

**Supplement to the agenda for**

# **Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee**

**Tuesday 17 September 2024**

**2.00 pm**

**Conference Room 1 - Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane  
Offices, Hereford, HR4 0LE**

**7. QUALITY ASSURANCE**

**Pages**

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QA Audit Report  
Qtr. 1 April-June 2024

**1. Summary audit grades – April-June 24**

This report sets out the outcome of the audit programme for qtr. 1 between April and June 24/25

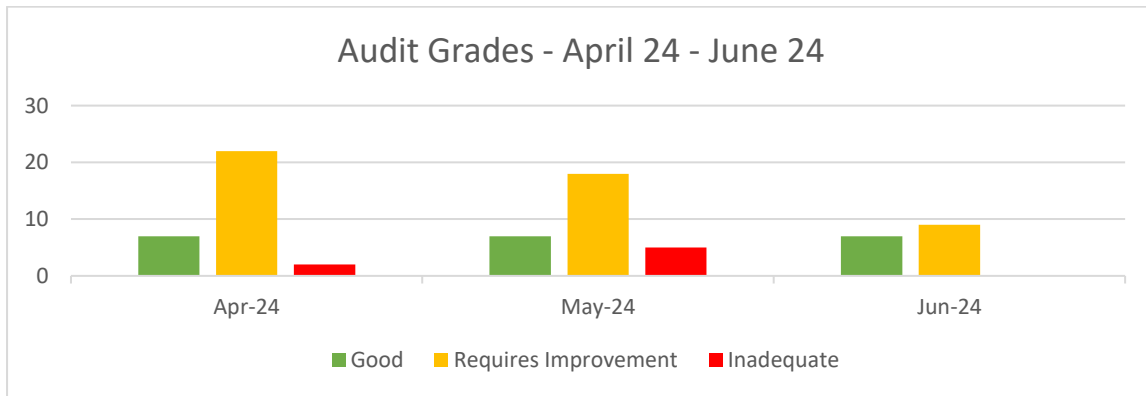
Grades / Months	April 2024	May 2024	June 2024
Outstanding	0	0	0
Good	7	7	7
Requires Improvement	22	18	9
Inadequate	2	5	0
Moderated	7	4	5
<b>Total Audits</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>16</b>

*(N.B. – the figures within this report may differ slightly from the previous report for the July Improvement Board, due to the*

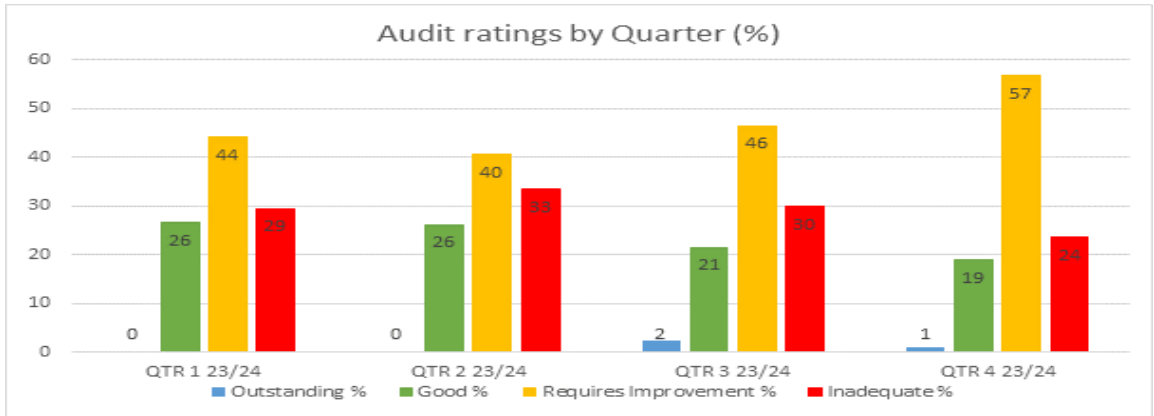
*inclusion of late audit returns).*

**Overall Outcomes Qtr1: Within the quarter 77 case file audit have been undertaken**

- 7 out of 77 audits (9%) were graded as Inadequate
- 49 out of 77 (64%) were Requires Improvement
- 21 out of 77 (27%) were Good.



For evidence of progress the chart below sets out overall case, file audit grades 23/24.



During 23/24 we can see a reduction in “inadequate” grading by Qtr. 4 to 24 (24%) a reduction that has been reflected in Qtr. 1 24/25, where we have seen a much smaller number of cases graded as inadequate. At the end of Qtr. 1, those cases graded Inadequate is at 9%, which is our base line for 24/25.

As a direct reflection of progress, we can also see a rise during 23/24 from 44% up to 57% for those cases graded as Requires Improvement. This is again reflected in Qtr. 1, where we see 64% graded as Requires Improvement.

During 23/24 our cases graded as “Good” stayed within the 26% in year until Qtr. 4 when only 19% were graded as “good”, though we can see this has improved back to 27% in Qtr. 1 of this year and therefore is more reflective of a specific month in a specific targeted service area. Better analysis in 24/25 will enable us to understand and report on this throughout the year.

Whilst the goal is to ensure we remove “inadequate”, reduce “Requires Improvement” and increase “Good”, this is a journey and these outcomes do reflect positive progress overall.

**Moderation**

Each audit graded has a “descriptor” to guide the auditor and give us a level of consistency in what good looks like, and outcome grading. Moderation during 23/24 was dip sampling of audit grade outcomes.

During 23/24 and Qtr.1 24/25 audit grades post moderation largely remain consistent with original grades. Over the 3 months, 13 audits have been moderated and 11 have retained the same overall grade (85%).

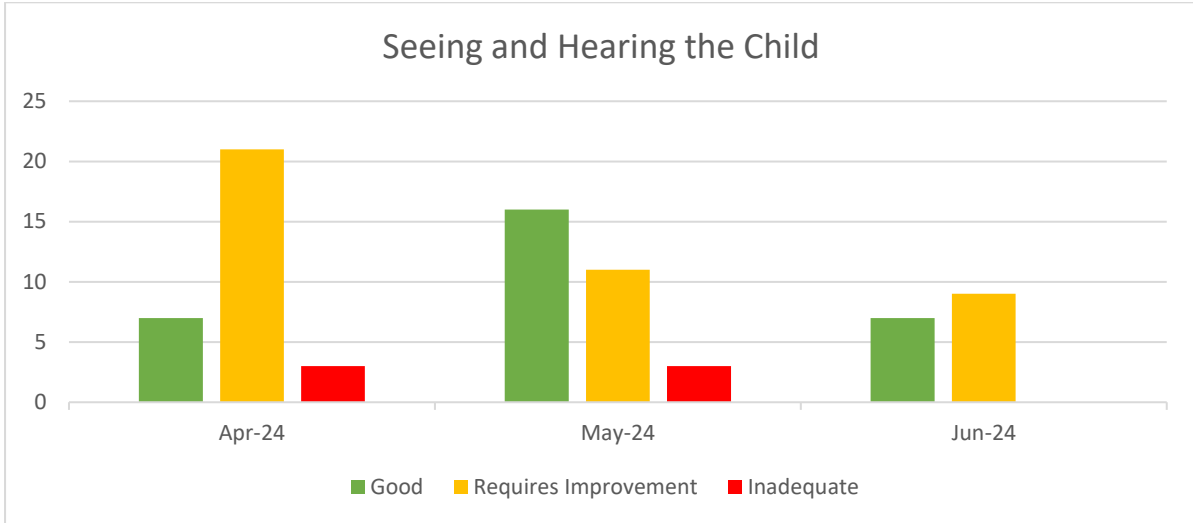
For 24/25 we have updated the grade descriptors in some detail and we have introduced “looped” audit. This means each case will be audited by two separate managers independently, and where their grades differ, there will be a moderation meeting to discuss and reflect why these have differed. This gives us direct learning to each auditor.

The following section outline the outcomes of case file audit by domains assessed in each audit. There are seven domains in all:

- Seeing and Hearing the Child
- Quality of Assessment
- Quality of Plans

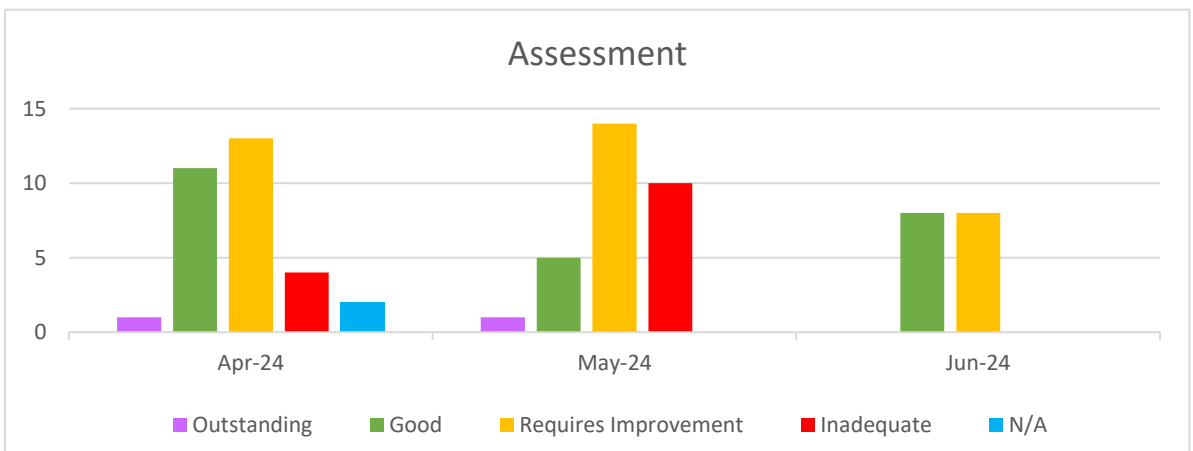
- Decision making and management oversight
- Meeting and Reviews
- Supervision
- Considerations and impact of diversity

## 2. Audit data by domain



Seeing and Hearing the Child	April 2024	May 2024	June 2024	Total
Outstanding	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0
Good	7 (22.6%)	16 (53.3%)	7 (44%)	30 (39%)
Requires Improvement	21 (67.7%)	11 (36.7%)	9 (56%)	41 (53%)
Inadequate	3 (9.7%)	3 (10%)	0 (0%)	6 (8%)

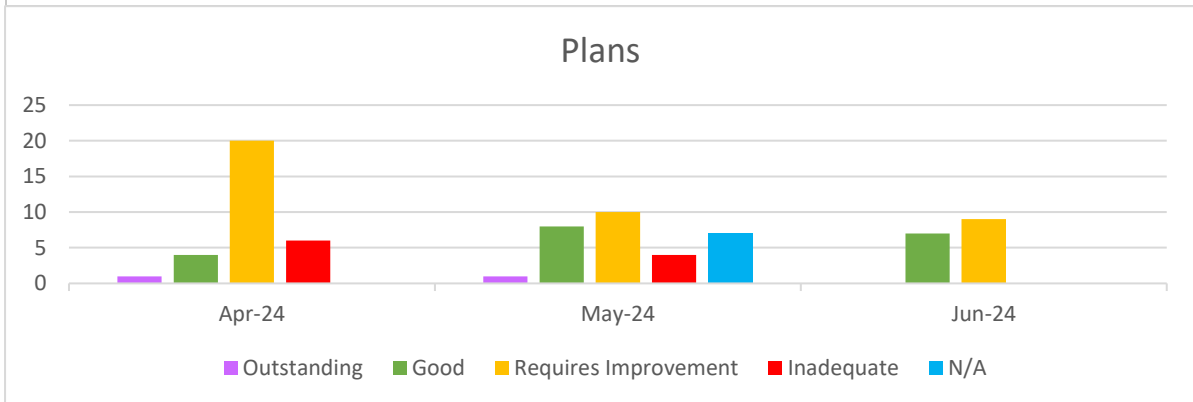
**Outcome: The majority of cases graded RI with inconsistent trend month by month.**



Quality of Assessments	April 2024	May 2024	June 2024	Total
Outstanding	1 (3.2%)	1 (3.4%)	0 (0%)	2 (2%)
Good	11 (35.5%)	5 (17.2%)	8 (50%)	24 (35%)

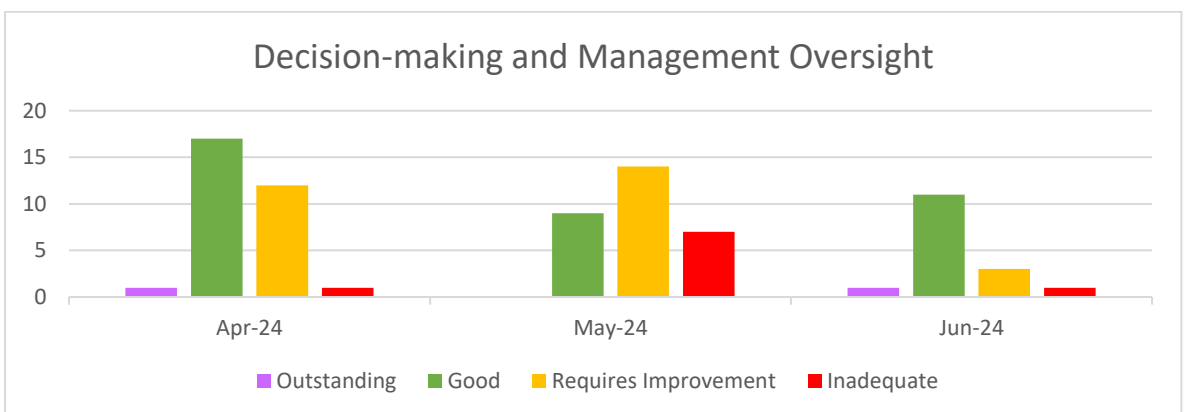
Requires Improvement	13 (41.9%)	14 (48.3%)	8 (50%)	35 (45%)
Inadequate	4 (12.9%)	9 (31%)	0 (0%)	13 (17%)
N/A (Not Graded)	3	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	

**Outcome: RI is the most common grade but we do see a positive trend month to month. A concerning number of Assessment grades as inadequate, though this does reduce to 0 in June.**



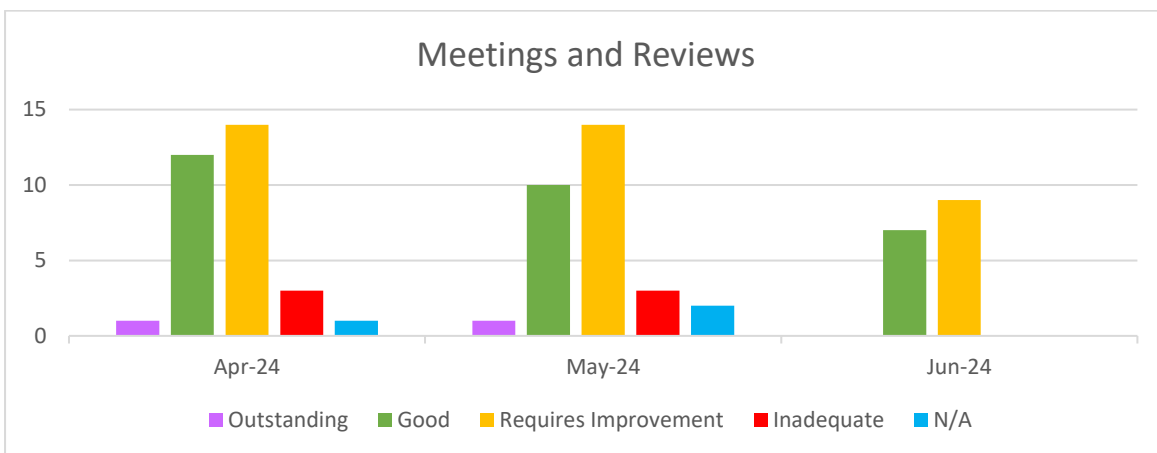
Quality of plans	April 2024	May 2024	June 2024	Total
Outstanding	1 (3.2%)	1 (3.4%)	0 (0%)	2 (2.5%)
Good	4 (12.9%)	8 (24.1%)	7 (43.8%)	19 (24.6%)
Requires Improvement	20 (64.5%)	10 (34.5%)	9 (56.2%)	39 (50.6%)
Inadequate	6 (19.4%)	4 (13.8%)	0 (0%)	10 (13%)
N/A (Not Graded)	0 (0%)	7 (24.1%)	0 (0%)	7 (9%)

**Outcome: RI is the most common grade but we can see a very positive trend month on month for those graded “Good” and an introduction of “Outstanding”, so the quality of plans is a strength in Qtr. 1.**



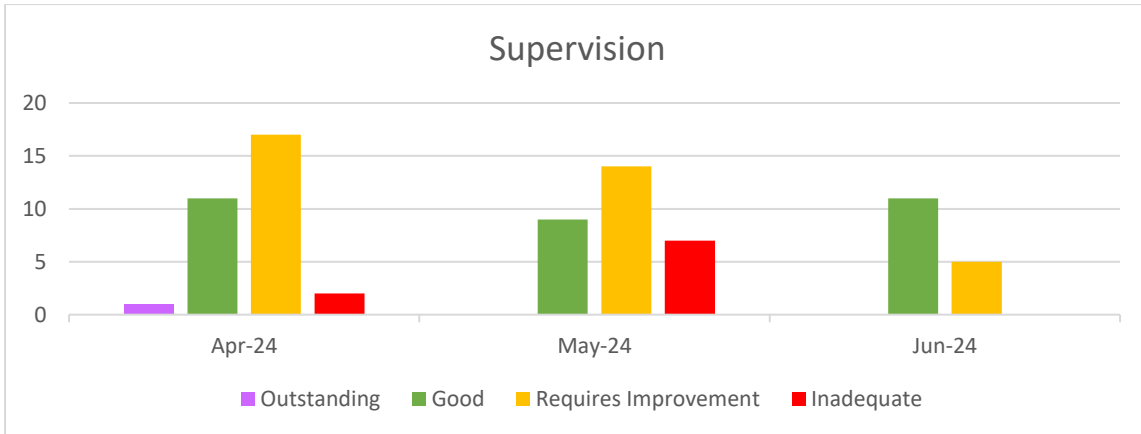
Decision making and Management Oversight	April 2024	May 2024	June 2024	Total
Outstanding	1 (3.2%)	0 (%)	1 (6.2%)	2 (2.5%)
Good	17 (54.8%)	9 (30%)	11 (68.8%)	37 (48%)
Requires Improvement	12 (38.7%)	14 (47%)	3 (18.8%)	29 (37.6%)
Inadequate	1 (3.2%)	7 (23%)	1 (6.2%)	9 (11%)

**Outcome: Good is the most common grade in this domain and though a small dip in month 2, is positively seen in a higher number of cases. May saw a concerning number of those graded Inadequate and a high number of RI, as service areas were targeted month by month, we can track to a specific service area.**



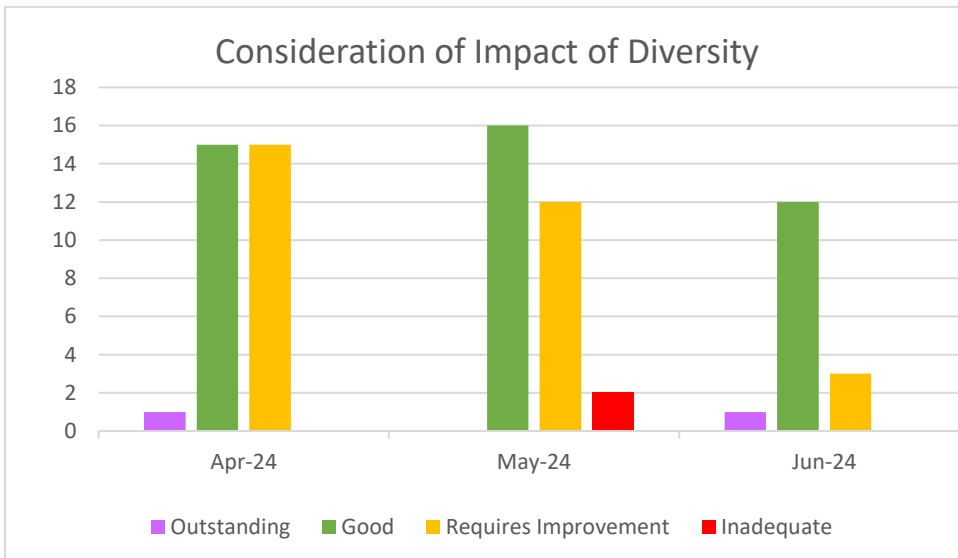
Meetings and Reviews	April 2024	May 2024	June 2024	Total
Outstanding	1 (3.2%)	1 (3.3%)	0 (0%)	2 (2.5%)
Good	12 (38.7%)	10 (33.3%)	7 (43.8%)	29 (37.6%)
Requires Improvement	14 (45.1%)	14 (46.7%)	9 (56.2%)	37 (48%)
Inadequate	3 (9.7%)	3 (10%)	0 (0%)	6 (8%)
N/A (Not Graded)	1 (3.2%)	2 (6.7%)	0 (0%)	3 (3.8%)

**Outcome: A very positive trend month on month seen in cases graded Good for this domain with a consistent level of Good grades across the the three months.**



Supervision	April 2024	May 2024	June 2024	Total
Outstanding	1 (3.2%)	0 (%)	0 (%)	1 (1.3%)
Good	11 (35.4%)	9 (30%)	11 (69%)	31 (40.26)
Requires Improvement	17 (54.8%)	14 (46.7%)	5 (31%)	36 (46.75)
Inadequate	2 (6.5%)	7 (23.3%)	0 (%)	9 (11.68)

**Outcome:** Although RI is the most common grade across the quarter, there is a positive trend in terms of audits being graded as Good. May saw a concerning number of Inadequate grades, however as service areas were targeted month by month we can track to a specific service area. June showed a strong end to the quarter, with more Good than RI.



Consideration of Impact of Diversity	April 2024	May 2024	June 2024
Outstanding	1 (3.2%)	0 (0%)	1 (6.3%)
Good	15 (48.4%)	16 (53.3%)	12 (75%)
Requires Improvement	15 (48.4%)	12 (40%)	3 (18.7%)



Inadequate	0 (0%)	2 (6.7%)	0 (0%)
<b>Outcome: This domain is consistently the strongest graded across audit activity with more Good than RI in two of the three months.</b>			

### Audit Grades by Domain

April's data evidences some Good practice in most domains and in one case, some elements of outstanding practice. The strongest domain is 'decision making and management oversight' with 19 of 31 audits (55%) having this domain graded as Good, followed by 'considering the impact of diversity', 15 of 31 being graded as Good (48%).

The areas of practice needing most development are 'seeing and hearing the child', 21 of 31 (68%) being graded as "Requires Improvement" and 'plans' 20 of 31 (65%) graded as Requires Improvement.

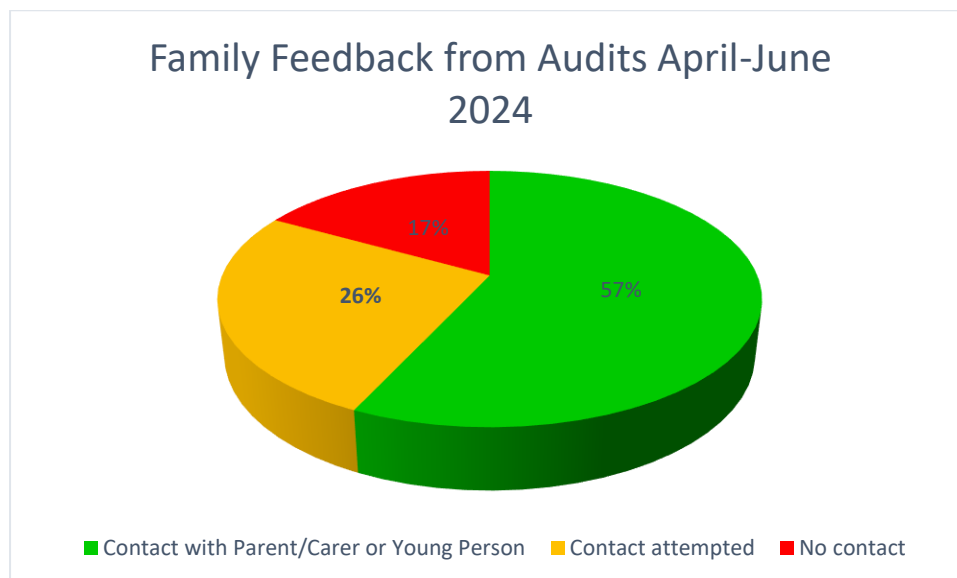
May's audit data shows that the domain of 'seeing and hearing the child' is somewhat improved with 16/30 (53%) achieving a grade of Good. The 'consideration of impact of diversity' is also positive with 16/30 (53%) also achieving Good. The results for 'decision making and management oversight', seven of 30 (23%) being Inadequate show the need for development, as do the results for 'supervision' 7 of 30 (23%) being Inadequate.

Of June's audits, 13/16 (81%) audits were graded as either Good or Outstanding for 'consideration of impact of diversity'. 'Decision making & management oversight' were graded Good or Outstanding in 12/16 audits (75%) and 'supervision' scored Good in 11/16 (69%) of audits.

### In conclusion

This data demonstrates some inconsistency in practice, however the April to June audits were focused on specific service areas rather than across the entire service. From September case audits, this has changed and auditing is being done monthly across the whole service. Where practice areas are identified as requiring practice development, workshops are being run facilitated by the QA team to disseminate good practice.

### Feedback gathered from Parent/Carer or Young Person



Gaining family feedback is central to our audit process and is central to our Phase 2 Improvement Plan and revised Quality Assurance Framework. Between April - June, we have had feedback from 57% of those families who case files were audited, this being largely consistent month on month. Some auditors attempted contact but were unsuccessful in speaking to the family, but overall, this is an area we need to greatly strengthen to contribute to practice development.

**Positive comments received from families included:**

- Parents feeling they could have a view that differed to the social worker
- Intervention improved outcomes for families
- Intervention is making a difference, and that families and children feel supported
- Experience of clear communication, support and progression of plans
- Social Workers' ability to build a relationship with parents and their children

*"The social worker has made a positive difference and pushed me to stop drinking. If I didn't have a social worker I would probably still be drinking so this is really positive and I've sorted this out for my daughter."*

*"The social worker was really good with I. She did a safety plan with I, she made I feel safe. She has made a positive difference to I due to the safety she created."*

*"He not only listens but he acts, he gives ideas about how to approach situations to make it easier and if L is struggling in school he will link in with the school. This means all professionals are working together and listen to the views of children."*

**Some less positive comments included:**

- Experiences of poor communication impacting on the relationship with family
- Negative impact of the changes in social worker with different practice styles
- Parents not feeling listened to or valued
- Little progress being made with the plan

*"There has been several social workers and when the last one left we was told by text message. My child now feels like Social Workers leave because he is so broken they can't fix him."*

***"I do not feel my children's best interests have been at the heart of social work intervention."***

***"It had a huge impact on my family having numerous social workers over the past 12 months..... this has led to huge confusion and inconsistency."***

### **Audits graded Inadequate**

7 audits were graded as Inadequate overall in April and May, with 5 of these being in May. There were no audits graded Inadequate in June, which is very positive. All actions following these audits have now been completed and there are no children currently with an Inadequate audit still open.

### **Analysis**

The data from audits show that quality of practice continues to need support and development. There are areas of good practice such as the 'consideration of the impact of diversity' and improving practice in the areas of 'decision making and management oversight' and 'supervision'. There remain a number of areas that require further development, 'seeing and hearing the child', 'assessments', 'plans' and 'meetings and reviews'. Given the priority given in the Phase 2 Improvement Plan to listening to families and especially to children and young people it is really important that we see rapid improvement in the 'seeing and hearing the child' domain. It seems likely that improvement here will also improve the quality of 'assessments' and 'plans'.

It is encouraging that there were no audits graded Inadequate in June and that June also had the highest number of audits graded Good (43.75%) over the last 6 months.

From September 2024, a new audit process including a revised audit template will be used and will consider practice across the whole service on a monthly basis. This will offer more opportunity to compare monthly data and identify areas of practice that are improving and those that need further focus across the different service areas.

Family feedback is an integral part of the auditing process and should be used to support service design and delivery. We need to increase the numbers of feedback gained through monthly audits and other methods and ensure that the findings contribute to all service improvement activity and ultimately positive outcomes for children.

### **Next Steps**

Through the audit process, some consistent areas of practice have been highlighted as in need of focus for improvement. In order to address this, in addition to the work being undertaken in the specific service areas, the QA team will be rolling out a programme of learning and development sessions that can be delivered within existing forums. This is due to begin in September 2024.

Our improvement partner, Leeds Relational Practice Centre, have been working with managers around strengthening supervision skills. These sessions are due to continue into September and October 2024. In addition Leeds, beginning in September, will be working closely with the PSW and their team, the Social Care Academy and QA team, to support staff and particularly multi-agency partners, in disseminating and embedding the restorative practice approach and its application to our work with children, young people and families.

