



Quality Assurance Framework

February 2022

“Only those organisations which constitute themselves as a learning system can successfully adapt and reinvent themselves within a context of continual change” - (Chard & Ayre 2010)

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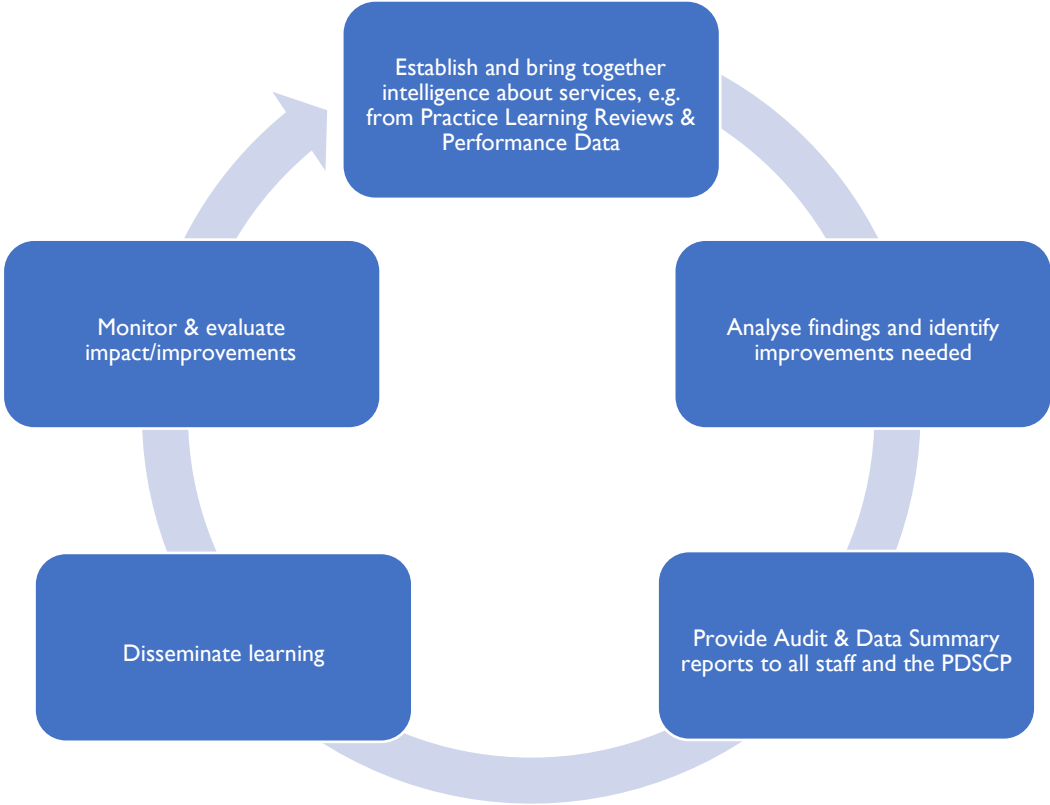
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Introduction – What is Quality Assurance?

This quality assurance framework is designed to promote a culture of continuous learning and improvement, by undertaking a range of assurance activities and drawing on a range of sources of information to identify both ‘what is working well and why’ and ‘what we need to do better’ to ensure children and families receive high quality services that improve their lives.

Fig 1: The quality assurance cycle



*PDSCP Pan Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership

In Bournemouth, Christchurch, and Poole (BCP) we have high aspirations to provide the best possible services and outcomes for the children, young people, and families we work with. To do this we must have a clear understanding and vision for what good and outstanding practice looks like.

A focus on quality assurance is not simply a focus on whether systems and processes are being adhered to, but on the impact and outcomes of those processes and whether our practice is leading to improvements in the lives of the children, young people, and families we are working with. We will ensure that positive outcomes are evident, and children are safe through high quality practice.

We will ensure we have effective quality assurance mechanisms in place to evaluate our services, provide timely and effective remedial actions when required and provide the

evidence of whether our services are meeting these good and outstanding practice expectations. The quality assurance framework seeks to keep a steadfast and optimistic focus on continuous service improvement.

Providing high quality, child and family focussed outcomes for our children, young people, and families in BCP requires strong whole service and whole system commitment. This includes ensuring that quality assurance activities are embedded on a day-to-day business as usual basis in all teams and services and by staff at all levels. Leadership, challenge, reflection, and learning are embedded throughout our quality assurance approach supported by the specific standards outlined in our policies and procedures (our Toolbox).

The engagement of children, young people and families is crucial to service effectiveness, and we want our quality assurance approach to ensure that the child is central in our work and that the voice of the child is clearly heard in all we do by gaining direct feedback as part of all Practice Learning Reviews. Our quality assurance framework will also enable us to draw this together from a wide range of other sources of information to evaluate the effectiveness of our local practice and to inform learning and further improvement.

We recognise that we can only achieve our vision to improve the lives of all the children, young people, and families we work with through effective partnership with families and across partner agencies, including with wide variety of voluntary and community sector partners, placing family's needs at the centre of everything we do.

Building a Quality Culture in BCP – Values & Principles

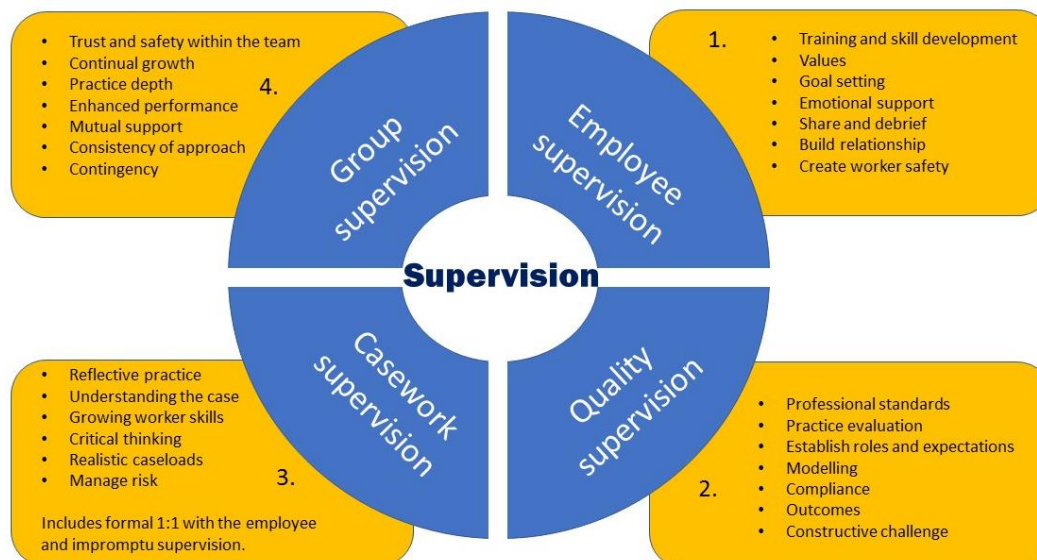
To develop a culture of continuous learning and improvement it is important that all staff understand their quality assurance roles and responsibilities. This understanding and accountability will be underpinned by a robust cycle of feedback and learning to drive the continuous development of a learning culture where problems are addressed openly and honestly and is embedded throughout Children's Social Care and Early Help Services.

We are committed to the development of a quality culture which encourages everyone to speak up or identify emerging problems at an early stage. Whilst we aim to get things right first time, we also recognise we may not always achieve this. Our commitment to learning will enable us to focus both on what has not gone well, as well as what has and how to build on those strengths to improve.

This framework encompasses the quality assurance activity that Team Managers and Service Managers, as well as the relevant and accountable Service Directors, perform as part of their business-as-usual management practice. Activity such as the assurance of a care plan; a court statement; a fostering assessment, a disruption meeting, or the quality of a child protection plan or the observation and quality assurance of supervision, are all day-to-day assurance activities undertaken in line with BCPs policies and procedures (our Toolbox) and this framework should be read in conjunction with those policies which can be found here [Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Children's Services Procedures Manual \(proceduresonline.com\)](http://proceduresonline.com).

Supervision Policy & Framework

To support whole service improvement BCPs Supervision Policy [Local Resources \(proceduresonline.com\)](http://proceduresonline.com) provides a framework of the requirements of good quality supervision that helps practitioners achieve the best possible outcomes for children, young people, and families:



(Source BCP Supervision Policy)

The BCPs Supervision Policy ensures that as part of the supervisory process, a worker's practice is cross referenced against the competencies outlined in the DfE Knowledge and Skills Statements for Children and Families Practitioners, in line with their role and position in the organisation and that opportunities for ongoing learning and development are identified. A useful link to support the mapping of this process is [Knowledge and Skills Statement for child and family social work: Mapping Resource \(Research in Practice\)](#).

Observation of Practice

It is an expectation that at least annually the supervisor will observe each worker undertaking direct practice by way of 'live supervision': this is the process of directly observing practice and providing immediate feedback. The frequency of such observation and degree of support offered during these sessions will be dependent on both the experience of the supervisee being observed and the complexity of the work being undertaken. Such sessions provide a unique opportunity to support supervision in all its functions, from managerial oversight of development and practice competence, through to the support and understanding of complex case interventions. In addition to enhancing opportunities for direct feedback, live supervision may also complement the development of skills and learning through agreement to co-work sessions and directly model alternative approaches to practice. It is recommended that live supervision is supported by the understanding and use of

established practice frameworks to enable both supervisors and supervisees to get the best out of this shared process.

Quality Assurance of Supervision

BSPs Supervision Policy sets out that it is an expectation that at least annually the manager of the supervisor will observe a supervision and offer feedback to the supervisor about areas of strength and areas for development. Service managers are expected to monitor reports that show the frequency of supervision sessions with employees and take action if necessary. Service managers will regularly check the supervision records maintained by the team manager and confirm supervision is occurring at the correct frequency and take action if necessary. Service managers will also talk to staff and ensure that supervision is occurring at the correct frequency and standard. The quality and standard of supervision will be part of the ongoing Quality Assurance activity.

Our Values



The principles of this framework are underpinned by our core professional values that guide our Children's Social Care and Early Help Services.

To be effective the Quality Assurance Framework will be:

- **Child centred:** the focus of quality assurance will be on the experience, progress and outcomes of children and families and what difference we have made to a child's life.

- **Strengths based:** quality assurance will focus upon strengths whilst identifying where practice can be improved by utilising an appreciative inquiry approach.
- **Evidence based:** quality assurance activity will draw on both quantitative and qualitative data; effective and accurate performance information will be routinely analysed alongside undertaking audits of practice.
- **Outcome focused:** whilst attention will be given to evidence of processes and procedures being adhered to, the focus of quality assurance will be upon outcomes achieved for the child.
- **Positive:** our approach to quality assurance will be positive – looking at informing and encouraging improvement and supporting the development of staff and services through the learning approaches adopted.
- **Reflective:** our quality assurance framework is designed to promote reflective practice and shared learning.
- **Supporting a Learning culture:** we will learn from everything we do, the learning gained will inform how we develop future practice and services across the wider service for the benefit of all children and families.
- **Restorative:** quality assurance will be restorative. Instead of a top-down approach, quality assurance work will be based on working with staff and managers and building relationships. As a restorative process quality assurance will be characterised by **high expectations, high support, and high challenge**.

Performance Data and Quality Assurance

As with quality assurance, performance assurance is everyone's responsibility with all staff having a role to play. All staff across Children's Social Care and Early Help Services are responsible for the quality of their own work and their individual performance. Managers have an additional responsibility to monitor and address performance within their service area or team and with individual staff members where necessary.

Effective use of data and performance indicators is an essential element of beginning to understand the quality of practice and services provided, however in addition to this, effective quality assurance systems need to be in place to determine the story behind the data. Robust analysis of accurate performance information will assist with quality assurance activity.

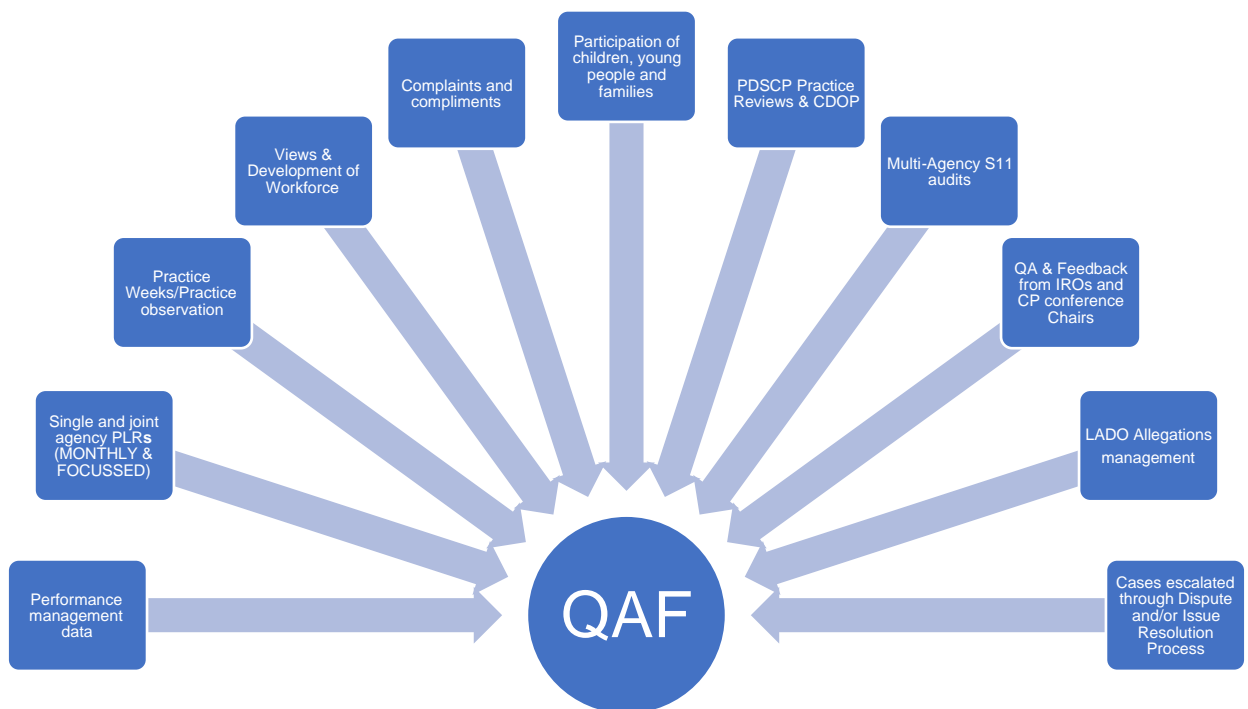
Our quality assurance framework enables us to bring together a range of evidence, both quantitative and qualitative, to help us evaluate the effectiveness of our services. At the heart of this framework is a recognition that to understand our practice and performance in BCP we need to ask the Ofsted self-evaluation questions:

- *What do we know about the quality and impact of social work practice in our teams and service areas?*
- *How do we know it?*
- *What are our plans for the next 12 months to maintain or improve practice?*

In BCP these questions are underpinned by professional curiosity to understand the lived experience of the child, what professional intervention might feel like to children and young people and what impact it has on their lives. Triangulation and analysis of all assurance evidence is used in a continuous cycle (see Fig 1) and learning is translated into whole service change through the service improvement plan.

Assuring & Improving - how we will evaluate the quality and impact of services

Fig 2. Elements of the quality assurance framework



*LADO Local Authority Designated Officer

*IRO Independent Reviewing Officer & Child Protection Chair

*CDOP Child Death Overview Panel

- **Complete a programme of collaborative monthly Practice Learning Reviews** throughout the year to assess progress in improving practice and identify priorities for learning and development.
- **Complete a programme of focussed (thematic) Practice Learning Reviews** where there are known or emerging issues for cohorts of children or aspects of practice.

- **Undertake desk top audits**, which may also be referred to as dip-sampling to test out a hypothesis about performance.
- **A focussed and inclusive Practice Week** that creates time for reflective evaluation and direct observation of practice (including direct feedback from children and families). They will take place up to four times a year, and service leaders, managers and social workers from different service areas will spend time with frontline practitioners, observing their practice and finding out first-hand what is happening for the families they work with. Practice Weeks provide an opportunity to celebrate best practice and continue to develop areas of practice that require further scrutiny, it can include:
 - Observing Core Group meetings and Child Protection Conferences
 - Observing Child Looked After Reviews and Pathway Planning Meetings
 - Observing office and home visits with families
 - Undertaking audits alongside Social Workers and Early Help Practitioners
 - Visiting workplaces and talking with practitioners and managers
 - The participation of children and families
 - A presentation of the findings of each Practice Week
- **Performance Management Data** robust analysis of accurate performance information will assist with quality assurance activity.
- **Views and Development of the Workforce** capturing the voice of all front-line practitioners through practitioner forums and exit interviews provides a valuable opportunity to value and listen to the voice of all staff. We will ensure staff are part of QA activity and find ways to support them to see QA as a learning tool (*work with, not do to*). We will celebrate success and identify what needs to be better and encourage reflective feedback from practitioners, asking them what they have done well and what didn't go well, and what would help them. We aim to listen to staff about their experience of working for the organisation and use staff surveys and health checks.
- **Complaints & Compliments** collate and analyse feedback from those who use our services, and we will engage technology to gain learning from complaints and compliments.
- **Participation of children, young people & families** we utilise datasets which include indicators to monitor children and young people's participation. We aim to embed the voice of the child and family in assessment and care planning. As well as delivering participation activities with a genuine commitment to co-production.
- **Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews & other PDSCP audit activity** (e.g. Multi Agency Audits, s11 Audits) incorporate learning from outside the organisation, e.g. learning from CSPRs, other local authorities, Ofsted inspections and Peer Challenges and self-assess against this learning.
- **Quality Assurance & Feedback of IROs & LADO, Dispute Resolution** the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) /Child Protection Chair (CP Chair) quality

assurance role provides information in relation to the use of the Local Dispute Resolution Process and participation within conferences, sharing of reports, and permanency planning.

The Approach to Quality Assurance

Roles and Responsibilities

Practice Learning Reviews are completed by all managers within the service and at all levels: this includes the Corporate Director of Children's Services; the Service Director's Children's Social Care; the Principal Social Worker; Service Managers; Team Managers and Assistant Team Managers.

It is an expectation that all managers complete one collaborative Practice Learning Review each month. Managers will complete PLRs both inside as well as outside their direct line management and across service areas.

PLRs that raise immediate concerns

The manager completing the PLR will ensure that any practice evaluations that identify immediate areas for concern and or an Inadequate PLR grading are shared in writing within 24 hours with the practitioner, Team Manager and Service Manager responsible for the child or young person and immediate action taken. All remedial actions to be completed no later than within 10 days. All PLRs graded as Inadequate to be tracked and re audited after 2 months (for consistency preferably by the same manager).

Collaborative Practice Evaluation

Collaborative monthly PLRs are completed by managers alongside practitioners to support their professional development. This provides the opportunity to engage practitioners, enabling them to understand the importance of the process and how it can help improve practice and children's outcomes. PLRs are a participative learning process giving an opportunity to reflect and receive feedback between the manager and the practitioner.

The collaborative PLRs will reflect on the practice standards pertinent to the area of work, will gain an understanding from the social worker or early help practitioner of the child's lived experience and what needs to change in order to improve their outcomes. PLRs will reflect on the purpose and focus of our work with families. The reflection will consider if this knowledge, understating and rationale for decision making is reflected in the child's written record - are we evidencing our accountability to the child through their record?

Collaborative PLRs include the voice of the child and their family. Gathering the views of those who receive services is critical in understanding the impact of interventions and in achieving positive outcomes for children.

When direct feedback from a child, young person and or family member regarding the quality of our service is not possible, the manager completing the PLR will clearly record within the PLR why this may not be possible and to identify where feedback is present within the child's record. The manager completing the PLR should also record what measures

may need to be put in place to enable gaining direct feedback and timescale for this. Other sources of child and family feedback can typically be found within:

- Assessments
- Supervision records
- Annual Foster Carer review records
- Case notes (including telephone call records or emails)
- Complaints and compliments logs
- Questionnaires from a child's looked after review meeting and child protection conference

Moderation

PLRs are moderated by Practice Learning Reviewers within the Quality Assurance Service in partnership with the manager who has completed the PLR.

Twenty per cent of all PLRs completed each month (including all those graded as Inadequate) will be moderated. The Quality Assurance Service will undertake moderation benchmarking exercises to ensure consistency of approach. In addition, Practice Learning Reviewers will meet with the manager who completed the PLR to provide coaching and development regarding auditing skills.

In turn the manager completing the PLR will discuss any changes to the PLR audit grade following moderation with the allocated Social Worker/Practitioner/Team Manager and Service Manager. Depending on the grade of the PLR this may also require escalation to the relevant Service Manager.

As discussed above the manager completing the PLR will ensure that any practice evaluations that identify immediate areas for concern and or an Inadequate PLR grading are shared in writing within 24 hours with the practitioner, Team Manager and Service Manager responsible for the case.

All remedial actions to be completed no later than within 10 days. All PLRs graded as Inadequate to be tracked and re audited after 2 months (for consistency preferably by the same manager).

The moderation practices adopted within the framework are based on the following general principles. Moderation practices should:

- Seek to ensure accuracy and fairness
- Consistently apply BCP Practice Standards, as well as local and national statutory guidance & legislation
- Consistently apply messages from research, literature & Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews
- Consistently apply national and local feedback from children, young people, and families
- Be clearly evidenced in the feedback provided to staff

Link Practice Learning Reviewers, PLR Tracking & Closing the Learning Loop

The Quality Assurance Service will allocate a link Practice Learning Reviewer for each Service Manager within Children's Social Care and Early Help Services, this is to support the development of a partnership relationship (by providing High Expectations, High Support and High Challenge) between Service Managers and the QA Service and to enable purposeful and impactful tracking of PLR actions to ensure all remedial actions are undertaken within an appropriate timescale for the child and family.

A core aim of this framework and all PLRs is to provide a positive impact for the child, young person, and family by contributing to their improving outcomes and to the learning and development of the service. In order to achieve this and support service areas to strengthen their management line of sight and grip upon the quality of practice, the Quality Assurance Service provides spreadsheet trackers of all PLRs allocated and returned within service areas to Service Managers for their oversight (and to support the reporting and analysis of the Quality Assurance Service). Service Managers and Team Managers share access to trackers with the Quality Assurance Service. Demonstrating the impact of quality assurance activities for the children and families we work with is everyone's responsibility.

It is the responsibility of the Quality Assurance Service to ensure trackers are updated with PLR allocations, returns and moderation outcomes each month. It is the responsibility of allocated Team and Service Managers to ensure trackers are updated when remedial actions identified in a PLR have been completed with children and families. PLR outcomes and actions should also inform business as usual management oversight and direction and be recorded within supervision discussions on the child's record in Mosaic.

Link Practice Learning Reviewers will also work with Service Managers to present bite size briefings from PLRs within service areas at service meetings. All Team Managers are to ensure there is a mandatory standing agenda item at all team meetings to feedback themes and learning from PLRs.

The Quality Assurance Service will attach the PLR to the child's electronic record and ensure that the child's practitioner, their Team Manager, and the relevant Service Manager are informed of the outcome of the evaluation, including any actions identified.

Monthly and quarterly reports are provided to the Quality Impact Board by the Quality Assurance Service; summarising quality assurance activity, learning and impact across Children's Social Care and Early Help Services.

Learning from Quality Assurance will inform the Workforce development agenda for Children's Social Care and Early Help Services through the Quality Impact Board. Which in turn will inform the provision of Practice Fundamentals sessions and the Partnership Academy training offer.

The Quality Assurance Service provides training for all managers completing PLRs to ensure managers have the knowledge, skills, and confidence to undertake PLRs to a consistently good standard. Additional coaching and mentoring is also provided by the link

reviewers in the Quality Assurance service to further embed skills within each of the service areas.

Focussed (Thematic) Practice Learning Reviews

Focussed PLRs are carried out to look at specific issues or areas of practice. These are carried out at least quarterly and are commissioned by the Quality Impact Board. Themes are informed by a range of sources including scrutiny of performance data, emerging concerns from one or more partner agencies and areas of concern that arise from the Quality Impact Board itself.

Focussed PLRs provide an opportunity to look at the quality of work that is undertaken with children and families and to reflect on and discuss the child's journey through the safeguarding system. The methodology for each focussed PLR will be adapted to suit the theme.

It is important that it is clear why a focussed PLR has been commissioned and what the scope of the evaluation is. For this reason, all focussed PLRs will be supported by clear terms of reference written in collaboration between the Service Manager Quality Assurance and the Quality Impact Board. The terms of reference should specify:

- Why the thematic/focussed PLR has been commissioned, including the context of why it needs to be looked at now.
- The scope of the evaluation and the evaluation criteria (how is it measuring against Practice Standards, legislation, local & national policy or procedures or family feedback, messages from research and literature/Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews).
- The sample size and characteristics
- Who will undertake the PLR?
- How will the PLR be undertaken?
- What is the timescale for the completion and reporting of the PLR?

The desired outcomes of thematic practice evaluations are:

- To provide evidence based robust self-assessment of critical areas of service
- To identify areas of good practice for dissemination; and
- To identify areas of ongoing weakness and potential risk for further targeted improvement work or intensified management direction.

The Quality Assurance Service is responsible for compiling an analysis of the findings from the focussed PLR and reporting findings and identified actions Quality Impact Board.

Quality Impact Board

The Quality Impact Board scrutinises and analyses performance data and reports, alongside workforce development and summary audit reports with an emphasis on findings, analysis, action, and learning, with the ability to drill down into services or themes. The Quality Impact Board is to serve as a golden thread through the organisation and provide opportunities for support and challenge discussions about the quality of practice and learning from all strands of data and intelligence (see Fig 2). Performance data should be scrutinised alongside PLR summary reports as a crucial means of triangulation.

	QUANTITY	QUALITY
EFFORT	<p>How much did we do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of customers served Number of activities delivered Number of services delivered 	<p>How well did we do it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> % customers satisfied % activities performed well % services performed well
EFFECT	<p>Is anyone better off?</p> <p>Number and % showing improvement in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skills Attitudes Behaviour Circumstances 	

