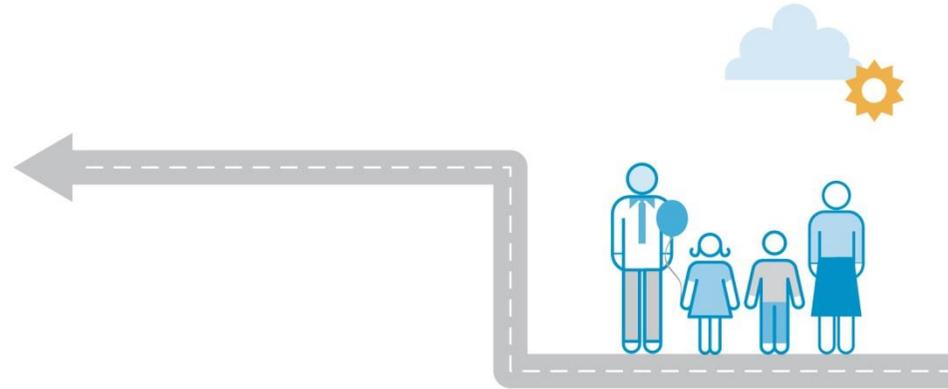


Final May 2021



# **Quality Assurance Framework**

## **Promoting and supporting excellence in practice**

**May 2021**

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## **Introduction**

The Peoples Directorate in the City of London is situated within the Department of Community and Children's Services and is responsible for delivering the whole range of children's services in the City of London; Children's Social Care, Safeguarding and Quality Assurance, Education and Early Years Services. This Framework covers the quality assurance work that takes place within children's services. These services include commissioned services, such as Independent Fostering Services, the Education Welfare Service and Youth Services.

The City of London is committed to providing services of excellence that deliver the best possible outcomes for children and families who reside within the City. This quality assurance framework sets out the mechanisms for how we will make sure that our services meet this high standard. This framework draws together the quality assurance activity that takes place across the Peoples Directorate, and how the impact of our work is confirmed by feedback from children and families.

## **Principles and Purpose of Quality Assurance**

The principles and purpose of this quality assurance framework are aligned with the journey of children and families through the services they receive, their lived experience and the outcomes achieved. This will be attained through being:

- **Child Centred:** focusing on the experience of children and young people, making sure that they are safe and protected from harm, and that their voice is heard clearly.
- **Restorative:** quality assurance will be restorative. This approach reflects the significant investment and training in systemic thinking and practice. Instead of a 'top-down' approach, quality assurance work will be based on working with staff and managers and building relationships. As a restorative process, quality assurance will be characterised by high support and high challenge.
- **Outcomes Based:** the focus of quality assurance will be on outcomes rather than processes. While processes play an important part, the real test is on the impact of our services for each child and family. We expect staff to have a relentless focus on impact and outcomes.
- **Positive:** our approach to quality assurance will be positive. By doing so, we shall inform and encourage improvement and support the development of staff and services.
- **Reflective:** our quality assurance framework is designed to promote reflective practice and shared learning.
- **Creative:** having a pioneering and 'can do' culture.
- **Consistent:** maintaining a consistently high standard of practice.

## Key Sources of Information

### Quantitative:

"How much?"

"How many?"

"How often?"

Performance Indicators and key metrics.

Wide range of data about service users, needs, services and intervention including timeliness and results.

Finance and resource data.

Partnership data such as health, education, housing, police, etc.

### Qualitative:

"How did we do?"

"What did the frontline services think and feel about it?"

"What did children, young people and their families think and feel about it?"

Audits/practice and impact reviews (single and multi-agency)

Section 11 audits.

Learning reviews.

Practice observations.

Management oversight.

Feedback from staff and other professionals.

Feedback from service users.

Complaints and compliments.

Evaluation of training (single and multi-agency)

Serious case reviews

Evaluations and inspections.

### Impact/Outcome:

"What difference have services/strategies/individuals made to the lives of children and young people?"

"Is anyone better off?"

"How can we improve?"

Outcome performance measures.

Voice of the child/practitioner.

Self-evaluations

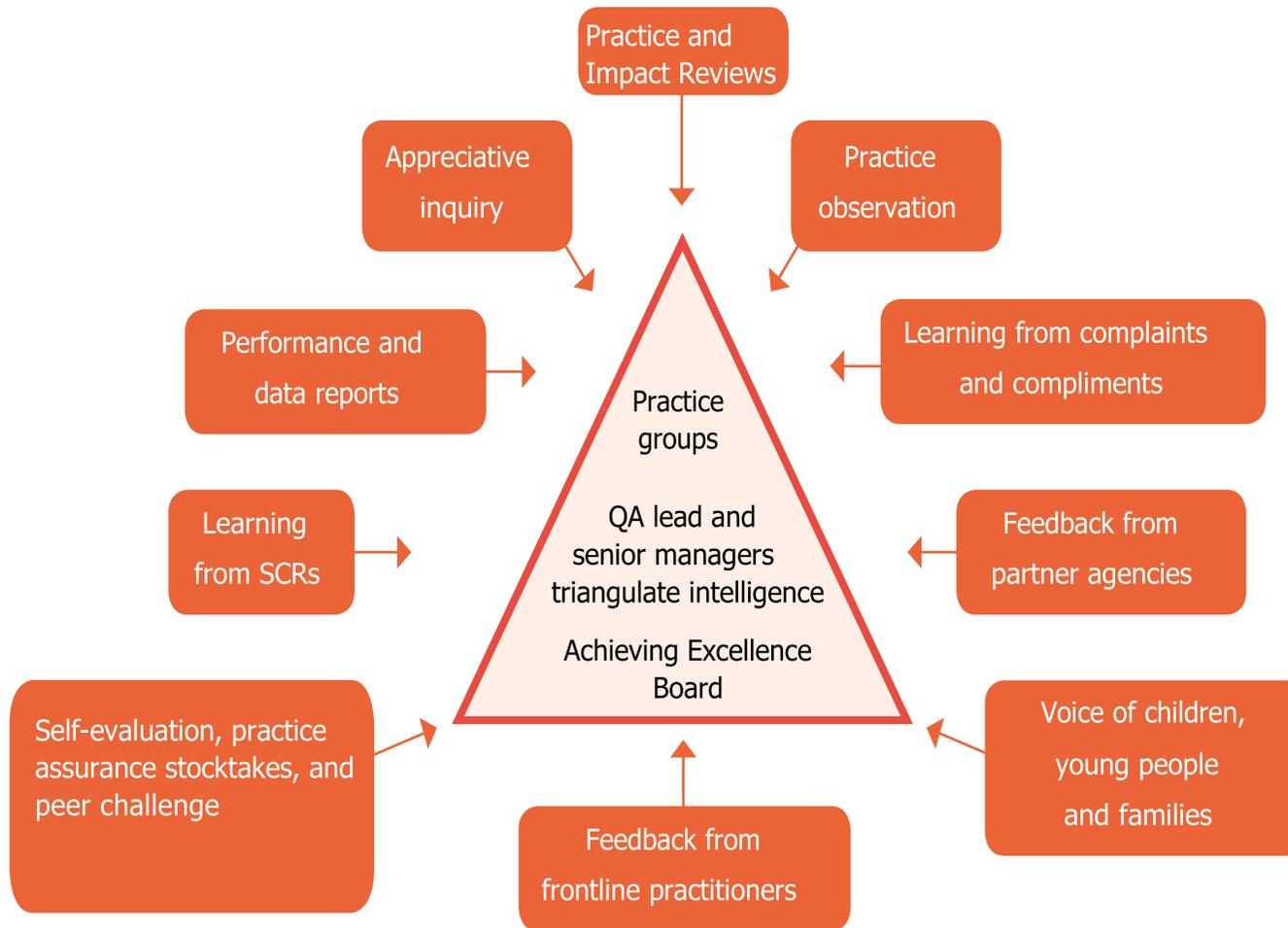
Direction of travel tools.

Annual reports.

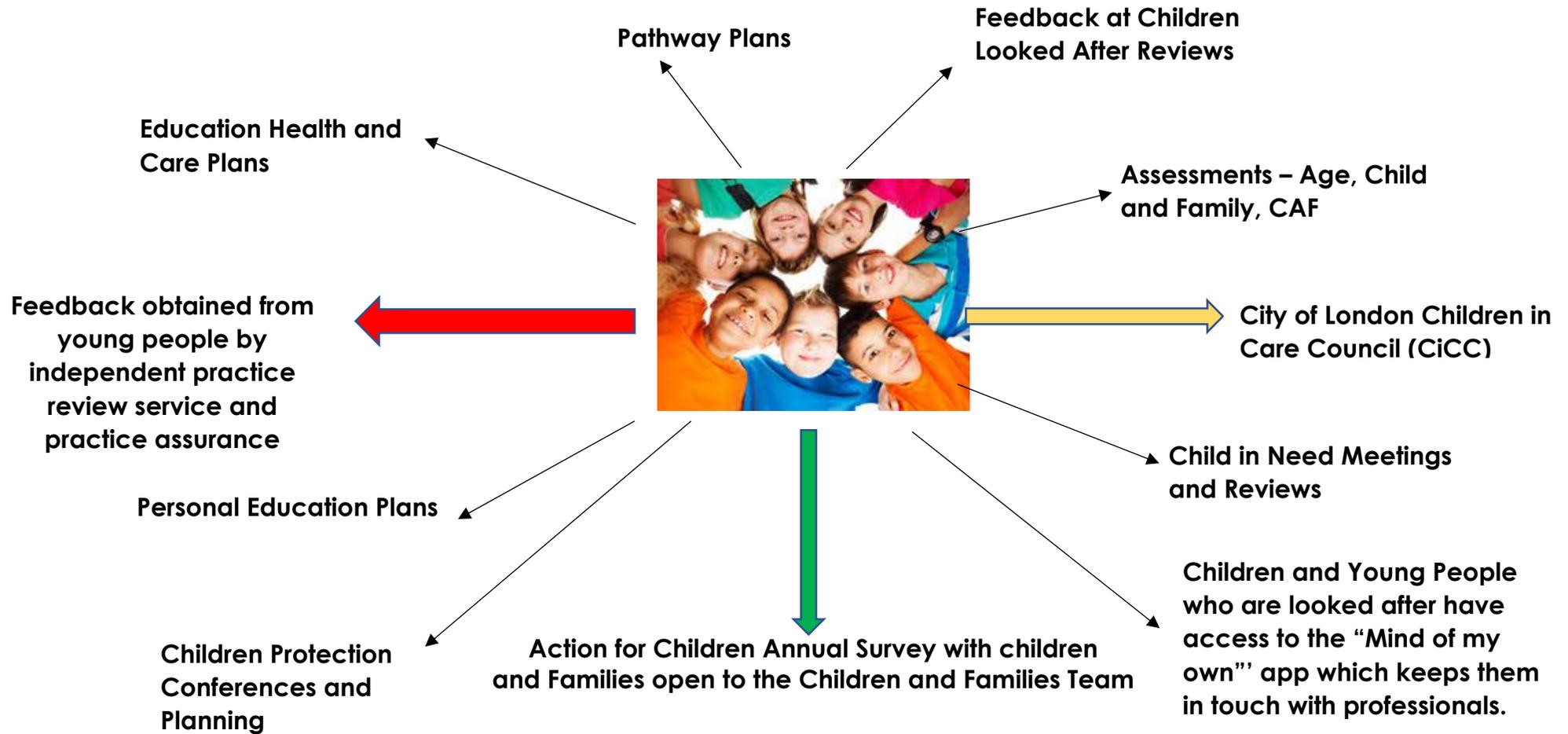
Development days, Deep Dives and Challenge events.

Evaluations and inspections.

## Framework for a whole-system approach to Quality Assurance Management



## Mechanisms for feedback from children and families



## **Making sure we hear and listen to the voices of children and that we help to make a difference.**

Children and young people who are known to services are consulted in many ways about their views. However, these views are not always visible or heard and they can become lost within the plethora of information collected. Additionally, some children may not be able to communicate verbally and/or English may not be their first language.

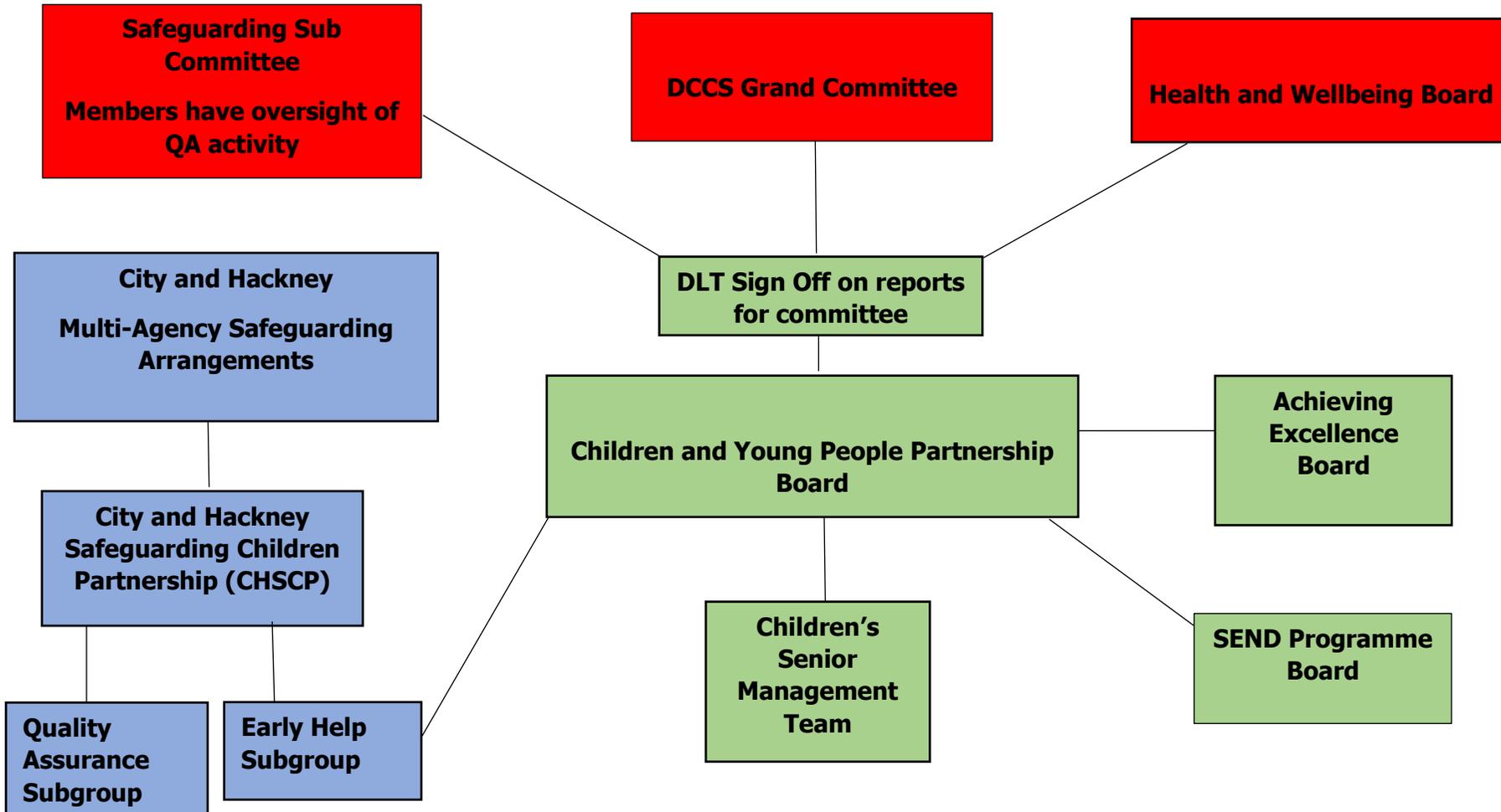
Children and young people can speak with a wide range of professionals who will ask them about their opinions and feelings. However, these views are not always captured or shared, and after time they become lost. By ensuring that we are consistently hearing and recording the child and young person's views (or recording our observations of a child's responses), we can build a more in-depth understanding of their needs and show themes in relation to their wellbeing. Where we do collect the views of children and young people, it is important that their views are represented in their entirety, and not interpreted or given from a third person perspective.

This framework seeks to ensure that the voice of the children and young person is visible and heard by:

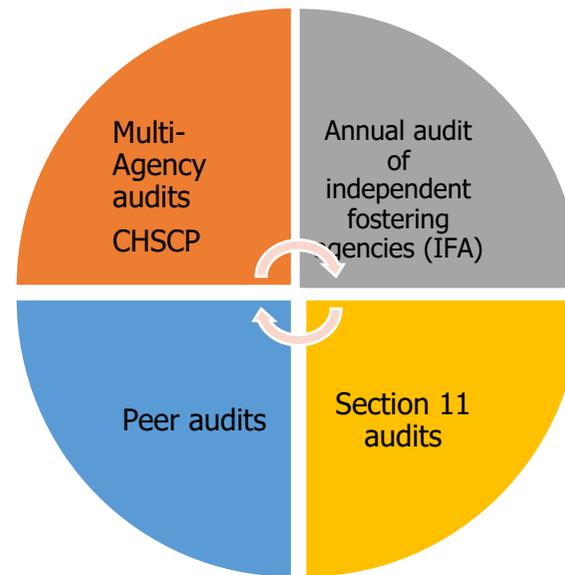
- Using different methods to collect children and young people's views, such as audio tapes, videos and/or Apps, which the young people can use with the support from their social workers or on their own. These will give the child or young person the opportunity to record their journey, aspirations, and views. They can also help to make life story work meaningful to them.
- Providing the capability on Mosaic, the electronic recording system for the views of children and young people to be more visible, by differentiating their views from other interaction taking place with professionals and other family members.
- Making sure that plans, reports, and assessments evidence the child/young person's perspective, in relation to what they want to change, and how they feel, through direct work which is age appropriate and supports their learning, language and diverse needs.
- Making sure that front line practitioners have the skills and confidence to engage with children and young people. Through a range of activities and methods, frontline practitioners can understand child development and undertake effective direct work with children and young people.

## Governance

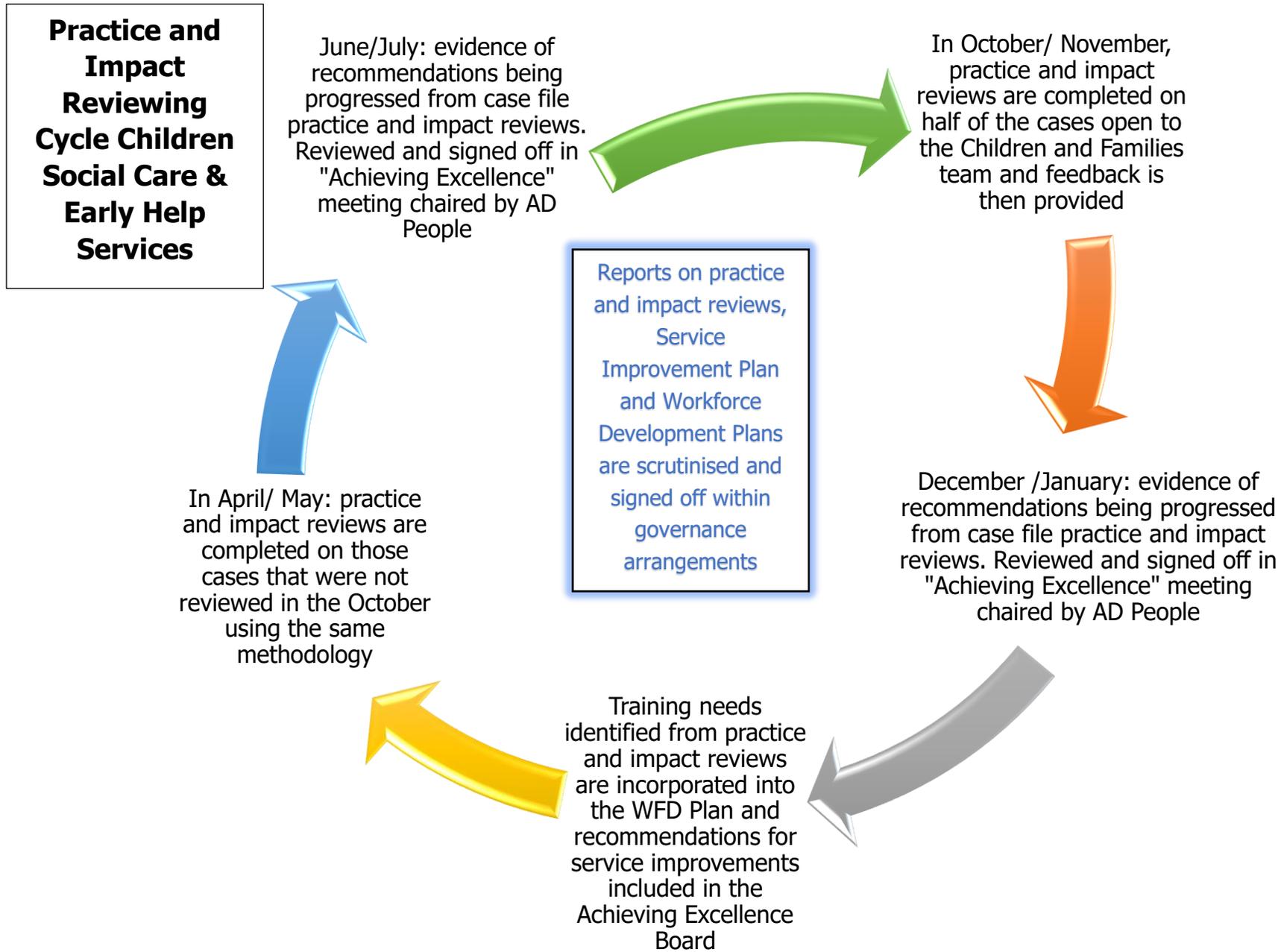
Effective governance provides an extra layer of quality assurance and scrutiny. The governance arrangements for the Corporation are set out below.



## Audit Cycle involving Partner agencies, City of London Corporation and Commissioned Services

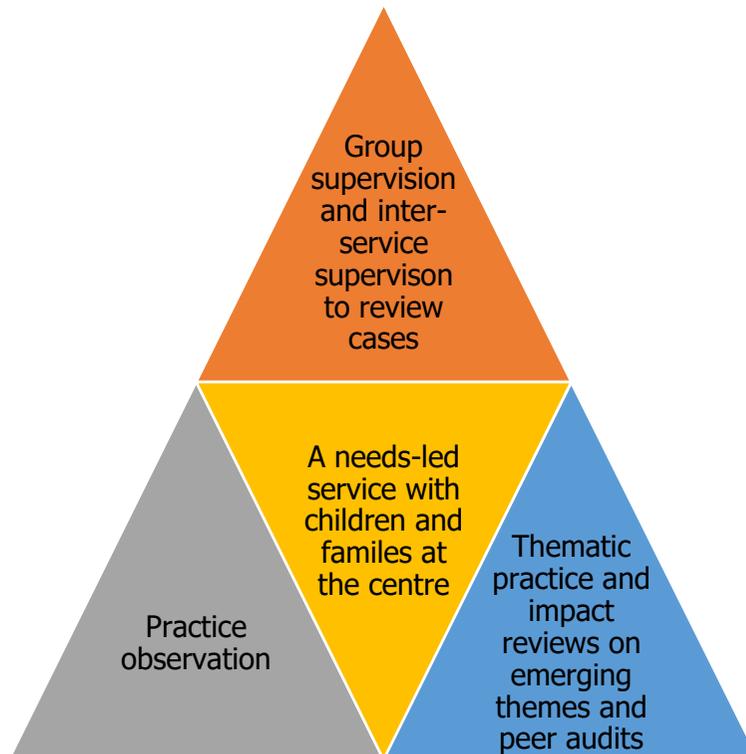


- Multi-agency audits are carried out bi-annually through the City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership. Partner agencies from Social Care, Education, Health and Police are involved. Learning from these audits is picked up through multi-agency action plans.
- Commissioned independent fostering agencies (IFA) and semi-independent provisions for care leavers are audited annually. Checks are made regarding how they meet national minimum standards in respect of IFAs, and standards of care in supporting young people towards independent living in relation to care leavers. Audits are also completed on youth services provision.
- Section 11 audits and peer audits are co-ordinated through the multi-agency safeguarding partnership between the City of London and Hackney (CHSCP).



## Practice Quality Assurance

### Qualitative Information



Frontline practitioners (social care and early help) have group supervision within their service area and with partner agencies where live cases can be discussed with constructive challenge and support. A systemic thinking approach is applied.

Thematic practice and impact reviews are carried out to explore hypotheses and emerging themes which may identify gaps in service.

Practice Observations take place across all levels of management in children's services. Senior managers have a line of sight over frontline practice. Practice observation guidance is attached in Appendix 2.

## **Operational Quality Assurance in the Children and Families Team & Early Help**

**Rigorous and regular management oversight of the quality, decision making, direction and outcomes relating to contacts, referrals, assessments, Early Help, CAF processes, s47 investigations, processes, and planning for children in need, children looked after and care leavers.**

**Group supervision, using systemic practice and thinking, individual supervision, and appraisal framework.**

### **Monitoring through Reviews and Panels:**

- **Adoption and Permanency Panel.**
- **Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) at Child Looked After Review and Child Protection Conference.**
- **Reviewing of Pathway Plans by the IRO.**
- **Management oversight on the review of Child in Need cases.**
- **“Top three” meeting with Senior Manager, which looks at cases where there may be block in moving plans forward for child and young people.**
- **Practice Observations which are carried out across all the tiers on management.**

### **Virtual School Head**

- **Oversight of Personal Education Plans (PEP) and the education section of pathway plans.**
- **Quality assuring PEP meetings with social workers and giving constructive feedback.**
- **Offering support and advice on what information should be contained on PEPs and pathway plans, and desired outcomes.**
- **Offering challenge to support improvement of education plans for children and young people.**

## **Operational Quality Assurance in the Education and Early Years' Service**

**SEND Panel; Reviews and Monitors SEND process including the quality of Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans, annual reviews of EHC Plans, and the transition of children and young people 14 years to adult services.**

**Termly reports to the Children's Senior Management Team on children who are Electively Home Educated (EHE) and at risk of missing education and weekly case updates to the Assistant Director of People.**

**SENCO network, which reviews and promotes good practice through peer support.**

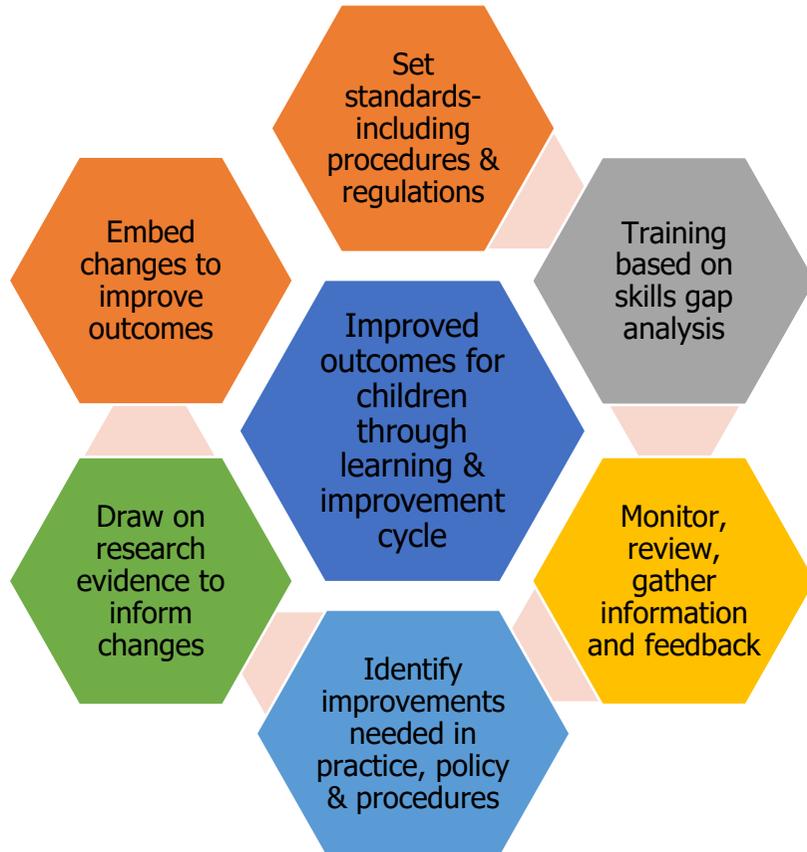
**Annual audits of Early Years Settings, reviewing Leadership, Management and Safeguarding, this is usually completed in the summer term.**

**SEND Programme Board; Strategic Oversight of the SEND joint strategy, self-evaluation form (SEF), Implementation of the SEND Service Improvement Action Plan, which is reported into Members Safeguarding Subgroup and Health & Wellbeing Board.**

**Monthly meetings with the Education and Early Years Service and Children's Social care team to review the vulnerable children list. This enables collaborative working and information sharing**

## Continuous improvement through learning

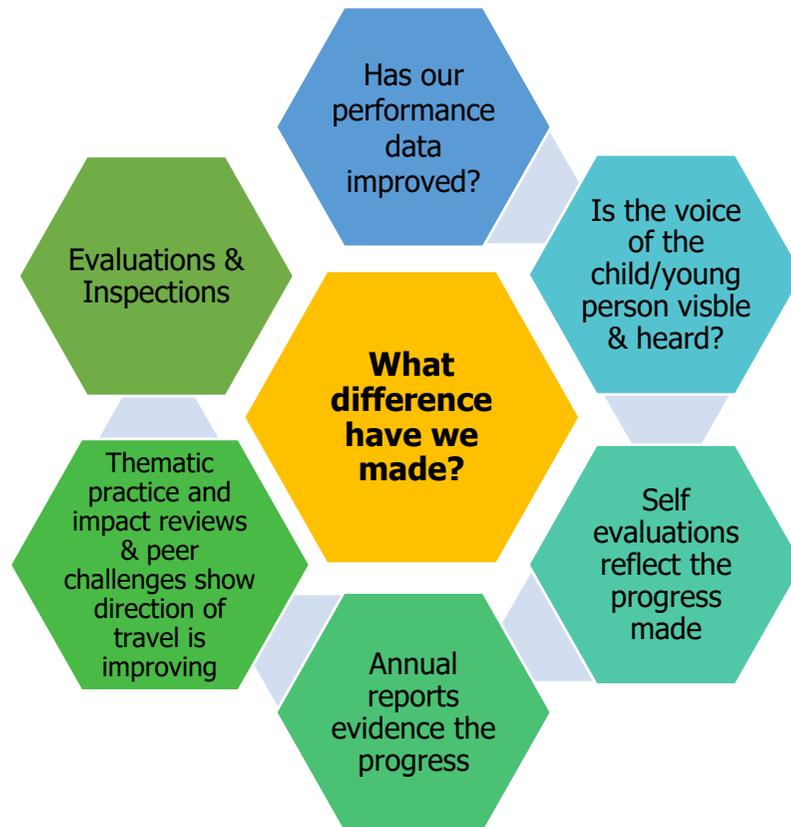
Quality assurance is a continuous improvement cycle using a range of interdependent methods to measure prevalence, monitor practice, listen to people's experiences, identify areas of improvement, and enact change as a result. An effective model will identify both "what is working well and why" and "what we need to do better". A key aspect in sustaining continuous improvements in practice is a learning and development programme that is responsive to the skills analysis of the workforce in meeting the needs of the service.



- Front line staff are supported by online procedures provided by Tri-x, guidance on regulations through policies and practice standards.
- Children's social care have access to a learning and development programme that is compliant with the DfE Knowledge and Skills Statement (2018). (See appendix 1)
- Training and support in systemic practice.
- Group supervision within children's social care and between services.
- Practice observations taking place across all tiers, from DLT, SMT, Line Managers and frontline staff.
- Learning from serious case reviews and internal management reviews
- Research based reports and assessments that help to inform practice and performance information.
- Measuring integration of learning into practice within appraisal and supervision.
- People's Learning – programme coordinated by The Workforce Development team

## Measuring Impact and Outcomes

Yvette Stanley, National Director for Social Care in May 2018 described how LAs could reach outstanding in child protections services by acknowledging that even the best performing LAs will have areas where they will need to make improvements in learning. This is achieved by learning from serious incidents and feedback from children and families, creating a learning environment that uses constructive management oversight and reflective practice to develop practitioners and manager.



"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 that supports learning in a complex and challenging environment". (Yvette Stanley)

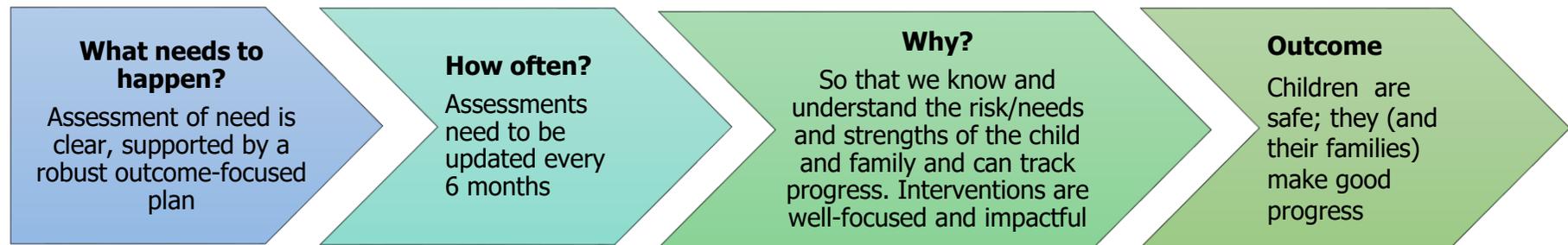
Local Authorities also need:

- ✓ A focus in getting basic social work practice right.
- ✓ A child-centred system with robust arrangements and processes.
- ✓ Consistent understanding and application of thresholds.
- ✓ Quality Assurance arrangements that support managers.
- ✓ Manageable caseloads.
- ✓ A strong learning culture.
- ✓ Collaborative working between teams to ensure effective information sharing
- ✓ Effective working with other agencies.
- ✓ A focus on achieving sustained improvements in the lives of children and their families.

In addition to the above, in 2021, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector emphasised the importance of being professionally curious by referring to, 'The right questions protect children.'

## Outcomes

Outcomes are the results or impact of services or interventions. A relentless focus on outcomes for children and young people help frontline staff understand the direct correlation with their actions in making a difference to the lives of children and families who receive services. Often the focus is on the process rather than the outcome. The diagram below shows the outcome of assessments being updated on a regular basis. An outcomes approach puts children and families at the centre rather than the process.



Using an outcomes-based approach reinforces for frontline practitioners their role and responsibility, enabling them to see the direct link between their actions and the impact these have for children, young people, and families. If an assessment does not look beyond the superficial presentation of that child or family's life, then all you are dealing with are the behaviours resulting from the underlying issue. Consequently, change will be limited and unsustainable. This leads to poor outcomes, as plans become task focused with limited evidence of change or impact. An outcomes-based approach combined with a strong ethos around learning and development supports improved outcomes for children, young people and their families, in making meaningful and sustainable change.

The Corporation has invested significantly in systemic thinking and practice. Systemic practice is a way of working which emphasises people's relationships as key to understanding their experiences and affect change. Families are worked with rather than 'done to'. They are better supported to stay together, and practitioners are more satisfied with their jobs and more likely to stay in them. The idea is that every conversation is an opportunity for change, and so social workers must be given the tools to be more adaptable and react to different and complex situations as they arise.

Systemic Practice has been and continues to be deployed across several authorities. It has proven to be an effective change to the way services interact and work with families. Key features of systemic practice are that:

- it is an evidence based therapeutic approach, which refers to a range of psychological interventions for individuals, couples and families based on systemic concepts and theory,
- systemic theory holds that people make sense out of their lives and derive meaning through relationships. Relationships are all important in the construction and therefore the dissolution of problems,
- systemic interventions are designed to help people make changes in their thinking, behaviour, and understandings to relieve distress, improve the quality of significant relationships and make positive changes in their lives: this gives the systemic approach a particularly good fit with the aims of intervention in children's social work,
- a systemic approach focuses on the key relationships around children, young people, and their families, in order to build on strengths and resources and make lasting change, thereby reducing the future demand on services from the identified child, young person and their family.

Systemic family therapy has a strong evidence base (Carr, 2009, 2014, Stratton 2010) in the treatment of: child and adolescent mental health problems including conduct problems, emotional difficulties, ADHD, eating disorders, depression; the impact of parental mental health difficulties on children and families; abuse and neglect; trauma; poverty and social marginalisation; the needs of looked after children; family and couple relationship difficulties; changing family structures.

## References

Susannah Bower, Carole Brooks and Jane Shuttleworth (April 2018) Research in Practice, Strategic Briefing, Building a Quality Culture in Child and Family Services.

Yvette Stanley, National Director for Social Care (May 2018) <https://socialcareinspection.blog.gov.uk/2018/05/how-do-we-achieve-outstanding-help-and-protection>.

Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children (HM Government July 2018).

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/942454/Working\\_together\\_to\\_safeguard\\_children\\_inter\\_agency\\_guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/942454/Working_together_to_safeguard_children_inter_agency_guidance.pdf)

Workforce Development Strategy – Peoples Directorate 2017 – 2022 (currently under review)

## Timeline of QA activity

### January

- Update Service Improvement Plan. (quarterly basis)
- All PEPs are updated within term time and overseen by Virtual Head.
- Monthly reflective supervision.
- SEND Panel.
- CHSCB Multi-Agency Audits (Completed bi-annually).
- Reports on Electively Home Educated Children to Children's Senior Management Team. (termly)
- Practice Observation carried out across all the tiers from social workers through to senior managers and directors.
- Strategic Placement Group, to review quality and value of placements attended by Commissioning, Children's Social Care and Early Help Service Manager, Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service Manager and Finance. Group is chaired by AD Peoples Service.
- Monthly meeting with the Education and Early Years Service and Children's Social Care team to discuss the Vulnerable Children list

### February

- Practice Standards updated (although urgent updates will be completed on an ad hoc basis).
- Monthly reflective supervision.
- SEND Panel.
- Reports on Electively Home Educated Children to Children's Senior Management Team (termly).
- Practice Observation carried out across all the tiers from social workers through to senior managers and directors.
- Annual Tendering Process, QA of Safeguarding requirements.
- Monthly meeting with the Education and Early Years Service and Children's Social Care team to discuss the Vulnerable Children list

## **March**

- Virtual School Head attends Children and Families Team Meeting to update staff on Education matters and discuss quality of PEP's and Pathway Plans.
- Monthly reflective supervision.
- End of Year Appraisals.
- SEND Panel.
- Reports on Electively Home Educated Children to Children's Senior Management Team (termly).
- Achieving Excellence Board
- Practice Observation carried out across all the tiers from social workers through to senior managers and directors.
- Monthly meeting with the Education and Early Years Service and Children's Social Care team to discuss the Vulnerable Children list

## **April**

- Update Service Improvement Plan (quarterly basis).
- All PEPs are updated within term time and overseen by Virtual Head.
- Monthly reflective supervision.
- Appraisal and objectives for coming year.
- SEND Panel.
- Reports on Electively Home Educated Children to Children's Senior Management Team (termly).
- Action for Children Survey completed with all young people open to the Children and Families Team.
- Practice Observation carried out across all the tiers from social workers through to senior managers and directors.
- Strategic Placement Group, to review quality and value of placements attended by Commissioning, Children's Social Care and Early Help Service Manager, Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service Manager and Finance. Group is chaired by AD Peoples Service.
- Monthly meeting with the Education and Early Years Service and Children's Social Care team to discuss the Vulnerable Children list

## **May**

- Independent practice and impact reviews completed on half of cases open to Children and Families Team.
- Monthly reflective supervision.
- SEND Panel.
- Reports on Electively Home Educated Children to Children's Senior Management Team. (termly)
- Practice Observation carried out across all the tiers from social workers through to senior managers and directors.
- Monthly meeting with the Education and Early Years Service and Children's Social Care team to discuss the Vulnerable Children list

## **June**

- Group Supervision for Children and Families Team.
- All PEPs are updated within term time and overseen by Virtual Head.
- Virtual Head produces annual and interim report on the work that has been covered.
- Monthly reflective supervision.
- SEND Panel.
- Reports on Electively Home Educated Children to Children's Senior Management Team (termly).
- Audits completed in Early Years settings.
- Achieving Excellence Board.
- Practice Observation carried out across all the tiers from social workers through to senior managers and directors.
- Annual audit on Independent Fostering Agencies and Semi-Independent accommodation.
- Achieving Excellence Meetings; reviewing progress made on recommendations from independent practice and impact reviews.
- Monthly meeting with the Education and Early Years Service and Children's Social Care team to discuss the Vulnerable Children list

## **July**

- Group Supervision for Children and Families Team.
- Update Service Improvement Plan (quarterly basis).
- Monthly reflective supervision.
- SEND Panel.

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- Reports on Electively Home Educated Children to Children's Senior Management Team (termly).
- Practice Observation carried out across all the tiers from social workers through to senior managers and directors.
- Strategic Placement Group, to review quality and value of placements attended by Commissioning, Children's Social Care and Early Help Service Manager, Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service Manager and Finance. Group is chaired by AD Peoples Service.
- Monthly meeting with the Education and Early Years Service and Children's Social Care team to discuss the Vulnerable Children list

## **August**

- Group Supervision for Children and Families Team.
- The Independent Reviewing Officer produces an annual report on Children Looked After in the City of London, which covers performance and QA of the work carried out with young people.
- Monthly reflective supervision.
- SEND Panel.
- Reports on Electively Home Educated Children to Children's Senior Management Team (termly).
- Practice Observation carried out across all the tiers from social workers through to senior managers and directors.
- Monthly meeting with the Education and Early Years Service and Children's Social Care team to discuss the Vulnerable Children list

## **September**

- Practice Standards updated (although urgent updates will be completed on an ad hoc basis).
- Group Supervision for Children and Families Team.
- All PEPs are updated within term time and overseen by Virtual Head.
- Monthly reflective supervision.
- Appraisal mid-way review.
- SEND Panel.
- CHSCB Multi-Agency Audits. (Completed bi-annually).
- Reports on Electively Home Educated Children to Children's Senior Management Team (termly).
- Achieving Excellence Board.

Final May 2021

- Practice Observation carried out across all the tiers from social workers through to senior managers and directors.
- Monthly meeting with the Education and Early Years Service and Children's Social Care team to discuss the Vulnerable Children list

## **October**

- Group Supervision for Children and Families Team.
- Update Service Improvement Plan (quarterly basis).
- Monthly reflective supervision.
- SEND Panel.
- Strategic Placement Group, to review quality and value of placements attended by Commissioning, Children's Social Care and Early Help Service Manager, Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service Manager and Finance. Group is chaired by AD Peoples Service.
- Reports on Electively Home Educated Children to Children's Senior Management Team (termly).
- Annual Ofsted Meeting and Self-Assessment update.
- Practice Observation carried out across all the tiers from social workers through to senior managers and directors.
- Monthly meeting with the Education and Early Years Service and Children's Social Care team to discuss the Vulnerable Children list

## **November**

- Independent practice and impact reviews completed on half of cases open to Children and Families Team.
- Group Supervision for Children and Families Team.
- Monthly reflective supervision.
- SEND Panel.
- Reports on Electively Home Educated Children to Children's Senior Management Team (termly).
- Practice Observation carried out across all the tiers from social workers through to senior managers and directors.
- Monthly meeting with the Education and Early Years Service and Children's Social Care team to discuss the Vulnerable Children list

## **December**

- Group Supervision for Children and Families Team.
- Monthly reflective supervision.
- SEND Panel.
- Reports on Electively Home Educated Children to Children's Senior Management Team (termly).
- Achieving Excellence Board.
- Practice Observation carried out across all the tiers from social workers through to senior managers and directors.
- Achieving Excellence Meetings; reviewing progress made on recommendations from independent practice and impact reviews.
- Practice Observation carried out across all the tiers from social workers through to senior managers and directors.
- Monthly meeting with the Education and Early Years Service and Children's Social Care team to discuss the Vulnerable Children list

Direct observation of staff across all levels is carried out throughout the year, the data from these observations will be on each individual's supervision record and support their learning and development record. Guidance for direct observation is in Appendix 2.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Knowledge and Skills Statement for Child and Family Practitioners**

A child and family social worker should be able to do the following:

#### **1) Relationships and effective direct work**

Build effective relationships with children, young people and families, which form the bedrock of all support and child protection responses. Be both authoritative and empathic and work in partnership with children, families and professionals, enabling full participation in assessment, planning, review and decision making. Ensure child protection is always privileged.

Provide support based on best evidence, which is tailored to meet individual child and family needs, and which addresses relevant and significant risks. Secure access to services, negotiating and challenging other professionals and organisations to provide the help required. Ensure children and families, including children in public care, receive the support to which they are entitled.

Support children and families in transition, including children and young people moving to and between placements, those returning home, those being adopted or moving through to independence. Help children to separate from, and sustain, multiple relationships recognising the impact of loss and change.

#### **2) Communication**

Communicate clearly and sensitively with children of different ages and abilities, their families and in a range of settings and circumstances. Use methods based on best evidence. Create immediate rapport with people not previously known which facilitates engagement and motivation to participate in child protection enquiries, assessments, and services.

Act respectfully even when people are angry, hostile, and resistant to change. Manage tensions between parents, carers and family members, in ways that show persistence, determination and professional confidence.

Listen to the views, wishes and feelings of children and families and help parents and carers understand the ways in which their children communicate through their behaviour. Help them to understand how they might communicate more effectively with their children.

Promote speech, language and communication support, identifying those children and adults who are experiencing difficulties expressing themselves. Produce written case notes and reports, which are well argued, focused, and jargon free. Present a clear analysis and a sound rationale for actions as well as any conclusions reached, so that all parties are well informed.

### **3) Child development**

Observe and talk to children in their environment including at home, at school, with parents, carers, friends and peers to help understand the physical and emotional world in which the child lives, including the quality of child and parent/carer interaction and other key relationships. Establish the pattern of development for the child, promote optimal child development and be alert to signs that may indicate that the child is not meeting key developmental milestones, has been harmed or is at risk of harm.

Take account of typical age-related physical, cognitive, social, emotional and behavioural development over time, accepting that normative developmental tasks are different for each child depending on the interactions for that child between health, environmental and genetic factors. Assess the influence of cultural and social factors on child development, the effect of different parenting styles, and the effect of loss, change and uncertainty in the development of resilience.

Explore the extent to which behavioural and emotional development may also be a result of communication difficulties, ill health or disability, adjusting practice to take account of these differences. Seek further advice from relevant professionals to fully understand a child's development and behaviour.

### **4) Adult mental ill health, substance misuse, domestic abuse, physical ill health and disability**

Identify the impact of adult mental ill health, substance misuse, domestic abuse, physical ill health and disability on family functioning and social circumstances and in particular the effect on children, including those who are young carers. Access the help and assistance of other professionals in the identification and prevention of adult social need and risk, including mental health and learning disability assessment.

Coordinate emergency and routine services and synthesise multi-disciplinary judgements as part of ongoing social work assessment. Use a range of strategies to help families facing these difficulties.

Identify concerning adult behaviours that may indicate risk or increasing risk to children. Assess the likely impact on, and inter-relationship between, parenting and child development. Recognise and act upon escalating social needs and risks, helping to ensure that vulnerable adults are safeguarded and that a child is protected, and their best interests always prioritised.

### **5) Abuse and neglect of children**

Exchange information with partner agencies about children and adults where there is concern about the safety and welfare of children. Triangulate evidence to ensure robust conclusions are drawn. Recognise harm and the risk indicators of different forms of harm to children relating to sexual, physical, emotional abuse and neglect. Take into account the long-term effects of cumulative harm, particularly in relation to early indicators of neglect.

Consider the possibility of child sexual exploitation, grooming (on and offline), female genital mutilation and enforced marriage and the range of adult behaviours which pose a risk to children, recognising too the potential for children to be perpetrators of abuse. Lead the investigation of allegations of significant harm to children in consultation with other professionals and practice supervisors.

Draw one's own conclusions about the likelihood of, for example, sexual abuse or non-accidental injury having occurred and the extent to which any injury is consistent with the explanation offered. Commission a second professional opinion and take legal advice where necessary.

### **6) Child and family assessment**

Carry out in-depth and ongoing family assessment of social need and risk to children, with particular emphasis on parental capacity and capability to change. Use professional curiosity and authority while maintaining a position of partnership, involving all key family members, including fathers. Acknowledge any conflict between parental and children's interests, prioritising the protection of children as set out in legislation.

Use child observation skills, genograms, ecomaps, chronologies and other evidence-based tools ensuring active child and family participation in the process. Incorporate the contributions that other professional disciplines make to social work assessments.

Hold an empathic position about difficult social circumstances experienced by children and families, taking account of the relationship between poverty and social deprivation, and the effect of stress on family functioning, providing help and support. Take into account individual child and family history and how this might affect the ability of adults and children to engage with services.

Recognise and address behaviour that may indicate resistance to change, ambivalent or selective cooperation with services, and recognise when there is a need for immediate action, and what other steps can be taken to protect children.

### **7) Analysis, decision-making, planning and review**

Establish the seriousness that different risks present, and any harm already suffered by a child, balanced with family strengths and potential solutions. Set out the best options for resolving difficulties facing the family and each child, considering the risk of future harm and its consequences and the likelihood of successful change.

Prioritise children's need for emotional warmth, stability, and sense of belonging, particularly those in public care, as well as identity development, health and education, ensuring active participation and positive engagement of the child and family. Test multiple hypotheses about what is happening in families and to children, using evidence and professional judgement to reach timely conclusions. Challenge any prevailing professional conclusions in the light of new evidence or practice reflection.

Make realistic child centred plans within a review timeline, which will manage and reduce identified risks and meet the needs of the child. Ensure sufficient multi-disciplinary input into the process at all stages. Apply twin and triple track planning to minimise chances of drift or delay, being alert to the effectiveness or otherwise of current support plans.

### **8) The law and the family and youth justice systems**

Navigate the family and youth justice systems in England using legal powers and duties to support families, to protect children and to look after children in the public care system, including the regulatory frameworks that support the full range of permanence options.

Participate in decisions about whether to make an application to the family court, the order to be applied for, and the preparation and presentation of evidence.

Seek advice and second opinion as required in relation to the wide range of legal issues which frequently face children and families involved with statutory services including immigration, housing, welfare benefits, mental health and learning disability assessment, education and support for children with learning difficulties.

Use the law, regulatory and statutory guidance to inform practice decisions. Take into account the complex relationship between professional ethics, the application of the law and the impact of social policy on both.

### **9) The role of supervision**

Recognise one's own professional limitations and how and when to seek advice from a range of sources, including practice supervisors, senior practice leaders and other clinical practitioners from a range of disciplines such as psychiatry, paediatrics and psychology. Discuss, debate, reflect upon and test hypotheses about what is happening within families, and with children.

Explore the potential for bias in decision-making and resolve tensions emerging from, for example, ethical dilemmas, conflicting information or differing professional positions. Identify which methods will be of help for a specific child or family and the limitations of different approaches. Make use of the best evidence from research to inform the complex judgements and decisions needed to support families and protect children.

Reflect on the emotional experience of working relationships with parents, carers and children, and consciously identify where personal triggers are affecting the quality of analysis or help. Identify strategies to build professional resilience and management of self.

### **10) Organisational context**

Operate successfully in a wide range of organisational contexts complying with the checks and balances within local and national systems which are a condition of employment. Maintain personal and professional credibility through effective working relationships with peers, managers and leaders both within the profession, throughout multi-agency partnerships and public bodies, including the family courts.

Act in ways that protect the reputation of the employer organisation and the social work profession, whilst always privileging the best interests of children. Manage the specific set of organisational tasks relating to lead responsibility for children with the support of an appropriately qualified supervisor and use of the multi-agency support network.

Contribute to the organisation's role as corporate parent to children in public care, encouraging and advocating for organisational focus, resource and support so that children and young people can thrive and enjoy their childhood and move into independence with confidence in and ambition for their futures.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Preparing for observation**

- Decide with the person who will be observing you what aspect of your practice they will be looking at i.e. is it within a professional setting or with service users.
- Ensure that prior to any observation taking place you have explained the purpose of the observation to the service user/users and obtained their permission.
- Ensure that consideration has been given to the impact in relation to power imbalance and equalities.
- Think about the purpose of the intervention taking place, and what you are hoping to achieve. You may want to have a conversation about this with the person who is observing you.
- Try not to be anxious. The observation of practice facilitates reflection, coaching and constructive feedback which can help to support learning.
- Remember it is a joint discussion, focusing on how you felt during the process, how you felt it went with the service user/s, and whether there is anything you would do differently.

### **Observer**

- Please ensure that the observation has your full attention and refrain from using your phone and that it is on silent.
- Be clear as to the purpose of the observation and check whether professionals/ service users are happy for you to be there to observe.
- Be clear that you are not involved in the intervention and are only to observe. To reinforce this, it may be helpful to sit away from the interaction.
- It can be distracting if you are taking notes during the meeting and you could easily miss important aspect of the intervention.
- Following the observation write up your findings, reflecting on not only what you have heard, but also what you have observed and felt in relation to the observation.
- When giving feedback it is important that it is a two-way conversation. Establish how the person being observed felt the intervention went, be honest and constructive when giving feedback, working from a strength-based approach rather than a deficit model.
- Reflect on the discussion that has taken place and the learning that has been achieved.

**A copy of the completed observation should be given to the person being observed and the person line managing the individual and should be kept with the supervision records. The quality assurance lead/principal social worker is to be notified of when the observation has taken place so it can be centrally recorded for auditing purposes.**