

# Policy Document

## Rochdale Children's Social Care Performance Management and Quality Assurance Framework



# Document Control

**Document Title: Rochdale Children's Social Care Services Performance and Quality Assurance Framework**

## Summary

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## Review of Strategy

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## Document Approvals

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Name	Title	Date of Issue	Version Number
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## 1. SECTION 1 - Quality Assurance background

### 1.1 Introduction

Children's Service's aim is to make a real difference in children's lives by: ***doing the right thing, at the right time, in the right way.*** To do this, we work in partnership with other services in the council, organisations across Rochdale such as police, health services, schools, voluntary and community sector partners. We must place the needs of children and their families' at the heart of all we do.

This Performance Management and Quality Assurance Framework is one of the ways that we measure whether we are setting and meeting our goals, how well we do it, how consistently and whether it makes a difference to children.

The word 'children' is used throughout this Framework for ease of reading but will mean babies, children and young people. Similarly, 'parent' means all those with parental responsibility including those who are children's main carers.

### 1.2 Vision

***To deliver high quality services that are driven by high standards of practice, informed by evidence and based on continuous learning to improve the lives for children and young people.***

This document sets out how the Framework will be delivered to ensure that we recognise the strengths in service delivery and work together to reflect, learn and continuously improve outcomes for children.

The Performance and Quality Assurance Framework is designed to drive high standards of practice across Children's Services.

The framework is measured against the 'Practice Standards' for all services that provide clear guidance on the approach, roles, responsibilities and expectations of practitioners and managers when working with children, young people and families in Rochdale and leaders in overseeing this.

This Quality Assurance Framework recognises that auditing activity alone will not improve the quality of practice. The vision must be owned by all staff and through a range of quality assurance activities practice will continue to improve.

Research tells us that a good Performance and Quality Assurance Framework must triangulate evidence from a range of sources to help us to understand what we are doing well and where we need to improve; not just for individual children but how well our services are meeting the

needs of all children. The voice of parents/carers and partners is essential to know how we are doing.

The Performance and Quality Assurance Framework will contribute to our self-assessment of our practice and will help us understand what we need to do to improve practice further.

In Rochdale we are committed to ensure that our interventions have a positive impact upon the experiences and outcomes of children and young people and that their views and aspirations are at the centre of all that we do. Our success depends upon the ability to consistently share learning widely across services and in a way that is engaging and owned by practitioners and their managers.

### 1.3 What does Quality Assurance mean?

*'The only sensible measure of how well the system is performing is the measure of how effectively it is helping children, young people and their families.'* (Munro, 2011).

Performance management and quality assurance is the **systematic** and **regular** monitoring and evaluation of what we do, with the aim of improving our practice to achieve better outcomes for children and families. If managers do not know what people are doing they cannot know if it is good enough.

### 1.4 The Quality Assurance Loop

Our approach to quality assurance is based on five steps to delivering improvements across the service:

- Ensuring that all staff are aware of the required standards of practice;
- Monitoring the work to ensure standards are consistently applied;
- Feedback to staff which acknowledges good practice and gives clarity on areas where improvement is required;
- Ensuring that action is taken to improve and monitor practice in those areas that do not meet required standards;
- Exploring with the worker, in a reflective conversation, what they learned from the process (in order that it is applied to all areas of their work), and what difference this makes to service users.

## Research in Practice - Continuous improvement - learning system



Quality Assurance **is the most important element of a manager's role**, because all managers are responsible for the quality of what their staff deliver. It helps us:

- Take responsibility for our actions as managers or workers;
- Assist staff in carrying out their jobs safely and effectively, because it tells managers if they are performing well or need extra help;
- Provide assurance that children are getting the right services and are safe from harm;
- Improve outcomes for children and families by highlighting strengths, gaps and areas for improvement in practice and in the services offered;
- Identify what works for children and families and highlights good practice;
- In service planning, identify training and commissioning needs.

If we can't see success we can't learn from it and if we can't recognise deficits we can't correct them.



## The three ways in which work is measured:

- Quantity – “How much or what did we do and it what timescales”?
- Quality – “How well did we do it”?
- Outcome/Impact – “What difference has it made to children?”

By ensuring our work is understood in this way we should be able to answer the “so what” question; *are children being helped and making expected progress by our intervention?* If not, we must ask ourselves the question ‘What do we plan to do about it?’ The framework supports leaders, managers and practitioners to create learning spaces that allow these questions to be answered.

## 1.5 Principles of Practice

To achieve our goal of: **“right thing, at the right time, in the right way”** we have identified our **‘golden threads’** these set the standards we expect to see in our work with children and families.

### The Golden Threads

1. Working with, not doing to. Focusing on the strengths of children, young people and families/carers
2. Ensure our use of language, in every interaction and written record, is respectful and values our children, young people and families/carers.
3. Effective Leadership at every level drives and challenges the work we do with children, young people and families/carers
4. The voice of children and young people is clear, understood and responded to.
5. Engaging positively with children and young people, and their families/carers
6. Understood history and networks, utilising appropriate tools, for example, chronologies and genograms
7. Assessments and plans are of high quality and coproduced

We are relentless in our passion for ensuring that the practice models used and the **Golden Threads** have the force to continuously drive better outcomes for children and young people, including securing permanence at the earliest of opportunities for children. The **Golden Threads** are the basis of the Practice Standards for Children's practitioners and frontline management. By aligning the practice standards with the **Golden Threads** we are benchmarking our practice to the passion and drive for delivering high quality services for children, young people and families.

## SECTION 2 – Quality Assurance Activity

### 2.1 Quality Assurance Oversight - Roles and Responsibilities

**Director of Children's Services and leadership team.  
(individually/collectively):**

- Are responsible for ensuring that we manage performance effectively and achieve the standards set by elected members, Government, legislation, professional bodies and Ofsted, and they:

Understand the performance compliance and quality of our services

- Advise members, of the setting of strategic direction and improvement priorities;
- Set appropriate targets and standards for performance;
- Identify and manage strategic and cross cutting performance issues facing children's services;
- Promote quality assurance framework to all staff and ensure it is understood across the whole service;
- Promote and embed The Family Safeguarding Model and The Golden Threads to ensure a high quality of practice culture;
- Engage in quality assurance activities including audits and undertaking direct observations of practice.

**Heads of Service:**

Are responsible for ensuring performance is effectively managed and improved in all areas of their service. They have a key role to:

- Promote the performance and quality assurance framework to all staff and ensure it is understood across the service;
- Ensure that the actions contained in the framework to improve and support child centered practice are carried out and the impact of any actions are monitored/ evaluated routinely;
- Ensure performance management is integrated into service planning.
- Identify strengths and gaps in performance;
- Promote and embed the Golden Threads to ensure a high quality of practice culture;
- Participation in and promotion of the audit cycle and moderation process.
- Ensure that service audit actions trackers are updated and closing the loop activity is embedded and routinely reviewed.
- Challenge and support managers to take account for the performance in their areas of responsibility;
- Identify, analyse, understand and continuously improve service performance;
- Incorporate results of customer feedback and complaints into service performance;
- Work with colleagues across the service to inform, challenge and improve performance in key areas



### **Practice Managers**

Are responsible to manage performance effectively and actively promote learning reflection in their particular service area:

- Promote and embed The Golden Threads to ensure a high quality of practice culture;
- Identify, analyse, profile and improve team performance
- Promote this framework to all staff and ensure it is understood across the service;
- Analyse skills and training/development needs of all staff-ensure those needs are met in order that are able to deliver services to the required standard;
- Set clear expectations and hold team members to account for their performance;
- Identify through regular monitoring (e.g. audit, observation and feedback) strengths and gaps in performance. Address and ensure that actions taken have made a difference ;
- Ensure performance data is captured regularly, in a timely manner, and used as an evidence base to make improvements;
- Develop a clear understanding of what it means and communicate it to team members
- Report as required to head of service/ performance clinics on findings actions to address any deficits.

### **Social Workers and Practitioners**

- Social workers to be familiar with and understand the requirements of this framework;
- Understand practice standards and apply in day to day work with children, young people and families.
- Practice using the principles of The Family Safeguarding model and The Golden Threads to ensure a high quality of practice
- Social workers to be prepared to engage in reflective discussion about the child and family and to contribute to learning through audit activity
- Social workers to respond in a timely manner to audit actions set;
- To listen to and act upon feedback from thematic learning, which influences social work practice
- Undertake statutory responsibilities on behalf of the local authority in a timely and purposeful manner.



### **Safeguarding Unit (SCU)**

Are responsible for ensuring performance is effectively managed and improved in all areas of their work in the safeguarding unit;

- Promote the strength-based approaches in the work of the unit to deliver a culture of high quality practice across the service;
- Support the operational service in embedding the performance and quality assurance framework and provide effective checks and balances regarding the quality assurance function of the service.
- Undertake agreed audits
- Highlight and shared best practice for looked after children and children subject to child protection plans.
- Ensure feedback from children, young people and families is effective in driving quality of practice across the unit and improving outcomes.
- Ensure compliance across service of practice standards, quality of practice and outcomes for Cared for Children, care leavers and children subject to child protection plans- providing challenge through dispute resolution processes.



### **Quality Assurance Team**

- The quality assurance team will;
- Develop the quality assurance framework with arrangements for regular review;
- Support the implementation of this framework across all aspects of children's services; undertake coaching of managers to develop the audit skills as required;
- The quality assurance business support officer will complete the administrative tasks in the delivery of the activity for the framework;
- Coordinate all audit activity and track any closing the loop activity and produced overview reports on strengths identified and areas of development in practice.
- Coordinate the moderation of audits by way of a moderation panel and undertake any additional moderation activity
- Be responsive to performance highlights that require additional scrutiny by undertaking/ coordinating additional audit activity.
- Feedback learning from audit activity and disseminate across the service. A
- Ensure feedback from children, families and professionals is utilised to scrutinise, inform and challenge performance provision of children's services and service based advice support and training as required;
- Ensuring senior leadership team have oversight of risks and agreement on action required.

**The Workforce Development Team**

- The workforce development team will;
- Promote The Family Safeguarding Model and the Golden Threads in delivering a culture of high quality practice within the service ;
- Ensure learning from the performance and quality assurance framework continuously informs the training and development plan.
- Provide a range of coaching, mentoring, core skills workshops and training to practitioners to support best practice across the service.

## 2.2 Quality Assurance: Management Oversight

All managers must understand their role within the framework and that they play an integral part in developing quality practice. In order to achieve this policies, procedures and practice standards must be understood and translated by frontline managers into practice by setting and supporting staff to achieve and maintain high standards.

Managers have a responsibility to ensure that **Practitioners** are familiar with policy, procedure, research and learning tools. Managers must recognise the importance of ensuring that the work of their practitioners is regularly reviewed and findings shared with the staff member as part of their ongoing development.

**Practitioners** are expected to take personal responsibility to learn from quality assurance activity and proactively engage in training and developmental opportunities.

Management Oversight is, "the regular, consistent oversight of decision making and quality of practice which managers routinely undertake".

Heads of Service/Service Managers also need to assure themselves that the work in their Service Area is undertaken to the required standards and to appropriate timescales.

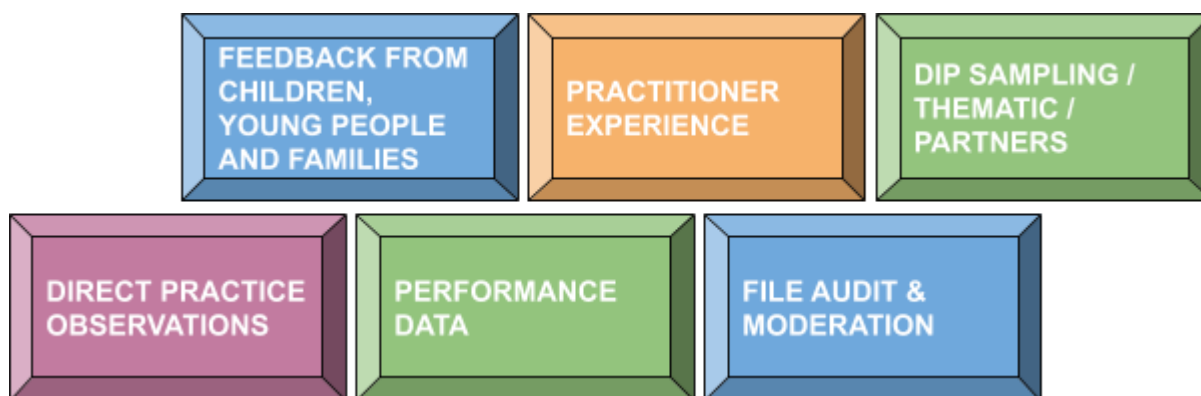
Senior managers in each service area will moderate all audits undertaken by front line managers to allow audit quality and accuracy to be consistently developed. It is important that Senior Managers evidence feedback to front line managers so that gaps and deficits are challenged and risks to children are effectively decreased.

It is essential that any urgent concerns found for the child's safety and welfare are raised immediately with the Service Manager/Heads of Service in Children's Social Care.

Where managers are undertaking additional auditing in their service area they are required to summarise and report on the quality assurance activity they are undertaking to allow the Quality Assurance Officer to produce a written report summarising all of the quality assurance activity that has taken place across the service.

Rochdale Borough Council Children's Services Performance and Quality Assurance Framework recognises that quality assurance is not just about completing audits but the continuous collection of intelligence and data that informs the organisation about practice.

## 2.3 Quality Assurance Activity Wall



### Quality Assurance Activity (how we gather the information)

**Performance Data**, covers a wide range of quantitative data and is the tool that drives intelligence for areas of focus. The performance data that is gathered relates to a range of activity from across the services, which relates to national and local standards.

## 2.4 Case Record Audit & Moderation, Full case file audits and moderation

In order to understand the quality of practice in child's journey through services we will complete monthly full audits of a child's file. They will focus on the quality of case recording, assessment, planning and review and consider how well management oversight and supervision is driving the plan for the child. The audits will be done in collaboration with the allocated social worker.

We will undertake the full case file audits using the cycle set out below so we can ensure the activity is purposeful, feedback and improvement loops are closed and strengths and areas of development are highlighted in order to inform future learning and development activities.

All audit activity undertaken will be moderated to allow audit quality and accuracy to be consistently developed. It is important that the moderation process provides feedback to front line managers so that gaps and deficits are challenged, practice is improved and risks to children are effectively decreased.

Audits and other quality assurance activities are only effective if the closing the loop is completed. This means that if an audit or other quality assurance process takes place without any follow up of feedback to the worker, clarity re required actions or monitoring to ensure the actions were completed and made a difference, the process is ineffective. It is essential that any urgent concerns found for the child's safety and welfare are raised immediately with the Head of Services in Children's Social Care).

**We will engage the practitioner** sitting alongside and holding a 'Reflective Conversation' about the work with the child and their family. This enables the manager to use the process to also consider the developmental needs of the practitioner. The discussion will include what went well, what has been learnt, what they are proud of, quality of practice, any barriers or complexity.

To be consistent in measuring the quality and impact of file audits the Ofsted judgements from the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS April 2019) will be used for recording the findings of the file audit as follows:

- Outstanding
- Good
- Requires Improvement to be Good
- Inadequate

All audit activity will be recorded and shared with the allocated worker and their line manager. Any gaps and deficits must be addressed (closing the loop) and any learning shared more widely.

NB: Where there are two key practitioners involved for example children / young people which crossover from Complex Safeguarding and Children's Social Care the manager completing the audit will ensure that both practitioners are engaged and actively participate to ensure assessment, planning and intervention are aligned).

- 1) **Themed audits** will be undertaken on key themes that have been identified from performance data or identified as areas emerging that require further spotlight for assurance. This might lead themed auditing within service area or particular cohorts of children.
- 2) When particular issues have been identified **Dip Sampling** will be undertaken on a number of cases in the areas linked to the performance indicators or issues.
- 3) **Multi Agency Partnership audits** will be completed part of Safeguarding Children Partnership. The themes will aligned to issues that are identified through CSPRs, or linked to the Safeguarding Partnership priorities
- 4) **Supervision audits** will be undertaken to ensure that management oversight is strong and vigorous with evidence of reflection and clear plans. In addition this will ensure the learning and development needs of practitioners are understood and supported through a clear focus on developing highly skilled practitioners.
- 5) **Practitioner Experience** - A Social Worker Forum meets to hear the views of staff and their experiences. We will use recommendations from this forum to influence service and practice development



- 6) **Direct practice observations** will be carried out that will focus on the knowledge and skills of practitioners. Managers must progress their own development, have clear up to date knowledge and an ability to judge the quality of practice of every member of their team, regardless of whether issues are identified more widely. This is gained by regularly monitoring and measuring each worker's performance.
- 7) **Our Children and Young People feedback & Family Feedback** will be achieved through a variety of sources to influence continuous practice improvement. Feedback should always be sought during a case file audit - children, young people and families should always be given an opportunity to input into audit activity and the same should apply to direct observations. The Complaints and Compliments processes will also feed into the quality assurance framework - including evidence of how we respond to children.

The key activities that build the quality assurance framework are not exclusive and other activities will also inform our overall understanding of the quality of our practice, for example Dispute Resolution, feedback from Commissioned Services, and Peer Reviews.

## SECTION 3 – Quality Assurance Schedule

### 3.1 Full Case Review Audit Cycle

#### Week 1

Auditors are provided with child's ID for case audits. Collaborative discussions are arranged with the social worker and time is identified in diaries to complete the case review



#### Week 2-3

Case reviews are undertaken which include a collaborative discussion with the allocated social worker/practice manager. Child and family feedback should be obtained along with feedback from key professionals supporting the child and family. During the case review if there are any immediate concerns about the wellbeing of the child you need to inform the head of service responsible as soon as the concern is raised. The QA team also need to be made aware of any case escalated. Any specific actions in relation to the child are recorded in the audit tool clearly stating who is accessing the file.



#### Week 4

Completed case reviews are shared with the social worker/ team manager. If the overall grade is judged as inadequate it also needs to be shared with the responsible Head of Service. A copy of the audit is also returned to CSC Audit email address.



#### Week 5/6

Moderation will be undertaken by the Head of Service/ Service Manager whom hold responsibility for the child to ensure that strengths and areas of development for specific areas are identified



#### Week 7/8

An Overview report to be completed by the Quality assurance team to include key findings: Strengths, Areas of development and recommendations to the service.



### **Week 8**

Overview report will be shared at the monthly Performance and Quality clinic. Heads of Service are responsible to take forward any learning from audits within their service. Any specific actions in relation to the child following the audit will be tracked to ensure action are completed

### **Closing the loop**

#### **Case specific actions**

Any remedial actions will be smart and include by who by when. The practice managers will then complete audit tool when actions have been completed and add additional commentary where appropriate.

Actions will be tracked by the quality assurance team.

#### **Service level actions**

HOS will be responsible for producing a service level action plan following a thematic review where areas of development have been identified. Action plans will be tracked at the monthly performance clinics

#### **Inadequate cases**

Any cases that are judged to be inadequate will be re audited within three months of the original audit

The quality assurance team will play a central role in the collation of the summary of findings, themes and learning. All outcomes will be cascaded down to practitioner level, to ensure everyone understands and is empowered to have ownership for driving practice improvement. This will be through practice forums, regular manager and team meetings and learning events.

## **3.2 Performance Information**

Regular and detailed scrutiny of performance data is central to ensuring that we understand the quality and effectiveness of the services that we provide to children and families. Scrutiny of this data should drive the improvement activity of the service.

Understanding and scrutinising performance data is a core function of all managers, service managers and service leads across Children's services.

Effective performance data enables managers to have oversight of practice, and managers should have confidence to use this data to improve the quality of decisions and the provision of help to children and young people.

We will be able to understand what is working well, what we are worried about, and what we need to do to improve outcomes for our families. We will be able to ensure that families receive the right support at the right time.

The performance cycle will support and continue to strengthen our learning culture, enabling us to make the links between performance, practice and improvement activity helping us to demonstrate impact and continually improve the services we provide.

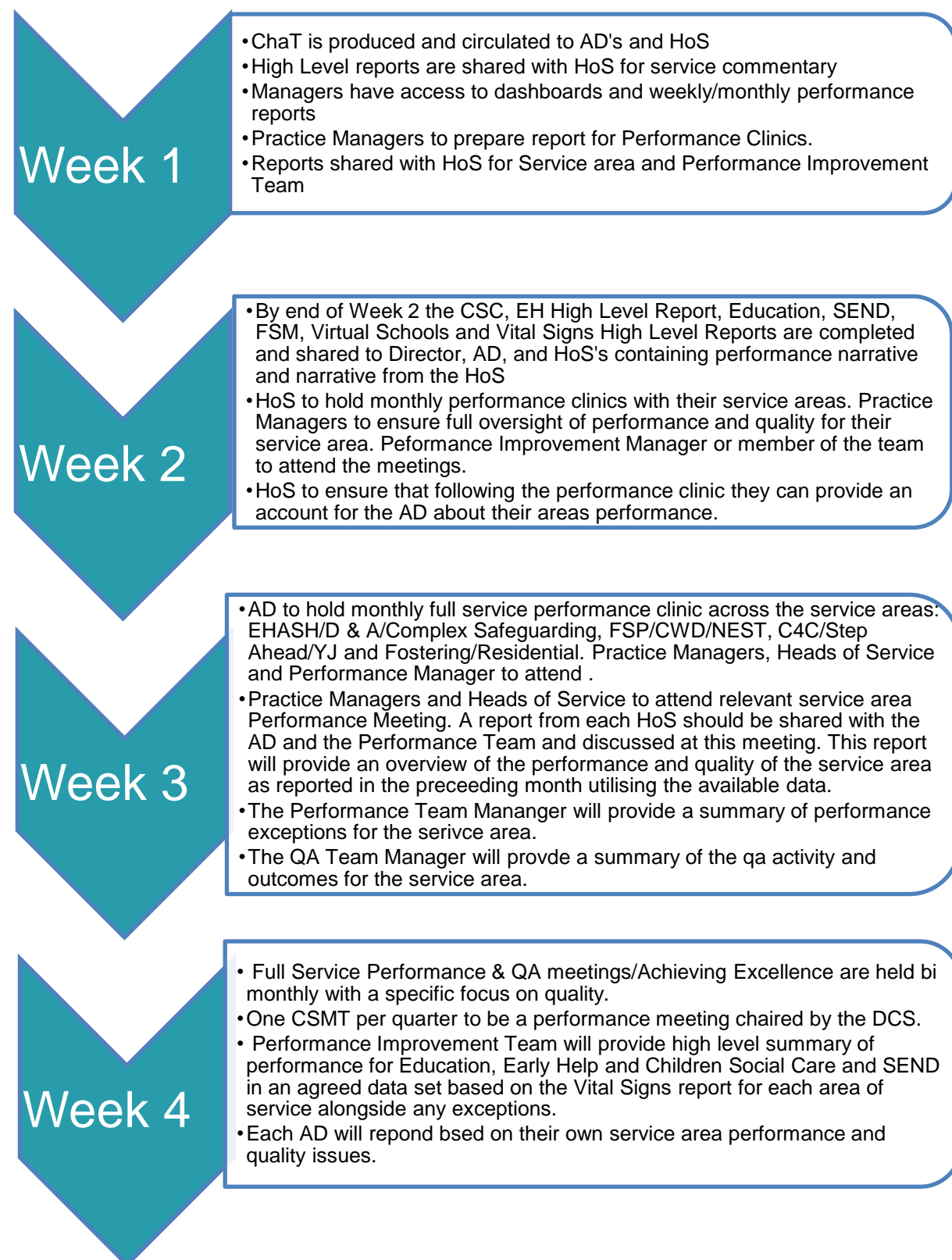
The leadership team in Children's Social Care oversees a number of performance management meetings; our approach to performance management allows these meetings to feed up the structure. Our meetings work on a four weekly cycle and help to ensure a shared focus and accountability regarding performance management to evidence children's best outcomes from social worker practitioner level, practice managers, service leads, Heads of Service, and Senior Leaders. We focus on both quantitative and qualitative information to provide a full picture of how our services are performing. This is supported by data that is produced by the Performance and Business Information Team, and by reports from managers to explain how it feels on the ground for social workers.

The cycle operates as a 4-weekly cycle. (Week 1, 2, 3 and 4). The data sent out by the Performance Improvement Team covers the key performance indicators (KPI's) for each service area and other vital information to support a high standard of service delivery and performance for children. We have a stepped approach to the information available for services, and at the end of each week there should be a number of outputs both for children's services and the Performance Improvement Team. The below diagram outlines the 4-weekly cycle.

This framework provides the infrastructure for a system of service improvement within Children's Social Care. It will deliver regular reports to the wider leadership team, managers and staff to ensure that we know our service well. The performance framework is a dynamic and active process that seeks to identify good and outstanding service delivery to ensure that this is spread across all teams. It works in tandem with the Achieving Excellence Plan Improvement Plan, ensuring that issues are raised through the performance meetings and that the Performance Improvement Team and the Principal Social Worker, Head of Safeguarding and QA, and QA Team work together on understanding the data story and the practice story.

It will ensure that managers at all levels within the organisation can have appropriate information and details of performance that is not meeting the required standard, what actions are required to address this and will allow us to track and monitor improvements in performance. The content of the framework will ensure that the service remains child and family orientated and is in touch with our staff and the demands they face.

### 3.3 The Performance Reporting Cycle



Activity	Who	Frequency	Outcomes
One Full Case File audit	Practice Managers, Independent Reviewing Officers/Child Protection Chairs, Heads of Service and Assistant Director, and the Director of Children's Services	Two audit cycles will run simultaneously. Auditors will complete x1 audit bi-monthly with the expectation of DCS completing an audit on a quarterly basis	We will understand the impact of Practice. An overview report will be produced that identifies strengths and areas of development. This will enable us to develop action plans in respect of future learning and development
Moderation	By Heads of Service and Service Managers	Monthly	Strengths and area of development will be identified for each specific service area to inform the service development plan
Thematic/Dip Sample Audits	Quality Assurance Officer	Monthly	We will understand strengths and area of development for specific areas of practice. We will consider.
Quality Assurance meeting  Achieving Excellence meetings	Chaired by the Assistant Director	Monthly	We will have oversight of our practice and performance, highlight good practice and provide scrutiny and challenge
Service Performance meeting	Chaired by the Head of Service for the Service Area	Monthly	We will have oversight of our practice and performance, highlight good practice and provide scrutiny and challenge



## SECTION 4 - How we measure and share learning

*The learning will be child-centred, strength based, focused on outcomes and reflective.*

Developing skilled, child-centred practitioners who work to a high standard, providing effective evidence-based support is at the core of this framework. This framework has set out how we will evidence through a variety of regular activities that gives a better insight into the quality of services each child and young persons have when children services are involved in their lives.

The quality and impact of the work we do should be evidenced within this framework. We will be able to evidence the impact of good quality assessments that demonstrate professional expertise and good quality plans that are regularly updated with families and contain realistic goals with clear action to improve outcomes for children and young people. We will use this learning to influence service development. When we have got something wrong we will be able to identify quickly and provide an effective remedy.

### 4.1 Quality Assurance Outcomes


**How we improve the quality of practice through shared learning? - moving beyond performance to quality.**

1. Heads of Service will meet with their Practice Managers at least monthly to manage performance and quality within their own service. Team Managers will produce performance reports for their teams.
2. The Assistant Director will hold monthly Performance Meetings with each part of the service. Attendance at this meeting will include the Head of Service for the service area, the Team Managers for the service area, a representative from the Performance and Business Information team and a representative from the QA team. The Head of Service will provide a report on their service area covering what they know about the practice in their area, how they know it, using performance and QA intelligence to evidence and what actions they are taking as a result.
3. A bi monthly full service Performance and Quality Assurance meeting will take place with Heads of Service, PBI and QA. This meeting will consider both compliance and quality and agree actions where required.

4. Closing the loop in all activities will ensure learning and required actions have made a difference. The diagram below explains the closing the loop cycle.
5. Managers Forum - QA Reports will be shared with managers. Managers to share areas of quality practice in this forum and what they are doing in response to the thematic issues in the Quality Assurance report/Reflective Conversations report.
6. Quarterly Quality Assurance briefing including findings & learning produced as a '7 minute briefing' for all staff.
7. The Workforce Training Planning will be considered with outcomes of QA outcomes in mind and continuously updated throughout the year by the Learning & Development Manager to reflect the findings and learnings.

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