

Telford & Wrekin  
Children's Services

# Quality Assurance Framework

Good practice  
Good Outcomes



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# FOREWORD

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to our new Quality Assurance Framework and Guidance.

Working with children and young people and their families is complex, and all of us who work in this world know that their needs are multi-faceted, and that we need to take a whole system approach towards helping them to live safely at home.

When working with families we need to ensure that we constantly explore and build on areas of strength, and agree effective plans for improvement where risks are identified. Similarly we need to constantly explore and build on areas of strength in the quality of services we deliver to children and young people and their families, and agree effective plans for improvement where the quality of practice does not meet required standards.

This quality assurance framework sets out the principles and standards of practice expected from all of us in Children's Services. It also sets out the mechanisms we will use to assess the quality of our practice, systems and processes, and use the learning to make improvements in practice and outcomes.

All of us are undertaking important work, and come in each day wanting to do the best we can. I hope you will find this guidance both interesting and helpful in ensuring good practice from us and good outcomes for the children and young people we work with.



*Jo Britton*

**Jo Britton**  
**Assistant Director**  
**Children's Services**

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# 1

# INTRODUCTION

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# INTRODUCTION

## What is quality assurance?

Quality assurance involves the systematic monitoring and evaluation of practice, policies, and procedures, with the aim of improving our services to achieve better outcomes for children and their families.

Quality assurance should be an integral part of everyday practice within Children and Family Services. Measuring the impact of service delivery is central to achieving improved outcomes for children. This requires a strong quality assurance system to be in place that evidences that services are being delivered effectively and to standards that enable children's welfare to be safeguarded and promoted.

## Why do we need quality assurance?

Telford & Wrekin Council is committed to achieving excellence through continuous improvement, where children are at the heart of everything we do, and have the opportunity to influence and shape the services they receive.

Having in place a robust quality assurance system should help to:

- Ensure that children's and young people's needs are met at the earliest stage
- Ensure and evidence that children are being kept safe from harm and protected.
- Ensure that thresholds are being applied consistently and effectively
- Improve outcomes for children and families we work with by identifying gaps and problems within practice and services offered, which can also be addressed through service planning, training and commissioning.

- Identify what interventions work for children and families and highlight good practice.
- Ensure staff are supported in carrying out their jobs both safely and effectively.

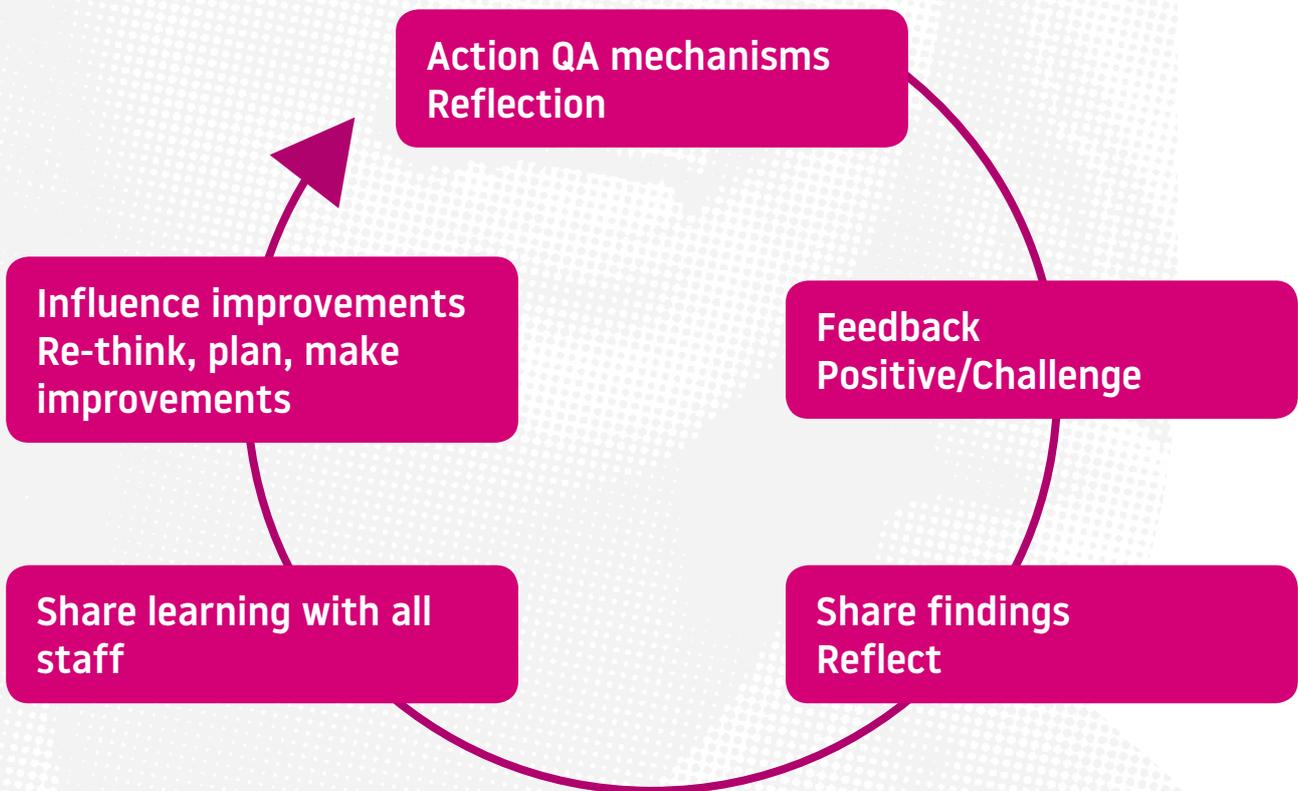
## Developing a positive quality assurance culture

If the quality assurance system is to be effective it is vital that we learn from all feedback, both positive and negative. The culture of the organisation needs to be one of learning, where staff at all levels feel safe to raise issues and discuss any difficulties, and are confident that their views will be heard and action taken to address the issues raised. In order to achieve this, feedback to staff needs to be positive, celebrating achievements and improvements and challenging in a positive way, and they need to be supported and listened to when raising issues, and informed of actions to be taken.



## Learning

Underpinning the Quality Assurance Framework is an understanding that continuous improvement depends on a culture of reflection in action and reflection following action (reflection during social work and early help practice and in supervision, consultation and discussion). This then feeds into the learning loop for the practitioner, service and organisation, so that we can re-think, plan appropriately and improve outcomes.



# 2

# OUR STANDARDS, VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

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# OUR STANDARDS, VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

We will know we have got it right when we have thriving children and families and thriving professionals working in a value driven organisation, and are spending within or below budget.

## The council's values and priorities

Our Co-operative Values are based on what residents and council employees told us about the sort of council and borough they would like to see in Telford and Wrekin.

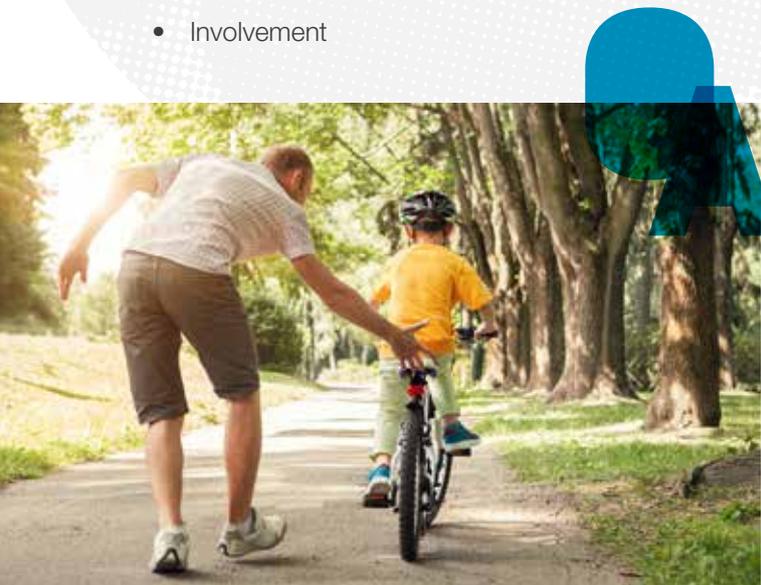
- Openness and Honesty
- Ownership
- Fairness and Respect
- Involvement

## Our priorities are to:

- Put our children and young people first
- Protect and support our vulnerable children and adults
- Protect and create jobs as a 'business supporting, business winning council'
- Improve local people's prospects through education and skills training
- Ensure that neighbourhoods are safe, clean and well maintained
- Improve the health and wellbeing of our communities and address health inequalities
- Regenerate those neighbourhoods in need and work to ensure that local people have access to suitable housing

## HCPC Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics (2016)

- promote and protect the interests of service users and carers;
- communicate appropriately and effectively;
- work within the limits of their knowledge and skills;
- delegate appropriately;
- respect confidentiality;
- manage risk;
- report concerns about safety;
- be open when things go wrong;
- be honest and trustworthy; and
- keep records of their work



# Our overarching principles

- In all our activities, the child's best interests come first
- We will always aim to meet the needs of children and young people and their families at the earliest stage, either through the provision of early help or where necessary, intervention from safeguarding services
- Children are best cared for by their families, and in situations where this cannot be achieved safely, they need to be looked after in safe and stable placements
- Our practitioners act as a resource for children and young people and their families, helping parents to make positive changes. To do this they need to have professional curiosity and take responsibility for self-development, and use supervision effectively
- In our assessments and work we aim to understand and improve the child's lived experience
- Work is carried out in partnership with parents and carers to enable them to meet their responsibilities and achieve best outcomes
- Children are involved in decisions that affect them
- In all our work, we maintain an awareness of equal opportunities and the impact of discrimination
- We work closely with other agencies to improve support that is offered to children, young people and families
- Work with children and families is undertaken within the legislative framework and makes use of best practice
- Our records are accurate, complete and demonstrate the child's story
- Work with children is managed and supervised to achieve the best possible outcomes.
- We treat children, families and our working partners with courtesy and respect

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# What this means in practice

- Every child and young person we work with has a good quality assessment which they have been involved in
- Every child and young person we work with has a plan which is SMART and written in plain language
- Every child and young person we work with is seen regularly, with clear purpose to visits
- Every child and young person we work with will have their voice visible in assessments, plans and reviews

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# Professional behaviours

- We will work with families rather than doing things to them, or not doing anything at all
- We will communicate clearly and effectively, in person where possible
- We will provide a working environment with high support and high challenge
- We will encourage best practice and address poor practice
- We will work together to resolve problems and create a learning culture
- We will invest in talking to children, listening to children and young people and responding to children and young people

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# 3

# OUR QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

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# OUR QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

## Scope

This framework covers quality assurance activity within Children's Services, including early help and safeguarding activity

The framework aims to reflect a balance of scrutiny around three areas:

- Quantitative data
- Qualitative data and audit
- Service user and practitioner views

## Activities and processes supporting our quality assurance framework:

### How much did we do?

- Weekly management information
- Monthly performance information
- Service/team/worker level data
- Case file audits undertaken
- Themed audits

## How well did we do it?

### We will recognise Service User and Practitioner Voices:

- Surveys of children and young people.
- Immediate feedback
- Complaints and compliments
- Safeguarding file audit activity
- Feedback from the Rights and Representations service
- Children in Care Council ('VOICE') activity
- Parent's and carer's feedback

### We will also gather the views of practitioners through:

- Induction feedback
- Feedback to Senior Management Team and Councillors
- Managers Learning Meetings
- Feedback at Staff Briefing Sessions
- Feedback from Team Meetings

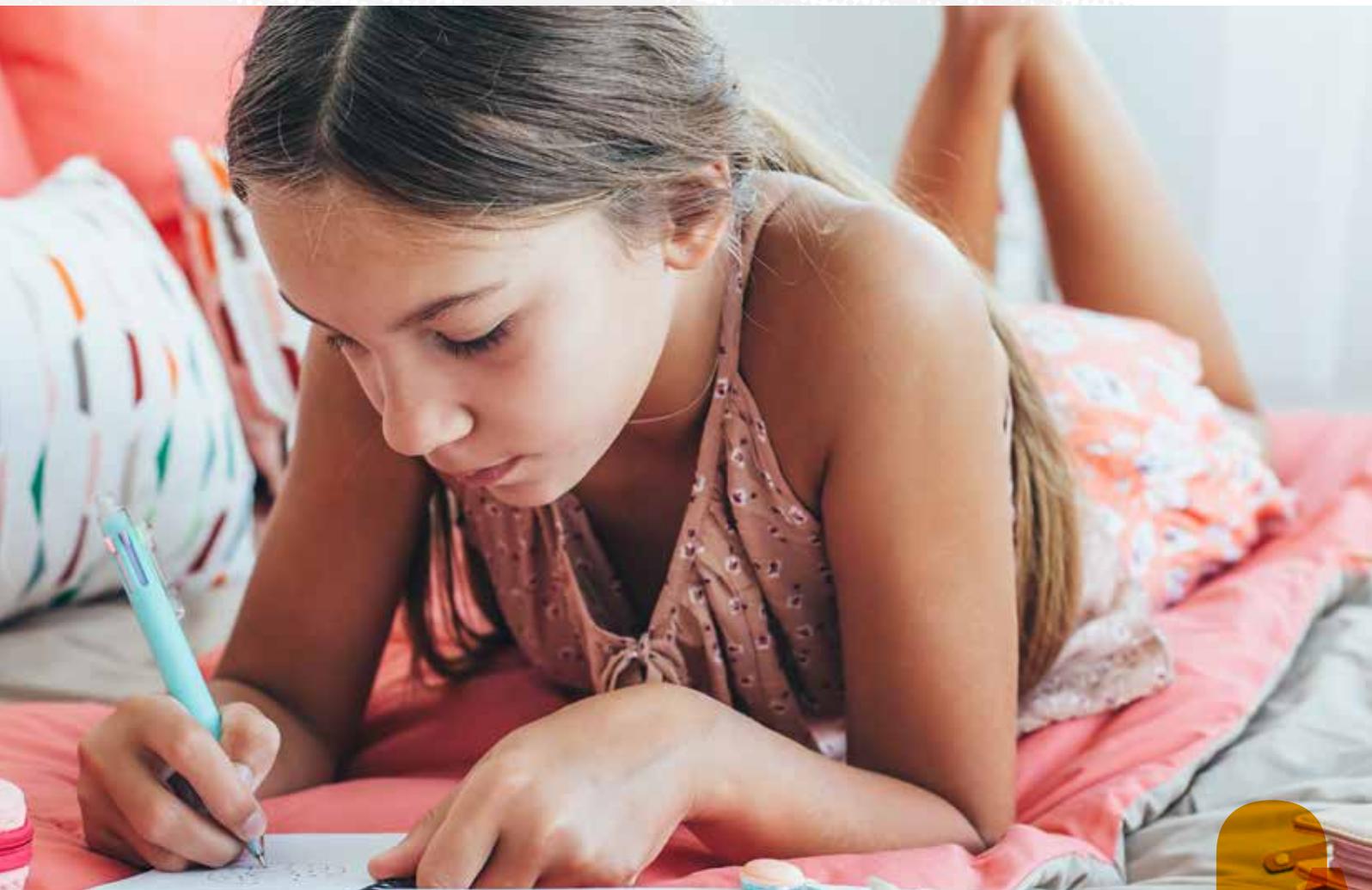
### We will evaluate Qualitative Data through:

- Monthly file audits
- Thematic audits
- Internal file audits by Team Managers as part of the supervision process
- IRO and CP Chair's reports and challenges
- Direct observation of practice
- Multi-agency file audit with the TWSCB
- Supervision audit
- External audit activity including peer audits, Ofsted inspections and TWSCB audit activity
- Findings of Serious Case Reviews and Management Reviews



## Impact (what difference did it make?)

- Survey/consultation feedback from our service users
- Complaints and compliments
- Safeguarding file audit activity
- Improved performance information – e.g. around re-referrals, repeat child protection plans, education achievements of children in care, care leavers in suitable accommodation, employment, education and training etc.
- Feedback from the Rights and Representations service



# 4

# IMPLEMENTING THE FRAMEWORK: QUALITY STANDARDS

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# IMPLEMENTING THE FRAMEWORK: QUALITY STANDARDS

Quality assurance is an integral part of each and every practitioner's daily duties and should be part of "business as usual".

The programme of activities and processes is set out in an action plan/timetable that sits on the Quality Assurance Share point site, and will be a working document regularly reviewed by Children's Services Management Group. It will incorporate the expectations of managers within the service. Each service area quality assures aspects of its core business on a systematic basis via its own Quality Assurance Framework. This rolling programme of activity allows for patterns and themes to emerge and actions then undertaken to address circumstances as they arise ie through thematic audit etc.

On a day to day basis QA activity is undertaken by Locality Team Leaders, Team Managers, Group Managers, Consultant Social Workers, the Principal Social Worker, Quality Assurance Manager, Service Improvement Manager, IROs, SDMs and AD in authorising a range of activities and actions e.g. signing off assessments including early help and statutory assessments, viability assessments, agreeing to placements, Care Plans, Child Protection Plans etc., together with identified deep dive analysis.

## Sharing the learning

### With staff

Performance and staff briefings will be held and will involve practitioners from across the service. The aim will be to celebrate success, identify areas of potential risk and will adopt a "turning the curve" process which will enable practitioners to identify the priority outcomes they want to improve.

### With Team Managers and Locality Team Leaders

Following the quality assurance management meetings held regularly, the SDMs will feedback to Team Managers and Locality Team Leaders outcomes of the discussions held, and share audit findings.

### With Senior Managers

The Service Delivery Managers are responsible for the oversight of the impact of the Quality Assurance framework in terms of their own service areas. They will ensure there is formal feedback to the Assistant Director, who will ensure feedback to the Director of Children's and Adult Services, elected members and TWSCB as appropriate.

Responsibilities of staff at all levels of the Service are set out in Appendix 1.

## How will we know how well we are doing it?

QUALITY STANDARD	WHAT DOES 'GOOD' LOOK LIKE?	HOW WILL WE MEASURE THIS?
<p><b>Assessments are good quality</b></p>	<p>Involve children/young people and their parents/carers</p> <p>Timely</p> <p>Proportionate</p> <p>Reflect historic information</p> <p>Identify risks and protective factors</p> <p>Result in a clear analysis of the child/young person's situation</p>	<p>Reports on timeliness</p> <p>Team managers' sign off of assessments</p> <p>Bi monthly service related audit activity</p> <p>"External" audit activity</p> <p>IRO scrutiny at reviews</p>
<p><b>Plans are good quality and SMART</b></p>	<p>Reflect assessment findings</p> <p>Are clear and outcome focussed with attributed actions which are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific</li> <li>• Measurable</li> <li>• Achievable</li> <li>• Realistic</li> <li>• Timescales are clear</li> </ul> <p>Other agencies are involved as appropriate</p>	<p>Service related audit activity</p> <p>"External" audit activity</p> <p>IRO scrutiny at reviews/IRO RAG ratings</p>
<p><b>Care Planning Meetings are held regularly</b></p>	<p>Held every six weeks until a child has a plan of permanence and then at least once between reviews.</p> <p>Meeting notes reflect the current situation of the child and outcomes are fed into CIC Reviews.</p>	<p>Minimal drift in cases.</p> <p>Clear and up to date records of the child's journey.</p>
<p><b>Child and family's voice is used to inform case planning and service delivery</b></p>	<p>Wishes and feelings of children/young people and families are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visible in assessments</li> <li>• Visible in notes of meetings</li> <li>• Reflected in plans</li> </ul> <p>Feedback from VOICE informs service planning</p>	<p>External audit, team related audit, service user feedback</p> <p>Suggestions acted upon from VOICE</p>

QUALITY STANDARD	WHAT DOES 'GOOD' LOOK LIKE?	HOW WILL WE MEASURE THIS?
<p><b>Our involvement makes a positive difference to outcomes for the child/ young person</b></p>	<p>Assessment and interventions achieve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced risk to children and young people</li> <li>• Positive changes made and sustained</li> <li>• Positive feedback from children/young people and their families</li> <li>• Positive feedback from others agencies in respect of outcomes e.g. Health, Education, YOS, Adult Services.</li> </ul>	<p>External audits</p> <p>Team manager feedback</p> <p>Annual survey feedback</p> <p>IRO questionnaire feedback following meetings</p> <p>Number of repeat CP Plans</p> <p>Number of repeat referrals</p> <p>Educational outcomes</p> <p>EETs improvement</p> <p>Stability of placements and learning from disruption meetings.</p>
<p><b>There is good quality staff supervision, management oversight and independent review</b></p>	<p>Supervision is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular</li> <li>• Consistent</li> <li>• Evidenced in recordings</li> <li>• Reflective</li> <li>• Leads to effective decision making and improved outcomes</li> </ul> <p>Rationale for decisions is clear and drift is prevented</p>	<p>Reporting on manager's decisions and relevant case notes.</p> <p>Internal team activity and external audits</p> <p>Permanence at second review (IRO)</p> <p>RAG Ratings</p> <p>Case supervision reports</p> <p>Findings of fostering survey</p> <p>"Getting to Good" improvements achieved.</p>
<p><b>We meet Statutory Requirements</b></p>	<p>All statutory requirements are met in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timescales for action</li> <li>• Statutory visits</li> <li>• Reviews</li> <li>• Legal proceedings</li> <li>• Core groups</li> <li>• Care planning meetings</li> <li>• Child protection conferences</li> <li>• Personal Education Plans</li> <li>• Unannounced visiting fostering</li> <li>• Child being seen</li> </ul>	<p>Reporting on timeliness of assessments</p> <p>Stat visits timescales</p> <p>Unannounced visits to foster placements</p> <p>PEPs etc.</p> <p>Child seen within timescales</p> <p>Internal and external audit</p> <p>IRO scrutiny</p> <p>Child and family feedback</p> <p>Feedback from virtual head.</p>

QUALITY STANDARD	WHAT DOES 'GOOD' LOOK LIKE?	HOW WILL WE MEASURE THIS?
<b>Visits are good quality</b>	Visits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are in line with statutory or service requirements</li> <li>• Have a clear purpose</li> <li>• Are recorded in detail to include agreed actions</li> <li>• Include the wishes and feelings of children/ young people</li> </ul>	Stat visits requirements fulfilled Reports Internal and external audit
<b>Quality of recording is good</b>	Recording is up to date, proportionate and clear Case files contain up to date chronologies and case summaries	Data quality reports Internal and external audit Management oversight case notes IRO scrutiny Feedback following case transfers
<b>There is good quality decision-making and application of thresholds</b>	Thresholds are applied consistently throughout the child's journey through our services Decisions are made appropriately and based on evidence Intervention reduces risk and improves outcomes Step up and down processes across the services are applied effectively and families experience them as seamless.	External audit at Front Door Number of S47s leading to ICPCs Outcome of LPMs Court outcomes aligned to plan ICPCs resulting in a CP Plan Proportion of cases stepped down that are re-referred Decrease in subsequent CP Plans
<b>We provide good quality intervention</b>	Children and young people and their families receive good quality services in line with service standards Practice is reflective Families are able to build sustainable relationships through having minimal change of social worker. Service users and colleagues are treated with respect and courtesy Diversity - children and young people's culture and diversity needs are recorded, considered and identified in assessments and reflected in plans	MACFA Audits Reporting of <i>identity</i> tab on protocol Internal and external audit Annual survey Feedback from other agencies Reflective group feedback Learning from complaints

QUALITY STANDARD	WHAT DOES 'GOOD' LOOK LIKE?	HOW WILL WE MEASURE THIS?
<p><b>We have a positive organisational culture</b></p>	<p>Staff working within the service feel valued and are provided with the support and challenge necessary for them to undertake demanding, complex roles.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feedback from staff</li> <li>Staff briefings</li> <li>Learning from exit interviews</li> <li>Induction feedback</li> <li>Participation at learning events</li> </ul>

# Appendix 1

## RESPONSIBILITIES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

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# RESPONSIBILITIES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITIES
<b>Practitioners (Early Help and Social Work)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure practice meets statutory requirements</li> <li>• Ensure practice meets professional standards (e.g. HCPC etc.)</li> <li>• Ensure practice in child-focussed and meets service standards</li> <li>• Ensure decisions are made appropriately</li> <li>• Seek manager advice where appropriate</li> <li>• Ensure recording is kept up to date</li> <li>• Ensure recording is in line with service standards</li> <li>• Work reflectively in order to continually improve practice</li> <li>• Participate in formal and informal opportunities for learning and reflection</li> <li>• Participate in reflective discussions about service improvements by providing your views, observations and suggestions.</li> </ul>
<b>Senior Practitioners/ Consultant Social Workers</b>	<p>As above, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote and monitor quality assurance with supervisees</li> <li>• Ensure staff are provided with supervision which is in line with service requirements and reflective.</li> <li>• Ensure staff have opportunities to develop their skills formally and informally</li> <li>• Ensure staff are able to participate in formal and informal opportunities for learning and reflection</li> <li>• Ensure that issues of capability are dealt with appropriately and in a timely way</li> <li>• Participate fully in quality assurance activities, such as auditing files as a standard part of supervision</li> </ul>
<b>Principal Social Worker</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Principal Social Worker will offer support to teams to ensure that practice improvements are embedded and secured.</li> <li>• Issues arising during the course of any work will be fed back routinely to the Assistant Director.</li> <li>• Key training issues identified by the Principal Social Worker will be notified to the Workforce Development Team to secure appropriate training.</li> </ul>

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITIES
<b>Independent Conference &amp; Reviewing Officers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure your practice meets statutory, professional and service standards</li> <li>• Ensure your practice is child-focussed</li> <li>• Ensure your recording is kept up to date</li> <li>• Act as ‘critical friends’ in promoting best practice in services to children and young people, and challenging where practice does not meet required standards</li> <li>• Ensure that Child Protection Plans provide the child with appropriate safeguarding, that they are achievable and are reviewed regularly.</li> <li>• Ensure that plans for Children in Care are based on a detailed and informed assessment, are up to date, effective and provide a real and genuine response to each child’s needs.</li> <li>• Monitor on an ongoing basis the quality of service provided to Children in Care, which also includes monitoring the performance of the Council’s function as a corporate parent, indentifying any areas of poor practice whether on an individual case basis or establishing collective patterns of concerns.</li> <li>• Contribute to the development and application of QA approaches for Council safeguarding service and the TWSCB</li> </ul>
<b>Team Managers and Locality Team Leaders</b>	<p>As above, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure quality assurance activities are undertaken in your team</li> <li>• Ensure day to day management oversight and authorisation activity considers quality assurance issues throughout the pathway e.g. is the assessment of good quality? Is the plan SMART? Is an external placement fully risk assessed and able to best meet the needs of the child?</li> <li>• Audit team files regularly as part of supervision and record on feedback template to enable shared learning</li> <li>• Participate in service level file audit activity and ensure feedback on individual audits is provided to practitioners, remedial actions completed and reported back as requested.</li> <li>• Ensure supervision audits are undertaken.</li> <li>• Participate in quality assurance learning sessions and ensure that learning is cascaded to team members for their information and reflection.</li> </ul>
<b>Service Delivery Managers</b>	<p>As above plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure team managers within your service area are undertaking quality assurance activities</li> <li>• Ensure learning from quality assurance activities is shared and used to inform improvements in practice</li> <li>• Attend Quality Assurance Meetings, with information about QA activity within your service area.</li> <li>• Feed information from the Quality Assurance meetings to team managers and ensure it is disseminated and used to inform reflective discussions</li> <li>• Undertake additional QA activities within your service area in response to practice or performance issues and share the learning within your own service area and the CSSSMT Quality Assurance meetings</li> </ul>

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITIES
<b>Assistant Director</b>	<p>As above plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure a ‘high support high challenge’ improvement culture within Children’s Services, so staff are aware of the importance of QA and their own responsibilities, confident to make decisions at the appropriate level, creative about solutions and feel able to discuss any concerns</li> <li>• Actively promote the importance of QA within Children’s Services and engage with QA activities</li> <li>• Ensure SDMs are encouraged and supported to participate fully in all QA activities, and hold them accountable for quality of services within their area</li> <li>• Provide SDMs with reflective supervision, and ensure QA activity and learning is discussed.</li> <li>• Undertake ‘grandparent manager’ audits of supervision as per agreed procedures</li> <li>• Participate in service level file audit activity and ensure SDMs are engaged fully in the process</li> <li>• Reflect on QA reports that are presented at SLT, take any agreed remedial action and report back to SLT on progress.</li> <li>• Feed back to Director of Children’s &amp; Adult Services (DCAS), Elected Members, TWSCB etc. as appropriate</li> </ul>
<b>Director</b>	<p>As above plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure ADs engage fully with agreed QA activity</li> <li>• Provide ADs with reflective supervision, to include discussion around service quality</li> <li>• Hold ADs accountable for service quality and engagement with QA within their service</li> </ul>
<b>Business Support Officers</b>	<p>Business Support Officers can help teams with quality assurance but should not be held accountable for issues regarding quality of practice. You can assist by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring your tasks are completed within agreed timescales and to good quality standards</li> <li>• Entering information onto electronic case recording systems accurately and in a timely manner</li> <li>• Reporting any practice quality issues to the relevant senior practitioners or team managers</li> <li>• Participating in reflective discussions about service improvements by providing your views, observations and suggestions.</li> </ul>