



Telford & Wrekin
Co-operative Council

Protect, care and invest
to create a better borough

Telford & Wrekin
**Children's Services
Practice Framework**
2022

Introduction

As Social Workers and Social Care Practitioners, entering the lives of families, building relationships, working to understand the challenges and struggles they are experiencing and celebrating their successes is a real privilege. I am fortunate to see and hear the impact that we are having on the lives of children and young people and it is through our continued commitment, desire and enthusiasm to do more that I know we can continue to achieve great things.

Central to our work is listening to and hearing the voices and experiences of the children we walk alongside, as it is this that guides the work we do and the help we provide in order to make a difference. We also know that the needs of each child, young person and family is different and with this comes complexity.

As confident practitioners, this practice framework informs and guides our practice, enabling us all to focus on working collaboratively with children and their families, underpinned by language that cares whilst encompassing our overarching values and commitments to delivering the best possible outcomes for all children and young people.

Only by working together, with each other and with children and their families can our practice flourish and positive outcomes be achieved.

Darren

Darren Knibbs, Director

“Child focused relationship based practice is at the core of our work with children and young people . It is important that practitioners understand our practice framework which supports our approach in delivering value based practice based upon research, evidence and professional judgement. I am really pleased that our framework promotes all of these together to enable practitioners to use knowledge and principles to inform their everyday work undertaken with children, young people and their families on a daily basis.”

Jo

Jo Britton, Executive Director



Our Social Work Practice

Having a clear framework of practice means having a widely owned and well-defined set of values and theoretical principles that underpin all work with children and families. These values and theoretical principles must be understood, shared and used across the whole organisation, including by partners, and they must flow from and be championed and embedded by leaders.

Good quality practice is the key to safeguarding and supporting young people, providing the expertise, knowledge and experience to enable them and their families to create change and improve their lives. As stated within our commitments, we hold the value that children and young people are best cared for by their birth families and extended networks where this is safe to do so. The relationships we build with families are key to promoting change, we strive to support families by reflecting principles of acceptance, empathy, respect and positive regard, and these along with the language we use are the building blocks to relational practice.

Where it is not possible for children to safely remain within their birth family or extended network we seek to ensure that their relationships are maintained in line with their best interests, birth parents and extended networks are included within the decision-making processes and we provide alternative care which is nurturing.



Children's Services Priorities 2022 onwards

- 1.** To create conditions so that every child is safe and feels that they belong in their home and educational setting.
- 2.** To promote access to a quality education offer for all children and young people across the borough.
- 3.** To focus on the best start in life and work with children, young people and their families as early as possible to avoid
- 4.** To develop a system wide approach with key partners to deliver our aspirations for children and young people.
- 5.** To ensure the workforce is skilled and develop a professional curiosity to adapt to changing service need.
- 6.** Every person to have access to opportunities to engage in stimulating activity which will improve their sense of wellbeing.
- 7.** To prepare our children and young people for independent, successful adulthood.

Using Systemic approaches to social work practice

Systemic approaches focus on the way relationships shape the challenges and difficulties that face a family or other caring environments. These relationships are considered at the level of the family system and of the wider social system which influences how families operate.

The generation of multiple ideas about how family relationships might be working to keep problems going is encouraged, and systemic interventions focus on whichever of these ideas seems to best fit the family system in terms of supporting relationships to be more helpful and reduce the difficulties that a family faces. This also applies to the relationship patterns that develop between a family system and helping agencies. Systemic approaches are used alongside strengths-based approaches as the two complement one another.

Children and families are empowered and supported to take ownership of their own solutions. As families help create and own the change and feel listened to, the approach encourages inquisitive analysis of what is happening for the family and can create sustainable change.

Social Workers and Practitioners become “change agents”, not just to assess and report but to act as a catalyst for change.

Family Safeguarding Model

Family safeguarding was launched within our teams in 2021. It is a whole system change which focusses on supporting children at risk or in need as a result of abuse or neglect, with the aim of providing the right tailored support to enable parents to safely care for their children and parent, supporting their parenting skills, building resilience and providing support to their own challenges that impact on their parenting. This enables children to remain in the care of the families and extended networks.

Family safeguarding brings together the professionals working with a family into multi- disciplinary teams where specialist adult practitioners in domestic abuse, substance misuse and mental health are co-located with Social Workers and alternatively qualified practitioners to improve practice approaches and shared decision making. The practitioners within the teams use a range of tools to work alongside families to meet their needs in a holistic way.



Our Commitments



- We are committed to keeping children safe from harm.
- We are committed to putting the child's best interests first and gaining a good understanding of children's lived experience in order to support them.
- We are committed to working collaboratively with parents, harnessing their motivation to identify the changes needed within their own families.
- We are committed to keeping children within their own family networks unless this cannot be achieved safely.
- We are committed to ensuring that children who cannot remain with their family are well cared for in safe and stable placements.
- We are committed to achieving the right permanence plan for children in as a timely way as possible.
- We are committed to working with families and partners in a manner which is reflective of strengths based working and relationship led practice.
- We are committed to supporting our workforce to enable them to develop professionally and provide opportunities for them to have a voice that influences change.
- We are committed to being the best Corporate Parents that we can be across the whole of our organisation.
- We are committed to listening to children and their families so that we can improve our services.
- We are committed to ensuring that records about the children we work with describe their journey with us and a provide a good understanding of why decisions were made.
- We are committed to recruiting and supporting foster carers who have the skills and expertise to support our children in care.
- We are committed to supporting young people who are care experienced and exit care to achieve their full potential, and to feel that we are there for them when they need us.



A culture of quality

We want to be able to provide our social workers and practitioners with a shared understanding and a comprehensive set of tools to enable them to undertake their best work. This will enable us to provide a high-quality service that meets the varying needs of children and families and supports us to work better together.

It has been informed by the continuous improvement cycle described in Telford and Wrekin Children's Services Quality Assurance Framework. This includes feedback from families we work alongside, practitioners, partner agencies, learning from internal and external inspection and audit, as well as responding to actions arising from rapid reviews and national policy. This ensures that our responses to children and families we work alongside is informed by national changes and local influences.

We have a commitment to learning from the families and children/young people we work alongside to ensure that they receive the best possible support.

Comment from a parent

"I love how she gets me. For example, when I went completely abstinent, she understood all the side effects I was explaining to her and how I can get through them. She makes me feel ok when I have had a lapse, she understands and we work on it which really helps."

Comment from a young person

"He always makes sure I am safe, tries his very best to help me be successful with most things he can do, never had a dull moment when working with me and, most of all is normally honest with everything he has to say".



Feedback from other professionals

“There is always ample opportunity to share my views and have them listened too”

“Our information sharing between each other has been excellent”



Feedback from foster carers

“The support offered by Telford and Wrekin has been outstanding from the start of our fostering journey to present day, couldn't fault the service provided”

“My Supervising Social Worker has been great support during my first year and has always pointed me in the right direction of further support. She actively helped to try and resolves issues in various ways.”

Our core principles underpinning our culture of quality are:

Relationship based practice - practitioners build positive relationships with children, young people and their families, fostering principles of empathy, positive regard, respect and using authority supportively to enable them to make positive changes to their circumstances. In addition to adopting these principles when working with other professionals.



Practitioners aid children, young people and families to understand their strengths and these are reflected within plans, strengths are built on and their achievements and progress are clearly evidenced and celebrated.



Practitioners are supported to do the best job they can, a critical friend approach is adopted to evaluating work to enable reflection, learning and improvements to be made.

Practitioners value the role and expertise of other professionals working together, being accountable for improving the lives of children, young people and their families.

**“We are
all part
of the
jigsaw”**





Practitioners are culturally competent, and actively promote inclusivity, demonstrating anti-oppressive practice and ensuring all of our work is culturally sensitive: we approach families and seek to understand how their culture, ethnicity and beliefs impact on their family life and circumstances. We aim to ensure that these factors are evidenced within our work and we seek to actively reduce exclusion and discrimination.

Comment from a parent

“She has been such a huge help. Everything I have asked of her she has done to support me. She has always got back to me when I have needed her and helped me to turn everything around for the better. She is amazing with K and L and it’s clear to see they adore her!”



Our practice approaches

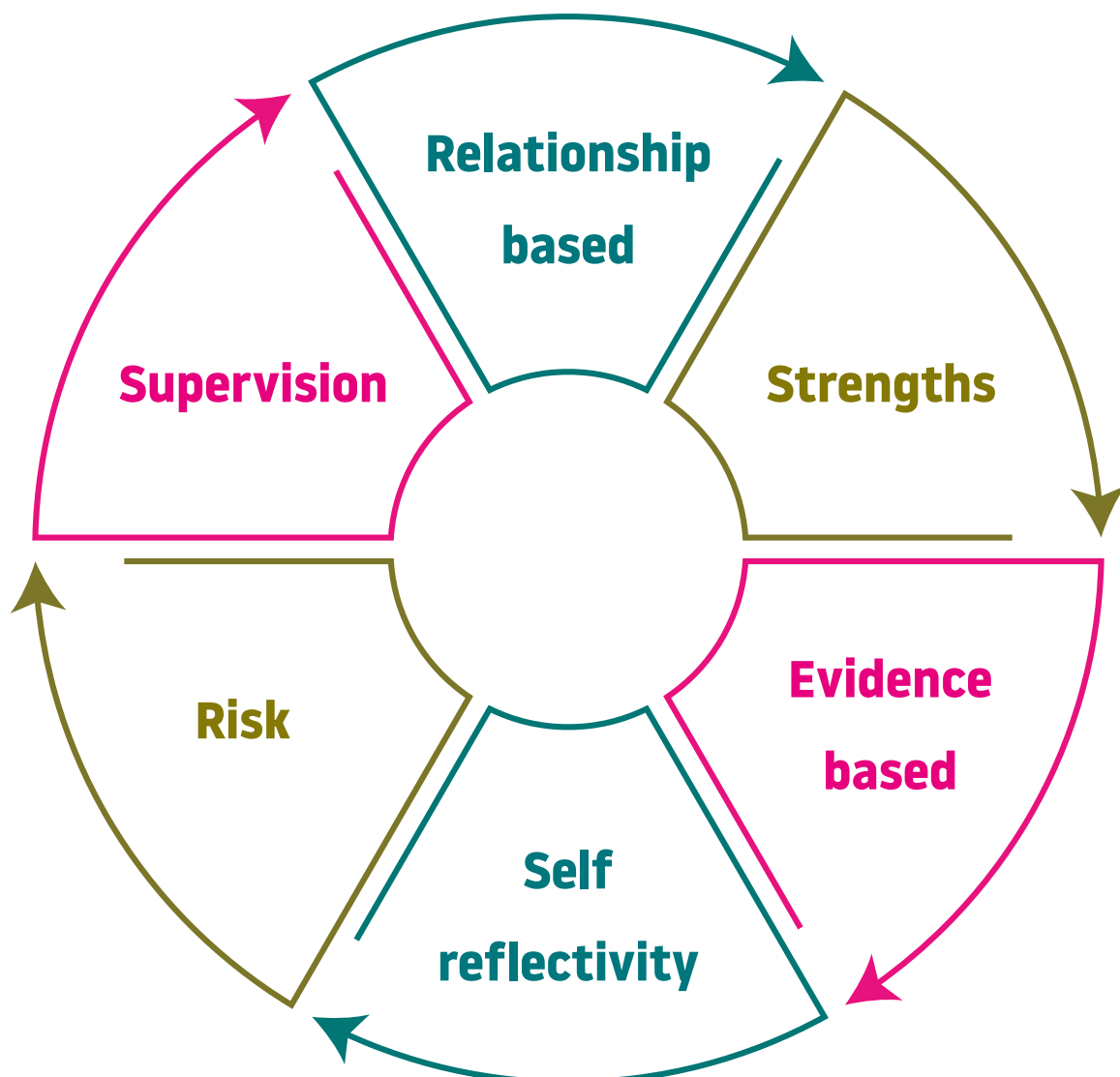
Systemic practice

Systemic practice seeks to understand the needs of the family through the lens of relationships focussing on the whole system around the family and not just the individual. Through this lens we seek to understand relational patterns and how these impact on the child/young person.

Systemic practice promotes the principle that families and individuals have the capacity to change and we provide the bridge to aiding their understanding of their relationships and how these have impacted on their situation. It seeks to examine patterns of belief/behaviour which may have contributed to difficulties and how these can be tracked back through the generations.

Systemic practice is reflexive in nature and also seeks to understand the part professionals are playing within the family circumstances.

What systemic practice looks like in our work:



Relationship based

Developing strong relationships between practitioners and families to make and sustain change. Adopting principles of curiosity, positive regard, respectful listening, modelling and mirroring, ensuring we come from a stance of neutrality. We seek to understand the relational patterns and dynamics that are evident within the family and outside of the family system. Being grounded in a trauma informed approach that seeks to understand and aid the understanding of the family of their history and context.

Supervision

Using supervision to generate hypothesis about family's situations and generate ideas about change.

Confidently sharing risk

Working alongside families to minimise risk through change.

Evidenced based

Using evidenced based support and interventions to promote change.

Self-reflectivity

Developing an awareness of our own beliefs, experience and values and how they influence our work.

How this works in practice:

- Direct therapeutic work alongside families delivered by a Systemic Psychotherapist
- Systemic practice framework embedded within our teams
- Systemic practice training embedded across our children's services
- Systemic reflective PODS for staff across children's services
- One to one consultations of systemic practice development working alongside families
- One to one wellbeing support for practitioners
- Elements of systemic practice – the social graceees embedded within our fostering panel
- Bespoke training for our systemic psychotherapist



“She has supported me and my family through tough times and was always there for us to talk to. She is truly a bright light in life as she never stopped Believing that we will make it through.”

“We wouldn’t be where we are now as a family if you didn’t help and bring us together.”

Family safeguarding

Underpinning family safeguarding is the practice model of motivational interviewing, a technique which seeks to enhance the adult's motivation to change, it is designed to help people find the motivation to make a positive behaviour change, with the practitioner aiding the building blocks for this change to take place. It is underpinned by the values of curiosity, positive regard, recognising the power of the adult to make change and how we can aid this change.

How this works in practice:

- Multi agency recording within the workbook programme.
- Focussed workbook programme of work to provide a framework of working alongside families.
- Group supervision whereby motivational interviewing is a key component.
- Motivational interviewing being embedded within direct practice.
- Colleagues from multi agency partners providing training and learning development opportunities.
- Motivational interviewing training for all staff across children's social care and partner agencies.
- Child protection and child in need plans – being clear and allowing families to see their strengths and areas to develop and timescales.

Dyadic Developmental Practice (DDP)

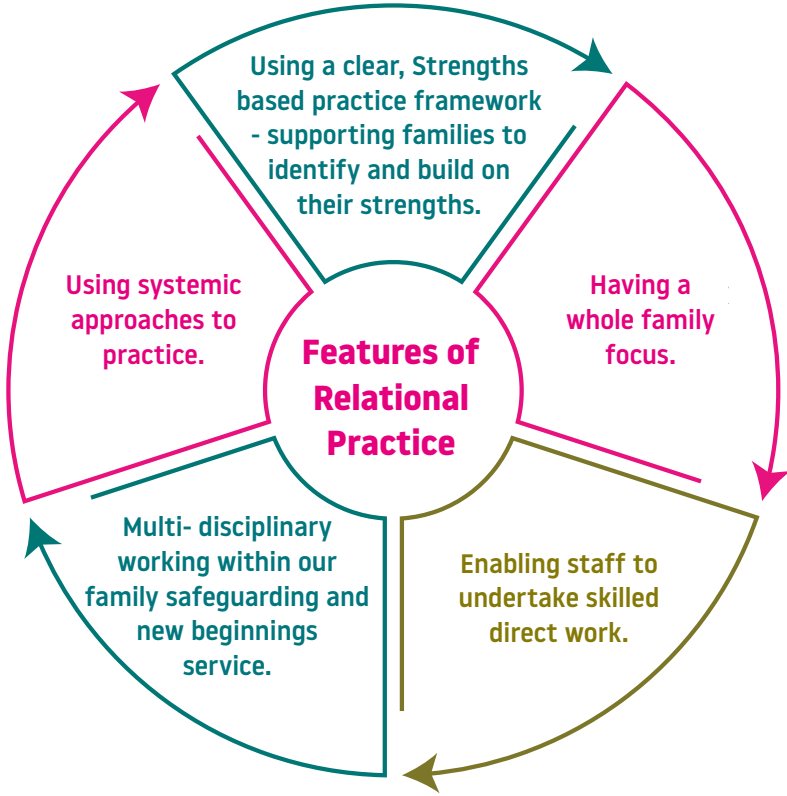
An all-encompassing approach that includes parenting and caring for children as well as therapy, aiding professionals to understand, work together and be effective in their support of children and their families. This approach is adopted within our fostering service and seeks to promote improved relationships between children, young people and their care givers. The key principles are playfulness, acceptance curiosity and empathy (PACE).

Mockingbird Programme

Led by the Fostering Network it is an evidenced based model structured around the support and relationships an extended family provides. The model nurtures the relationships between children, young people and foster families supporting them to build a resilient and caring community.



Our practice on a page



Comment from a young person

“She’s very supportive in almost everything, easy to get in contact with. She is always at hand when I need her, very happy woman, and I enjoy having her as my key worker.”



Our Practice Values

The core values underpinning our practice are:



1

Make a difference to positively contribute to children’s lives.



2

Foster relational principles – demonstrating empathy, compassion.



3

Collaborate with children, young people, their families and our partners.



4

Provide an ethical service promoting the rights of children, young people and their carers.

Our Practice Standards

To aid our practitioners to support and work with families in the best possible way, aligned to our core values, vision and commitment we have developed a set of practice standards which cover the following:

- **We will build positive relationships with families.**
- **We will provide culturally competent practice throughout our assessment, planning and support.**
- **We will ensure that every child and young person we work has a good quality early help or statutory assessment which they have been involved in.**
- **We will be the best parent for our care experienced young people.**
- **We will provide effective quality assurance of practice.**
- **We will ensure that our practice based on evidence and models.**
- **We will ensure that every child and young person we work with has a plan which is SMART and written in plain language.**
- **We will see every child and young person we are working with regularly, with a clear purpose to visits.**
- **We aspire to a service for every child that we would welcome for our own.**
- **We will ensure children and families contribute to the plan of support.**
- **We will hold Core groups, Care Planning Meetings and Children in Need Meetings regularly.**
- **We will ensure that every child and young person we work has their voice visible in assessments, plans and reviews.**





Comment from a practitioner

“I feel well supported in my job and valued for the work I am doing. I feel able to lead on creative aspects of the offer to the young people and feel that to achieve this I get support from both peers and my manager. The biggest reward is the feedback from the young people, peers, and the manager”.

Comment from a practitioner

“What I love about T&W is people are caring, thoughtful and want the best for T&W. They are willing to push the boundaries and from what I see have a senior management structure in place that don't think they know it all and are willing to listen and learn from staff led groups and even want to be a part of that journey too and are there offering their support and knowledge”.

High support, high challenge for staff

Supporting children, young people and their families/carers that have experienced trauma, abuse and neglect is rewarding but also challenging. The responsibility of working alongside families whereby the decisions our workforce make and the power of their influence has the ability to shape and aid positive changes in the lives of children, young people and their families may pose challenges and we will support staff in their practice and decision making.

Our culture of high support, high challenge provides our workforce with relevant training and learning to undertake great practice and creates space to learn from others including those with lived and learnt experience to receive appropriate challenge to ensure that the decisions we make are the right ones for children, families and carers. Our training and development offer ensures that we are closing the loop in relation to the findings of audit activity, learning from local Child Safeguarding Practice reviews and learning from complaints and compliments, as well as responding appropriately and effectively to the changing needs and demographics of our community.

This drives a shared understanding of practice expectations and provides forums for support in achieving these. In addition we are responding to the national context of Children's Social Care, ensuring that we are ahead of best practice initiatives and the changing context of service delivery by providing training within this context.

We do this through:

Learning and Development

Regular training both delivered internally by our staff and externally by trainers with lived/learnt experience.

Policies and Procedures

Our Policies, Procedures, Practice Guidance, National Legislation and Regulations support the consistency of practice.

Performance Meetings and Performance Board

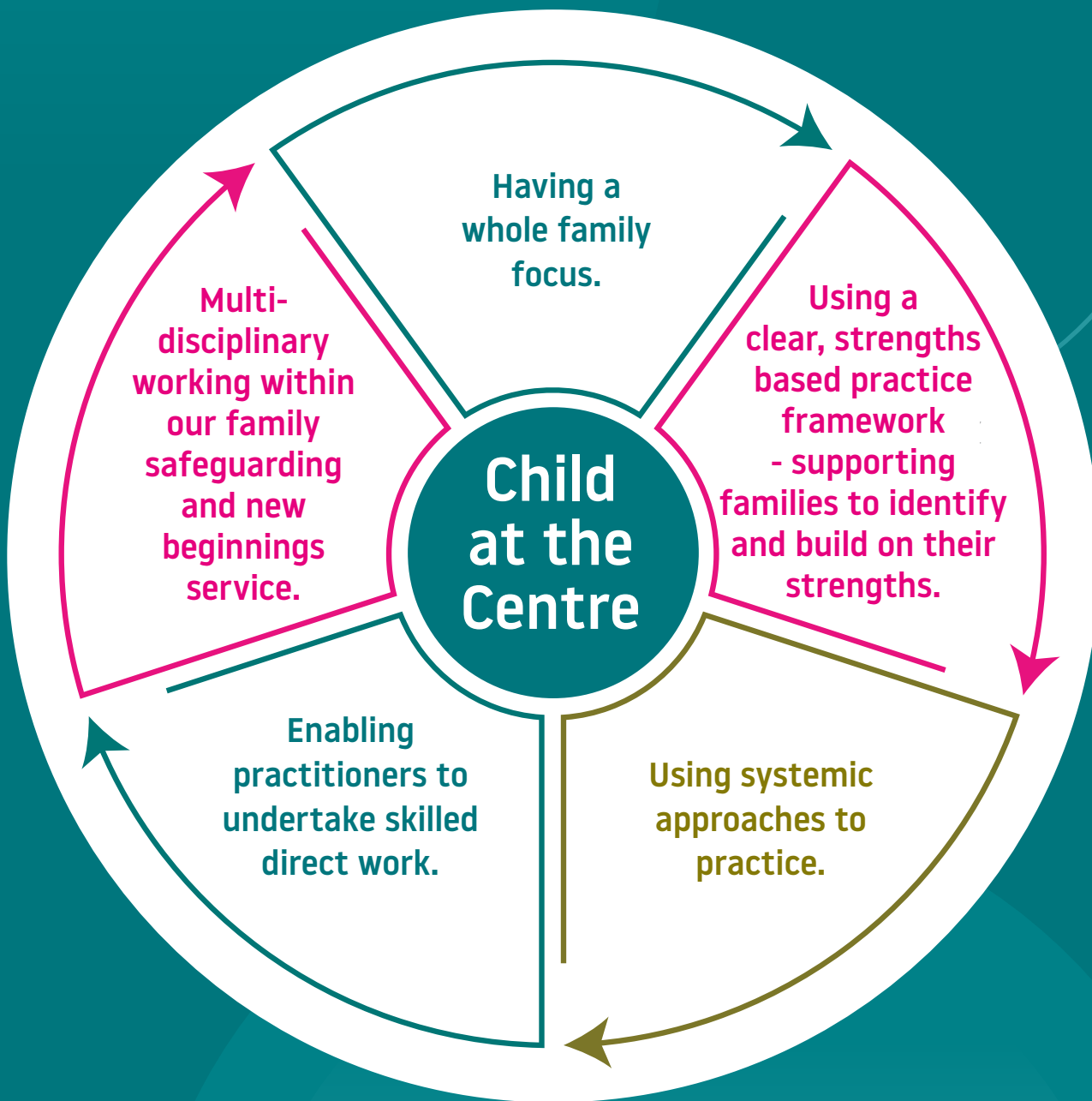
Regular performance meetings discuss our performance journey highlighting issues for more deep dive activity, providing a narrative for Performance Board, chaired by our Executive Director, and attended quarterly by our Chief Executive to ensure line of sight and to challenge where action is required.

Quality Assurance Group

Chaired by the Director to focus on areas of quality and practice via audit activity, complaints, consultation and to consider learning and activities to "close the loop" where actions are required to make to improvements.

Improvement and Transformation

Formerly our Ofsted Planning Group
Chaired by the Director with Executive Director attending, to focus on ongoing improvement and service activity provided by SDMs attending to focus on specific areas of improvement and development.



Appendix 1

Yvette Stanley, National Director of Social Care wrote in a blog “*how do we achieve outstanding help and protection*” about common themes from inspection. She says

While the best LAs don't always get everything right, they do absolutely make sure they cultivate a culture of learning and an environment where good social work can thrive.

So even in the very best performing LAs, there will be areas for improvement and learning. They will constantly seek to improve practice learning from serious incidents, near misses and from feedback from children and families and they will use management oversight and reflective supervision to support social workers in consistently doing their best work and to develop themselves as practitioners.

Outstanding child protection requires that senior leaders of the organisation have a clear line of sight on casework so they can challenge and support the judgements of managers in a way that ensures the culture of the service is not risk averse but one which supports learning in a complex and challenging environment.

Leaders, managers, and staff are caring, professionally curious, committed to understanding the experiences of the children they work with, and unwavering in their determination to make them safer. Put simply, outstanding does not mean 'perfect.' Nor does it mean that there aren't areas for improvement, or there will not be a serious case review/learning review.

Identifying areas for improvement does not in itself preclude a LA from an outstanding grade if it has taken swift, appropriate action to address them. Indeed, we see this as evidence of effective leadership, knowing yourself and responding appropriately.

Equally, we did not and do not expect each and every family to receive the same level of intervention. Proportionality is key, as the ILACS evaluation now sets out. It is not possible, or indeed appropriate, that every family gets an intensive response.

Ingredients for success

There will always be key ingredients that are necessary to be outstanding. I won't list them all, but it's timely to highlight some of the main elements.

Strong and effective leadership in help and protection is of course vital, but LAs also need:

- *a focus on getting basic social work practice right*
- *a consistent understanding and application of thresholds – essential for making good decisions.*
- *well-supported, confident, and knowledgeable managers who understand the quality and impact of practice*
- *performance management and quality assurance arrangements that support managers in monitoring work and to take action where necessary*
- *manageable caseloads and a stable, knowledgeable, and committed workforce*
- *a strong learning culture and a strong focus on practice*
- *effective working with other agencies*
- *a system that focuses on providing help early to children and their families and a “preventative” approach across all the levels of need, vulnerability, and risk*
- *a child-centred system with robust arrangements and processes*
- *a focus on achieving sustained improvements in the lives of children and their families*

Appendix 2

Check list for recording

- Is it easy to see the child and young person's journey, lived experience and is this reflected of their current circumstances?
- Where a child/young person is unable, either through age or stage to verbally contribute to their journey, that this is reflected via observations, interactions and direct work that reflects their wishes and feelings.
- Are the child/young person's voice, wishes and feelings evident? Is there evidence of direct work with them? Are their views evident in decision making? Where this is a younger child or none-verbal is their lived experience visible and described by their interactions, observations of them, their presentation?
- If the child/young person and their parents/carers read any recorded information, what would they think about the way they are written about? Writing to the child/young person is a positive way to explain what has happened in their journey with us.
- If the child returns to see their records as an adult would they see there journey and understand why decisions were made?
- Is there a genogram and can we see the natures of their relationships and networks?
- Is there a clear, concise, up to date case summary?
- Is there a good quality, concise chronology of key events, decisions and the impact on the child/young person?
- Is the rationale for decisions clear?
- Is management oversight evident?
- Is IRO/CP Chair oversight evident?
- Is the IRO footprint evidence on the child/young person's record?
- Is there evidence that our involvement is helping the child/young person to be safe and improving their outcomes?

Good assessments

- Has the assessment been updated when there has been a change of circumstance or at clear points of change?
- Was it completed in a timely way?
- Is the reason for assessment clear?
- If relevant does it include historical concerns and the impact on he here and now?
- Have other agencies been consulted/ involved?
- Has the child/ young person been seen? And their views sought?
- Does it evidence their lived experience?
- Have parents been involved?
- Have other people important to the child/ young person been consulted?
- Does this include absent parents?
- Has research been used to inform the assessment?
- Are both strengths, needs and risks identified?
- Is the analysis clear and does it reflect the information in the assessment?
- Are there clear decisions/recommendations?
- Is management oversight and decision-making clear?

Good Plans

- Are the purpose and aims clear?
- Is it up to date and updated at the relevant point in time?
- If the child or young person is care experienced, is there a clear plan for permanence?
- Does it identify strengths, needs and risks?
- Does it include the child/young person's wishes and feelings?
- Does the child/young person understand what the plan is and why?
- Have the child's parents/carers been involved?
- Is there evidence of positive collaboration with other agencies?
- Is the plan SMART, with clear actions and timescales?
- Is the plan progressing appropriately?
- Are agreed actions completed?
- Are there regular meetings in place to review the plan?
- Is management oversight visible?
- Is IRO oversight/challenge visible? Do they escalate appropriately and effectively?
- Is the plan achieving its purpose to improve the outcomes for the child/young person?

Good Management Oversight and Supervision

- Is there evidence of impact and oversight from senior managers?
- Do managers support practitioners and promote their well-being?
- Does the workforce development plan help staff to grow and develop best practice?
- Do managers and senior managers provide appropriate challenge and support, and promote a positive organisational culture?
- Do managers and senior managers model appropriate standards of practice and professional behaviours?
- Do managers and senior managers support and enable staff to work autonomously and use their skills, while being available to provide support and consultation when required?
- Can team managers' oversight and challenge be seen on recordings?
- Are managers' decisions clearly recorded, and do they include the rationale for the decision?
- Is there evidence that managers' decisions/agreed tasks are acted on?
- Is supervision regular and timely?
- Is it challenging, supportive and reflective?
- Is there evidence in supervision notes that actions agreed at previous supervision have been completed?
- Can the impact of management oversight be seen in the quality of intervention and recording?

