

Audit Guide

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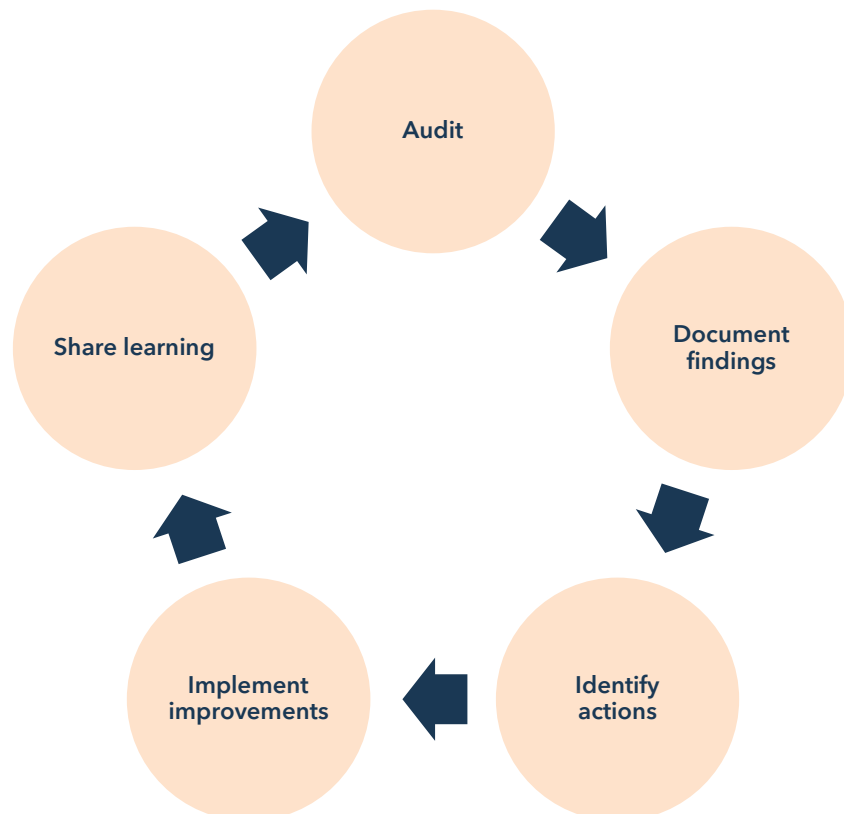
Foreword

This guide has been developed to introduce the subject and further research and learning is recommended to provide a complete understanding. Requirements are often unique to individual care services, and you should consider how best to implement practices.

Introduction

Audit processes are a crucial step in ensuring the delivery of high-quality, safe, and effective care by providing reassurance that processes and procedures are being followed.

The audit process should be considered a circular process, building on previous audits to verify the effectiveness of implemented measures and newly emerging problems.



Regulatory Compliance

A robust audit process is essential not just for identifying areas for improvement but also to evidence to the regulator that you have the appropriate governance processes in place to meet the regulatory requirements and the commitment to accountability.

Quality Improvement

Documenting audits allows for a review of past assessments, evidencing changes over time. This information is valuable for identifying trends, patterns, and areas for improvement.

Risk Management

Audits can support the identification of new or escalating risks. By identifying the risks earlier, risk assessments and mitigation strategies can be implemented, demonstrating a proactive approach to risk management.

Training and Development

Audit documentation aids in staff training and development by providing a new perspective on areas that may require additional training or improvement. It also helps in assessing the effectiveness of the existing training programs and any required changes.

Legal Protection

In the event of legal challenges or disputes, well-documented audit records can serve as evidence of a commitment to quality, compliance, and continuous improvement. This documentation can be crucial in defending the organisation's actions and decisions.

Plan

There should be an established audit plan in place that documents what audits are undertaken, by who and the frequency of their occurrence.

There should be an established plan for when audits should be conducted and evidence that the audits were carried out in accordance with that plan.

Physical Environment

The physical environment can present several risks to both staff and people living at the care service. While safety features might previously have been implemented, these can get worn and damaged over time. An audit assessing the physical environment should identify potential risks in each room such as uncovered radiators, exposed hot water pipes and windows without compliant restrictors.

Audits should also identify potential hazards such as wiring, worn flooring or anything within the physical environment that could cause a risk to people.

Equipment

Equipment can be worn down with use and might no longer be fit for purpose. Items such as mattresses, pressure cushions, hoists should be checked on a regular basis to ensure they are in safe working order but also that they are clean.

Infection Prevention and Control

Infectious diseases can easily spread in an enclosed environment and prevention is the best way to control them. A clean environment is essential to a good quality of life and to ensure a pleasant working environment. Audits should assess if cleaning documentation is being correctly updated and if the environment is clean.

Kitchen

The kitchen presents several significant risks with regard to people's health. Audits within the kitchen should ensure the appropriate food safety and cleanliness process associated with the kitchen are being followed and documented.

Training

Reviewing training records for staff to identify overdue training, training imminently will require refreshing or gaps in training. This audit should be undertaken across all roles, including management.

Medication

There should be a variety of medication audits undertaken to include assessing MAR chart completion, medication storage temperatures and stock levels, particularly for controlled drugs.

Dining Experience

How staff are supporting people and ensuring they are supporting them in the way they have requested in their care plan is essential to ensuring a person-centred experience.

Food and Drink Consistency

Individuals might be receiving their food or drink in a consistency compliant with IDDSI (International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative) guidelines. Food and drink should be included within the audit plan to ensure people are receiving their food and drink to their assessed consistency.

Care Planning

Care plans should be under a constant state of review, following changes in a person's needs or when there has been a requested change. Care plans should be audited to ensure they are person centred and match the wishes and needs of an individual.

Where there is synergy between documents, the content should be consistent to ensure staff are able to effectively support somebody.

Accident and Incidents

There should be an effective means to document, investigate and manage an accident or incident. Audits should identify if there are any open items that haven't been resolved if preventative measures have been implemented and if they were effective.

Policy and Procedures

There will be documented policies and procedures in place which will require reviewing and refreshing, either on an annual basis or in response to regulatory changes or the implementation of new laws or guidance.

Investigation

There should be a clear remit for the audit to ensure it doesn't deviate from its purpose and has a clear objective.

An investigation should not solely be the responsibility of the manager and can be undertaken by other appropriate roles within the organisation and a variety of people should be able to input into the process.

A good investigation should include:

- Review the relevant documentation that is pertinent to the audit, including specifying the timeframes of certain documents that need to be reviewed.
- Speak with people to better understand information and provide additional context.
- Review previous audits to see if any identified themes are reoccurring or unique developments.
- Assess the effectiveness of previous measures that were implemented, to gauge their effectiveness.

The audit should be clearly documented to detail the entire investigation process, including findings, actions taken, and lessons learned.

If information is not recorded it cannot be reviewed in the future and cannot be provided as evidence of the investigation.

Documentation should clearly outline the root causes of any identified issues, contributing factors, and confirm the corrective actions.

Improvements

The audit documentation should have detailed the findings of the audit and any areas that require improvement.

An audit that has identified improvement areas should have a corresponding action plan to ensure the corrective actions are clearly recorded and the process is accountable.

For each of the corrective actions there should be an associated level of risk and specified timescale in which the action will be completed and the

- Update documentation.
- Implement or update risk assessments.
- Update policies and procedures.
- Provide updated training.

Once the corrective actions have been implemented, there should be an assessment to understand if the actions have been effective and if any further action is required.

Learning

Sharing information and learning after an audit is essential for fostering continuous improvement, enhancing transparency, and promoting a culture of accountability.

This helps prevent the repetition of mistakes, encourages the adoption of successful practices, and supports the professional development of staff.

While audits are used to identify areas for improvement, they should also be used to identify good practice and a successful audit is just as important. Staff should know that audits are undertaken and why, but also when audits have been positive.

Audience

The learning from audits should be shared where appropriate with care staff, management, the nominated individual, and the care provider. Ensuring everyone is aware will help to embed changes in practice, but also ensure its clear why something is being changed.

If the audit identifies an issue that requires financial investment to remedy, it should be escalated to the nominated individual and the business owner or lead. It should be clearly documented why the financial investment is required and the consequences of not resolving the issues identified through the audit.

Staff Meetings

Learning can be shared through team meetings, sharing the information with a range of people at one time. This is also an opportune time to share best practice gather valuable insight into how to best implement new measures or provide additional ideas.

Supervisions

Including learning from an audit in a supervision is a useful means to discuss areas for their own professional development or to discuss areas for improvement. The nature of the supervision can also enable them to provide views that they might not otherwise want to share within a group environment.

Staff Notice Board and Message Groups

Any media that staff see on a regular basis could be a good way of sharing your findings. Ensure the information is clear and to the point, highlighting the key findings.

Summary

Audits play a pivotal role in ensuring the delivery of high-quality, person-centred, and compliant care services. Audits serve as a proactive tool for continuous improvement, risk management, and accountability within the organisation.

Throughout this guide, we have emphasized the importance of thorough documentation, transparent communication, and a commitment to sharing information and learning from audit outcomes.

We encourage people to view audits not merely as compliance measure but as opportunities for developing everyday practice. The insights gained from audits, when shared and acted upon, contribute to the ongoing development of a resilient and responsive care service.

They are essential in building trust, ensuring quality, and navigating the path to continuous improvement.

Additional guidance is available through [MiDoS for CARE](#).

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Staffordshire
Social Care
Workforce

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Care Market Development Team