domestic Abuse
- Neglect
- Harm outside the home
- Embedding and championing the practice framework

