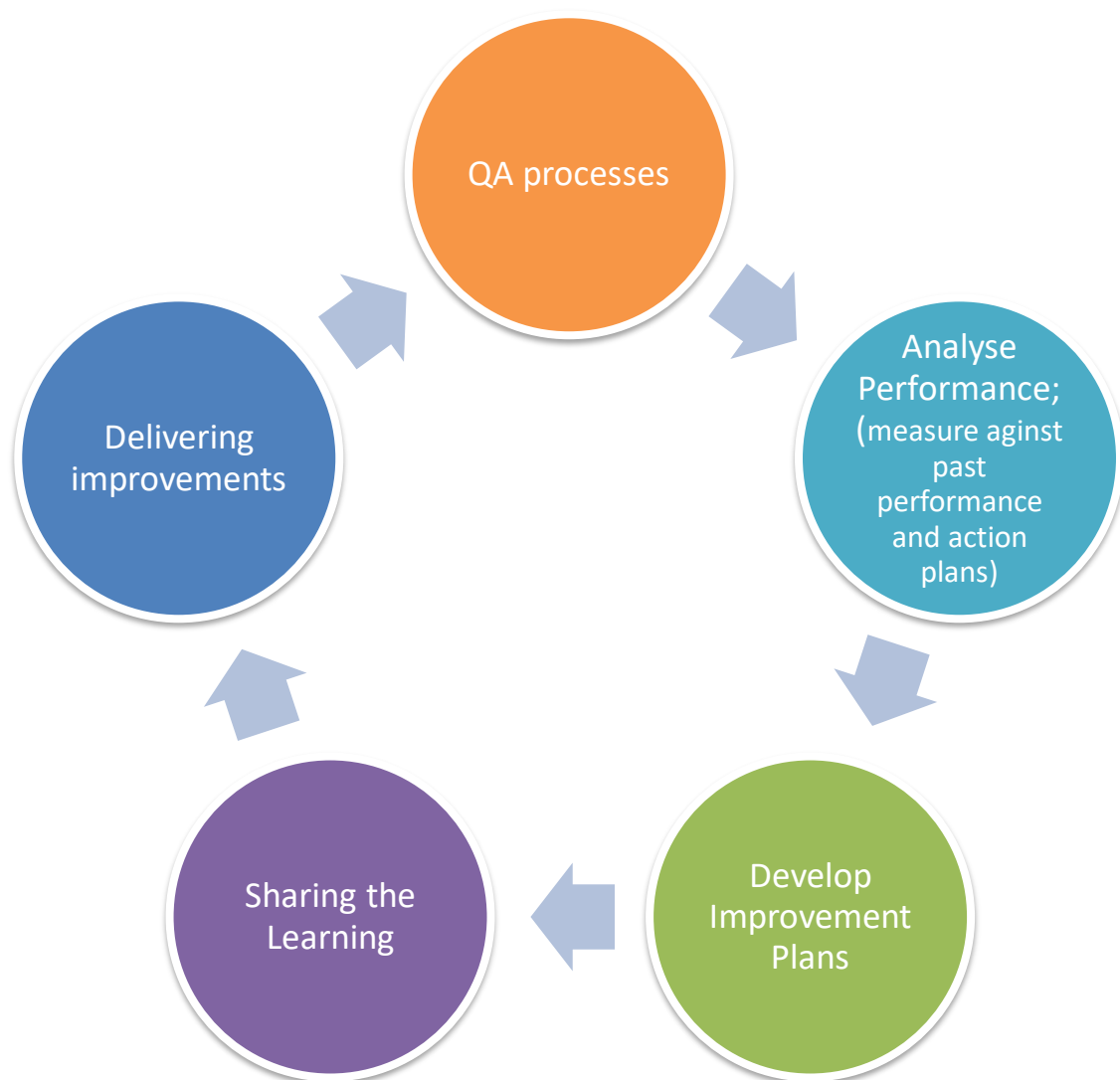




Hammersmith & Fulham Quality Assurance Framework

The Learning Cycle



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Introduction

This Framework applies to all children's services teams and services.

The framework sets out how H&F learns from all activity completed to ensure children and families are being supported in the right way at the right time, and understand what difference has been made. The framework sets out the approach and how learning is embedded and evidenced in practice.

The Quality Assurance Framework (QAF): provides a level of confidence about service delivery and the positive impact on children and their families in H&F

Measuring impact is key - What difference are H&F and their partners making? It is this reason that outcomes for children is at the heart of the Framework.

The Quality Assurance Framework includes capturing data to ensure standards are met and procedures followed. However, these measures alone do not assure positive impact and there is a need to ask, "so what"?

The QA framework starting point is being clear about "what good looks like".

Our vision for quality and improvement

Our aim

- To be a learning organisation
- To quality assure and improve our services
- To improve outcomes for children.

Priorities

- The needs of children and families are understood
- Children are at the centre
- Children and families benefit from every visit and meeting
- We understand and improve the impact of our work.

Essential Components to deliver a quality service

1. **Organisational:** having effective quality assurance systems and procedures in place
2. **Cultural:** an ethos that promotes learning, critical reflection and curiosity
3. **Leadership:** That supports and champions reflections, participation, feedback and improvement

4. **Management:** to monitor and evaluate individual's practice against standards
5. **Workforce:** be supported to take responsibility for their practice.
6. **Service users:** validate that requirements of the standards have been adhered to

Our guiding principles for the Framework are:

1. **Child Centred:** Children, young people and their families are at the heart of what we do. The focus of quality assurance must be on impact and outcomes for the child or young person in their journey through our social work and safeguarding systems.
2. **Restorative Practice:** The approach to Quality Assurance will be underpinned by Restorative Practice, and a desire to examine and capture best practice. This means that QA activity is done 'with' staff, rather than 'to' or 'for', in ways that build relationships and are characterised by respecting each other's perspectives, high expectations, high support and high challenge, to enable us to learn, improve and change.
3. **Outcomes Based:** The focus of quality assurance will be on outcomes rather than processes.
4. **Positive:** our approach to quality assurance will be positive - looking at informing and encouraging improvement and supporting the development of staff and services.
5. **Reflective:** our quality assurance framework is designed to be about promoting reflective practice and shared learning.

Policies, procedures and standards

Policies, Standards and Procedures underpin the expectations for practice in the service. They give guidance and ensure that all staff are aware of the consistent standards that they need to meet.

Standards for Practice	Customer Service Standards
<p>Standard 1: All children and their families will be treated with respect and honesty and be actively involved throughout our work with them</p> <p>Standard 2: All children will have an assessment and a plan which reflects their own experiences, wishes, feelings and the needs of</p>	<p>We will maintain our local Customer Service Standards throughout our work (link): We will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explain why we are working with you and your family and what we can and cannot do;

<p>parents and carers; enabling them to fulfil their responsibilities.</p> <p>Standard 3: All children will have a plan which explains what needs to happen; by when; who by; what outcomes we are seeking together; how risk is being managed; and what the contingency plan is.</p> <p>Standard 4: As far as age and understanding allows, children will be spoken to alone and worked with by professionals who have the tools to directly engage them.</p> <p>Standard 5: All children's case records will be analytical, well written and timely, so that everyone can understand significant events that have happened; what the plan is; the purpose of actions and contacts; and what difference has been made so far for the child.</p> <p>Standard 6: Every child will be supported by management oversight of the professionals' working with them. This includes reflective supervision; checking that work has been done to agreed standards (monitoring and quality assurance); seeing what difference it is making; and what needs to happen next.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • listen to you and take into account your wishes and feelings in everything we do; • take care to ensure you understand what we are saying, by using clear and straightforward language or a translator if necessary; • do everything we say and when we say we will do it; • be on time for meetings and appointments; • keep you updated on progress; • keep your personal information safe and explain how we are going to use it; • try to answer your questions or find someone who can.
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These practice standards are informed by statutory guidance and regulation; The Social Work Professional Capabilities Framework; Health & Care professions' standards of conduct and performance; research evidence about practice most likely to lead to good quality services and good outcomes for children and families;

Roles and Responsibility for Quality Assurance

To be effective, quality assurance needs to take place within an organisational context which promotes and supports the continuous development of Family Services as a 'learning organisation'. It depends upon 'ownership' at all levels.

The Quality Assurance Framework starts from a number of very clear presumptions - that all staff are responsible for the quality of their own work;

that everyone has a duty to both assure their own work and be ready to challenge the work of others if children are or might be at risk, and that ultimately those who deliver frontline services are responsible for the quality of those services.

The Framework is designed to be inclusive, working 'with' staff rather than doing 'to' them. Frontline social work staff are best placed to assess the quality of what they do, the constraints they experience in delivering quality, and to learn from an inclusive process which enables them to reflect and improve practice. Equally, Operational Managers have the direct responsibility for ensuring the work of their teams, services and area.

All managers have specific responsibilities for monitoring and driving forward improved practice in line with service priorities, improvement plans, audit outcomes, and feedback from service users in order to achieve improvements and best practice. Managers also have a responsibility to support practitioners through the supervision and appraisals processes.

Staff in the Safeguarding Review and Quality Assurance Service, which includes Independent Reviewing Officers, Child Protection Chairs and QA Manager, contribute to the improvement cycle by embedding the quality assurance framework and supporting operational services to drive up standards.

The Quality Assurance Manager has a clear coordinating and analysis role and to provide an overview of impact and effectiveness and to monitor improvement plans. The aim is to provide a proactive approach to quality assurance to ensure that performance is improved and sustained. Work is targeted as agreed by the Family Services Management Team and informed by themes and issues identified throughout the service.

The Assistant Director of Family Services has oversight and ownership of this Framework. This post is responsible for its implementation across Family Services, and to ensure it is updated and refreshed as needed.

Elected members have a particular role in overseeing and scrutinising frontline service delivery. Member scrutiny is carried out through the Performance and Overview functions and there is an expectation that all members take an interest in and responsibility for the outcomes of the most vulnerable children, especially those for whom they are corporate parent

Methodologies for assuring quality of services

Information is considered and gathered from the following sources:

1. Performance and Management Information:

Data tells us something about how well the service is doing and will ordinarily measure either service outputs or outcomes for children. Many of these indicators are nationally set and reported upon. Statistical neighbours and

best performance authorities benchmarking data is available and is used by H&F to drive service improvement.

2. Monthly Audits

Monthly Audits will be undertaken by ALL Operational Team Managers, Deputy Team Managers, CPAs & IROs; to review practice and the impact on children and families.

Monthly auditing will take place during the 2nd week of each month. Heads of Service will provide the QA Manager with a list of cases from their service area – one for each social worker.

Each auditor will audit one casefile a month; this will include:

- reviewing the case records
- reflective discussion with social worker

Monthly auditing ensures that every social worker's practice is audited 6 monthly. Managers will audit across services thereby facilitating another layer of quality assurance and independent scrutiny of practice, standards, decision making and progress.

Some monthly audits will be thematic, to help us focus on specific areas for improvement arising from previous audits, case reviews and Practice Week

- Monthly audits will be collated into a report, every 3 months.
- The findings and themes will inform the Learning and Improvement Plan.

Individual Audit documentation and outcomes will be both discussed in supervision and used to demonstrate social workers' and managers' learning and reflections, on the quality of decision making and progress of cases.

3. Practice Week

Practice Week will be undertaken by ALL Heads of Service. They will take place twice a year and run over a week.

Practice Week will involve a combination of activities:

- a review of the case records
- reflective discussion with the social worker
- direct observations of practice
- user feedback – obtaining views of children, parents and carers during observations, and by direct contact
- Audits will be graded in line with the Ofsted Evaluation and Grade Descriptors
- There will be a report of the findings and themes that will feed into the Learning and Improvement Plan.

So that the framework is a reflective learning experience for practitioners, Auditors complete part of the audit alongside the case worker. On completion, the Auditor will feed the results of the audit, reflections and any actions required to the Social Worker and will copy the documentation to their line

manager. This will be used for reflective discussion in supervision, to inform future practice and service provision. Recommendations will be uploaded on to the child's file and monitored by the manager.

Practice Weeks will include obtaining the views of children and their families about their experience of receiving services and the impact our work has on their lives. This process can be supported by the Children's Advocate and/or the Virtual School.

4. Staff Observation

All staff will be observed to assess the quality of their practice in working with children and families and/or partner agencies.

Observation of staff in their everyday work is an important element of quality assuring professional practice. Observation of practice adds to a whole picture about the way that our workforce builds relationships, maintains honest open and transparent conversations, challenges and reframes on behalf of children and families. This will identify professional developmental needs and grow workforce confidence, and develop autonomy.

All Team Managers (or Deputy and Senior Practitioners who supervise staff) will

- observe practice of newly qualified workers in line with local and national ASYE policy;
- observe the practice of experienced workers at least once every year in line with national standards
- identify any workers within the team in need of support to improve performance;
- share observations with workers in reflective supervision sessions;
- negotiate individual action plans with workers as necessary;
- share completed observations with the Learning and Development Team.

Observations of practice will also take place during Practice Week

Observations can take place during a range of activities such as (but not limited to):

Home visits

CP Conferences

LAC Reviews

Professionals meetings

Network meetings

CIN meetings

Legal Planning meetings

Court proceedings

Ethical guidance: During each observation of practice, the observer will be sensitive to the potential pressures on, and the apprehension of, children, young people, families and staff.

Agreement should be obtained from families for observations to take place using the template in [Appendix A](#)

5. Multi-agency Audits – LSCB

A rolling programme of multi-agency audits is in place to promote learning for all partner agencies. These are identified through the LSCB Quality Assurance sub group. A Multi-agency audit may also be initiated in response to an identified practice issue or in response to a serious incident involving a child. The Quality Assurance Manager is responsible for coordinating the audits.

6. Case Reviews, Serious Case Reviews, Serious Incidents, Domestic Homicide Reviews

These provide the opportunity to reflect in detail on practice within individual cases, and to identify and act on areas for improvement. This is an essential part of the learning cycle to try and prevent similar situations or incidents arising in the future. The learning from all of these cases will be disseminated across Children's Services.

7. Feedback from Service Users

It is essential that children, young people and their families' views about the services that they receive are sought and captured within the quality assurance process. This ensures services are matching needs and that service users are central to the service delivery.

Consulting with and using feedback gained from children, young people, families, and other professionals is central to understanding the subjective experiences of those accessing or working for Children's Social Care.

The Principal Social Worker role is pivotal in understanding the experiences of frontline practitioners. Seeking feedback helps us to improve how we deliver our services to individuals, improve the working conditions and processes for our teams, and enables us to identify themes to be addressed. Identifying themes will allow us to build upon excellence and continuously improve.

There is an expectation that every child and carer who comes into contact with the service has an opportunity to express their views. Some of the ways we do this include;

- Parental views will be sought at closure via telephone interviews
- Child and parent views will also be gained via Practice Week, LAC Reviews and Child Protection Conferences.
- Feedback will be gained from thematic audits.
- Feedback will also be obtained during Customer Care Month which takes place every October
- Feedback will be obtained from the Children in Care Council and via the Corporate Parenting Board meetings

Foster Carer views will be obtained on an annual basis through their annual review. In addition to this there is an annual survey of foster carers.

8. CPA & IRO Feedback

IROs and CPA's play a key role in planning and quality assuring the impact of work undertaken by children's social care. Their role is to ensure that the quality of the work is of a high standard and that plans for children and young people are progressed.

CPA's and IRO's meet with the Director of Children's Services and Assistant Director of Family Services on a quarterly basis to provide feedback on practice and any issues or themes arising. The CPA's and IRO's will provide examples of good practice as well as areas for improvement and any escalations of concern.

9. Participation and Advocacy

Advocacy and participation work completed with children is also a vital component in the Quality Assurance Framework.

The Children's Advocate will provide a bi-annual report of their work undertaken with children and young people.

The Children's Participation Worker will complete a bi-annual report of all participation work undertaken with looked after children and care leavers.

Both reports should contain a brief analysis of the impact of their intervention and a summary of identified key themes and trends relating to issues and concerns regarding children and young people's experiences, service provision and engagement, as well as positive outcomes and achievements.

10. Complaints & Compliments

Complaints and Compliments about Children's Services are another important element of the Quality Assurance Framework. The Complaints Officer will provide quarterly reports, briefly identifying the nature of all reports received and provide an analysis which identifies trends and makes comparisons about the nature of complaints.

Analysis

This key stage will make sure there are robust processes in place for turning the findings from the various QA processes into robust action plans. The Quality Assurance Manager will gather the learning and develop an analysis arising from quality assurance activities around themes of strong performance, good practice and areas requiring improvement.

Analysis will also include an evaluation of the impact of previous improvement and action plans measured against current findings.

Learning & Improvement

It is essential that areas for improvement are identified and recorded in an action plan agreed by senior managers.

Findings from all quality assurance activity will feed into the development of the Learning & Improvement Plan. The Learning & Improvement Plan is a live document that will be reviewed and evaluated on a 6-monthly basis or prior to and following a yearly themed audit or quality assurance activity, to measure impact and improvement.

Heads of Service and Team Managers will review the outcomes of the quality assurance information related to their team/service over the past six months, and in discussion with their team/service, agree key priorities to target. The Team Manager and Head of Service will discuss the reasons or causes for good and poor practice, negative and positive impact and next steps.

This will include

- Identifying individuals who need additional support, direction, guidance and training
- Arranging learning sessions to engage the team/service in understanding and taking ownership of the practice problem and find solutions
- 'Coaching and mentoring' input from Principal Social Workers and Consultant Social Workers
- Themes that need bringing to the attention of Senior Managers, other parts of the Council or partners to support practitioners (e.g. changes to procedures, guidance, resources, training).

Principal Social Workers will take the lead in ensuring that learning from the various audit and quality assurance activity informs the workforce strategy and learning and development pathways for children's services staff.

Themed findings from audit/outcomes for children and families will influence the Learning and Development Programme.

Disseminating the learning

It is imperative that learning from each quality assurance activity is shared with the right people and used meaningfully to change practice and improve outcomes for children, families and employees. The ways in which we will do this are:

1. Data:

Each month, Heads of Service will meet to analyse challenge and improve performance data. Operational managers are accountable for performance in their teams and are required to take remedial action if performance is below target.

2. Practice Week and Managers Monthly Audits Report:

Practice Week audits, Managers Monthly Audits, corresponding SW conversation feedback and service user feedback will be collated and considered by the Quality Assurance Manager to inform their overall findings with regards to the quality and impact of service provision to the child and their family. The findings and conclusions will be presented in Learning and Improvement Report and will inform the Learning & Development Framework.

3. Learning & Improvement Reports:

It is essential that the learning and analysis of performance from our quality assurance activities is understood by;

- Practitioners, in order to reflect on their own practice and make changes to have a positive impact on their work with families
- Operational managers, to ensure they have an understand of the performance of their teams and take action to improve practice
- Senior managers, to ensure they have an understanding of and take action to address deficits in performance, thematic issues and cultural practices within their service.
- Leaders, to ensure they are aware of the strengths and areas for development within the department

The Learning & Improvement reports will be shared with all staff, senior managers and leaders on a quarterly basis

4. The Quality Assurance Forum:

A Quality Assurance Forum will meet every 3 months and will provide an opportunity for managers and frontline practitioners to explore and learn from the findings from data, audits and case reviews.

5. Learning and improvement Newsletter and Bitesize Learning Sessions:

The findings and learning from internal and external case reviews, thematic studies and Ofsted thematic reports will be cascaded by the Head of SRQA and the Quality Assurance Manager via the Learning & Improvement newsletter and bitesize learning sessions

Impact

Evidencing the impact of learning will be central to ensuring quality assurance activities makes a difference for children and families. The Learning Cycle set out in this QA Framework ensures a process of activity, analysis, actions, delivering improvements and review.

To make sure the Framework is truly child centred, following the journey of the child through our services, the impact of the Framework will be judged on the following factors;

- Is all quality assurance activity being carried out in partnership with service users and professionals, from student social workers to senior managers?
- Are we continually seeking to improve performance and demonstrate the impact of help for children and their families in improving their outcomes?
- Are the findings from all QA activity driving service improvement and creating better outcomes for our children and our workforce?