

**Children’s Services**

**Quality & Performance Strategy**

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# Introduction

Derbyshire County Council is committed to achieving the best outcomes for all children, young people and their families. In children’s services, our ambition is:

**‘To achieve sustained positive outcomes for children and young people and to improve their physical, social and emotional well-being and safety, close the gap in educational achievement and support all children and young people in realising their potential’**

Our vision is that all staff are:

**‘Working creatively together to inspire and empower children, young people and their families and communities to be the best they can be: safe, healthy, happy, learning and working’**

To achieve best outcomes, we work with children and families using strengths-based principles, empowering families to find their own solutions and keeping children at the centre of all we do. We ensure services are delivered to nationally and locally agreed standards and meet our associated performance targets.

Understanding the quality of the services we provide and having an effective strategy to share and use this learning to support continual improvement, is central to achieving improved outcomes for children. In Derbyshire we have a strong quality assurance and performance monitoring system in place that evidences services are being delivered effectively and to standards that enable children’s welfare to be safeguarded and promoted.

We are also committed to involving children, families and staff, and to listening and responding appropriately to what they tell us. We strive to continually increase the impact of the voice of children, young people and their families in improving services.

A quality service cannot be fully achieved without effective partnership working. This strategy recognises the need for a partnership approach and is fully aligned with other relevant partnership strategies including those of the Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (DDSCP)

# The Purpose of the Strategy

Ensuring practice is of good quality and strong performance is everyone’s business within children’s services. It is not just for people working in dedicated quality assurance and performance roles.

This strategy seeks to ensure we are doing the right things, at the right time for the children, families and communities that we serve. Through this strategy we will ensure that the work we are doing meets statutory requirements and makes a sustained improvement to the lives of children, young people and their families.

Our staff are our most valuable asset. Through this strategy, we will continue to develop and maintain a learning culture that encourages everyone at all levels of the organisation to reflect on the work that they are doing, be innovative in their approaches and contribute to a culture of continuous improvement.

This strategy is intended to help staff and partners to understand our approach to managing performance and evaluating the quality of our services. It is underpinned by a formal framework for quality and performance, as detailed in Section 2.

# Key Aims

The key aims of this strategy are to:

* + - * Articulate our culture of quality assurance, performance improvement and continuous improvement
			* Champion best practice
			* Provide support and challenge to services and staff, to encourage reflection and learning
			* Routinely monitor the quality of services against agreed quality standards
			* Be clear about everyone’s responsibilities, accountabilities and expectations
			* Encourage active listening to children and young people and their families and use their feedback to improve what we do
			* Be open, honest and non-judgemental when seeking and giving feedback on practice and making improvements
			* Learn from our practice and the practice of others to consistently improve our services to children and young people and their families, including through compliments and complaints
			* Ensure that we know ourselves well and understand the quality of the services we provide, based on evidence and not assumption

# Essential Components of a Quality Service

**Workforce**

Staff who are well trained, supported and take responsibility for their practice

**Feedback**

Sharing learning from compliments, complaints and encouraging participation

**Leadership**

Leaders at all levels who support and champion reflection, encouraging and learning from feedback and continuous improvement

**Systems**

Having effective quality and performance systems in place

**Culture**

An ethos that promotes learning, critical thinking, reflection, curiosity and innovation

# Corporate Governance

The Executive and the Improvement and Scrutiny Committees have very different functions and responsibilities, however, the aim of both is to secure the best outcomes for the people who live and work within Derbyshire.

The Improvement and Scrutiny Committees have a number of responsibilities. These include:

1. Adding value to the work of the Council
2. Holding the Executive to account on behalf of the residents of Derbyshire through the regular review of performance in relation to service delivery
3. Undertaking research and consultation on behalf of the Executive and in advance of Cabinet decisions. This is known as pre-decision scrutiny
4. Being engaged with major policy and strategy work at a very early stage. This is known as pre-strategy scrutiny
5. Holding the Executive to account through scrutinising its decisions
6. Undertaking reviews of Council activities and those of other public bodies that affect the people who live and work in Derbyshire, leading to recommendations on improvements which can be made
7. Calling-in Executive decisions which have not yet been implemented if there is a need for aspects of the decision to be reviewed
8. Assisting the Executive in policy formulation and developing recommendations on the budget and policy framework when examining the Executive’s proposals

The work programme is a flexible plan which outlines the programme for the coming municipal year and is usually developed at the first meeting after the Annual Council. The programme is drawn together by the Chair and members of the committee and can include issues put forward by members, topics that arise during discussion with cabinet members and executive directors, concerns generated from the Corporate Complaints Policy, the Council Plan, performance data and potential issues arising from corporate priorities or the Forward Plan.

· Departmental and service level self-evaluations

· Informed by information and intelligence from performance data, QA findings, compliments, complaints, service user feedback and peer review/inspection activity

**2.0 The Quality & Performance Framework**



Self-Evaluation

· Performance management the ‘golden thread’ running through plans at every level from the Council Plan to individual ‘My Plans’ and personal development reviews

· Focused improvement plans in place where needed that are overseen by the QA & Transformation Board

· Plans supported by workforce strategy, induction & training

· QA activity including reflective case reviews, thematic audits, dip-sampling and practice learning days

· Compliments and complaints

· Peer review and inspection findings

· ‘Show me tell me’ visits

· National guidance & best practice

· Findings from local and national learning reviews

***Improved outcomes for children, young people and families are at the heart of the framework***

***Continuous consultation, review, and feedback are intrinsic to the framework. It is a dynamic process that has flexibility to address service priorities.***

Performance Management

Improvement Planning

Reviewing Effectiveness

· On-demand data dashboards

· Regular performance reports and bitesize briefings

· Regular meetings to review performance at all levels in all services

· Regular and effective supervision

· Comprehensive and up-to-date policies and procedures

The quality and performance framework consists of four inter-related and complementary activities with improved outcomes for children, young people and families at its centre.

# Self-Evaluation

Self-evaluation is a process by which information and evidence is gathered in order to reach an agreed view on our strengths and areas for development. This information and evidence comes from a variety of sources, including:

* + - Service user feedback
		- Staff feedback
		- Feedback from partners
		- Performance reporting & analysis
		- Quality assurance activity
		- Compliments, complaints and representations
		- Internal and external peer challenge, including inspection
		- Regional and national learning
		- Legislation and best practice

As a department, we produce an annual self-evaluation which is used to inform our annual conversations with Ofsted. This self-evaluation is also shared with members, and other local authorities as part of regional challenge events.

More detailed self-evaluations are also developed for specific service areas e.g. special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and the leaving care service (LCS).

# Improvement Planning

Council Plan

Departmental

Service Plans

My Plan/Supervision

Training and Development

Effective and purposeful planning ensures that we are clear about the goals and outcomes we are seeking to achieve. Collaborative planning enables us to engage staff effectively and ensures all areas of the department contribute to the delivery of positive outcomes for children and young people.

Performance management is the “golden thread” that runs between plans at different levels, so that all staff can see and understand how they contribute to wider priorities.

Specific, focused action plans are developed in areas where change or improvement is needed. These are overseen by the Quality Assurance and Transformation Board, chaired by the Executive Director for Children’s Services.

# Performance Management

Staff and managers take responsibility for the quality of their own practice and understand how this contributes to the performance of wider teams. This is supported by a comprehensive schedule of quality and performance meetings, from strategic to operational levels as detailed in Appendix A.

Performance management is further supported by a suite of management information and performance reports including on-demand dashboards and a range of scheduled performance reports.

# Review

A range of activities take place to help us review the quality and impact of our services.

# Observation of Practice

Managers regularly observe staff as part of their role and this informs ongoing staff development and service improvement.

# Audit

A programme of reflective case reviews (RCRs) is undertaken within Early Help and Safeguarding, facilitated by the Quality Assurance Team. There is a bi-monthly programme of RCRs completed by team managers. RCRs involve a file read, reflective conversation with a practitioner and feedback from children and families. Actions and areas of good practice are noted and there is a focus on continuous improvement for practitioners. This programme enables themes to be identified and provides a line of sight from senior managers to practice. RCRs are being extended to a wider range of service areas including SEND. A number of services including SEND, leaving care, fostering and youth offending service (YOS) also have bespoke QA programmes supported by dedicated resource within the quality assurance team.

Thematic audits are fluid and are arranged in response to any emerging concerns about performance, practice or as a result of local and national developments. Multi-agency audits are also undertaken regularly and are managed by Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children’s Partnership.

# Practice Learning Days

These are led by senior leaders and include RCRs, manager and practitioner focus groups, ‘show me, tell me’ reflective conversations and other activities as required to identify strengths and areas for improvement relating to the identified key lines of enquiry.

# Internal and External Reviews

We regularly carry out in-depth reviews of services. The Department is outward-facing and welcomes external scrutiny and challenge, regularly

inviting regional peers or other external experts to provide an independent view of quality. This then informs actions from an operational level to transformational change e.g. bringing the leaving care service in-house from a commissioned provider.

# Service User Feedback, including Compliments and Complaints

Listening to children, young people and families is becoming more embedded as an integral part of reviewing effectiveness and strategic planning. There is regular review of the themes emerging from service user feedback and the quality assurance team supports services in responding to and learning from compliments and complaints.

# Key Enablers of Success

We are committed to creating and maintaining a culture that allows staff to flourish whatever their discipline. To support in achieving this, the following key provisions are in place:

# Clear communication strategies to share our learning

Learning from our performance management and quality assurance activities is shared in a range of ways, both individually to staff through reflective discussion and/or supervision and at team, service, and management levels. This is supported by the publication of regular reports, which are provided regularly to the senior management team and heads of service.

# Policies, Standards and Procedures

These underpin the expectations for practice in our services. They give guidance and ensure that all staff are aware of what is expected. Our policies and procedures are not static and are reviewed and refreshed regularly as a result of changes in legislation, feedback and learning from within services.

To ensure staff understand what is expected of them we have a range of practice standards for them to work within and which are supported by a range of induction, training and development activities.

# Workforce Development, Training and Supervision

The department has a strong emphasis on workforce development, starting with a good induction and offering a comprehensive programme of continuous professional development opportunities. This programme is also regularly reviewed and updated as a result of changes in legislation, feedback and learning from within services. We use the information that we receive from our quality assurance activities to consider future guidance and training for staff. Supervision is well embedded with an emphasis on practice, service delivery, and impact.

# Participation

Participation is an important element of the quality and performance framework and the department is committed to working alongside children, young people and their families to promote service improvement. The participation and children’s rights team facilitates care leaver and children in care councils alongside the Derbyshire Youth Network; a strategic participation network with a reach of over 21,000 children via community groups and school democracy leads. Specific support is provided to promote the participation of children and young people with SEND.

# The Role of the Quality Assurance and Performance & Analysis Teams

Staff from the quality assurance and performance & analysis teams provide an independent quality assurance and performance management function, working collaboratively alongside operational teams. The role of the teams is to contribute to the overall improvement cycle through the management of an annual programme of activity and analysis of performance which takes account of:

* + - Feedback from service users, including compliments and complaints
		- Findings from previous quality assurance activity
		- Performance data
		- Research and best practice

Reports are presented regularly to the senior management team to ensure a clear line of sight to quality and performance and inform future activity.

# 3.0 Quality and Performance Framework Responsibilities

All managers are expected to provide regular, high quality supervision for staff, scrutinise performance data and participate in relevant team and service meetings. In addition to these core responsibilities, the table below details the specific quality assurance and performance activities which are undertaken by staff in specific roles. Taken together, these activities help us to deliver the quality and performance framework described in section 2:

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| **Role** | **Task** | **Frequency** | **Purpose** |
| Elected Members | Monitor performance via:* Cabinet
* Corporate Parenting Board
* Departmental Leadership Team
* Performance Improvement Boards
* Derby & Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (DDSCP) Chief Officers Group and Executive Board
 | Annual programme of meetings | Monitor performance and outcomes for children and young people, use of resources, decision-making and risk management |
| Meet with children in care &, care leavers’ councilsParticipate in the ‘Big Conversation’ with children in care and care leaversSupport a ‘takeover’ of Corporate Parenting Board by children in care and care leavers | QuarterlyAnnuallyAnnually | To gain their views and inform decisions by Corporate Parenting Board |
|  | Maintain an overview of the quality assurance programme, key findings and the department’s annual self-evaluation.Participate directly in some quality assurance activities, such as reflective case reviews.  | Via monthly briefings with Director for Performance Quality and PartnershipsAnnually | Monitor the quality of services and outcomes for children and young people |

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| **Role** | **Task** | **Frequency** | **Purpose** |
| Executive Director of Children’s Services | Visit services following on from practice learning days, to discuss progress with the development plan | Six per year | Oversee and ensure progress on improvement priorities |
| Visits to front-line service teams and children’s homes to have informal discussions with front- line staff. | Annual programme of visits | Meet and review practice pressures and issues with front-line staff |
| Chair Departmental Quality Assurance and Transformation Board | Bi-monthly meetings | Oversee and ensure progress on improvement priorities |
| Review and scrutinise key performance measures via:* Senior Management Team
* Performance Improvement Boards
* Corporate Parenting Board
* Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (DDSCP)
* Corporate Management Team
* Departmental Leadership Team
 | Annual programme of meetings | Gather assurance and monitor performance and outcomes for children and young people, quality of practice, use of resources, decision-making and risk management |
| Review and scrutinise internal and multi-agency audit outcomes | Bi-monthly | Monitor practice standards and multi-agency processes |

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| **Role** | **Task** | **Frequency** | **Purpose** |
|  | Bi-annual meeting with children in care and care leavers’ councils | Bi-annual | To gain feedback from young people |
| Management seminars | Annual (six sessions) | To gather feedback and undertake planning activity with managers across the department |
| Departmental engagement forum | Every 6 months | To gather feedback from a cross-section of staff across the department and agree an action plan |
| ‘Show me, tell me’ sessions | Monthly or quarterly rolling programme | Informal conversation with staff to understand their views and service issues |
| Annual triad ‘challenge conversations’ with regional East Midlands authorities | Annual | Gather external assurance on performance and outcomes for children and young people and test hypotheses |
| Regular sampling of casework | Monthly | Ensure ‘line of sight’ into quality of social work practice |

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| **Role** | **Task** | **Frequency** | **Purpose** |
| Service Directors | Visits to front-line services or “touch base” virtual meetings, with a focus on:* Capacity
* Demand on services
* Recruitment
* Training
* Joint working arrangements
* Management and supervision
* Strengths and challenges
 | Annual programme of visits | Gather information about service standards and challenges |
| Review and scrutinise key performance measures via:* Senior Management Team
* Performance Improvement Boards
* Corporate Parenting Board
* Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Board (DSCB)
* Corporate Management Team
* Departmental Leadership Team
* Thematic or service-level improvement boards or performance meetings
 | Annual programme of meetings | Gather assurance and monitor performance and outcomes for children and young people, quality of practice, use of resources, decision-making and risk management |
| Talk-back sessions | Annual – attend at least one session | Informal conversation with staff to understand their views and service issues |
| Review and scrutinise internal and multi-agency audit programme results | Bi-monthly | Monitor practice standards and multi-agency processes |

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| **Role** | **Task** | **Frequency** | **Purpose** |
|  | Bi-annual meeting with children in care and care leavers’ councils | Bi-annual | To gain feedback from young people |
| Management seminars | Annual (six sessions) | To gather feedback and undertake planning activity with managers across the department |
| Annual triad challenge conversation with regional local authorities | Annual | Gather external assurance on performance and outcomes for children and young people and test hypothesis |
| ‘Show me, tell me’ conversations with workers | At least one per year | Sit alongside staff and discuss their work |
| Regular practice observations and sampling of work | As relevant to each role | Ensure ‘line of sight’ on quality of practice |
| Director, Early Help & Safeguarding | Undertake Bi-monthly senior manager reflective case review | Bi-monthly | Monitor practice standards and multi-agency processes |

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| **Role** | **Task** | **Frequency** | **Purpose** |
|  | Lead practice learning days | Six per year | Understand performance and quality within a specific service area |
|  | Attend social work practitioners’ focus group | Quarterly | Direct conversation with social workers to understand practice issues |
|  | Chair high risk CRE oversight meeting | Monthly | Provide oversight of risk management at child level |
| Director, Schools and Learning | Attend ‘Future Shape: Education’ board | Annual programme of meetings | Work with partners to improve standards in education |
|  | Chair ‘line of sight’ meetings for children missing education (also attended by Director for Early Help & Safeguarding) | Half-termly | Improve identification and response to children at risk of missing education |
|  | Meet with Derbyshire Parent Carer Voice | Monthly (term-time) | Gain feedback from parents of children with SEND |
| All Assistant Directors and/or Heads of Service | Undertake regular practice observations | Quarterly | Ensure line of sight on quality of practice |
| Regular sampling of work | As relevant to each role | Ensure line of sight on quality of practice |
| Monitor and scrutinise performance data via dashboards, reflective case reviews and action plans | As required | Monitor performance and identify themes and issues and take remedial action where necessary |
|  | Provide final scrutiny of key reports and decision making as identified in scheme of delegation. | On-going | Assurance that documents and plans are fit for purpose |

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| **Role** | **Task** | **Frequency** | **Purpose** |
| Assistant Directors and/or Heads of Service (Early Help & Safeguarding) | Review and scrutinise internal and multi-agency QA programme results and action plans | Bi-monthly | Monitor practice standards and multi-agency processes |
| Chair locality scrutiny meetings | Two per month | Scrutinise plans for children to ensure timely and appropriate decision-making |
| Chair locality Children at Risk of Exploitation Panels | Monthly | Share information and intelligence about risks to keep children safe |
| Head of Child Protection and IRO service | Report to DDSCP and the senior management team on child protection performance, including Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) | Minimum of annually | Independent evaluation of quality and impact for children |
| Annual report of the IRO service | Annual | Quality of IRO service and evaluation of quality of support for children in care |
| Chair virtual multi-agency panel to review any dissents regarding the outcome of child protection conferences | As required | Quality and consistency of child protection decision-making and identification of any learning themes |
| Develop and maintain systems within child protection and IRO service to promote identification of themes, escalation and challenge,e.g. peer review, mid-term reviews | Ongoing | Ensure effectiveness of independent quality assurance services and impact on quality of practice |

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| **Role** | **Task** | **Frequency** | **Purpose** |
| Head of Children in Care Provision | Annual fostering and adoption reports | Annual | Quality of service, understanding key themes and issues |
| Head of Performance, Quality & Participation  | Annual complaints report | Annual | Learning from complaints to inform service development |
| Ensure completion of Regulation 44 visits to children’s homes | Quarterly report on themes | Gain and use learning from independent visits |
| Team Managers | 1-2-1 Supervisions/My Plans/Personal Development Reviews (PDR) | Monthly supervision, bi-annual My Plan/PDR | Monitor performance, develop practice and improve service delivery |
| Monitor and scrutinise performance data via dashboards, QA activity and action plans | As required | Monitor performance and identify themes and issues and take remedial action where necessary |
| Undertake bi-monthly manager reflective case review (if applicable) | Bi-monthly | Monitor practice standards and multi-agency processes |
| Practice observations and review/sampling of work | Ongoing | Ensure practice standards are met, quality of service remains high and the planned impact is achieved |

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| **Role** | **Task** | **Frequency** | **Purpose** |
| Assistant Head of Service (QA) & Complaints Manager | Manage children’s services response to all complaints and representations received | On-going and in line with relevant procedure | Ensure timely and effective response to all complaints and representations received by children’s services |
| Manage children’s services response to all complaints escalated to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) in conjunction with the council’s LGSCO link officer | On-going and in line with agreed procedure | Ensure timely and effective response to all requests received from the LGSCO link officer |
| Provide regular performance information and learning summaries in relation to complaints and representations received by children’s services | In line with statutory requirements and agreed standards | Ensure standards are met and learning is shared and used to improve services and/or practice. |
| Independent Reviewing Officers/Child Protection Managers and/or Chairs | Quality assure all child protection and looked after children planning | In line with statutory intervals and agreed standards | Ensure clear, focused and appropriate plans are in place and reviewed for all children subject to CP plans or looked after.Provide robust challenge to practice as required and use escalation arrangements effectively where appropriate |

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| **Role** | **Task** | **Frequency** | **Purpose** |
| All staff | Be aware of, and apply, relevant policies, procedures and standards | Ongoing | Ensure agreed standards are met |
| Seek and act upon national/local learning including feedback from children and families | Ongoing | Ensure learning is shared and used to inform practice |
| Participate in regular supervision and My Plans/PDRs | As set out in the relevant policies | Ensure everyone has clear objectives and support; ensure timely decision- making |

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| STRATEGIC ASSURANCE | Level | Body/Board/Group |
| Top-level Boards | Senior Management Team (SMT)Corporate Parenting BoardEmployment and Skills BoardPractice Improvement BoardsQA & Transformation BoardDepartmental Leadership Team |
| Strategic Groups | Improving Health Outcomes Governance Strategic BoardChildren Missing Education (CME) Monitoring Line of SightChildren in Care (CIC) Strategic Governance BoardSORE Project BoardDerbyshire Adult Community Education Service (DACES) Governance BoardSchool Organisation and School Place PlanningCS Diversity and Inclusion GroupHome to School Transport Strategic Governance GroupTraded Services Strategy GroupEarly Years Strategy GroupVirtual School Governance BoardCiC 16+Governance GroupYOS Management BoardSEND Strategic Governance Board |
| OPERATIONAL AND PRACTICE | Improvement Boards | Starting Point Strategic BoardAdoption Improvement BoardCare Leavers Improvement Board |
| Leadership Meetings | Joint Leadership Meeting: (S&L, EH&S & SS)Divisional Management Team & Leadership Team MeetingsOLT Performance GroupOperational Leadership Team (OLT)Extended Leadership Team (ELT) |
| Developmental & Operational Groups | High Risk CRE Oversight MeetingLCS QA GroupYOS QA GroupWorkforce Development GroupTransition GroupPractice Development Group |
| PARTNERSHIP GROUPS |  | Derbyshire Children’s Partnership Board and Locality Children’s PartnershipsDDSCP Board & Sub-GroupsFuture Shape: Education BoardNursery, Secondary and Special Schools Forum; Primary Area HeadsSEND Stakeholder Group0-19 Partnership Group |
| INDIVIDUAL LEVEL | Individual performance management | My Plan & PDRProfessional supervisionPersonal Supervision |

 Children’s Services Performance Management Framework (Appendix A)

Note: Governance and accountability arrangements are detailed within terms of reference for individual groups where appropriate

