



Practice Handbook

Practice Standards and Procedures



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Introduction & Our Vision

1. We are committed to making Wandsworth the best place for children to grow up and in order to achieve this ambition, we put children first, at the heart of everything the council does. Every child deserves a good start in life, a positive childhood experience, and access to the necessary stepping stones on the way to becoming accomplished adults. Working with our partners, we will ensure that no child is left behind. Priority will be shown to our most vulnerable children, recognising their need for faster outcomes and improvements.
2. Fundamentally we believe in “working with” rather than “doing to” in terms of the how we work with families. When working with families, children and young people will be at the heart of our work and we want to contribute to a better life both now and in their futures. Our guiding North Star is:
 - Improving children’s lives by supporting them to be within their families where possible and securing permanency for them where this isn’t
3. Our way of achieving this is:
 - Having a stable, motivated & capable workforce to work with families
 - Good collaboration and good quality relationships between partners and networks to achieve the very best for families
4. Good quality practice is the key to safeguarding young people, enabling them and their families to create change and improve their lives. This practice handbook sets out the standards we expect from all our staff working with children and families and what families can expect from whomever they encounter in our organisation. This handbook is intended to help practitioners with what is helpful and what works.
5. Each section contains useful resources, practice guides, links to statutory guidance and direct work tools. Our aim is for the handbook to be useful all our staff. Regular updates and revisions will be incorporated in line with continuous improvements.
6. This Practice Handbook April 2021 updates and replaces our previous suite of practice standards. Throughout the Practice handbook we use “children” to mean children and young people. We recognise and understand our young people can contribute to decisions made about them and seek to reflect this throughout the handbook.
7. We are grateful to The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster City Council for sharing best practice, giving insight into the development of their Practice Handbook, and for allowing us to utilize their structure.

Our Core Values

8. Our core work is built on a set of professional core values, ethics and ambitions that include
 - Making a difference to **positively contribute** to children's lives
 - **Empowering** children and families
 - Showing **compassion and empathy**
 - Providing an ethical service based on **respecting and promoting the rights of children, young people and their carers**
 - **collaborating** with children, their families and our partners

Our Practice Framework

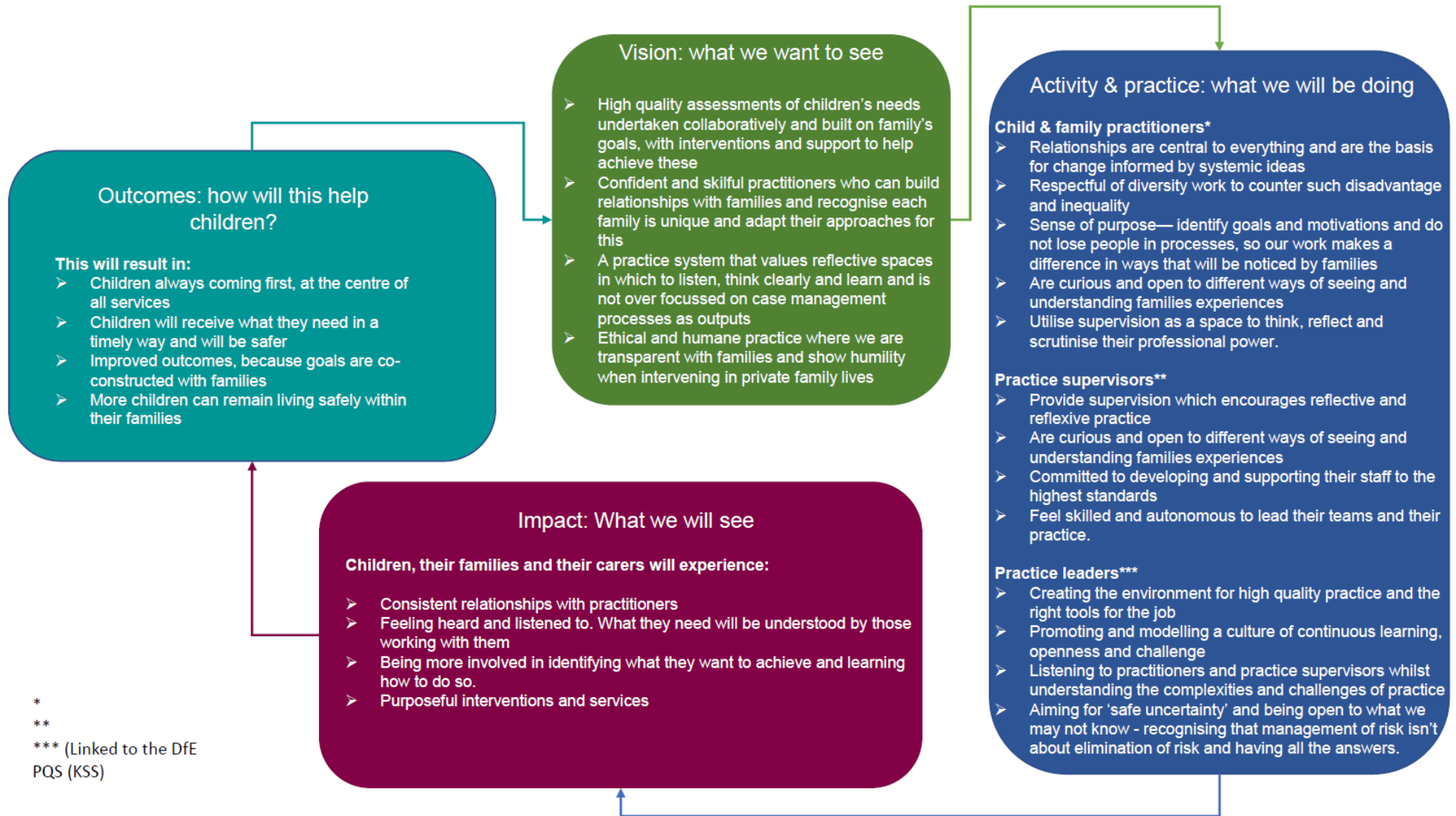
9. We seek to support children, young people, and their families to achieve the best possible outcomes in their lives whilst recognising that some of our families face additional difficulties with which they will need help. Fundamentally we are committed to “working with” rather than “doing to” in terms of the how we work with families.
10. Our practice framework and how we do our work, along with encouraging deeper practice knowledge and values driven practice, articulates our core purpose; it is a conceptual map underpinned by values informed practice, research and evidence and offers a rationale while promoting a range of practice tools for assessments and interventions.
11. This practice framework has been developed in consultation with over 200 practitioners and managers across our practice system during 2020. We have called this ‘Wandsworth’s Blueprint for Helping Children & Families’.

This incorporates:

- Our **values and principles for effective practice**
 - **Systemic, motivational, relationship based and strengths-based practice principles**
 - The importance of **evidence-based practice** as guiding what works
 - The importance of **organisational culture** and attending to how we continue to learn together and build our common purpose
12. The relationships we build with families is both central to the help we can offer and how they will experience this. This means that families need to be really heard and we therefore need to recognise that barriers within our own organisation and wider society that can lead to families not being heard. This includes discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, age, disability, social background, gender and sexuality and religion.

13. We recognise that each family is unique and complex, and that to understand the needs of children and their families we need to practice in a manner that recognises that it is in the context of these relationships that change can take place – relationships within families and relationships between professionals and families.
14. We believe in being curious about what has shaped people's identities, amplifying strengths, multiple relational perspectives and not positing a professional 'single story' about a family as bad or inadequate.
15. Systemic tools help us explore and make meaning of these experiences and relationships together with families and children (Genograms, Eco maps, Timelines, Social GRACES etc) and Motivational Interviewing concepts help us with developing skills to respond with empathy and understand and harness families motivations for change. The common denominator are that these approaches are strengths based, collaborative and recognise the expertise of those we serve.
16. Fundamental to this is a workforce which is skilled and knowledgeable but also has the right values for working in such a way with families and can work with colleagues in other agencies.

Wandsworth blueprint for helping children and families – our practice methodology & theory of change
What do we do and how do we do it?



Practice standard one: The beginning of our work with families

Aims

- Children do not experience unnecessary statutory intervention
- Families understand the reason for the involvement of children's services
- We work with consent wherever possible
- Every interaction is an intervention where we seek to create change by building relationships.
- Where families receive interventions and move between services (such as Early Help), this is received by families in a helpful way and changes in relationship with practitioner are managed humanely that help rather than hinder families.

The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub

17. Wandsworth MASH receives all enquiries, contacts and referrals where there are worries about children. We deliver a framework that enables partnership agencies to collaborate in supporting and safeguarding children through sharing and analysing information that is held about them. Wandsworth MASH provides a space for agencies to access their client data systems, balancing the need for privacy with the need to share information safely. By doing this, Wandsworth MASH aims to identify needs and risks, building a more complete picture of the child and their family to inform the decision-making process. The service intends to provide a necessary, reasonable, proportionate, timely and coordinated approach in supporting all children in need and/or at risk within the Borough. It builds effective working partnerships that place the child at the centre of decision making and ensure that the right help is identified from the onset. This joined up approach to information sharing enables proportionate and timely decisions to be made about the types and levels of services children need and facilitates timely access to resources across universal services, early help and targeted early help, as well as statutory social care when necessary.

18. The MASH ensures children and young people:

- are safeguarded and protected appropriately, acting in accordance with policy and procedural guidelines. All referrals are dealt with in a timely and effective manner to ensure the immediate protection of children.
- have their rights taken into consideration within their family environment and community.
- have their vulnerabilities identified and immediate action taken to protect them, if required.
- have their needs consistently identified and met, utilising the Wandsworth Threshold document.
- have their information shared with partners when it is appropriate, relevant and proportionate in respect to protection and safeguarding considerations.
- are at the heart of all enquiries, contacts and referrals to produce the outcome of 'right service, right time'
- that consent, to share information, has been gained wherever possible by the referrer from the parents unless to do so would seriously compromise the child or children's safeguarding and protection.

Outcomes

- Families understand the reason(s) why we have become involved and the expectations from them and us.
- We build meaningful relationships with families that make a difference.

Useful Tools and Resources

- Leaflets
- MASH information sharing agreement (ISA)
- Threshold documents
- Information sharing guidance
- MASH Operational Manual
- Quick guides

Practice standard two: Building positive relationships with families

Aims

- To build and sustain good working relationships with families which form the bedrock for sustainable change
- To explore and be curious about what life is like for each child and family and the relationships and people that are important to them
- To develop practice and culture that actively seeks feedback from children and families and learns and adapts from this

Relationships

19. Messages from research tell us that effective and sustainable change is the result of successful working relationships. Social Work Post Qualifying Standards identify relationships as the bedrock of all support and child protection responses, including skilled practitioners who are both authoritative and empathic in their partnerships with families.
20. The ways we build these relationships demonstrate how we value the families we work with as human beings who are vulnerable and experiencing challenges, and importantly who we also see as having strengths and the potential to find their own solutions to their difficulties.
21. Each and every contact and interaction with a child and family is seen as purposeful and an opportunity to create change. Practitioners are encouraged to be curious and creative when working with families. This includes using tools and methods which they are knowledgeable and confident with, adapting their approach for each family, being open to possibility, recognising what may be successful with one family may not be with another family and harnessing the family's own motivations for change.

Our practice framework is relationship and strengths based

22. Each child's experience is unique within the context of their own family and the people who are most important to them. Our relational practice framework, which consists of systemic principles and MI, is the methodology we will use in Wandsworth to work directly with our families and understand their needs. This helps us understand relationships as key to understanding families experiences and that an individual's difficulties aren't seen solely existing in them but embedded in relationships around them and people's actions are in response to this.
23. This is built on social learning theory and communication theories that help us understand how relationships between people influence their beliefs about themselves, their families, their culture and their environment. This can lead to patterns of behaviour and meaning connected to these behaviours within relationships that need to be explored and understood and are often embedded in language which has created meaning over time.

24. To understand a child and family we get to know them over time, visit them regularly and demonstrate our core values in building these relationships. We utilise the cycle of change and change theory to understand stages towards change and to aid practitioners and families reflect on progress and motivation.

Outcomes

- Families are helped by practitioners that embody our core values and experience our help as compassionate
- Families are active participants in change
- Practitioners use theoretical constructs to help understand families and are supported and challenged to think about their approaches
- Families are supported to identify their own solutions and goals to get the help they need

Useful tools and resources

- Post-qualifying standards: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/708704/Post-qualifying_standard-KSS_for_child_and_family_practitioners.pdf
- Cycle of Change: <http://socialworktech.com/2012/01/09/stages-of-change-prochaska-diclemente/?v=f24485ae434a>

Practice standard three: Assessing a child and family's needs

Aims

- To understand a family's story, including patterns of behaviour and their impact on parenting capacity and how a child's needs are being met
- To understand the important people in a child's life and family and networks of support available to a family
- To understand what life is like currently, for the child, living within their family and their community.
- To analyse information and views from a range of sources to understand the child and family's needs and plan what needs to happen next

Clear reasons and expectations for involvement

25. It is important that children and families are aware of the reasons why we become involved in their lives and why we are undertaking an assessment of their needs. Practitioners will help families understand these reasons and be compassionate in their approach when families struggle to understand or accept this.
26. Messages from research tell us that when experiencing stress and anxiety it can be difficult to absorb and retain information so practitioners may need to revisit this with families during each visit. The value in this is that families are much more likely to achieve change when they have their own agency in identifying this change. This is core value of our work that we will "work with" rather than "do to" families.
27. An assessment is a dynamic process and is only a snapshot into a family's life at any given point in time. It is important that we tell the family this and support them to participate. Their views must be reflected in the assessment.

Open and meaningful assessments

28. We view every interaction as an intervention. Our assessments seek to meaningfully engage families, helping them reflect upon their own experiences of being parented, exploring their strengths, and considering areas that might further enhance their parenting. It is important that we are honest with families about our worries in a way that does not seek to blame them or shame them. We will work with our children and families using various direct work tools and explore what life is like for them. We will use the Social Graces to understand important aspects of their identity, intersectionality and how it impacts on their lived experience. The language used in our assessment will be clear, simple and family friendly (TACT booklet).

Proactive use of genograms and chronologies

29. Genograms – drawing a map of family relationships collaboratively with a family provides a useful opportunity to explore their family story, their family history and the significance of relationships within the family (usually across at least three

generations). The practitioner brings their skill in remaining curious; such as using circular questioning techniques in order to better understand the context the children in the family exist within and exploring the Social GRACES – i.e. different aspects of family identify such as gender, age, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, education, disability and so on. This visual aid can support the family to take a meta-position (birds eye view) of patterns and support their curiosity in the process of change.

30. **Chronology/Timelines** – this is a list, in date order, of significant changes and events in a child and family’s life. It is also a tool social workers can use with families to explore patterns and meanings and helps parents/families think about and examine these too. These conversations can then open possibilities to think differently and create ideas for change and new ways of behaving. This is also an opportunity for families to provide feedback if our recordings of the events in their lives are incorrect, so a collaborative activity that supports the joining process of engagement.
31. **Ecomaps** – a map of people the child and the family see as important and supportive to them. This could include extended family and any other important people in the child and family’s life. Used in a relational way completing an ecomap can support conversations that help understand what help is effective and why.

Who is involved in the assessment?

32. It is important that we include fathers from the onset of our assessment. Where parents are separated and there are issues concerning violence from men, it is still important to evidence that we have carefully considered how to engage fathers (Link to Quick Guide to working with Fathers and Men).
33. Involving children is fundamental to best practice in assessing their needs. This must demonstrate an understanding of their views, opinions and their lived experience. This requires practitioners to be skilled in employing a range of methods and tools for communicating with children across different ages and developmental stages and in a way that is helpful and meaningful for them. We have developed an extensive Direct Work handbook to support practitioners with ideas and options as well as Direct Work kitbags and resources for loan from the Social Care Academy library.
34. Direct work with children should not just be viewed as a discrete activity between the child and practitioner. Explaining to the child why their views are important and how these views are important to be heard by their families can be a powerful way in helping parents and carers understand what is happening for children and what might need to change.
35. Assessments must also consider the involvement of extended family and friend groups as well as professional networks, when exploring what support and intervention they can provide. Consent must be sought wherever possible. There may be some circumstances where the need for consent is outweighed by the level of risk. In these instances, we will carefully record the reasons for this and continue to try to work as collaboratively as possible with the family.

Culturally competent practice

36. Our practice with families explores all aspects of the social GRACES – this includes culture, gender, ethnicity, class, education, sexual identity, race, ability, spirituality etc. of which families feel important to consider when we work with them. It is important to acknowledge differences and be mindful of the power difference that families may experience when working with them. It is important that we can name these in a respectful manner.

Dynamic analysis and hypotheses

37. An assessment with the family must explore various possibilities and hypotheses. However, we must not be fixated on these hypotheses as there is considerable danger in holding a fixed narrative about families. An assessment is only a window into a family's life at a given point in time. It is important that as we build family chronologies and review past interventions, we are exploring the hypotheses that we are forming with the family and their network, being willing to change our views in response to more information or developments and maintaining professional opinions that are dynamic and adaptable to new changes. Families should know at all times what our formulations are and how we intend to offer our support. The recursive nature of hypothesis testing and refining is key, if we are to practice in a manner that enables us to hold multiple realities.
38. It is important that we maintain curiosity throughout completing our assessments with families, sustaining a culture of respectful challenge. Our families that we work with have a right to challenge our hypothesis. Likewise, it is important that we continue to encourage healthy and respectful challenges in our supervisions and case discussions. This will enable us to be open to multiple possibilities, ensuring that no individual or family is reduced to "one story or truth".
39. The assessment must engage multiple perspectives; at the conclusion, the findings must be shared with families as well as key contributing parties. The assessments must be balanced and multifaceted, exploring the families' strengths, difficulties and areas of risks. The assessment recommendations must be aligned to these to ensure that any plan derived from these recommendations is relevant, realistic and enables the family to bring about change.
40. We recognise that towards the end of an assessment there will inevitably be many uncertainties, including questions concerning the family's ability to make or maintain changes. As an organisation, we strive to conclude assessments in a position with enough safety to close the case, recognising that uncertainties are unavoidable. We must also appreciate that relapse is an inevitable aspect of the change process and we must therefore anticipate with families how they will manage moments when these occur, without resorting to starting over.

Intervention that creates opportunity and understanding

41. Every contact has an impact, from the first phone calls and first meetings, throughout all interactions. Therefore, it is important that every interaction is an opportunity for the family to create change.

42. These conversations form the basis of our engagement with families. They aim to support families in making steps towards positive and sustainable change, providing guidance and insight into potential problems as well as generating understanding of their situation and how it has come to develop.

Developing assessment goals

43. An assessment is a collaborative process with our families, children and young people where we strive to develop shared goals from the onset. It is important that we explore with families, what they hope for from the assessment process and what they would like to be different. It is important to consider that some families may not have had a good experience with services in the past, therefore it is necessary to discuss this with them. Families who have not experienced the service may have some anxiety around involvement, or may not understand how our systems work, so it is important to talk through this during the assessment process.
44. Where we are not able to have shared goals, it is crucial to maintain transparency with our families about what we identify as change that is essential to keep children safe. Children are at the heart of our practice and whilst it is important that we engage with adults to influence their behaviour, it is crucial that our focus is that these changes will improve the lived experience of the child or young person.

Sharing assessments with families and children

45. Unless there are exceptional circumstances that would put the child or parent at risk, families will receive a written copy of a finalised assessment.
46. It is important to consider that reading a written assessment can be very personally difficult for family members. Therefore, we need to make our language concise, straightforward and jargon free, avoiding lengthy reports. It is appropriate that we use TACT language and separate facts from professional judgements.
47. When sharing assessments with children, a narrative should be developed to explain what has happened and what the family and social care professionals will be doing for them in the future to help keep them safe and resolve problems. An explanation that features direct work such as words and pictures may be helpful.

Useful Resources for Assessments

- Tools to support direct work with children – we place an importance on seeing children alone where possible and meaningfully engaging them in direct work. We have a workbook of direct work resources and kitbags for practitioners to use in direct work.
- Completing a “mapping” with parents can help to facilitate a conversation about their strengths; what they / professionals are worried about; and what immediate next steps need to happen during the assessment process
- Scales and Questionnaires –The Department of Health published a pack to complement the assessment process; and this has many useful scales such as “Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaires” or the “Parenting Daily Hassles Scale” that can be useful tools.

Outcomes

- We have a detailed understanding of what life is currently like and the lived experiences of the child living with their family and community.
- We identify and mobilise the strengths and positive aspects of family life/ parenting.
- The nature of our interventions demonstrates our understanding of the child and their family.
- Our assessments are accessible and transparent.
- We make clear recommendations that guide families forward, providing opportunities and understanding

Useful tools and resources

- Quick guide on genograms, chronologies and ecomaps
- Quick guide on visits
- Quick guide to working with fathers
- https://www.tactcare.org.uk/content/uploads/2019/03/TACT-Language-that-cares-2019_online.pdf
- Direct Work Handbook
- Direct Work Resources during covid
- Assessment Framework for Children in Need (Triangle)
- Leaflets
- Guide to Parenting Assessments

Practice standard four: Working with children, young people, families and partners to plan and achieve good outcomes

Aims

- Families and professionals are clear why social workers are involved and the purpose of assessment and intervention plan
- Children & families are directly involved in creating the plans that keep them safe and lead to the best outcomes for them.
- Desired outcomes are clearly articulated, easily understood and SMART
- Our interventions and their impact are measured and understood and we can adapt them if needed with families

Developing plans with families

48. Children's plans are put in place to meet identified needs, reduce risk and make positive changes in a child's life. Plans are best created in collaboration with families and professionals.

Writing plans

49. Our plans draw on the strengths and assets of a family and are written using clear language that is understood by the child and their family. Plans are smart, shared and reviewed in a timely way, so all are clear how plans are progressing and what will happen if problems arise. Everyone involved should have a copy of the plan, including the child. This may include developing a version of a plan that can be understood by each child. We are committed to using language that is respectful and honouring of families and will actively make reference to using [Language that Cares](#).

Making plans SMART

50. A SMART plan is specific, measurable, agreed, realistic, timely. Making plans SMART promotes a clear purpose and direction. The plan can be used to inform decision making and referenced throughout the process, for instance, during visits, meetings and supervision. Plans are reviewed to examine progress and consider potential improvements. Clear plans describe who is involved, the nature of interventions and how timely changes will be incorporate to meet agreed upon outcomes.

A simple planning format is:

Identified need	Identified assets	Identified plan	Outcome to be achieved
What are you concerned about?	What is working well?	Who will provide this and by when?	What are the success measures?

A simple reviewing format is:

What are we worried about?	What is working well?	What still needs to happen?	The outcome and success measures
Any worries since the plan was developed? Any things that are happening in the family's life that are making the outcomes harder to achieve?	Current strengths? Current and existing safety?	Is the plan still the right plan? Is it achievable? Family motivation for change?	What has been achieved?

Useful tools and resources

- [Quick Guide to child Protection Conferences – DRAFT](#)
- [Quick Guide to SMART plans - DRAFT](#)
- Example of plans – child protection plan/ child in need plan
- Legal framework assessment and planning work
- The case for clear blue water, paper on care proceeding – by Isabelle Trawler
- Quick guide to Children Subject to a Child in Need plan
- Quick guide to Children Subject to a Child Protection Plan
- TACT [Language that Cares](#) 2019; changing the way professionals talk about Children in Care
- Assessment framework
- Continuum of need
- Guidance on core group meetings, CIN meetings and TAF meetings
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2019)
- IRO handbook
- Care planning regulations (2015)

Practice standard five: The Interventions we offer

Aims

- We intervene at the earliest opportunity, building on the family's strengths, are respectful of the family's culture, norms and values to prevent further unnecessary statutory involvement
- Our interventions with families have purpose and are proportionate to their needs
- Our interventions are informed by theory and research that guide what we do and how we do it

What is an intervention?

51. 'Intervention' is the activity we undertake and the tools we might employ to undertake the work with the family that is identified in the assessment when intervention is undertaken everyone is clear on the aims and purpose.
52. We understand that problems arise within the context of relationships and we believe the best solutions utilise the strengths and resources within the relationships of the family. Building positive relationships between practitioners and families helps develop a better understanding of each family's unique situation so these relationships themselves become the vehicle for delivering interventions that create change.

Visits

53. Most interventions provided to families are through practitioner conversation and discussion with families when they visit families at home the frequency of visits varies with the level of need identified. Most visits are at home and children are seen alone. Some visits will be announced and some will be unannounced in line with the plan for the child.
54. Recordings of the visit must include:
1. Purpose of the visit - clarifies the aim/intervention, everything then flows from this.
 2. Who was present in scene space including who may not have been present.
 3. Observations of the parent and child interactions.
 4. What took place/happened, did your intended purpose come to fruition, if not, why not?
 5. The child's wishes and feelings
 6. The practitioner analysis
 7. Actions to take forward (as a result of your visit, is there a change needed to your assessment or plan?)
 8. Outline plan for next visit

Direct work with children

55. Direct work is communication with the child to build a relationship with them to understand their experiences of their family life, their wishes and feelings, and what they would like to happen. Without direct work the child's voice and experience is not heard.
56. Practitioners should consider the environment used when conducting direct work, asking themselves, does the child feel safe and comfortable? The use of simple, plain and age appropriate language is important, as well as checking the child's understanding of things that are being explained to them. Direct work is used:
- To understand the child's experience
 - To learn more about the family through the child's experiences
 - To help the child understand why you are involved
 - To get to know the child, what triggers their emotions and how they handle them, if they have any coping strategies
 - To help identify any interventions that might help the child
 - To help the child's parents hear and understand the child's experiences, what makes them happy and what may be frightening for them

Outcomes

- Interventions take place within the context of relationships
- Families feel understood and heard by practitioners
- Intervention creates meaningful and lasting changes for families
- Families feel part of the intervention and not 'done to'
- Parents understand the impact that their actions and behaviour have on their child's health and development
- Improved relationships within families

Useful Tools and resources

- [Quick Guide – Pre-Proceedings – DRAFT](#)
- Cycle of change (add link)
- Direct work toolkit for children and young people
- One-minute guide to voice of child
- VoiCIN leaflet
- Quick Guide to Information for parents and young people: S20 Accommodation
- [Quick guide to visiting children and young people - DRAFT](#)
- Examples of good direct work
- Direct work resources/ handbook

Practice standard six: Child focused recording

Aims

- To record our work with children, young people and families accurately and respectfully so we can be accountable for our decisions that have an impact on their lives.
- To find and identify patterns that can inform our decision making and how we intervene
- To ensure accurate and proportionate information sharing.
- To ensure that families do not have to repeat their story unnecessarily and that different views are recorded alongside one another.

Creating and sharing records

57. We get to know children and young people at critical moments in their lives and part of our role is to record their experiences. Records are an important and integral part of our accountability and are central to good, family centred practices.
58. Recording should be in plain language, without jargon or acronyms. Names and roles should be recorded in full at least once in the recording event, so the reader is clear who is being referred to. Recording should capture the views of parents and important family members as well as the voice of the child or young person, and the views of the practitioner.
59. Records tell the story about interventions and work with families and should be written respectfully and compassionately. Children and families may encounter many different professionals when needing and seeking help. Good recording helps practitioners know what has gone before, have an overview of the family's history and what has or hasn't been successful for the family previously. Recordings are also records that families and children access (for example assessment reports and requests to access records) and understanding children and families as our highest context audience for case recordings informs how we write them.

Purpose of case recording

60. A child's case record should tell their story with clarity, for example, why their parents needed support to care for them; what help they needed; who helped them; if the help provided didn't make things better, what decisions were taken and why, by who; If children couldn't live with their families how was that decided and any other considerations. A case record provides a clear overview of the child's situation and how practitioners have assessed, intervened and tried to help them.
- Case records should be made for the child (and family) to access their case file
 - Case recording should provide an easily accessible audit trail of accountability for the quality of social work practice and decision making about a child's life that can be taken forward if a new social worker becomes involved
 - Case records must include social work analysis based in research and best practice to support decisions and plans to improve a child's lived experience.

- Up to date recording should be available for out of hours social workers and duty social workers to provide informed support and decision making.
- Case recording should provide an easily accessible audit trail of accountability for the quality of social work practice and decision making about a child's life that can be taken forward if a new social worker becomes involved.

Essential elements on a child's record

- Genogram
- Chronology
- Assessment and updated assessment
- Visits
- Plans
- Reviews
- Transfer or closure summary
- Record of direct work with the child

Other important records

- Minutes of meetings and panels
- Risk assessments
- Contact arrangements knew
- Letters to children (for e.g Later Life letters)

Outcomes

- We have a clear and comprehensive overview of critical moments for the child and family
- Records are accessible and respectfully written for children to access them later in life
- Records provide narratives that are clear and appropriate and also thoughtful and compassionate

Useful tools and resources

- [Quick Guide to case recording - DRAFT](#)
- Quick guide to voice of the child
- BASW Case recording top tips

Practice standard seven: Culturally competent and self-aware practice

Aims

- To recognise and acknowledge that families are often very worried when referred to our services and their response has to be seen within that context
- To practice in a culturally inclusive manner - with practitioners who are reflective and reflexive in their practice with families and work with families within an ethical frame of embracing diversity
- We invite families and children to tell us about their experience in relating with us through empathic curiosity
- To recognise that families who access our services will experience oppression, discrimination and adversity, and we want to create conversations that recognise this and allow families to tell their own unique stories
- To be self-aware and willing to confront our own biases and perceptions through open conversations with families and receiving feedback from families

The principles of culturally competent and self-reflexive practice

61. Cultural competence refers to the ability to understand and act with empathy towards individuals and groups of people across varied and diverse backgrounds. There are many areas of difference between individuals and groups of people, where discrimination may be active in varied forms. Personal past experiences that have affected either practitioners or families (or both) may in turn impact the relationships between them, as well as the different interpretations that may be attributed to behaviours or ideas.
62. The acronym GRRRAACCEEESSS was developed by John Burnham in 1993, and details some of the differences that may interact with our personal backgrounds and biases to influence our perceptions. These include Gender, Geography, Race, Religion, Age, Ability, Appearance, Class, Culture, Ethnicity, Education, Employment, Sexuality, Sexual orientation and Spirituality. It is important that attention to these differences is not procedural, rather an ability to consider intersectionality in the development of understanding the lived experiences of those we support. Holding a curious stance must take into account the context in which individuals are located and the importance of recognising powerful discourses that influence our practice.
63. As an organisation, we are highly conscious of these differences and how they can affect relationships and the judgements people make. As practitioners, it is essential to maintain a constant awareness of our own inevitable biases and prejudices, which includes considering our unconscious biases and how they may influence our perception and decision-making. Bringing a heightened level of self-awareness to inform all of our interactions, reviews, and case supervisions is crucial to developing and maintaining a self-reflexive atmosphere and practicing in a more effective way that demonstrates compassion and cultural competence. At every juncture in our practice, all forms of supervision, meetings, assessments, direct work, and engagement with

partners, we must ensure we hold a self-reflexive lens around matters of cultural competence.

Feedback and Learning Episodes

64. The best way to measure our progress and the quality of our services is the feedback we receive from the work we do with children and families. During and after our work with families, we will ask them for their opinions. For instance, what worked well for them? What didn't they like so much? Do they feel that we have helped them bring about positive change? We will seek feedback from other professionals who have worked alongside us to learn how they experienced our practice.

Outcomes

- We have a continual feedback loop from children and families who use our services
- Our practitioners are interested and want feedback from children and families on the impact of their work and learn from feedback
- Feedback from children and families is listened to and is used to improve how we work with them
- The voice of the child and the young person is fundamental to our work and practitioners have a range of tools and opportunities to build their skills to work with children
- Our assessments and plans will be informed by culturally competent practice that recognise the uniqueness of each child and their family

Useful tools and resources

- Practice guide to voice of the child
- Practice guide to recordings
- Practice guide to Learning Episodes
- Practice guide to Social GRRRAACCEEESSS
- Practice guide to genograms and ecomaps

Practice standard eight: Effective supervision and management oversight of high-quality practice

Aims

- To build supervisory relationships providing opportunity for creative thinking about complex family systems as well as offering critical challenge
- Managers and supervisors have a strong working knowledge of practice, which is demonstrated through evidence-based oversight and confident decision-making
- Good understanding of the legal and regulatory requirements informs supervision that ensures purposeful and effective intervention
- Managers are demonstrably committed to developing excellent practitioners and delivering a quality service
- We recognise the important of supervisory relationships as the vehicle for the quality of service delivered to families
- To provide peer group supervision to build creative and curious thinking in teams and about families, recognising there is no “single story”

The principles of effective supervision, management oversight, support and challenge

65. Every decision or action taken by a practitioner or managers will have an impact on the children and families who they work with and are responsible for. Therefore, decisions must be made with the utmost care and consideration for everyone impacted.
66. Supervision that provides reflective and critical consideration of practice is essential to the case review process and also to informing and developing the quality of service we provide. Encouraging and practicing reflexivity through management oversight allows social workers and the wider department in general to identify strengths, weaknesses and personal biases and act on them with supervisor support.
67. Supervision has different functions (see Morrison) including management, development support and mediation. These functions may at times be undertaken by different managers. Reflect with supervision whereby a practitioner can think, explore, bring dilemma's, biases, uncertainty is critical to best practise. Management functions for supervision do not take precedence and good supervision encompasses the range of functions.
68. Heads of Service, Service Managers, Team Managers and Assistant Team Managers (where applicable) and practise supervisors have responsibility for:
 - Ensuring a professional response for children, families and partners from the first point of contact all the way through to the closure of a case
 - Takes an accountable role in ensuring good quality decisions are made to determine the nature of intervention or communication with children and families.

- Ensures the voices of children and families are heard throughout the entire process of involvement, from assessments to interventions.
- Monitors work to ensure procedures are understood and being followed to a high standard, including the practice standards laid out in the practice handbook.
- Demonstrates priorities that focus on positive outcomes for children and families and provide clear direction.

Outcomes

- Supervision and management oversight provides clear direction for practitioners
- The focus of supervisors is on helping social workers to achieve identified outcomes for children and families
- Managers and supervisors provide high quality supervision that is creative, reflective and challenging
- Supervisory relationships are supportive and aid personal development of workers
- Decision-making is clear and managers are accountable

Useful tools and resources

- Supervision policy
- Supervision templates
- Good examples of supervision
- [Quick Guide to Management oversight - DRAFT](#)
- Morrison's Four Functions of Supervision

Practice standard nine: Effective quality assurance of practice

Aims

- To provide a supporting structure around the work we do and the mechanisms in place to monitor the quality of our practice with children and families
- To provide effective and responsive services to the highest standard
- To scrutinise and respond to practice improvements needed and where things are working well to build on and replicate our successes

Providing a quality service

69. The revised Quality and Outcome Focused Practice Framework strengthens our approach to building a quality culture. The Learning Episode tool has been developed to evaluate the quality and impact of practice through reflective conversation with practitioners, triangulated with the quality of case recording, listening to people who experience practice and practice review using evaluation criteria for what “good” looks like. The Learning Episode tracks through to service manager assurance that learning has sustained good practice or led to improvement.
70. Performance data and analysis is accessible for managers to closely monitor key quality indicators and is used to commission further qualitative analysis and understanding of any change in performance.
71. Peer review and external scrutiny is a valued method of benchmarking and improving the quality of services.

Our Quality assurance principles

72. Child centred - judgments based on children and families experiences of our services, their individual progress and outcomes
73. Provides practice scrutiny that is established, systematic and used to improve the quality of decisions and provision of help to children and families
74. Is a mirror of how true we are being to our ‘obsessions’ within the Children and Young People’s Plan
75. Promotes a culture committed to learning and development: listening to and valuing practitioner
76. Built on continuous improvement - detailing the ‘six ways’ to deliver the Children and Young People’s Plan

Outcomes

- We have a good understanding of the quality and impact of our practice
- We have identified where we are headed and what action we need to take
- We have an embedded quality culture of learning from practice
- We know How much we did; how well we did it; if children and families are better off

Useful tools and resources

- Quality and Outcome Focussed Practice Framework (QF)
- Learning from practice

Practice standard ten: Being the best corporate parent

Aims

- Every child looked after is enabled to achieve their full potential
- Everyone working in all parts of our services, will go the extra mile to work together to support Children Looked After and Care Leavers
- The needs of Children Looked After and Care Leavers are advocated for at every opportunity
- To ensure that every child will have a safe 'forever' home
- Care Leavers will receive excellent support & mentoring
- We will support our partners in being the best corporate parents
- We celebrate the successes of our children and young people
- To follow the principle "if this were my child, would this be good enough?"

Knowing our Responsibilities

77. We recognise that children in care are the most vulnerable in our community and need additional help to achieve their full potential. As the corporate parent, we are committed to making sure the rights of children and young people in care are respected by:

- Assessing their individual needs
- Considering their personal wellbeing
- Advocating for their best interests
- Providing opportunities for them
- Making sure their voices are heard
- Providing advice and assistance
- Ensuring services are available and accessible for them.

The role of the Corporate Parenting Panel

78. The Corporate Parenting Panel works to ensure that the council is fully enabled to effectively undertake their role as corporate parents, ensuring that the council is supporting Children in care and care leavers to meet their full potential.

79. Corporate parenting principles are laid out in section 1 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and cover 4 themes: Education and Independence; Health and Wellbeing; Safety and Stability; and Participation and Engagement.

Achieving Permanence

80. Part of being the best corporate parents involves achieving permanence for Children Looked After and Care Leavers. Permanence is defined as 'a sense of security, continuity, commitment and identity' and can be achieved through differing routes for each child.

Role of partners

81. Ensuring partners and families are involved in decisions and have a good understanding of what's in the best interests for their children.
82. Playing an active role by working with organisations that aid, engage and involve young people, such as CLICK. Support schools in always considering the needs of our Looked After Children.
83. Praise and support our foster carers as we seek loving families for LAC.
84. Local employers – engage with local employers to help young people in care and care leavers seek opportunities and improve their future prospects.
85. Celebrating Success – we can join in celebrating the successes of our children and young people. We can use our social media accounts and other networks to share positive news stories and attend organised events celebrating achievements.

Outcomes

- Every child will be supported to meet their individual potential
- Our partners feel supported in being the best corporate parents

Useful Tools and Resources

- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Permanency strategy
- Best practice examples of Care Plans
- Guide to undertaking Pathway Plans
- Best practice examples of Pathway Plans

Frequently asked questions

Q: Where can I find the Practice Guides?

A: These can be found on the Trix procedures web page

Q: Where can I find the Good Practice examples?

A: These can be found on the Trix procedures web page

Q: Where can I contact to find more about our social work practice framework?

A: there is more detail in our Practice Framework document which can be found on the Trix procedures web page

Q: How do I find the Trix procedures web page?

A: You can do a web search for 'children's procedures Wandsworth' or find the link on the Children's Social Care and Early Help internal communications site. It is useful to save a quick link to the procedure on your desktop