



# Childrens Social Care and Early Help

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## Quality Assurance and Learning Framework

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Acknowledgement is given to Bexley Local Authority for the influence of their QA Framework.

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## **In Halton we are committed to the following principles which inform the work with children, young people, their families and carers:**

- Engage with families by working alongside parents, children and young people and seeking their consent and agreement.
- Work to families strengths – especially those of parents and carers and take the time to understand their needs fully. Parents tell us that they are motivated by having goals that reflect their family priorities
- Focus on preventing problems before they occur and offer flexible responsive support when and where it is required.
- Build the resilience of parents, children, young people and communities to support each other.
- Work together across the whole system aligning our resources so we can best support families and do what needs to be done when it needs to be done.
- Base all that we do on evidence of both what is needed and of what works and be brave enough to stop things that are wrong.
- Be clear and consistent about the outcomes we expect, and judge what we do against them.

## **There are a number of essential factors to enable us to deliver effective early intervention these are:**

- An open, honest and transparent approach to supporting children and their families.
- Parents are usually the best people to understand their child's needs. however, parenting can be challenging. Parents may need support when they request it, asking for help should be seen as a sign of responsibility rather than parental failure.
- Parents tell us that support works well when they are respected and listened to by practitioners. In the majority of cases, it should be the decision of the parents when to ask for help or advice but there are occasions when practitioners may need to engage parents actively to help them to prevent problems from becoming more serious.
- All practitioners should seek to work collaboratively with families, discuss any concerns with them and ensure that they are involved in decision making.
- It is important that practitioners acknowledge and respect the contribution of parents and other family members.

## **Earlier, solution-focused and evidence-based interventions.**

- Enabling children and their families to receive appropriate support in a timely way can lead to better outcomes for children and potentially prevent further escalation.
- We will all work with families when needed, to help them to identify the things they want to change and the support they need.
- The most effective support is tailored to the families need and provided at the minimum level necessary to ensure the desirable outcomes are achieved, with as little disruption to family life as possible.

## A multi-agency/disciplinary approach to assessment, support and intervention

- Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is the responsibility of everyone in Halton who works or has contact with children and their families.
- The multi-agency/disciplinary approach ensures that children and families are understood, so that they receive the right support and practical help in a coordinated way, when they need it.
- Partners and professionals who work with children and their families should, usually with parental consent, consult one another, share information and work together to ensure that the child and their family receive the most appropriate and effective support.

## A confident workforce with a common core of knowledge and understanding about children's needs

- Appropriate, effective and timely support for children and families could not be achieved without the professional judgement and expertise that all practitioners working with children bring to their role.
- We will support individuals and organisations in Halton to develop confident practitioners who can work in an open, non-judgmental way with families to enable them to make choices and changes.
- Our aim is always to build resilience in children and their families. We want them to believe in and lead the changes to alleviate their difficulties for the remainder of their lives.

## Our Practice

In Halton we all believe that every child should have the opportunity to reach their full potential and that children are best supported to grow and achieve within their own families.

### Halton's Practice Framework:

- We will use **conversations** to build relationships with children and their families, we will actively listen to both their strengths and what they need help with. We will create the opportunity to have conversations with our professional networks to help us provide the right support at the right time.
- We will practice with respectful **curiosity** to help us understand the lived experience of children and young people who need our help. We will be curious about the families past experience. We will encourage curiosity across our professional network, helping us to build strong local relationships.
- We will practice with **courage**, not being afraid to fail and try new things supporting our children and families through change, modelling courageous conversations to challenge without blame. We will use courage to seek feedback on our practice and create a culture of safe challenge.
- Our practice will be **considerate**, respectful of diversity and difference, we will practice with care to ensure the best outcomes for our children and their families.
- Halton's practice framework will help practitioners to use conversations both improving and using their skills and knowledge. The practice framework will help us to use a common language, it will promote a clear, fair process that we can all understand and use.
- By working together, we will develop flexible services which are responsive to children's and families' needs and provide the right level of intervention at the right time. This will support a shift of focus away

from managing short-term crises and towards effective intervention and support for children and young people and their Families at an earlier stage.

## **We are committed to the following principles which inform the way we work with children and families:**

- Wherever possible all children's and families needs will be met by universal services.
- As soon as any professional is aware that a child has any additional needs he/she will talk to that child and their family and offer advice and support to meet that need.
- Families will be empowered to identify their own problems, needs and solutions. In most cases, outcomes for children will only be improved by supporting and assisting parents/carers to make changes.
- We will offer support and services to help families find their own sustainable solutions. Once improvement is made, services will reduce or end so as not to create dependence.
- Our aim is always to build resilience in children and families and the capacity to overcome their own difficulties for the remainder of their lives.

## **Advice and consultation**

A consultation can take place between professionals, either face to face, by telephone or through virtual means, for the purposes of gaining or providing information or for discussing collaboratively on something. This can ensure that the right response is given at the right time and that the best course of action is followed.

The GDPR provides a number of bases for sharing personal information. It is not necessary to seek consent to share information for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of a child provided that there is a lawful basis to process any personal information required. The legal base that may be appropriate for sharing data in these circumstances could be 'legal obligation', or 'public task' which includes the performance of a task in the public interest or the exercise of official authority. Each of the lawful bases under GDPR has different requirements. It continues to be good practice to ensure transparency and to inform parent/ carers that you are sharing information for these purposes and seek to work cooperatively with them.

## **Principles of consultation**

- Consultation should be open to all agencies who work with children, young people and their families.
- Consultation should take place when there is a clear benefit to the child or young person and their family.
- Consultation is an important part of helping agencies and practitioners to work together to achieve the best possible outcomes for children and young people.
- Consultation is a two way process and demonstrates an acknowledgement of different but equally valid knowledge and expertise.
- You should be able to explain to the family why you feel it would be helpful to consult with other agencies. Families should whenever possible be aware of and involved in consultations and informed of the outcomes and decisions taken as a result.
- Information should be shared in the spirit of openness, transparency and honesty between practitioners, the child and their family. However it is important that you have due regard for the principles of confidentiality.
- Consultations may be recorded pending on the significance of concerns raised to ensure clarity and to enable you to evidence any decisions that have been made.

## Summary and quick guide

Halton Childrens Social Care and Early Help Directorate is clear about its journey to good and through the establishment of a strengths and relationship based practice framework. This will ensure our children receive the highest quality services and standards of practice which deliver the best possible outcomes for them, their families and carers.

Our programme of audit activity aims to:

- ✓ Provide assurance that practice positively influences outcomes for all vulnerable children and young people.
- ✓ Take into account the requirements of inspection bodies.
- ✓ Involve all children's social care staff in continuously seeking to improve their practice
- ✓ Ensure consistency of practice across children's social care and specifically the use and deployment of our Systemic practice framework.
- ✓ Embed a culture of learning, confident practice and feedback.
- ✓ Identify areas of practice improvement to inform the performance conversation & appraisal process

Our Quality Assurance (QA) & Learning Framework enables us to robustly relate performance management data with quality assurance with three simple interrelated questions:

[How much did we do?](#) (Service activity),

[How well did we do it?](#) (Quality),

[Did we make a difference to children lives?](#) (Is anyone better off?).

Measuring the impact of our work at all levels across children's services is crucial in closing the quality assurance loop and demonstrating the difference our services make to improving children's outcomes. Consequently, this QA framework underpins the Halton Practice Framework and Expectations. The Halton Practice Framework establishes a strength/relationship based approach detailing expectations for each part of the service ensuring everyone is clear about what good practice looks like and understands what is expected of them as they carry out their work with children and families.

The Quality Assurance (QA) & Learning Framework enables us to robustly relate performance management data, with quality assurance, using three interrelated questions.

[What did we do?](#) (service activity) [How well did we do it?](#) (quality) for our children and families, and most importantly, [What difference did we make to improve children and families lived experiences?](#)

## What does the QA & Learning Framework cover?

This Quality Assurance (QA) Framework outlines the five key areas of quality assurance, which collectively contribute to our understanding of practice within the Children, Families & Education Directorate. It is an important support and reference tool for managers and practitioners alike

1. All case auditing is undertaken using a strength based collaborative approach which interrogates essential elements of our practice framework and expectations whilst emphasising learning for the practitioner and system.
2. The system aligns core data with quality assurance, enabling effective and meaningful monitoring. The data provides a strategic overview of performance alongside monthly performance data, performance review and workforce data.
3. Feedback from children, families, staff and other professionals provides for accountability by acting as a critical friend to the system through answering the question “so what?”
4. Practice Leadership provides underpinning support throughout the system from induction to standards of practice
5. Practice Review keeps the system under review. Finally, all these aspects are analysed together to report on what difference we are making to children, young people and families.

The Quality Assurance/Audit and Practice Improvement service oversee and monitor the impact of the framework. The QA Report will continue to bring together all work into one place so key learning is identified and the impact of agreed actions are monitored through the Performance & Accountability Cycle.

## What do we mean by Quality Assurance & Learning?

Quality assurance is more than just routinely counting numbers, meeting targets and periodically carrying out audits. Effective quality assurance is dynamic and evolving, where there is an embedded cycle of monitoring, continuous reflection and learning, based on the principle that there is always room for improvement.

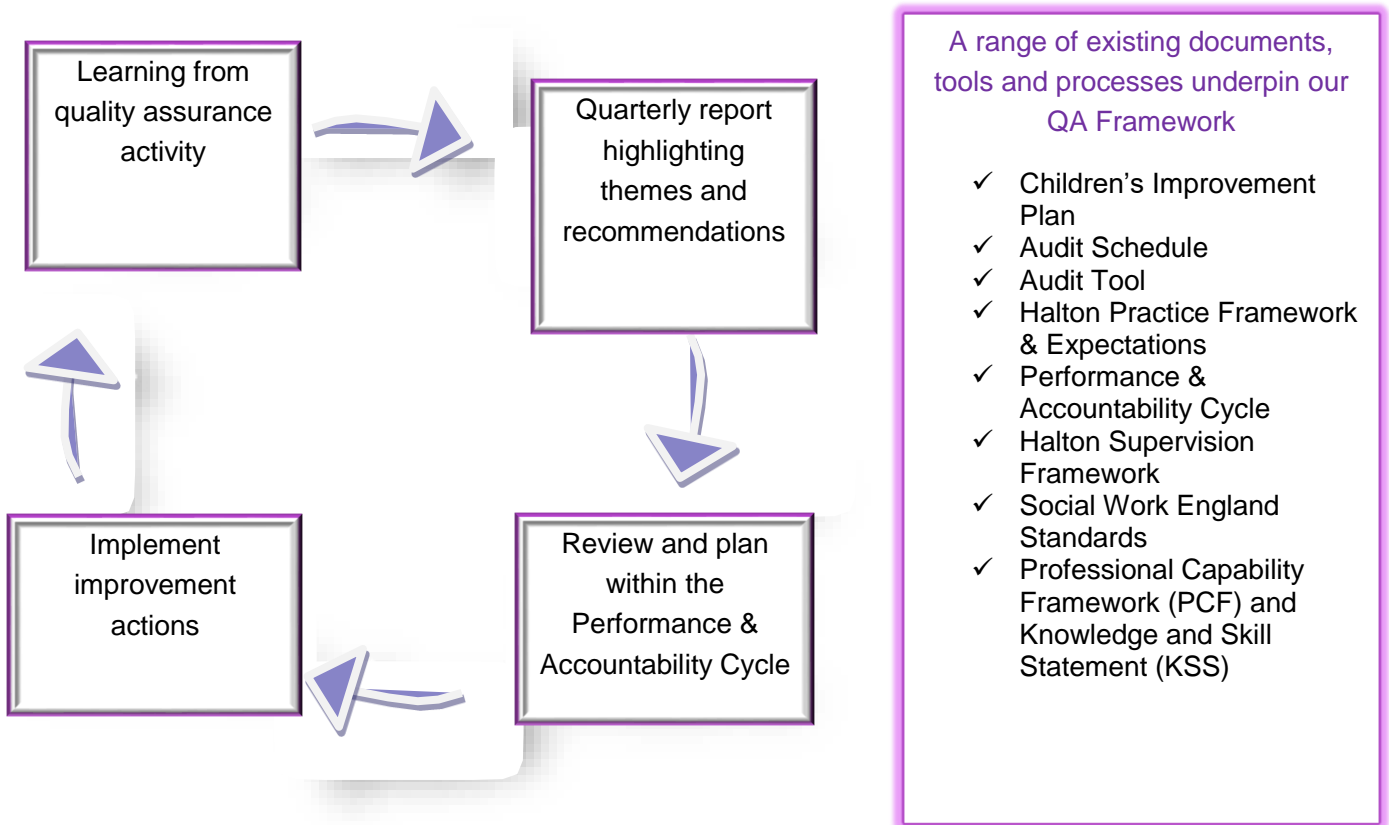
Quality assurance must be owned by everyone in the organisation, managers at all levels should understand and routinely undertake quality assurance activity on their individual supervisees, teams and service areas. Most importantly, we need to get behind data trends to fully understand the lived experience of those receiving a service from us.

Learning organisations use a range of methods to gather both quantitative and qualitative information from a variety of sources, to measure and analyse the aggregated information against an agreed set of standards.

Measuring practice is only purposeful if the loop is closed and the organisation uses the learning to plan and deliver service improvements. As stated above, the learning from our quality assurance activity will be drawn together into a monthly report and reviewed within our Performance and Accountability Cycle.

## How our quality assurance activity leads to a continuous cycle of service improvement?

- Quality assurance is more than just routinely counting numbers, meeting targets and periodically carrying out audits
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## What are our methods of Quality Assurance?

A combination of quantitative and qualitative information allows us to measure standards and outcomes:

- ✓ Collaborative Audits – (deep dive & thematic). The strength of collaborative audits is that they allow reflective discussion which supports greater learning
- ✓ Performance data
- ✓ National & local Inspections
- ✓ Peer reviews
- ✓ Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews
- ✓ Internal Safeguarding Reviews
- ✓ Practice Week
- ✓ Feedback from Independent Reviewing Officer/Child Protection chairs – midway reviews
- ✓ Internal Panel Processes
- ✓ Feedback from children, parents and carers
- ✓ Children in Care Council
- ✓ Care Leavers Forum
- ✓ Complaints & compliments
- ✓ Staff feedback eg Exit interviews, Supervision, Probation, Appraisal
- ✓ CAFCASS & Legal feedback from proceedings
- ✓ Multi-agency partner feedback



## Our QA & Learning Principles

Practitioners and their managers work within the framework of The Children Act 1989 and must adhere to all associated statutory guidance.

- i. It is a child's right to a family life. This means we will work in partnership with our children's family and friends to help them do their best for all our children. We strongly believe that children belong in natural networks with people they know and who will love them and keep them safe. We expect all practitioners and managers to prioritise this value, and to help children have safe permanent relationships as a basic entitlement. Our Practice Framework and Expectations articulates the key theories, values, principles and approaches that inform the way we work with children and families in Halton and how we work together as professionals. It describes the way we do things in Halton and why we do them that way. It provides a structure through which everyone can be part of working together to achieve our shared outcomes for children and families.
- ii. Relationship based practice, requires an environment that supports practice to be as good as it can be. Every practitioner and manager has to feel that they can do their best work with the backing of their leaders. Our QA Framework supports a learning culture, to allow our practitioners to adopt the stance of reflection, learning and improvement to ensure the best outcomes for our children.
- iii. Our work is underpinned by strong and consistent management oversight of practice. This comes in many forms, though at the core is a basic requirement that a robust case management system is in place which provides data on demand, throughput and timeliness on all statutory basics. Such quantitative data is complemented by collaborative reviews of practice, where managers and practitioners adopt monthly reflective sessions about the impact of our intervention on children's outcomes. This is a coaching exercise with a focus on learning and improvement, rather than blame and deficit. Themed reviews of practice are commissioned as required.
- iv. Case records are required to be up to date at all times. There are additional systems in place for managers to review all open work, specifically where we have commenced or are commencing legal proceedings or children have a child protection plan or lengthy in need plan.
- v. We operate an open door conversation policy where all practitioners are encouraged to discuss practice and talk with managers regularly.
- vi. Our starting point in practice is that there will always be ways to do what we do better. We will seek feedback from each other and from families regularly and consider that without this, we have no real understanding about the difference we are or are not making.
- vii. We will ask for feedback from families in our monthly collaborative reviews of practice, and will meet them face to face if they have reason to complain. We will ask managers to report on family feedback in their monthly reports. We strive to learn from all reviews of our practice and seek out additional opportunities to do so – for example from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews published, from inspection reports and from the variety of forums where we engage with children and or their parents/carers.

## How to use this framework

We all have a role in ensuring our work remains of a high standard and continues to meet the needs of the children, young people, and families we are supporting. Through our quality assurance activities, together, we will demonstrate that we understand ourselves and the difference we are making to the lives of children, young people, families and carers through good use of data, information, family feedback, compliments and complaints - always asking how we can make things better and being curious and innovative in our practice.

<p>As a <b>Practitioner</b>, I will work with families in accordance with Halton’s Practice Framework and Expectations and uphold our values and guiding principles in my practice.</p> <p>When I am unsure, I seek advice from colleagues and when I am concerned about practice I will report this.</p> <p>I embrace learning and the opportunity to develop my practice.</p> <p>When I am involved in a collaborative case audit, I will complete the pre-audit reflection prior to meeting with the auditor. With the support of my manager I will take responsibility for progressing relevant actions from the audit to ensure children’s best outcomes.</p>	<p>As a <b>Practice Lead and Principal Manager</b>, I maintain regular oversight of children’s files, via audits and supervision to ensure recordings are up to date, assessments are evidenced based and demonstrate how practice improves the child’s safety, lived experiences and positive developmental outcomes.</p> <p>I ensure practitioner’s work remains of a good standard by undertaking practice observations and providing reflective feedback. I provide feedback to practitioners on areas to develop and ensure concerns are actioned in a timely manner when safe practice may be compromised. I provide an overview of the performance of my team in the monthly performance and accountability report which enables me to share good practice and highlight any areas of improvement.</p>	<p>As a <b>Leader</b>, I lead and embrace change with a sense of confidence, optimism and creativity, seeking to understand the challenges and focusing on the opportunities, together as one complete children’s service. We won’t always get things right first time, however we embrace opportunity to reflect and learn, remaining calm and adaptable. I am a confident leader of system learning. I am visible and approachable, seeking and listening to other people’s thoughts and showing that we take into account different perspectives when making decisions and taking action to improve children’s outcomes. Our values and principles are embedded in every aspect of our work, I lead by example. Our policies and procedures are transparent, consistently led by us and always improving the quality of our practice. This ensures our practitioners are supported by policies and procedure</p>
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## Our Audit Process

The annual schedule of auditing activity will routinely contribute to measuring core areas of practice to ensure the principles and bottom lines of our Practice Framework and Expectations is embedded. The themed audits are informed by quality assurance and improvement activity along with the Halton Children Improvement Plan.

### What do we mean by Collaborative Audit of a child's file?

Collaboration between the auditor and allocated practitioner is a reflective and learning audit. It is a partnership that supports the practitioner to reflect on the positive impact of our intervention work with children as well as areas where we need to improve to ensure their best outcomes in a timely manner. The Practice Framework and Expectations provide a baseline of 'bottom lines' related to practice standards in all areas of the child's journey. The reflective and learning audit process should use the bottom lines as a guide and judgment criteria as discussed below. The reflective discussion will also focus on what difference we can evidence from our intervention to improving children's lives in their immediate, interim and longer term future outcomes.

### The Collaborative Audit Process

**Judgement:** The auditor and practitioner(s) are required to provide a judgement for each section of the audit, using the Practice Framework as a guide. Children's files that do not evidence the 'bottom lines' should be graded as inadequate. The final grading should consider both evidence seen by the auditor in reviewing the file alongside the practitioner and information gained from the reflective discussion with the practitioner. The auditor should record their view, using the Ofsted grading below:

Ofsted Grade
Inadequate
Requires improvement to get to Good
Good
Outstanding

**Feedback:** Obtaining feedback from children and families we work with is essential to the auditing process and reflects a strength/relationship based practice approach.

### Roles & Responsibilities

Practice Leads and IRM's will audit one child's file per month. Moderators, (Divisional Managers, Service Managers and Principal Managers) will moderate one child file audit per month.

### The Quality Assurance Audit and Practice Improvement Team

- The QA Audit Team will identify a child's case file (open for a minimum of four weeks)
- Divisional Managers, Principal Managers, Practice Leads and allocated practitioners will be notified of the child's ECLIPSE number by the QA team.
- The Collaborative audit process will be started on ECLIPSE on the 7<sup>th</sup> of each month and allocated to the auditor.
- Practitioner Pre-Audit Reflection will be assigned to the allocated practitioner.

## Auditors

- Auditors will complete collaborative deep dive audits with the practitioner within 10 days.
- The child's file audit should account for the whole child's journey, but with specific focus on the last six months.
- Feedback must be sought by the auditor from the child/young person (if age appropriate), parents/carers during the collaborative audit process and recorded on the audit form.
- The auditor should record any actions to address 'bottom lines' and to ensure that the child's file and our intervention work is of a 'good' standard and thus having a positive impact for their safety and overall developmental outcomes.
- Once completed, the deep dive audit will be finalised and sent to the QA team in tray, the audit form will then be sent to the moderator.
- At this point if any audit is identified as 'Inadequate', a notification will be sent to the Divisional Manager and Director for Operational Safeguarding for their oversight.
- The auditor will ensure immediate tasks are actioned within 5 working days and where this is not possible a realistic time frame should be agreed. Case direction resulting from audit and tasks are recorded as Management oversight notes for accountability.
- The impact of the actions identified should be reflected upon in supervision, specifically related to the child's safety and outcomes.

## Hints and Tips for Collaborative File Audits

Contact the practitioner early to set a meeting date

Prepare well by understanding where key documents are recorded and what these say

The allocated practitioner completes the pre-audit reflection template prior to meeting with the

Complex work, for it to be a meaningful process practitioner needs to take time

**Remember COLLABORATION is key!**

The final audit judgement needs to be informed by the evidence available on the child's file alongside the parent/child feedback

## Divisional Managers

- Divisional Managers are responsible for reviewing the audit findings and actions and must be satisfied areas of improvement are addressed to ensure outcomes for children are not impacted. The case must be brought up to the expected practice standards within **five** working days of the moderation.
- Divisional Managers are responsible for ensuring the plan for improvement, reviewing the audit findings and recommendations of any audit graded inadequate. The relevant Divisional Manager must be informed of all audits or moderations graded inadequate, on the day audit is completed with a clear plan of action to keep the child safe.
- Divisional Manager must update the QA Team when all identified actions have been completed and the case now reflects the expected practice standards.

## The Moderation Process

- All deep dive audits will be moderated. Moderators have 10 working days to complete the collaborative moderation.
- Once deep dive audits have been finalised by the auditor, the QA team will send them to Moderators.
- A further review of the case and collaborative discussion between moderator and auditor to agree shared expectations about best practice, thereby generating conversations between managers at all levels.
- Moderation will be completed within 10 days of initial allocation. This will enable the audit cycle to be fully completed each month and provide a timely learning and improvement opportunity.
- The Moderator will identify any additional recommended outcomes/actions necessary to bring the child's file up to the standard of 'good' practice.
- The Moderator will then finalise and the moderation will be quality assured before final QA comments are added by the QA Audit and Practice Improvement Principal Manager.

## Performance & Accountability

The Quality Assurance Team will select several audited and moderated cases to present to the Senior Leadership Team for overview and comment.

QA audit and practice improvement team produce a monthly audit report and a bi monthly and performance and accountability report.

The Quality Assurance Team collates learning to inform practice improvement and work closely with the Corporate Learning & Development Team and Children's Partnership Board to contribute to the Learning & Development Strategy.

Reports will be shared with Service and Team Managers through the Performance and Accountability cycle

## **Building a shared understanding of quality**

The collaborative audit between the auditor and the allocated practitioner should be an inclusive, constructive and positive learning process. The auditor, the allocated practitioner and moderator can seek support and guidance from the Audit and Quality Assurance Manager at any stage of the audit and moderation process should there be questions about judgements and rationale to support these.

## **Closing the loop**

Integral to embedding learning and improvement from audit is the process of closing the loop. Closing the loop refers to the process of ensuring the actions identified by the primary auditor and moderator have been completed.

As mentioned above, primary auditors will identify actions for completion within 5 working days. The moderator will review the child's file and provide their findings which include the impact of any actions completed following the primary audit. Their judgement will accord to their findings and additional actions may be identified.

When the primary audit and moderation are complete, the actions from both stages of the audit will be tracked. The QA Manager will send the Divisional Managers and Principal Managers the action tracker within 1 week of the audits being completed. The Divisional Manager will then inform the QA Manager when actions are completed. The QA Manager will then report on audit actions at the Quality and Performance clinic.

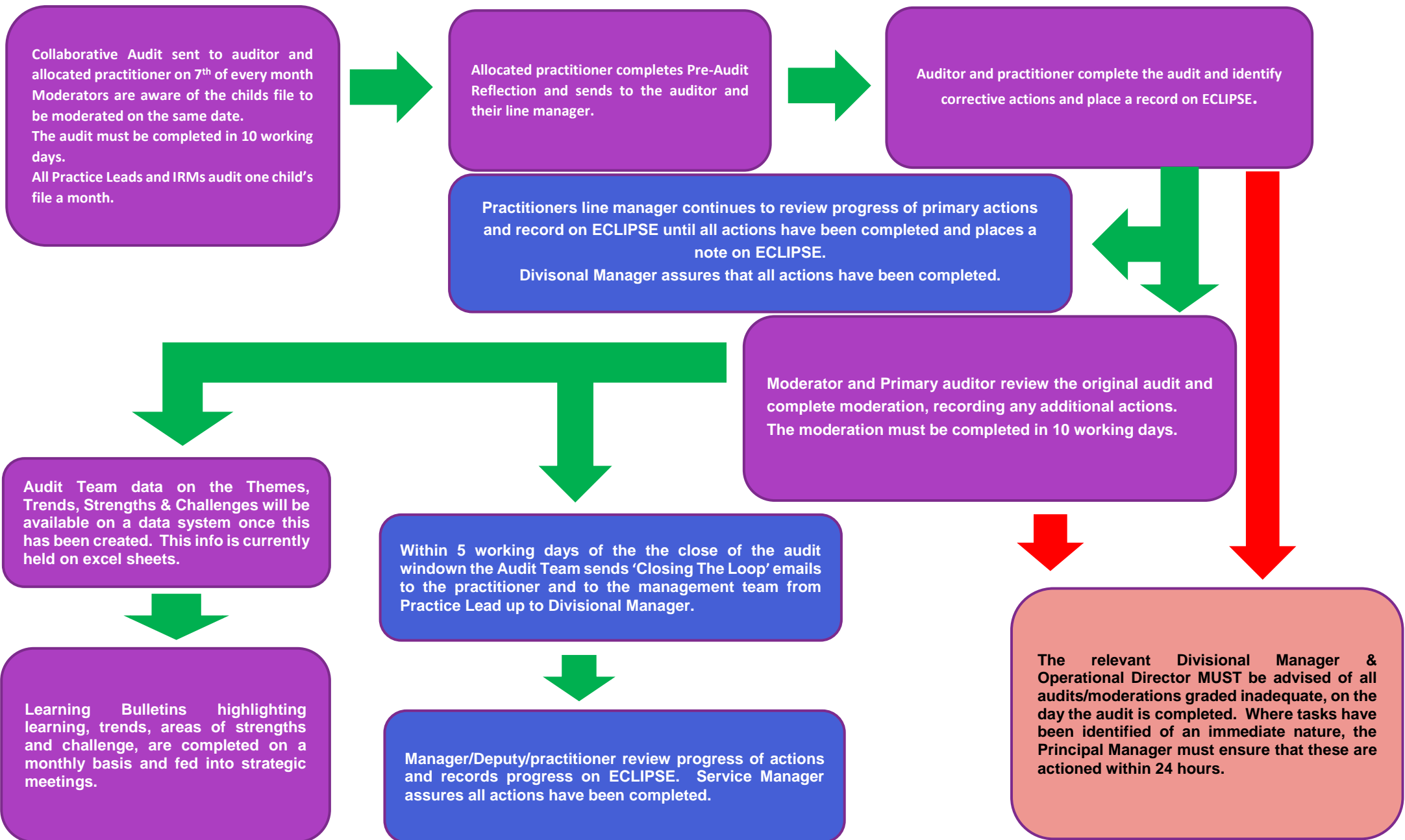
Good practice identified via QA and audit activity is shared with practitioners, managers and Divisional Manager to enable learning from good practice to take place. The work of individual practitioners and managers is recognised by nomination for attendance at the DCS/SLT Celebration Breakfast.

## **Audit review process**

All inadequate audits will be re-audited one month after the findings of inadequacy.

Built in to the audit process is a dip sample review of previously audited files which takes place three months after the moderated audit has closed. This process identifies the impact of the closing the loop actions on learning and improvement, good practice observed and any areas for further improvement to achieve good outcomes for children and audit judgements.

## COLLABORATIVE AUDIT & MODERATION FLOW-CHART



# What Good Looks Like.

## Key documentation to consider:

Integrated contact & Referral

Team(iCART) Operating Protocol,

Scheme of delegation

Practice standards

Transfer protocol

QA Framework

Practice Framework

Visiting Requirements

Dispute resolution

## Referral

- Child and family contact details are identifiable from child and family details.
- Consent obtained
- Reason for referral can be identified but may be lacking in strengths
- Referral acted upon promptly
- Indication that history has been considered
- Decision is appropriate for level of need / risk
- Decision is recorded
- Case allocated within 24 hours.

Good

- ✓ Contact / Referral shows a clear understanding of when appropriate to refer to social care
- ✓ Contains all relevant information and identifies area of strength and outlines concern
- ✓ Analytical and considers previous contacts / referrals
- ✓ Includes all persons living in the home and the support network
- ✓ Includes absent parents
- ✓ Concerns are discussed with parents/carers and children and their views are sought
- ✓ Focused on planning
- ✓ Evidence based
- ✓ Impact of each child
- ✓ Jargon free
- ✓ Includes diversity
- ✓ Professional curiosity and challenge evident
- ✓ Childs voice is evident
- ✓ Includes partner agencies

Requires Improvement

- Child and family contact details are identifiable from child and family details.
- Consent obtained.
- Where consent is dispensed with there is a recorded decision.
- Reason for referral can be identified but may be lacking in strengths
- Referral acted upon promptly
- Indication that history has been considered
- Decision is appropriate for level of need / risk
- Decision and decision making is recorded
- Case allocated within 24 hours.

Inadequate

- Vital information missing
- **Contact / Referral gives no indication of areas of strength and safety for family**
- Delays in referral
- Referral not clear
- Consent lacking where should have been sought
- Delays in response
- Decisions have not included history
- Decision making unsafe / no risk analysis
- Delays in allocation



## Basic information

Practice with children, young people and families focuses on their needs and experiences and is influenced by their wishes and feelings. Social workers recognise the factors that can make children more vulnerable and tailor their interventions appropriately

### Good

- ✓ Child's details are clear on case file
- ✓ Recording is concise and analytical and provide sufficient detail to ensure effective safeguarding and planning.
- ✓ professional curiosity and challenge evident
- ✓ Case summaries & chronology up to date and consider impact
- ✓ Jargon free
- ✓ Child's story is clear
- ✓ Intervention links to plans
- ✓ Clear decision making
- ✓ IRO/CPM footprint visible.
- ✓ Child's voice feeds through the case file and informs assessment and planning (inc direct work)
- ✓ Advocacy offered
- ✓ Files for children in care

### Requires Improvement

- Most of child's basic details are clear
- Recording is concise and sets out clear plans
- Some challenge to parents / carers but lack of curiosity
- Case summary & chronology are on file but not up to date
- The child's story can be understood
- Decision making is understood but not in detail
- Child voice is evident but could be stronger

### Inadequate

- Basic detail is lacking
- Recording is out of date and unfocused
- No case summary or chronology
- Decisions made based on what parents say with no evidence to support
- Case file recording is difficult to understand, inconsistent or incomplete.
- Not enough information to support decision making
- Child's voice and direct work is lacking.

# Assessment

Assessments are dynamic and change in the light of emerging issues and risks, they are timely and proportionate to risk resulting in direct help for families if needed. Information-sharing between agencies and professionals is timely, specific, effective and lawful.

## Good

- ✓ Identifies areas of strength and outlines vulnerabilities and concern
- ✓ Analytical and identifies a clear plan
- ✓ Includes all persons living in the home and the support network
- ✓ Includes absent parents
- ✓ Focused on planning and identifies the right level of intervention
- ✓ Evidence based
- ✓ Impact on each child
- ✓ Jargon free
- ✓ Includes diversity
- ✓ professional curiosity and challenge evident
- ✓ Child's voice is evident
- ✓ Includes partner agencies
- ✓ Assessments and outcomes are shared and feedback sought
- ✓ Management review and clear oversight

## Requires Improvement

- Some areas of strength / concern analysis is limited
- May not include all in the home / network / absent parents
- Partially feeds into planning
- Diversity considered but not explored
- Individual impact on child not considered Some challenge to parents / carers but lack of curiosity
- Child has been seen but no sense of lived experience
- History considered but not analysed
- Some information from partner agencies
- Assessment shared
- Assessments are completed in a timely manner and are updated when required

## Inadequate

- No identification of strengths, vulnerabilities and concern,
- No analysis
- No family / support / absent parents included
- Assessment does not inform planning.
- No consideration of impact
- Jargonistic
- Decisions made based on what parents say with no evidence to support
- No evidence of child's voice
- No multi agency context
- Outcomes not shared
- No evidenced management oversight
- Assessments are out of date or not updated when required.

# Planning

Plans are dynamic and change in the light of emerging issues and risks. Action is taken to avoid drift and delay.

Plans include (but are not exhaustive to): the CIN / CP / CLA plan, Safety plan, health plans, PEP, Family plan (from FNM)



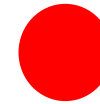
**Good**

- ✓ All plans are outcome focused and needs led
- ✓ Plans are up to date
- ✓ Plans are progressing and outcomes are improving
- ✓ SMART
- ✓ Encompasses all of the child's individual needs
- ✓ Child and family involvement in all plans developed
- ✓ Family network meetings evident
- ✓ Plans reviewed with the multi-agency team & amended to reflect needs and risks
- ✓ Evidence of progress
- ✓ Permanency planning clear
- ✓ Child's voice informs the plan
- ✓ Direct work with the child to review progress and impact of the plan
- ✓ Contingency planning is



**Requires Improvement**

- The plan is updated but could be more detailed and focused
- Elements are task focused
- Not all actions are SMART
- Generalised and not specific to the individual child
- Consideration of family and friends but not explored in any depth.
- Key significant people and professionals are included in the plan
- Review meetings take place in timescale but lack focus on plan progression and evidence limited change
- Permanency planning is considered but not clear.
- Plan shared.



**Inadequate**

- No evidence of up-to-date plans
- Plans are ineffective and drifting
- No permanency planning evident
- Predominantly task focused
- Family networks meetings have not been considered
- The child / family has not been involved in their planning
- Review meetings are not held and do not include parents or the child's perspectives

## Review

Regular review points should feature across the child's case file. Children and young people are protected through effective multi-agency arrangements, promoting timely information-sharing, planning, decision-making and monitoring. Actions happen within agreed timescales to promote better outcomes.

### Good

- ✓ Statutory reviews are held in timescales and are responsive to the child's emerging needs.
- ✓ Reviews are attended by family and professionals (updates provided if not present)
- ✓ Children have opportunity to participate / attend reviews.
- ✓ Reviews are clearly recorded with clear analysis.
- ✓ Permanency plans reviewed.
- ✓ Plan progression and impact is regularly reviewed

### Requires Improvement

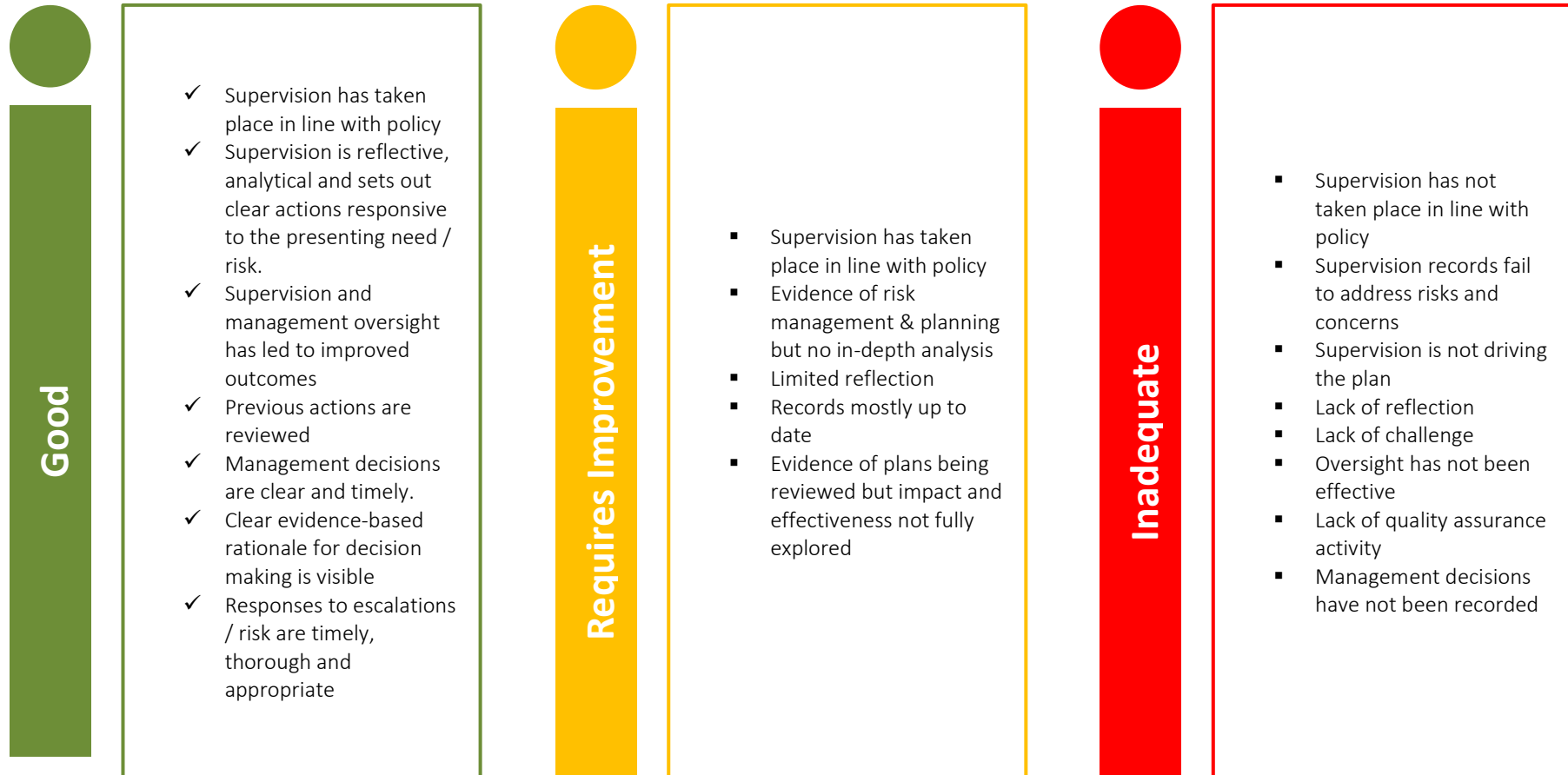
- ✓ Reviews are not arranged in line with what works best for the family (i.e., not considering working parents)
- ✓ Review meetings take place in timescale but lack focus on plan progression and impact
- ✓ Key people are invited, but updates are not received if unable to attend
- ✓ Child's voice in the review is minimal
- ✓ Lack of analysis.
- ✓ Updates identify areas of change and recommendation but fail to feed into new actions and make changes to the plan
- ✓ Review minutes and outcomes shared

### Inadequate

- ✓ Statutory reviews are not held in timescales.
- ✓ Key family / professionals are not invited.
- ✓ Children are not invited to their review (where required)
- ✓ The review is not meeting the child's needs.
- ✓ Lack of detail to enable appropriate planning and action.
- ✓ Child's voice is missing from the review
- ✓ Safety plans are not reviewed
- ✓ Permanency planning is not reviewed

# Management Oversight

Systematic and high-quality management oversight drives good practice, ensuring child-centred plans and actions within timescales appropriate for the child. Quality assurance of documents with clear rationale for all evidence-based decision making.



## Glossary of Terms

- Auditor – Individuals identified to complete monthly deep dive audits. This cohort includes Principal Managers, Practice Leads and aspiring Managers.
- Closing the Loop – The system put in place to track actions coming through audit are progressed and signed off by the appropriate individuals. This is ultimately the responsibility of Divisional managers but they are supported by the QA Manager.
- Deep Dive Audit – A wholistic review, normally covering the past six months but factoring in key matters that may go back further, of a Child's experience with the Local Authority. The grading of the audit reflects the impact of all the interventions and is not reflective of just one individual.
- Dip Sample – This is a very focused review of certain cases to inform specific information eg has an audit had a positive impact.
- Eclipse – Halton Children's Services data system
- Moderator – An individual assigned to review an audit and promote consistency across auditing practice.
- Thematic Audit – This is more focused than a deep dive but more indepth than a dip sample. It will explore specific themes via audit activity.
- Audit Lead – responsible for driving audit practice and extroloating themes from practice that will then be used to support practice needs.