**Children’s Social Care**

**Quality Assurance Framework**

**Children, Families & Lifelong Learning**

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**** **October 2024**

##### Introduction

The aim of the quality assurance framework is to improve outcomes by monitoring the quality of practice and service provision. This is achieved in several ways, including:

* Promoting an understanding that quality of practice and service provision is everybody’s business and everybody’s responsibility
* Promoting quality consistency across Children’s Services
* Creating a mechanism for the ongoing monitoring and measuring of performance against required standards and agreed targets
* Identifying strengths, best practice and areas for improvement
* Enabling services to learn and benefit from audit findings
* Identifying substantive or systemic areas of underperformance to inform the work programme of Performance and other services
* Developing a feedback cycle which drives a learning culture of continuous improvement where problems are addressed openly and honestly
* Enabling a clear line and method of quality assurance communication between staff members and Practice Leadership Team (PLT)

The Framework outlined here sets out our role and activities in finding out:

* Are we doing the right things for the child at the right time?
* Are we keeping children safe as a result?
* Are we supporting parents and do they feel supported?
* Are we improving outcomes for children?
* How do we measure how well we are doing this?
* What impact has the Family Safeguarding model of practice had?
* Is it making a difference?
* Are we engaging well with children and their families and taking account of their views/ wishes?
* How do we evidence this?
* What are we doing well and what is the difference made?

##### Good quality management

Good quality management is an active pursuit designed to make a difference - rather than simply monitoring quality in a passive way.

Effective quality management is characterised by:

* A clear understanding of needs achieved through rigorous needs analysis
* Explicit aims, objectives, priorities and targets for services
* Clear plans, strategic and operational in nature, informing service delivery
* Relevant measures enabling judgements to be made on whether services are achieving what is required
* Reporting at the right levels to enable appropriate decisions and actions to be taken in a timely manner

Effective quality and performance management relies on clearly understanding the different roles and responsibilities of individuals

##### Our approach

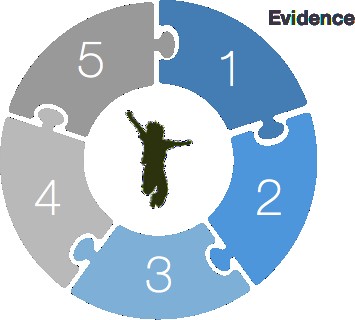
Our approach has five steps that enhance practice assurance:

**Evidence, Analysis, Action, Learning and Impact.**

A diagram of a child's diagram

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There is a wealth of evidence available for all staff, leaders, managers and practitioners, to use and embed in their work to ensure children are safe, seen and heard. This evidence is captured for example in our direct work with children, service audits, deep dive audits, peer reviews. We will use this information to understand what is working well and what we need to improve practice. It will also be used to inform accurate and good quality performance conversations with staff.



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Simply collecting evidence and information is not enough. We need to know and understand at all levels what has gone well, what we need to improve, and what effort or activity is needed to drive that improvement. We need to know this in the context of the whole system and be alive to the consequences of any adjustment we may make. We are collectively responsible for this. Practitioners, managers, heads of service and the leadership team will all use the evidence available to them, to analyse, challenge and improve the quality of practice and performance, collectively learning from assurance activity.

A puzzle with a child in the middle

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A puzzle with a child in the middle

Description automatically generatedWe have the systems in place to ensure we are able to respond to the intelligence our quality and performance activity is providing us with. We have set out the ways in which we will share our assessment of practice in the products section below. Day to day quality and performance activity is embedded within our teams, which are the checks and balances teams have in place to assure their own work, and include supervision, peer discussions, case debrief and team discussions. We are keen that this activity is captured to ensure experiences in teams leading to improvement in practice is shared at a system level. Quality and performance management routines are in place for all managers through service arrangements.

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A child jumping in the middle of a puzzle

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Evidencing the impact of our learning is central to ensuring our activity makes a difference for children and families. We are upholding shared accountability for practice that leads to good and improved outcomes for children and families through quality supervision discussions, performance and quality meetings, and existing protocols. We are investing in approaches to check the impact of our work and setting conditions and routines that require us to confirm we have made a difference. By staying curious about the impact of our activity, we remain constantly aware that there is always more to learnA child jumping in the air

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##### Practice standards

We have set out what good practice looks like and expectations of staff and management through our ‘Children’s Services Practice Standards’. Understanding and reviewing how well embedded these are into our practice is a key feature of our practice learning framework and programme of activity.

These standards align with best practice and are benchmarked against Outstanding and Good local authorities. The Practice Standards are regularly reviewed and updated, with the most recent update in September 2024. The revised standards are available on Tri-X.

##### Practice Learning Framework

Our practice learning framework (see figure below) embodies our approach to understanding and improving the quality of practice. It outlines the activities associated with each of the five steps in the framework—**Understand, Plan, Do, Review, Revise**—ensuring that we consistently understand, respond to, measure, and improve services and outcomes for children.

We are placing **auditing** at the heart of our practice learning framework, with the Quality Assurance Service overseeing the overall process and programme of work. Our monthly, countywide audit programme supports us in understanding the quality of practice and identifying countywide remedial actions where needed. The Audit and Practice Standards Service is responsible for compiling and reporting findings from these audits and making recommendations for improving practice to deliver better outcomes for children.

We are committed to providing practitioners and managers with clear and consistent expectations about practice through the Audit Programme, which focuses on agreed quality standards and best practices. Practice observations have been included as an additional quality assurance activity, giving managers new opportunities to evaluate practice in diverse ways. Targeted dip sampling provides local managers with timely intelligence on service delivery, quality of practice and threshold consistency.

Each staff member is responsible for the quality of their own day-to-day practice. Operational managers are routinely identifying and addressing remedial actions needed to improve practice for each family, often through supervision. This focus on quality improvement is an integral part of our everyday work.

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**Understand**

Voice of the child and family (service user feedback)

Monthly Audit Programme

Thematic Audits

Dip Sampling

Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

Position Briefings

Complaints/Escalations/Alerts

Ofsted Monitoring Visits

Children’s Commissioner Reviews

**Revise**

CFLL Directorate Leadership Team

Practice Leadership Team

Achieving Excellence

**Do**

Academy and Practitioner/SSCP/ and Policy Briefing

Monthly Highlight Reports

Team Tuesday learning sessions

Audit consultations

Practice Guidance and policy updates

Practice Challenge Reports

Bespoke QA support to operational staff

**Plan**

CFLL Directorate Leadership Team

Practice Leadership Team (ADs and Performance)

Corporate Leadership Team

Achieving Excellence

Quality Practice, Relationship and Support Service

Service Management Teams

Practice Challenge Meetings

**Review**

CFLL LT Performance Report

Performance Intelligence reviews at PLT (monthly)

Performance information/

Intelligence Reporting

The experience of children, young people and families

Quarterly reporting to Select Committee and other applicable boards

##### Do – help people achieve better practice

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| Disseminating practice guides and 7-Minute Briefings, key messages from inspections, learning reviews & serious case reviews..... |  | Utilising the voice of children and families through service-user feedback |  | Attending service/team meetings  to talk about and respond to quality issues and celebrate good practice |
| Tracking and monitoring audit improvement plans. |  | Practitioner SharePoint and bulletins to share  good practice and key areas of focus |  | Routine testing of Practice Standards through work with social workers. |
| Continual inspection readiness and preparation. |  | Responding to issues highlighted through performance intelligence. |  | Undertaking thematic reviews and targeted dip sampling |
| Audit reporting that pulls  together themes, actions and  impact. Includes all relevant information that tells us about the quality of practice. |  | QA support coordinated across the service to report into Practice Challenge  meetings |  | 'Team Tuesday’ connecting and networking with staff in the office |

##### Voice of the child, the family, and their experiences

Listening to and responding to users and particularly the **voice of the child,** alongside that of their carers is one of the most important ways we understand how the services we deliver are being received and whether our practice is making the right difference for children and their families. Feedback from children, young people and families is used to build our evidence of family experiences, learn from them and in turn improve our support through the services we provide. The figure below shows the many ways our young people are involved strategically, operationally, and individually.

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##### Responsibilities within Children, Families, & Lifelong Learning

**Performance and Quality Management: Our Shared Responsibility**

In Surrey, performance and quality are everyone’s responsibility. Elected Members, Leadership, local managers, and staff share accountability for managing, delivering, and governing services while striving for continuous improvement and excellence. Residents and those who use our services rightly expect high standards of performance and accountability. This section outlines the complementary roles of council officers and elected members in performance management.

**Senior Leadership Responsibilities**

Our Senior Leadership team, led by the Executive Director for Children, Families & Lifelong Learning, manages operational and strategic services by:

* Embedding a culture of strong performance and quality management across departments.
* Holding Assistant Directors and Service Managers accountable for their areas' performance and quality.
* Monitoring performance and quality across all services.
* Integrating performance and quality management into business and service planning and staff performance processes.

**Assistant Directors, Service and Team Managers**

These staff ensure effective performance and quality within specific service areas by:

* Promoting a performance and quality culture locally.
* Establishing appropriate planning, supervision, and performance management processes.
* Regularly analysing data to assess performance and quality.
* Identifying areas for improvement and implementing service improvement plans.
* Using local challenge and support forums to champion best practice.

**Quality and Performance Service**

Our Quality and Performance service supports governance and operational management by:

* Reporting on service quality and performance to Members, Cabinet, Select Committees, and Directors.
* Analysing practice themes, strengths, and areas for development.
* Using evidence from audits to shape policy, standards, and guidance for consistent practice.
* Challenging poor practice and identifying and celebrating good practice. Promoting examples of excellence and championing social work values.
* Upholding high standards for language, recording, and adherence to practice models.

**Practitioners and Staff**

Every member of staff contributes to performance and quality management by:

* Focusing on improving outcomes for children.
* Staying aware of council and departmental priorities.
* Tracking their performance against standards and objectives.
* Engaging in personal development and service planning to meet improvement needs.

**Council Governance**

**Elected Members** act in the public interest, setting the policy context for services and ensuring accountability. The Leader directs the Chief Executive, who, along with the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT), oversees effective service delivery. Cabinet Members, particularly the Lead Member for Children, are responsible for:

* Setting the strategic direction and performance priorities with senior officers.
* Overseeing the implementation of policies.
* Monitoring the effectiveness of performance and quality management.
* Holding senior managers accountable for service performance.

**Select Committees**, especially the Children, Families & Lifelong Learning Select Committee, provide support and challenge by:

* Contributing to service plans.
* Monitoring implementation and effectiveness.
* Reviewing performance and quality reports, questioning underperformance, and making recommendations for improvement.

**Chief Executive’s Leadership Team (CELT)**

These Leaders ensure council services meet objectives and standards through:

* Advising Members on strategic direction and improvement priorities.
* Setting targets and standards based on outcomes.
* Acting on underperformance and poor quality.
* Embedding a strong performance and quality culture across services.

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| **Title** | **Quality Assurance Framework** |
| **Purpose** | **To outline the quality assurance framework by which standards and quality of work is compiled, understood and acted upon.** |
| **Updated by** | **Kasey Senior** |
| **Approved by** | **Patricia Denney** |
| **Date** | **11.12.2024** |
| **Version** |  |
| **Status** | **Final** |
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| **Next review date** | **October 2025** |