

Quality Assurance & Learning Framework

Herefordshire Council
Children and Young People Services

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Foreword

Dear Colleagues,

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 we constantly explore and build on areas of strength, and agree effective plans for improvement where risks are identified and addressed. 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 continual improvement.

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 want to do the best we can in our respective roles. 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.

**Darryl Freeman, Director of Children and Young People Services
Herefordshire Council.**



Darryl Freeman

Director of Children and Young
People Services

What is quality assurance?

Quality assurance in Herefordshire 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. Our quality assurance activity will demonstrate a consistent focus on our children, their experiences, voice and their outcomes. Children are central to all that we do in Herefordshire. We have embedded a culture of focus on IMPACT of all our activity. We are encouraging staff at all levels to identify, measure and analyse the impact for children, to ensure that our improvement activity is consistently leading to better outcomes for children.

Quality assurance is more than routinely counting numbers, meeting targets for performance indicators and periodically carrying out audits.

Our quality assurance activity is dynamic and evolving, with an embedded cycle of monitoring, reflection and learning, based on the principle that improvement is a continuous journey.

Improving outcomes for children and delivering good quality support and protection is everybody's business and is owned by us all. Managers across the service understand and undertake regular quality assurance activity in their teams and services.

Most importantly, we need to systematically collect accurate data and analysis of the quality of practice in Herefordshire to enable us to robustly analyse and scrutinise performance and better understand the lived experience and journey of children and families. Using learning and key messages from QA activity and performance data we are able to better understand and target our improvement activity at pace.

Herefordshire quality assurance activity is an integral part of everyday practice within our Children and Young People's Directorate.

Measuring the impact of service delivery is central to understanding and achieving improved outcomes for children. This requires a strong quality assurance system to be in place that can evidence services are being delivered effectively and to standards that enable children's welfare to be safeguarded and promoted and their outcomes to be maximised.

Why do we need quality assurance?

Herefordshire Council is committed to achieving excellence through continuous improvement, where children and young people 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 will help to:

- Ensure and evidence that children are being kept safe from harm and protected.
- Ensure that children's needs are met at the earliest stage.
- 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 roles both safely and effectively.

A key aim within this revision of this Quality Assurance Framework is to better integrate and strengthen the use of both qualitative and quantitative data to support an even more sophisticated and coherent practice story and approach to practice improvement.

The framework seeks to improve the quality of services by:

- Reviewing the quality of practice against standards and expectations regarding performance; data, local and national standards, regulatory requirements to support in getting things “right first time”
- Identifying strengths in practice that can be shared with others and built upon
- Spotting shortfalls in practice that require further work and improvement, including local and whole system action that leads to sustainable improvements and challenging historical custom and practice
- Ensuring that all staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities regarding quality assurance of practice, and that improving quality of practice is part of “business as usual” for all staff within Children and Families
- Fostering a culture of “high support, high challenge” that sits within a cycle that drives a culture of continuous improvement, tackling problems openly and honestly and leading to visible change
- Identifying learning and development needs for individuals, teams, practice areas, services and partners
- Embedding the voice of children and young people in practice and improvement activity.

Developing a positive Quality Assurance culture

Herefordshire recognise that it is vital that we learn from all our quality assurance activity and from feedback, both positive and challenging. The culture of the organisation is 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. In this commitment we will all ensure colleagues are supported and listened to when raising issues, and informed of actions to be taken. It is essential that practitioners feel part of audit activity and not “done to”.

Audits will be completed with the involvement of the practitioner enabling a learning opportunity for each practitioner, facilitating a learning opportunity between practitioner and auditor. This will ensure that the practitioner can contribute effectively, learn directly from the process and better understand what good practice looks like, understand decision making and application of thresholds of audit grades.

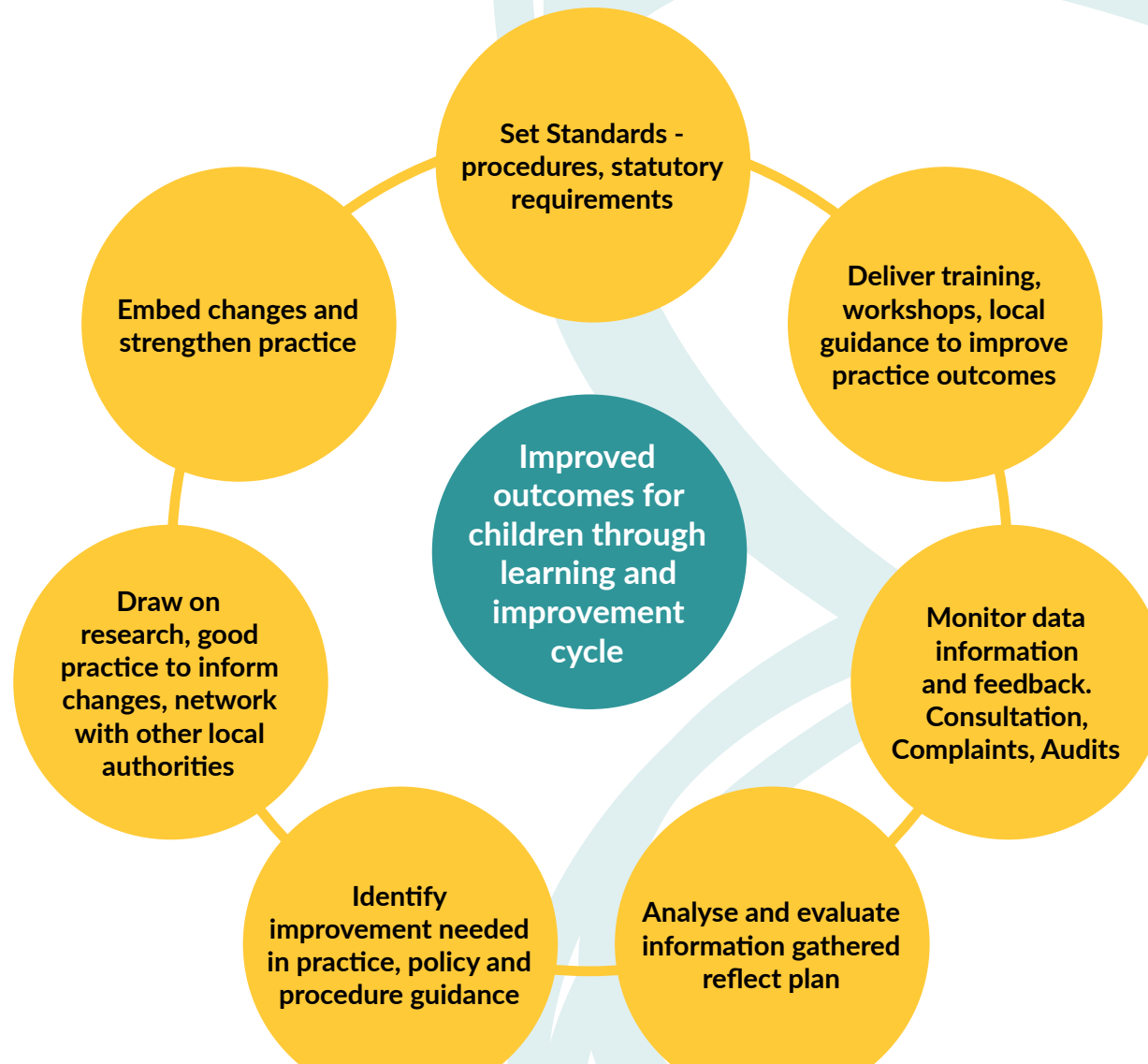
To support manager’s confidence and accuracy of audit completion, we are delivering a series of Best Practice in Auditing workshops and these will become part of the core training offer from the Academy.

Additionally we have provided managers with an exemplar audit for them to use and we have developed grade descriptors to ensure accurate and consistent grades are applied. (see appendix)

We have also implemented a Practitioner's Feedback Sheet (see appendix) to learn from our staff on their experiences of audit activity and inform future development of QA activity.

We have also implemented a Weekly Step Guide for auditors (see appendix).

Embedding Positive QA Cultures



Our standards, values and principles

The Council's Values

At Herefordshire Council, our **PEOPLE** values shape our future culture and underpin all of our work:

People - Treating people fairly, with compassion, respect and dignity.

Excellence - Striving for excellence, and the appropriate quality of service, care and life in Herefordshire.

Openness - Being open, transparent and accountable.

Partnership - Working in partnership and with all our diverse communities.

Listening - Actively listening to, understanding and taking into account people's views and needs.

Environment - Protecting and promoting our outstanding natural environment and heritage for the benefit of all.

As an organisation, we are proud to operate against a set of core defined principles:

Partnership - We collaborate to maximise our strengths and resources.

Resilience - We use resources wisely so Herefordshire is fit for future generations.

Integrity - We make decisions based on evidence and work with respect, openness and accountability.

Democracy - We strengthen local democracy, decision making and service delivery and involve more young people.

Engagement - We listen to and learn from our communities and help people connect through culture, creativity and care.

Our Practice Standards

Herefordshire has set out a clear set of practice standards for effective intervention with children, young people and their families.

It supports our vision that all children and young people in Herefordshire feel safe, loved, and valued, and grow up with the confidence and skills to be the best they can be.

Keeping children and young people at the centre of all we do.

Our Practice Principles.

1. Children and families are placed at the heart of everything we do.
2. Every child will have an assessment of their individual needs and will seek to promote family stability and safety.
3. Every child will have an assessment which reflects their own and their families strengths and assets.
4. All children's plans will explain what needs to happen by when
5. All children's case records will be clear using language that is easily understood.
6. All casework will be supported by regular and timely management oversight.
7. Staff will use strength based approaches to enhance working relationships with families.



Quality Assurance Framework

Practice Development

We all have a role in ensuring our work remains of a high standard and continues to meet the needs of the children, young people, and families we are supporting.

Through quality assurance activities we will demonstrate that we understand our own practice and the difference we are making to the lives of children and their families and carers through good use of data, information, family feedback, partner agency feedback, observations of practice, compliments, and complaints - always asking how we can make things better and being curious and innovative in our practice to achieve continuous improvement.

Quality assurance, both quantitative and qualitative activity is an integral part of each and every practitioner's daily duties and should be part of "business as usual". This work will be complemented and supported by work undertaken by the QA team and Senior Managers, who will undertake moderation activities, lead on thematic audits, and support operational managers in learning and improving practice standards.

On a day to day basis QA activity is undertaken Team Managers, Advanced Practitioners, the Principal Social Worker, Quality Assurance Manager, Quality Assurance Practitioners, Independent Reviewing Officers, CP Chairs, Service Managers, Heads of Service, Service Directors and the Corporate Director in authorising a range of activities and actions.

This happens as we sign off assessments including early help and statutory assessments, viability assessments, agreeing to placements, Care Plans, Child Protection Plans, for example, together with identified deep dive analysis.

What QA work looks like?

Activities and processes supporting our quality assurance framework:

- Weekly management information and performance meeting.
- Weekly performance meetings
- Monthly performance data and information
- Service/team/worker level data
- Case file audits undertaken
- Themed audits
- Multi agency audits
- Audit moderation
- Feedback and practice development.
- Checks and authorisation of a range of activities on the case recording system
- Responding to complaints and compliments.
- Quarterly Diagnostic (mock inspections)

We will also gather the views of practitioners through:

- Feedback as part of the audit activity
- Feedback to Corporate Leadership Team, Directorate Leadership Team and Councillors
- Feedback via the Staff Reference Group
- Feedback at Staff Briefing Sessions
- Feedback from Team Meetings
- Feedback from Practice Week
- Feedback from the annual staff health check survey

We will evaluate feedback from children and their families through:

- Enabling participation and responding to children, young people and families and Practitioner Voices:
- Surveys of children and young people.
- Immediate feedback
- Complaints and compliments
- Safeguarding file audit activity
- Feedback from independent advocates
- Children in Care Council (Your Voice Matters) activity
- Placement Review Meetings (Disruptions)
- Children's feedback from child protection conferences and reviews and child in care reviews

We will evaluate Qualitative information through:

- Monthly file audits
- Thematic audits
- Internal file audits by Managers
- IRO and Child Protection (CP) Chairs reports and challenges
- Direct observation of practice
- Multi-agency File audit
- Supervision audit
- Performance management boards
- External audit activity including peer audits, Ofsted inspections and Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) audit activity
- Findings of Rapid Reviews and Children's Safeguarding Practice Reviews
- Management oversight on case recordings
- Escalation by IROs and CP Chairs

Responding to Findings

Limiting judgements

Where a subsection is graded as inadequate, it is unlikely that the overall judgement can be anything other than inadequate.

Audits where practice has been judged to be inadequate.

Herefordshire have significantly strengthened arrangements to respond to children following an audit judging practice to be inadequate. We have implemented a workflow and template for actions and review (see appendix) where the HoS and Service Manager ensure a multi-disciplinary action meeting takes place within 3 days. Where risk is identified a visit to the child will also take place by the SW. This action setting meeting will plan actions from the audit, and allocate these to SW, Child Protection Chair, IRO, PA etc. We use the SMART approach as a basis for creating goals: specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely. The plan will show; who is involved, the interventions and how change will happen in a timely way to ensure the best chance of success. The clearer we are together about the outcomes we are working towards the more likely that change will happen.

Audit action tracking

Actions from all audits are now recorded on a QA tracker held by the QA team, and TMs are responsible for sharing with the QA team when these have been completed, any additions and the reviewing mechanisms. Service Managers will be responsible for ensuring Team Managers implement reviewing mechanisms and ensure improving outcomes for children are sustained and reviewed effectively. In this way we now keep a centralised record of all children's cases audits and can ensure oversight of the impact of audit and subsequent remedial actions. We routinely record all audit grades for subsections and overall and use this data in our monthly QA report to demonstrate trajectory of improvement and target areas for development.

Reporting Cycle

The QA team will provide a monthly audit compliance report and a monthly overview of grade application for overall audits and subsections. A monthly best practice briefing will additionally be shared with staff to reflect key messages. Quarterly QA reports will provide an overview of the quarter grade applications, compliance as well as an overview of learning from complaints, feedback, voice of the child, escalations, rapid reviews, multi-agency audit and other QA activity.

All of the above reports will be fed back to staff groups on a monthly basis and will then feed into a quarterly Quality Assurance Report; which will determine the development of a robust and responsive Learning and Development Plan and a single agency themed audit schedule; it will also if necessary feed information to the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership (HSCP) via the Children's Quality Assurance Sub Group representative, which will help the HSCP to determine the Multi Agency audit schedule.

This reporting cycle will enable us to build a library of month on month audit activity, key areas requiring improvement, identify cohorts of children to audit and ensure we maximise, and evidence, the impact of all QA activity.

The Framework sets out the expectation that workforce development plans, service plans and personal development plans will evidence that they are shaped by the learning from the quality assurance process.

Best Practice Briefings

The QA team and PSW will develop a one page Best Practice Briefing to all staff. These will be mapped against audit findings and will target practice improvement in key areas, for example, purposeful social work visits, direct work with children, professional curiosity, plans, assessments and more.

These are intended to be a five minute read and will be used by managers to generate practice discussions in team meetings and supervision and enable a focus on good quality practice.

The Principal Social Worker will utilise the learning from quality assurance activity and develop procedures, support, reflective sessions and training opportunities to improve areas of practice in conjunction with the Academy.

How we will know that we have been successful

It is critical that we forensically track the impact of our improvement activity to ensure that it is leading to better outcomes and experiences for children. We remain vigilant in our scrutiny of QA activity and impact and are flexible and professionally agile in adapting to emerging themes.

1. Children and their families say they feel more respected and able to make good decisions for their children with the support of professionals
2. Parents, children and carers say that they were listened to and actively contributed to their children's plans
3. More children and young people are safely remaining with their families.
4. Length of time that children require intervention or support is only for as long as it is needed.

5. Children and young people experience stability and permanence whether at home or in care without delays
6. Policies, procedures and guidance support best practice and empower practitioners to be creative and innovative.
7. A quality assurance process aligned with the strengths based approach demonstrates that we measure what really matters to children, young people and families, and drives improvements to practice.
8. Caseloads are manageable and practitioner tools enhance practice, maximising time with families.
9. All staff are confident using strengths based approach in a consistent manner and case audits show fidelity to the approach.
10. Feedback from families, practitioners and partners is regularly analysed and informs service development.
11. Our partners tell us that they have experienced multi-agency collaboration, that strengths based approach is helping them to make a positive difference with families.
12. Partners tell us they feel confident using the "professional differences" policy when needed.

There is clear evidence of learning from assurance processes both in children's lives and systematically through closing the loop processes.

Implementing the Framework: Sharing and Acting on the Learning

Direct feedback from audits, observation of practice, practitioner events will all be used in addition to staff briefings involving 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.

A regular QA briefing will be circulated to all staff to update them on quality assurance activity and provide senior leaders with an overview of each month’s audit grades and compliance rates.

With Team Managers

The team managers are responsible for oversight of practitioners’ work. They will assure day to day activity and support workers to meet practice standards. Team managers are responsible in ensuring audit recommendations/actions are completed.

They will guide and direct workers' activity, provide oversight and QA key documents via sign off - e.g. plans and assessments. They will undertake file checks / audits of our work to monitor quality, consistency and develop individual learning plans with staff to help all meet the standards we have set.

With Service Managers

The Service Managers are responsible for the oversight of the impact of the Quality Assurance Framework within their own service areas. They will monitor learning plans for their service to ensure actions are completed and will provide updates to performance meetings and boards. They will feedback to the Heads of Service who will collate strengths, learning and challenges for the Service Director responsible for that part of the service.

With Senior Managers

The Heads of Service and Service Directors will work together to lead and deliver the Service direction and ensure that our working environment is appropriate for continuous learning and development. The Heads of Service will collate information from their areas and liaise with Service Directors, who will ensure that the Corporate Director for Children and Young People is aware of our achieved standards, outcomes and performance across the QA framework, as well as challenges and focus areas to support improvement.

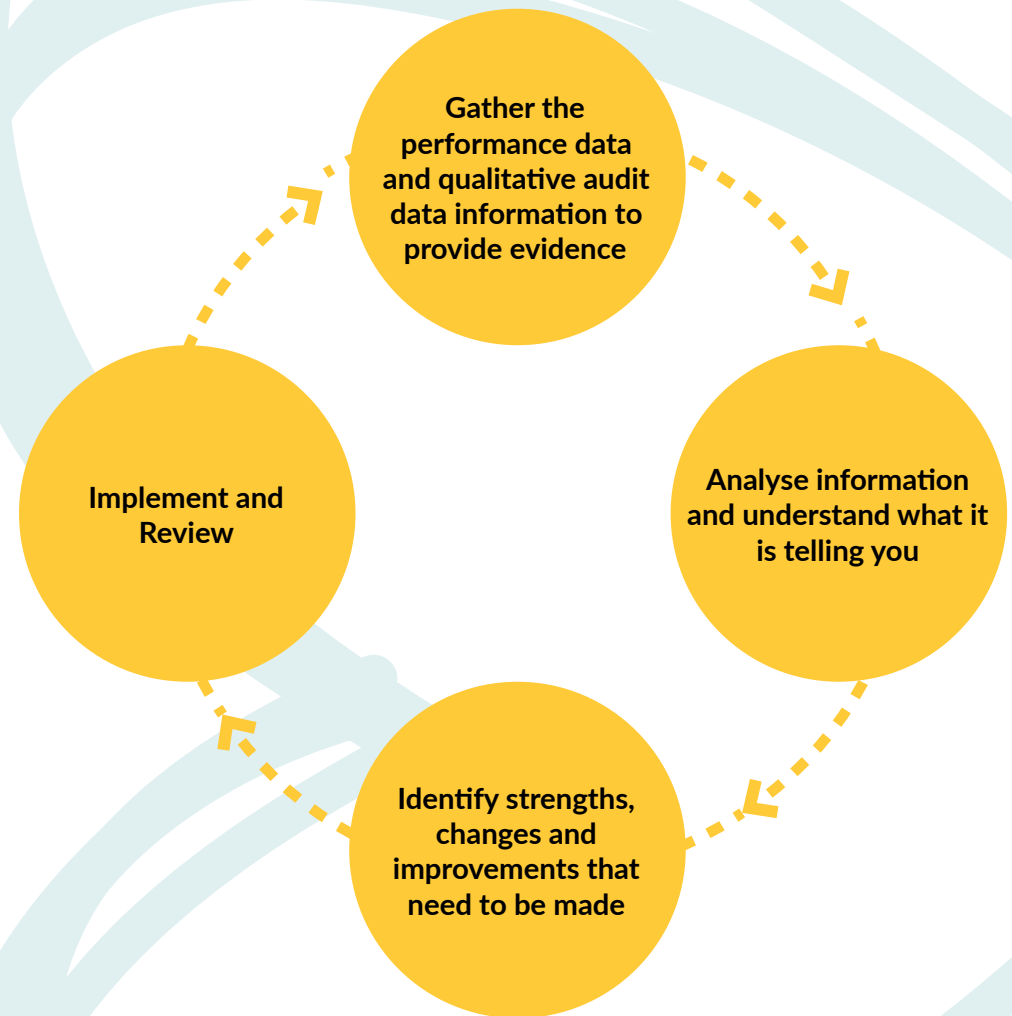
The Continuous Improvement Model

This subjects the performance information into systematic analysis, from which knowledge may be gained to inform service development and improvement.

It is expected that this continuous knowledge acquisition will drive evidence-based practice. This learning will be passed on through direct work, training, provision of guidance documents etc. to improve outcomes for children and young people.

Examples of which would include (amongst others):

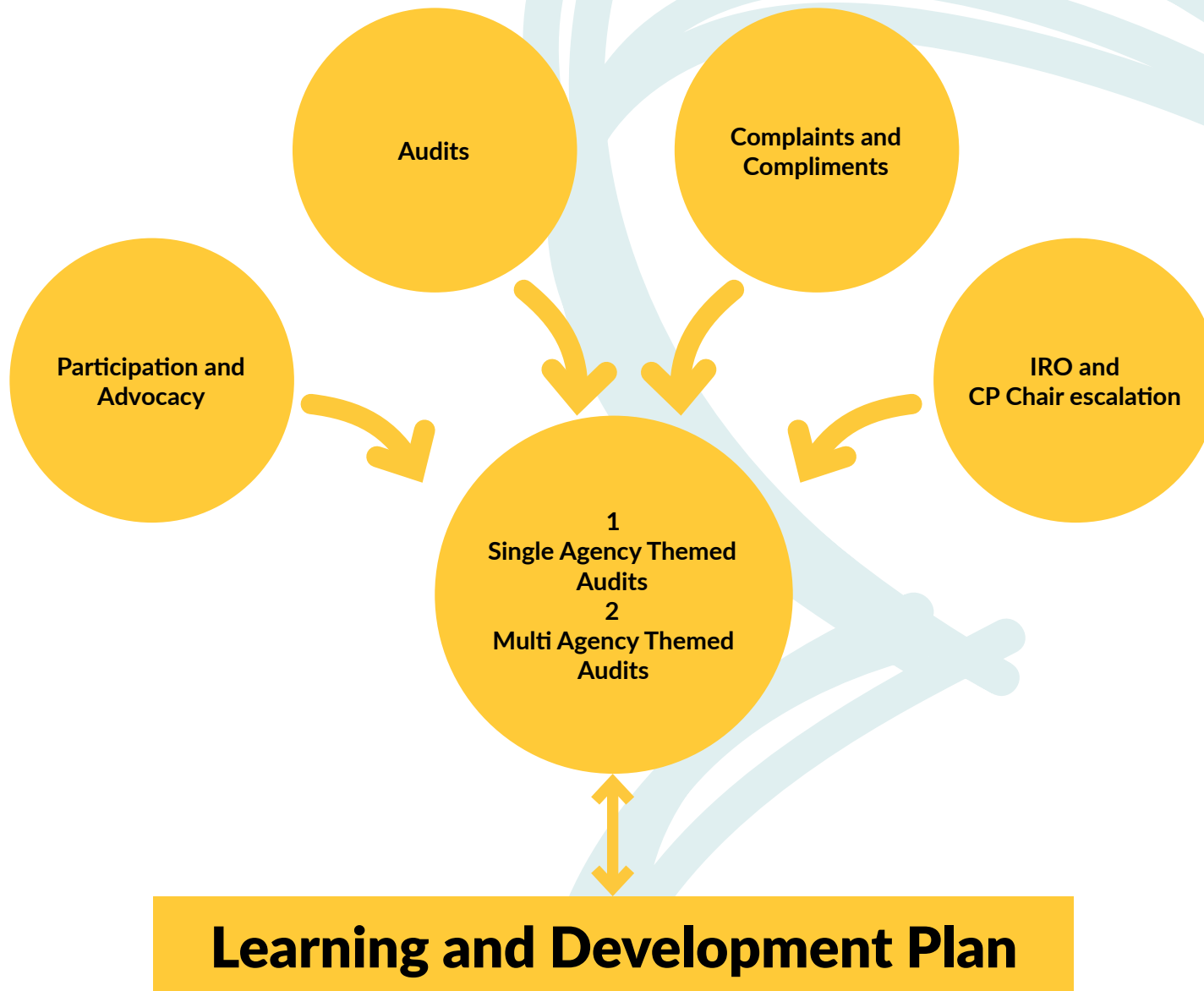
- Responsiveness to assessed need and the wishes of children and families.
- Reviewed / revised policies and procedures.
- Integration of training into practice.
- Workforce development strategies – learning, development and recruitment of staff.



How will we know we are doing it?

Practice Standard	What does 'good' look like?	How will we measure this?
Children and families will be placed at the heart of everything we do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve children/young people and their parents/carers in shaping plans and decisions • We will listen to children • We will work with children pro-actively taking account of their needs • We will deliver relationship-based practice with children and families • We will involve them in genuine partnership • Timely Proportionate • Reflect historic information identify risks and protective factors • Result in a clear analysis of the child/young person's situation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports on timeliness • Team managers' sign off of assessments • Audit activity "external" Audit activity IRO / CP chairs • Audit activity • Feedback from children and families • Scrutiny by DLT and CLT
Every Child will have an Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve children/young people and their parents/carers in shaping plans and decisions • Reflect the child's life experiences • Include wider partners and family views • Regularly updates to take account of changes • Timely Proportionate • Reflect historic information and identify risks and protective factors • Result in a clear analysis of the child/young person's situation • Detailed genogram will be included • Safety planning assessments of children will be clear • Written in clear and friendly way 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports on timeliness • Managers' sign off of assessments • Performance reports on timeliness • Audit activity • Feedback from IRO/CP chairs • Feedback from children and families • Feedback from partners
Plans are good quality and SMART	<p>Reflect assessment findings Are clear and outcome focussed with attributed actions which are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific • Measurable • Achievable • Realistic • Timescales are clear • Other agencies are involved as appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service-related audit activity "external" audit activity • IRO scrutiny at reviews • CP Chair scrutiny • Audit activity • Management sign off/oversight • Children and family feedback

Practice Standard	What does 'good' look like?	How will we measure this?
Children's records will be clear and accessible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language will be easy to understand and not jargon • Recordings will be timely • Recordings will include reflection and analysis • Significant events will be explained and decisions evidenced • There will be explanation as to the purpose and impact of activity e.g. visits • There will be a pen picture of the child updated three monthly • Child and family views will be clearly recorded and confirmed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management supervision/ oversight • Audit activity • Scrutiny from CP chairs/IRO
Children's cases evidence regular Management Oversight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular, recorded management oversight will be on records • Manager's directions and comment will be clearly recorded • Reflective supervision will be seen on files • Managers follow up of activity agreed will be evident • Evidence of managers reflecting on impact and agreeing next steps • Evidence of support and challenge • Evidence of managers impacting on case progression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management oversight on files • Supervision reports • Audit activity • CP chairs/IRO interventions • Staff feedback – through reference groups • Partners feedback • Child and family feedback
The use of strengths-based approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wishes and feelings of children/young people and families are: • Visible in assessments • Visible in notes of meetings • Reflected in plans • Feedback from Your Voice Matters informs service planning • Safety/wellbeing plans are evident • Multi agency plans are clear and proactive • Children and families are clear as to the concerns and actions required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • audit • service user feedback • Suggestions acted upon from Your Voice matters



Moderation, Learning and Improvement

Below are the key elements that will impact upon our service development and improvement work.

Moderation

The QA service will undertake monthly moderation to ensure that the quality and timeliness of audit completion is consistent and of good quality and is enabling senior leaders to have robust oversight of the quality of practice in Herefordshire. Auditors of those selected are able to join in the process and the moderated work will be thematically reported on into Quality Assurance and Improvement Board and afterwards out to the workforce as a set of feedback and learning opportunities.

Managers will use learning from audit activity within supervision sessions as well as within their team meetings. Managers will review the impact of learning to ensure they are influencing practitioner's practice. Additionally managers will be using these learning opportunities to identify team training needs and these will be mapped by the Academy to ensure training meets these needs. Managers will also use learning from QA activity to set team practice priorities, implement priorities from the established QAPIB and ensure the impact for children is measurable and well identified.

Closing the Loop

Learning from activity carried out as part of this framework will be used proactively to bring about continuous development and improvement in practice to ensure we improve outcomes for children, young people and their families. Arrangements now systematically ensure that actions/recommendations from audits are routinely tracked/closed down.

- If the outcome of any audit is an “inadequate” judgement, we now have a robust, timely response to respond to children (see

appendix). In addition our QA practice development leads/QA Officers will meet with the allocated social worker and team manager to facilitate a reflective conversation about the quality of practice and collaboratively devise an action plan to improve practice and therefore outcomes for that child(ren).

- Action Learning Sets will be delivered by our QA Practice Development Leads/QA Officers and Principal Social Worker. The subject matter for these ALS will be informed by our quality assurance work and offered separately to all levels of the organisation.
- Monthly reports will be shared by the QA team reporting on key themes from audit activity and these areas will be mapped to ensure our Academy training offer matches identified staff development.
- A separate monthly audit compliance report will be shared to ensure we are tracking completion of audits by managers.
- Quarterly and annual Quality Assurance Reports will be produced drawing together learning and themes from quality assurance activity undertaken and actions that need to be taken in response to findings. These will be presented to SMT, DLT and Members as required. These will include learning from feedback from children, families, and partners as well as from complaints, compliments, escalations, rapid reviews and independent reviews. Monthly Highlights reports will also be completed and shared with SMT/DLT to share learning from routine monthly audit activity
- A monthly two page Best Practice Briefing to staff will be shared by the PSW, in light of emerging areas for development, with links to learning and this is aimed as a tool for managers to use within supervision and team meetings to discuss best practice in targeted areas. Managers will be expected to review their impact on practice.
- These reports will also be shared and discussed by the PSW at the monthly Service Development Meetings/Managers meetings.

- Themes from the quality assurance activity will inform monthly practice briefings and a rolling programme of practice development workshops delivered by the Academy.
- Child, Young Person and Family Feedback annual report and feedback templates and guidance.
- Complaints and Compliments, quarterly and annual report
- All services are encouraged to share learning opportunities with each other through the Social Work Academy by allowing their presentation and learning materials to be stored and made available.
- A library of good practice exemplars will be held and updated by the Academy. The learning from QA activity will inform the review of the types of exemplars required.

Role	Responsibilities
Independent Conference & Reviewing Officers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure practice meets statutory, professional and service standards • Ensure practice is child-focused • Ensure recording is kept up to date • Act as 'critical friends' in promoting best practice in services to children and young people • Ensure that Child Protection Plans provide the child with appropriate safeguarding, that they are achievable and are reviewed regularly • 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 • Monitor on an ongoing basis the quality of service provided to children in Care and children subject to child protection plans, which also includes monitoring the performance of the wider children's services • Function as a corporate parent, identifying any areas of poor practice whether on an individual case basis or establishing collective patterns of concerns.
Team Managers, Early Help Team Leaders	<p>As above, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure a 'high support, high challenge' improvement culture within service areas, so staff are aware of the importance of QA and their own contribution to it • Ensure quality assurance activities are undertaken in the team • 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? • Audit team undertake regular audits as part of supervision and record on feedback template to enable shared learning • 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 • Ensure supervision audits are undertaken • Participate in quality assurance learning sessions and ensure that learning is cascaded to team members for their information and reflection.

Service Managers	<p>As above plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure a ‘high support, high challenge’ improvement culture within service areas, so staff are aware of the importance of QA and their own contribution to it • Ensure team managers within their service area are undertaking quality assurance activities • Ensure learning from quality assurance activities is shared and used to inform improvements in practice • Attend Quality Assurance meetings, with information about QA activity within the service area. • Feed information from the Quality Assurance meetings to team managers and ensure it is disseminated and used to inform reflective discussions • Undertake additional QA activities within service area in response to practice or performance issues and share the learning within own service area and the Quality Assurance and Performance Board (QAPIB)
Head of Service & Above	<p>As above plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure a ‘high support, high challenge’ improvement culture within service areas, so staff are aware of the importance of QA and their own contribution to it • Responsibilities, confident to make decisions at the appropriate level, creative about solutions and feel able to discuss any concerns • Actively promote the importance of QA and engage with QA activities • Ensure all Service managers are encouraged and supported to participate fully in all QA activities, and hold accountable for quality of services within their area • Provide Service Managers with reflective supervision, and ensure QA activity and learning is discussed. • Participate in Service level file audit activity and ensure Service Managers are engaged fully in the process • Reflect on QA reports that are presented, take any agreed remedial action and report back to SMT and DLT on progress • Feed back to Elected Members, Safeguarding Partnership as appropriate.
Business Support Officers	<p>Business Support Officers can help teams with quality assurance but should not be held accountable for issues regarding quality of practice. They can assist by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring their tasks are completed within agreed timescales and to good quality standards • Entering information onto electronic case recording systems accurately and in a timely manner • Reporting any data quality issues to the relevant practitioners or team managers • Participating in reflective discussions about service improvements by providing their views, observations and suggestions.

Summary of QA Programme of activity

Introduction

We have identified the requirement to develop strong audit capacity as part of the long-term strategy to monitor and assure quality of practice, improvement and learning. We are therefore developing an audit team as part of service development to ensure capacity to undertake core audits, support ongoing training to managers and staff in undertaking their audits, moderation processes, closing the loop activity and capacity to undertake thematic audits. The audit team will also provide capacity to support the partnership in undertaking multi agency audits and assurance processes.

Update

Our Audit and learning work is complemented by thematic audit activity as per the draft schedule below. It is proposed that some of the thematic audits will be multi agency

The outcomes and analysis of this work is shared through monthly qualitative reports to DLT and through workshops with managers and partners

The programme will consist of: -

- **Collaborative audits each month** – these will be led by an auditor with the social worker and / or manager. The case will be selected at random
- **thematic audits** – these will focus on a specific area and the quantity will depend on the area considered, for example the MASH thematic will cover strategy meetings, section 47, decision-making, step-up step down, assessment NFA. This will enable triangulation of findings and an in-depth overview of the process in that area.

There will be some aspects in these processes that are undertaken with the partners and / or staff. The audits will each have templates developed for future use to enable accurate comparisons on performance to be made when audits are repeated.

- **The senior manager audits** – Cases will be selected at random and will use the templates agreed
- **Team manager level audits** – The team managers will be a key part of the ongoing audit program but the aim is to achieve the targets set whilst enabling time and space to undertake the implementation of learning and closing the loop activity. It is also proposed that some of the thematic audit work may include team manager level staff

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Status	Final document, as approved by Divisional Leadership Team (DLT)		
Subject	Processes and behaviours for the purpose of achieving and demonstrating excellence in services for children and young people.		
Title	Quality Assurance & Learning Framework November 2022		
Type	Policy guidance for the children's social care workforce and relevant others		
		Approval Log	
		Impact assessment by	
		To be agreed by	SMT and Information Governance Manager
		To be approved by	DLT
		Finally to be ratified by	DCS
		To be reviewed by	SMT
		Review date	May 2023

Version Log					
Version	Status	Date	Description of change	Reason for change	Pages affected
1.0	Final draft	20221206			
1.1	Final + 1	20221213	Minor corrections, formatting	Formatting errors	All
1.2	Final + 2	20221214	Document management controls	Records management policy requirement	All
1.3	Published	20221221			

Appendix 1 - Audit and Moderation Process

Please click on the links below to access all the online resources

[Best Practice in Auditing workshops](#)

[Audit tool](#)

[Grade descriptors](#)

[Closing the Loop](#)

[Escalation Processes & Flowcharts](#)

[Tracking of children where practice has been judged, through audit, to be inadequate.](#)

[Thematic Audit Templates](#)