

What is the Compact Audit?

Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 places a duty on key people and bodies to make arrangements to ensure that their functions are discharged with regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

In order to reduce the bureaucratic burden on agencies, the PSCP collaborates with the Partnerships in Hampshire, Southampton and Isle of Wight to complete Section 11 audits of statutory agencies listed in the Act that operate across two or more of the Partnership geographical areas. These agencies are required to complete this audit once every two years.

In addition to the Section 11 requirements, the PSCP seeks to assure that these arrangements are both in place and effective for all agencies, organisations and services that have contact with children and families in Portsmouth. So variations of this tool are used to seek assurance that:

- Statutory agencies are compliant with the Children Act
- Educational Establishments are compliant with the Education Act and Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Early Years Providers are compliant with the Childcare Act

It does this through using the same 12 standards across the variations of this tool, so that comparisons as to the effectiveness of safeguarding in the city across sectors can be made. This is called a Compact Audit.

Why do we carry out the Compact Audit?

This tool is designed not only to assist in assuring compliance; but also to provide a multi-agency benchmark through the use of a common language. It is hoped that this will create a more consistent approach to considering safeguarding arrangements across Portsmouth and Hampshire.

Improving the way key people and bodies safeguard and promote the welfare of children is crucial to improving outcomes for children. The Compact Audit is a self-assessment process aimed at supporting agencies in achieving compliance through identifying areas of good practice and areas where improvement is needed. It should be used to assess the extent to which safeguarding children is embedded within an organisation.

What is the process?

These audits of safeguarding and early help practice are repeated once every two years, and agencies will be asked to develop action plans to address any areas identified as requiring improvement or inadequate. The Partnership will expect evidence that these actions have been implemented within agreed timescales.

Based on the standards outlined in Working Together 2015; the Safeguarding and Early Help Compact Audit tool sets out 12 standards for effective early intervention and safeguarding practice which are:

1. Senior management commitment to the importance of the safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children
2. Staff responsibilities and competencies (the term 'staff' also refers to volunteers)
3. A clear line of accountability within the organisation for work on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children
4. Service development takes account of the need to safeguard and promote welfare and is informed, where appropriate, by the views of children and families
5. Induction, training and appraisal for staff and volunteers on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children
6. Safe Recruitment
7. Allegation management
8. Effective inter-agency working for early help and to safeguard children and promote the welfare of children
9. Information sharing
10. Equality of opportunity
11. Disabled children
12. Commissioning Standards

The standards for all services are the same, but the wording has been amended to suit the relevant agency e.g. GP, Schools, Early Years etc. Audit tool participants are asked to rate themselves using a four-point rating system to assess compliance with each standard:

- Outstanding: Our organisation can fully demonstrate compliance with the standard
- Good: Our organisation can demonstrate compliance with the standard
- Requires improvement: Our organisation has limited ability to demonstrate compliance with the standard
- Inadequate: Our organisation is unable to demonstrate compliance with the standard

The tool is designed primarily to be used by statutory services but is not limited to those agencies. We expect that any service that comes into contact with children (and information about children) from pre-birth up to 18 years old, in Portsmouth completes this tool. For example we would expect providers of sports and leisure opportunities for children to self-assess against the tool.

What do we do with the information?

The Monitoring, Evaluation and Scrutiny Committee (MESC) lead on collating and analysing the results. A final report is written, which summarises key findings from the submissions and identifies trends, areas of concern and good practice.

This report is shared with the PSCP and any areas of concern are shared with relevant service leads or are responded to by the PSCP Business Unit. Overall findings are shared annually within the PSCP Annual Report.

For further information, please email pscp@portsmouthcc.gov.uk