



Children's Services Quality Assurance summary for ISC Board



Introduction

Q2 2025-26 (July – Sept 2025).

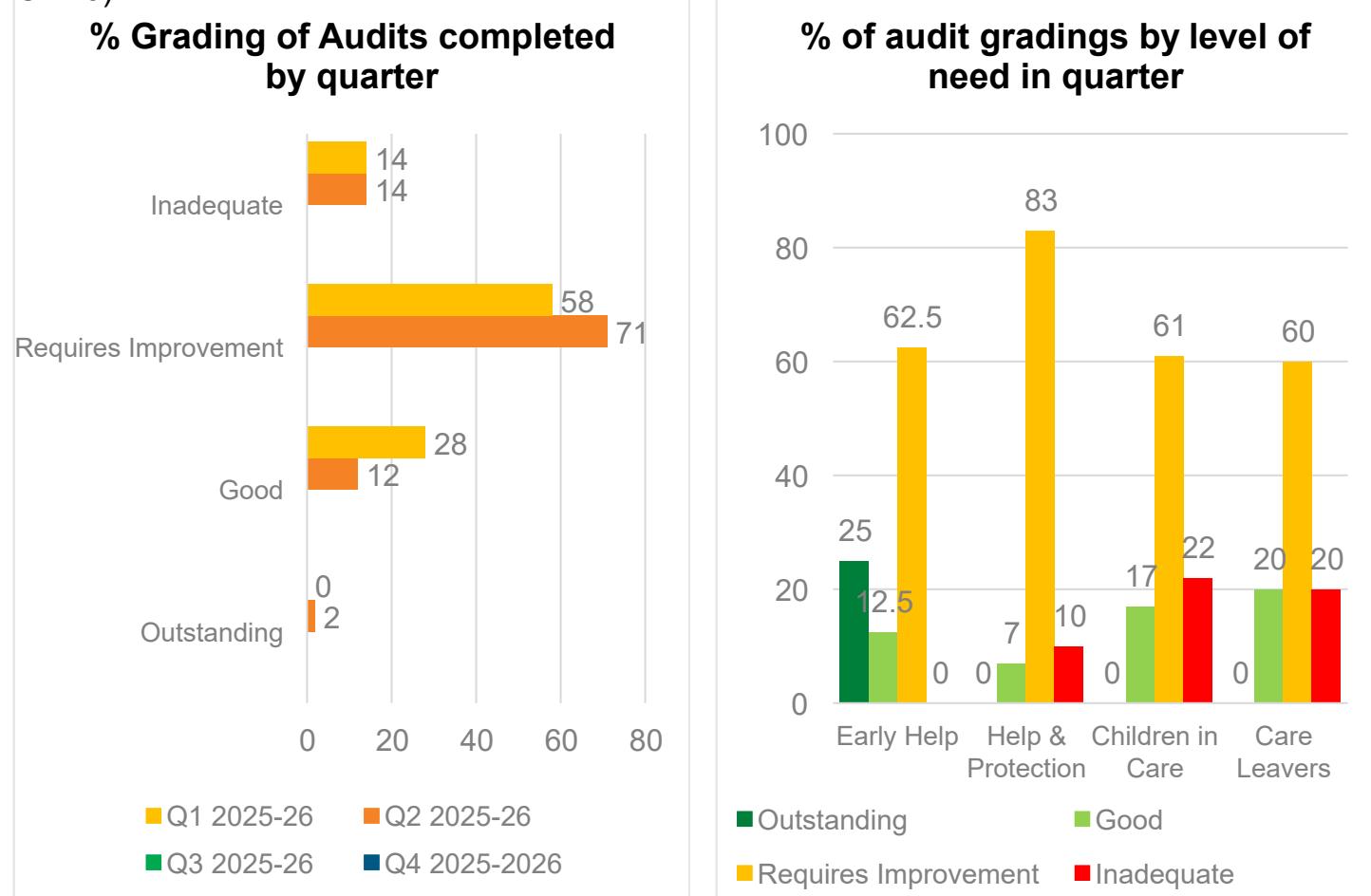
This report has been created to help the Improving Services to Children Board understand quality assurance activity undertaken by Children's Services, HBC in the quarter.

This report covers:

- Grading of deep dive audits with comparator data for understanding trend, including break down by level of need
- Moderation activity including outcome of moderation
- Monthly ICART multi agency audits
- Thematic audits
- Overview of findings from Team and Service Manager QA activity
- Summary of strengths and progress identified in the quarter
- Areas that are continued areas of focus
- Actions being undertaken to improve practice

Monthly Audit Programme

During the period Q2 2025-26 (July – Sept 2025) **66** audits have been completed across Early Help and Children's Social Care. (EH 8; H&P 30; CIC 18; CL 10)



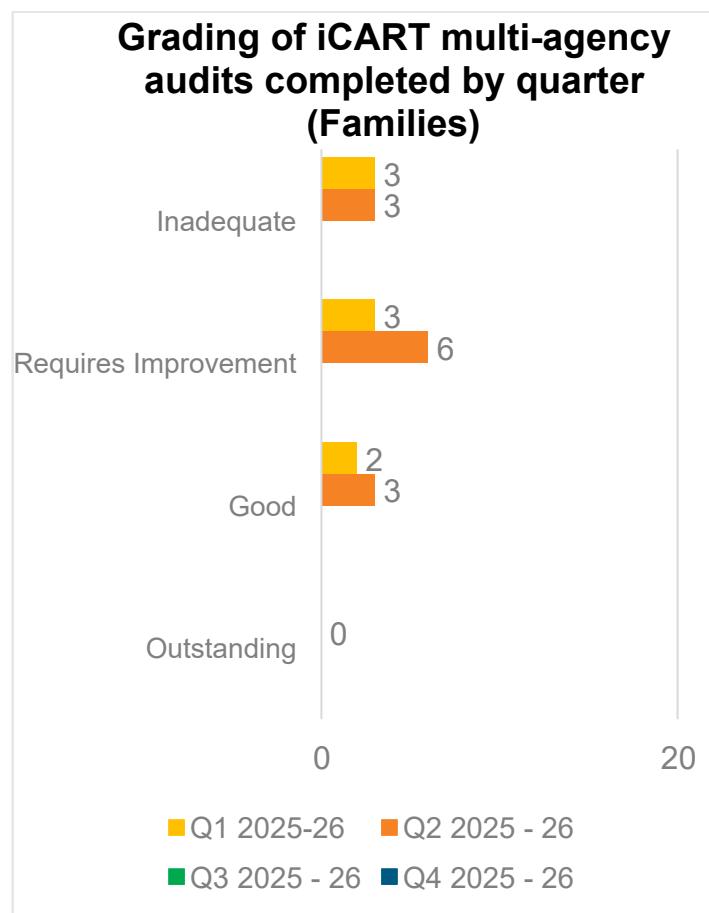
Moderations

This quarter 45 audits were subject to moderation. Of these 8 had their grading changed through moderation (19% of the audits moderated prev Q1 was 28%).

	Original grading of moderated audit	Grading after moderation
Outstanding	2	2 retained outstanding
Good	13	6 Good 6 RI 1 Inadequate
Requires Improvement	23	22 Requires Improvement 1 Inadequate
Inadequate	7	7 Inadequate

Monthly multi-agency iCART audits

During the period Q2 2025-26 (July – Sept 2025) **8 families** were considered during multi-agency iCART audits.



Thematic audits & ad hoc manager quality assurance activity

During the period Q2 2025-26 (July – Sept 2025) the following thematic audits have been completed:

- Fostering: 8 fostering families were considered during audit, caring for 13 children
- Life story work: 22 children's records audited

Additionally, during the period, the following quality assurance activity has been completed by managers within their service areas:

- QA of children's plans
- Children in Care Plans. Scrutiny of children's 2nd review to explore whether permanence plan was confirmed.
- Contingency plan detailed on core group meeting record.
- Review of actions in CP plan and within CIN meeting
- CIN review: Duration of CSC involvement 12months plus – does this involvement remain appropriate
- Children's CIN plans

Areas of Strength identified through quality assurance activity

- Examples of Outstanding practice identified within Early Help services. Early help continues to evidence good practice in terms of direct work and engaging with children and their families
- Early help subgrades all show upward trajectory.
- Timely response to risk - DAT
- Quality of assessment - evidence of well written assessments, voice of the child is increasingly stronger on file
- DAT - evidence of visiting frequency being led by consideration of the child's individual circumstances
- Increasing number of audits RI with green shoots of good practice within sub gradings.
- No audits graded as inadequate across the service September 2025
- 5 out of 6 (83%) children's records subject to reaudit had improved practice and gradings
- CIN - Significance of risks posed is well understood and appropriate safety plans in place for children
- The number of gradings of Inadequate in Help and Protection and Children in Care audits is decreasing. There were no inadequate audits in August and September for Care Leavers.
- Voice of the child is improving particularly in Children in Care audits
- Social workers are evidencing relationship-based practice that is having a positive impact, and this is supported by family feedback
- There is evidence of timely PEP meetings, direct work with children, good relationship-based practice for our children in care.

Feedback Quotes from family

Feedback provided by mum states that she felt listened to by the social worker. SW made it as easy as possible in a difficult situation. Worker listens and doesn't push things on me. Worker listens to me and has made this involvement easy she has involved G's dad as well.

G is a baby, but worker has seen him many times and has noticed his development changes and told me this. 10/10 in all (but one) areas.

Mum - Thank you for all the life changing support, it has impacted my life massively. I will always be extremely grateful".

School feel the plan is helping the child and their family. Attendance is improving and positive behaviour in school.

Child – “The social worker believed me when I told her what was happening” “I’m getting more help; I’m involved I attend meetings and know what is happening”

Dad scored the social worker 10/10 as every concern child had the social worker has listened to and child understands. That the worker noticed when things are going well and that the social worker cares about the family and making changes.

Police when asked if communication is good - Yes, very much so, with the managers and SW's in DAT and iCART especially.

Areas of learning and development identified through quality assurance activity

- When recording on children's files practitioners need to be mindful of language. Social work general statements can appear 'blaming' when read back.
- Grade descriptors need to be linked to audits to support auditor's conclusion and grading
- The timeliness and quality of visits remains variable.
- Quality of supervision remains an area that requires focussed improvement.
- The consistency and quality of chronologies need improvement
- Contingency plans/updated case summaries (need to include all parents, relevant carers and professionals) need to be on files and regularly reviewed
- Genogram's need to be consistently recorded
- Case summaries and pen pictures need to be recent, with context and detail.
- EHCP's need to be on children's records and include the most recent review to ensure SW can link to PEP's and that children's plans are all aligned
- Staff turnover impacts on relationship building for children and their families as well as progression of the child's plan
- Life story work is not consistently evident on children's records
- IRO footprint is not always recorded in between reviews.
- Drift and delay in planning is still evident for some children

Feedback Quotes from family



- **"She's always there when I need her and she's always gets back to me, whereas some social workers don't respond"**
- **Mum expressed her frustrations with people (social workers) coming in and out of her and child's life and not doing anything because child "behaves for a few weeks"**
- **Child – "this worker has been really helpful and more helpful than some of the others I have had who have not been great."**
- **Feel "a bit unsure about what happens next in terms of PA support?"**

Our response to quality assurance findings

The full service reflect on findings from quality assurance at monthly Aiming High meetings. From this actions are identified to ensure that good practice is embedded across the full service, or areas of learning and development are responded to with actions that the full service can use to support consistency of practice.

In the last quarter the following key actions have been identified for action as a result of quality assurance:

Action agreed	Lead	Timescale
Service Managers will collectively agree what a good chronology looks like. What we will expect to see on a child's file at each stage of their journey through the continuum of need. How this will become embedded in practice. When we will begin to see improved practice emerge and how we will test this out.	Lisa Riley	TBC
Quality and purposefulness of visits is inconsistent, particularly those undertaken by a Duty Social Worker 1. Before the next AH meeting, Service Managers will explore within their respective areas the obstacles to achieving consistently good, purposeful visits. 2. Lisa Riley to provide a written summary to Service Managers of previous agreements around Duty SW visits. 3. Service Managers to begin to formulate a service wide plan to improve the quality of visits which is focussed on the identified barriers and bring back to November AH meeting. 4. Good practice examples to be shared with Service Manager group	1. All service managers 2. Lisa Riley 3. All service managers 4. QA Lynette Lofthouse & SWA	AH Nov 2025
We don't currently align all of the plans for individual children 1. There are already plans underway to align MFH and EHCP. This work will continue. 2. -The alignment of children's plans will be a priority action in the implementation plan for the Family Safeguarding Model;	1. Michelle McPherson and Kate Chorlton 2. Matthew Brown.	1. TBC 2. the implementation plan is due for completion by December 2025