



**HILLINGDON**  
LONDON

# London Borough of Hillingdon

## Children's Social Care

### Quality Assurance Framework

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## 1. Introduction and Purpose

The quality assurance function for Children's Services in the London Borough of Hillingdon (LBH) is coordinated by the Safeguarding, Partnership and Quality Assurance service. As a *learning authority* we recognise that maintaining the quality of our services necessitates commitment to continuous improvement.

This framework therefore refers to services across children's social care including, early help, the front door (mash/triage/ referral and assessment) children's social work, children in care and care leavers.

LBH's Quality Assurance Framework is designed to promote continuous learning and improvement through four stages.



Figure 1– Four Stages of Improvement

In Hillingdon we have high aspirations for our children and a clear shared vision that puts residents and children first. We work in partnership with families and colleagues to enhance children's present and future lives, to ensure they can be the best versions of themselves, to enjoy good physical, mental and emotional health, to have pride and understanding of their unique identities, to have a stable home where they feel they belong and to be and feel safe and loved and empowered.

We recognise that we can only achieve our vision through effective partnership with families and across agencies, and professionals in the borough including a wide variety of voluntary and community sector partners.

The services we deliver with our partners are guided by Children's Social Care High 5, which outlines our five priorities, behaviours and outcomes, and the five ways we with achieve and measure these. (appendix 1)

Ultimately, the purpose of the Children's Services Quality Assurance Framework is to ensure that children, young people and families are achieving their potential through excellent service and continuously scrutinised practice. We will do this through our 5 behaviours:

- Know and understand our children, know and understand who cares for our children, know and understand what life is like for our children
- Be compassionate and collaborative in our relationships
- Always consider 'how could this be better?'
- Give, seek, receive and learn from feedback
- Seek to always provide the right help, at the right time, by and for the right people.

## **2. The link between Performance Information and Quality Assurance**

Like quality assurance, performance assurance is everyone's responsibility with all colleagues having a role to play. Managers have an additional responsibility to monitor and address performance within their service area or team and with individual colleagues where necessary.

Effective use of data and performance indicators is an essential element in understanding the quality of practice and services provided. Performance data has an important role to play in understanding the direction of travel, identifying trends and themes and potential issues.

In addition to this effective quality assurance processes need to be in place to determine the narrative behind the data. All managers are supported in developing the right skills, knowledge and tools to access, understand, interpret and use performance information.

Performance reports are delivered through the weekly data sets sent to managers to enable them to address performance within their team alongside the monthly ChAT report.

### 3. Quality Assurance – The Approach

We strive to ensure that the work we do is of the highest standard as it ensures that our children achieve the best possible outcomes. We understand that in order to achieve this all colleagues at all levels across the local authority and partner agencies need to recognise that they have a shared responsibility for quality assurance.

#### 3.1 Individual Responsibility

Children's Services colleagues should ensure that their practice is consistent with [Social Work England Professional Standards](#), to:

- Promote the rights, strengths and wellbeing of people, families and communities.
- Establish and maintain the trust and confidence of people
- Be accountable for the quality of my practice and the decisions I make.
- Maintain my continuing professional development.
- Act safely, respectfully and with professional integrity.
- Promote ethical practice and report concerns.

To support this, colleagues are required to ensure that all work is undertaken in a child centred manner, consistent with legislation, internal policy, procedure, standards and expectations and as a result in line with external standards, policy and legislation. All Children's Services colleagues are required to take individual responsibility for ensuring they meet the requirements of the professional registrations and standards (including [Professional Capabilities Framework](#), and [Knowledge and Skills Statement for child and family practitioners](#)).

To assist colleagues in feeling confident in their role a thorough and robust [induction package](#) is available for all new starters. Ongoing [training and development](#) opportunities are available and regular [supervision](#) provides individual support.

## 4. Quality Assurance Activity

A range of quality assurance methods are in place to assist in ensuring that we deliver high quality services to all children, young people and families. Quality assurance activity can be broadly split into three areas:

1. Internal audit
2. Multi-agency quality assurance
3. Stakeholder engagement/feedback.

### 4.1 Internal audit activity

The primary purpose of auditing is to ensure that the work we do is of the highest standard and it ensures that our children achieve the best possible outcomes. In Hillingdon audits are used to establish an understanding of the quality of practice across teams within Children's Social Care, promote dissemination of good practice and inform any improvement activity.

#### 4.1.1 The process of internal monthly audits

Audits are allocated on a monthly basis to all internal auditors. It is the role of the Principal Social Worker to randomly select cases from the current open referrals and distribute these to internal auditors.

A [guide to managers monthly audits](#) provides a step by step guide to auditors with key reminders being provided

- Audits should review the work of children's social care during the previous **6 months** of intervention, or most recent referral, whichever is sooner. However, the auditor may need to consider practice prior to this to understand the child's journey, their progress and how this relates to the current plan.
- Auditors should make attempts to contact the child/young person and/or parent where it is appropriate to do so.
- The audit will be reviewing the process but it will mainly be focusing on achieved **Outcomes** for the children - an Audit cannot be Good or Outstanding if the children's outcomes were not met or are not on the way of being met

All monthly case audits will be recorded in LCS (Child's Electronic Record) on the Case Management Audit tool and undertaken **collaboratively** with the allocated social worker.

Audit findings should be discussed with the allocated worker during a face to face or virtual meeting. Following this the social worker and team manager are expected to note the findings of the audit report, and complete part B of the audit form at the next available supervision – or sooner if immediate safeguarding actions are identified.

Three times a year the audits conducted will be thematic and as part of these the records that will be reviewed will be selected using clear, predefined criteria.

The Safeguarding, Partnership and Quality Assurance service will coordinate allocation and analyse of audits, drawing of the conclusions and formulating recommendations for the Senior Management Team (SMT) to consider. The final analysis of the audits is also shared with the rest of the children's social care service via monthly newsletters, use of rolling presentations on screens and presentations at management and service meeting as appropriate.

#### 4.1.2 Scaling and Escalation

It is a requirement that all auditors scale the case they are auditing in line with the Ofsted grading as per the [audit guidelines](#). It is also expected that any auditor identifying a serious safeguarding issue or significant concern escalates the finding to the relevant Team Manager immediately.

#### 4.1.3 Moderation

The Safeguarding, Partnership and Quality Assurance service will moderate a sample of completed audits to ensure consistency and quality. It is envisaged that this level of moderation may highlight areas for development in relation to undertaking audits that require bespoke training/briefings. If this is the case the findings of the moderation will be shared with SMT and where appropriate Hillingdon's Learning and Development team.

#### 4.2 Thematic Audits

Three times a year (frequency may change if necessary) the audit undertaken by the Internal Auditors will be address a theme identified by SMT and/or SPQA. The process will follow as above, unless the nature of audit requires specialist process which will be laid out in advance. The case files that are audited are selected based on set criteria from the current open

referrals. The completed themed audit will be saved to the individual child's electronic file.

### 4.3 Ad hoc audits

The theme and scope of ad hoc audits will be determined by SMT and will be in response to specific areas of practice. These audits will be completed as a desktop exercise by the SPQA service or specific individuals identified for this purpose. The case files that are audited on ad hoc basis are selected from the current open referrals using predefined criteria. These audits are not completed on a regular basis and completed audit tools may not be saved to the electronic case record depending on the issue being addressed.

The Safeguarding, Partnership and Quality Assurance service will be coordinating and receiving completed audits. They undertake the analysis, drawing of the conclusions and formulating recommendations for the SMT to consider.

### 4.4 Additional Audit Activity

In addition to the audit activity set out above, further quality assurance activity is conducted.

#### 4.4.1 Practice Observations

In addition, the supervision the practice of all Social Workers will be observed at a minimum of twice a year by their line manager. The findings of the observation will be discussed in supervision, [annual appraisal of practice](#) and contribute to the professional development of the Social Worker.

#### 4.4.2 Commissioned Services

A number of services for children, young people and families are commissioned by LBH to external providers. All commissioned services will have in place a contract and service specification to which they are required to adhere to. Part of this service specification will be focused on performance and quality assurance and issues in relation to these elements should be identified and addressed through standard contract monitoring processes.

Where there is a concern over the quality of a commissioned service the Safeguarding, Partnership and Quality Assurance service can work with the service (with their agreement) the contract manager and procurement to develop a bespoke piece of quality assurance activity to investigate the concerns further. Once the activity has ended the team will produce



a report which will be presented to SMT to agree further steps.

#### **4.4.3 Internal Audit**

Internal Audit provides an independent, objective assurance and consulting activity designed to add value and improve the council's operations. It helps council services to improve their effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes. Internal Audit provide an independent opinion on the effectiveness of the council's procedures for controlling its financial, operational, risk management and governance systems.

Internal audit have a risk-based IA Plan for 2021/22, linked to the organisational objectives and strategic priorities, whilst also taking account of the Council's wider assurance framework. Underpinning the high-level annual plan, IA will carry out quarterly planning cycles to ensure that IA coverage has the flexibility to respond to the dynamic environment in which the Council operates, this may include audits within children's services.

#### **4.4.4 Youth Justice Service (YJS)**

It is acknowledged that YJS have a separate recording system, Care works, and additional auditing schedules and responsibilities under the HMIP framework. As such a separate Quality Assurance Framework has been developed. The YJS are a key part of children's services delivery and therefore joint audit activity will take place on a thematic basis to consider the cohort of young people who know to both YJS and other parts of children's social care.

### **4.5 Hillingdon Safeguarding Children Partnership Board**

#### **4.5.1 Multiagency audit programme**

The Hillingdon Safeguarding Children Partnership Board scrutinises the work of all safeguarding partners and subgroups and holds them to account on safeguarding practices. The Board will analyse and identify unassessed or developing risks to children, using performance and audit data and reports from safeguarding partners.

The Hillingdon Safeguarding Children Partnership Board has developed a multi-agency practice development forum to coordinate learning and implement recommendations. Childrens and Adult Services will be part of this partnership findings of

each audit will be collated by the practice development forum for quality assurance purposes. Quality assured audit reports, which include recommendations, are presented to the Hillingdon Safeguarding Children Partnership Board for agreement and implementation of identified learnings.

#### **4.5.2 Safeguarding Learning Events**

Safeguarding Learning Events will take place quarterly to help develop collaborative partnership relationships and find creative and innovative solutions to achieve better outcomes for children. The aim of the Safeguarding Learning Event is to disseminate learning from local and national practice, with the goal to support improvements in local practice.

Safeguarding Learning Events will include service user feedback and the voice of the child to challenge and promote learning, improvement [\[HS21\]](#) and continuous professional development.

#### **4.6 Stakeholder Feedback**

Gaining feedback from children, young people, families and carers is an essential part of the quality assurance process as it is central to understanding the subjective experiences of those accessing services. It is equally important that colleagues have the opportunity to feedback on the support they receive, the services they deliver, their working conditions and learning and development opportunities.

Feedback can be obtained in a number of ways and does not always have to be formally requested. For instance feedback can be gained from:

- Assessments
- Supervision records
- Plans and reviews
- Case notes
- Visit records
- Complaints, comments & compliment logs

There is an expectation that every child, young person, family and carer who comes into contact with Children's Services is provided with the opportunity to express their views. All monthly audits will consider the appropriateness of contacting children, young people and their

families as part of the internal auditing process. The call is intended to aid the auditor to understand impact of social work intervention for the child and provide feedback to the allocated social worker and manager.

In addition to the feedback opportunities listed above specific pieces of work are also undertaken to gain feedback from stakeholders, this includes:

- Staff Survey / Healthcheck
- Learning Events
- Annual Staff conference
- Team / service / management meetings
- Staff Forums with Principal Social Worker (including Advance Practitioner and ASYE supervision)

In addition to this the Team Managers will discuss as part of supervision and in team meetings any areas of feedback, each Head of Service will share service feedback to SMT.

#### 4.7 Children's Rights and Participation Team

Participation of children and young people in decisions about their lives is an essential part of growing up and if done well it enhances children's safety and well-being and improves services designed to support and protect them. It is essential that children and young people are enabled by professionals to **participate** in matters that affect them, particularly any plans or arrangements that will affect them and/or their family and are **consulted** with regard to processes designed to improve services both to them individually and more generally.

The Children's Rights and Participation team work closely with the children in care councils - who act as a representative voice for children in care. The team organise participation and consultation events for children in care, ensure that the views of children in care are heard by directors through quarterly "thinking out loud" sessions, and support young people's involvement in corporate parenting panel.

## 5 Link to External Quality Assurance

### 5.1 Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted)

As a regulatory requirement, LBH hosts a series of announced and unannounced inspections led by Ofsted. Children's Services can be subjected to an inspection against a number of different Ofsted frameworks. Whilst some of these frameworks are specific to particular services area for example Children's Homes, some have a wider scope.

[The Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services \(ILACS\)](#) Framework can incorporate all elements of children's services. Inspection outcomes have a multi-purpose; informing policymakers about the effectiveness of services, determining the overall effectiveness of services delivered, and to support improvement, while still holding the local authority children's services to account in meeting their legal responsibilities to children in need of help, protection and care



### 5.2 Care Quality Commission (CQC)

From October 2015 commissioning for 0-5 health services transferred from NHS England to Local Authorities, joining up the whole 0-19 commissioning. Local Authorities (LA) are expected to ensure that the appropriate clinical governance arrangements are in place to support safe delivery of health services. LBH became both the commissioners and providers of Children's Health Services 0-19 in October 2017. In addition to this it is a requirement of The Health and Social Care Act 2008 (regulated activities) and The Care Act 2014 that all care providers are registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC). The CQC monitor, inspect and regulate services to make sure they meet fundamental standards of quality and safety.



### 5.3 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP)

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation is the independent inspector of youth offending and probation services in England and Wales. HMIP report on the effectiveness of probation and youth offending service work with adults and children, inspecting these services and publishing inspection reports.



All youth offending service inspections consist of three domains. Domain one covers aspects of organisational delivery. Domains two and three look at the court disposals and out-of-court disposals respectively. HMIP test the effectiveness of the provision and provide assurance, making recommendations designed to identify and disseminate best practice, challenge poor performance and encourage improvement

In all cases of external inspection Children's Services are required to meet or evidence a set of specific standards or regulations. This Framework and the audit and quality assurance activity that sits within it will help ensure that the services provided by Children's Services meet a level of 'inspection readiness'.

## **6 Comments, Compliments and Complaints**

Comments, compliments and complaints are vital in helping to determine the quality of the services and practice provided to children, young people and families, which when used in conjunction with other quality assurance methods enables rich quality assurance activity. Comments and compliments direct to teams should be logged with the Complaints and Enquiries (Residents Services) team. Formal and informal complaints can help identify recurring or underlying problems and potential improvements. Learning from complaints involves a four stage process.

Hillingdon also recognises and celebrates good practice, sharing this “shout outs” in the PSW practice briefing, team / service meetings etc

Complaints in relation to Children's Service, either its workforce or services, are collated by the Complaints and Enquiries service within LBH and analysed on a quarterly and annual basis. The information collated is presented to SMT so that any outcomes, development work and learning can be shared and further disseminated where appropriate.

## **7 Learning and Development**

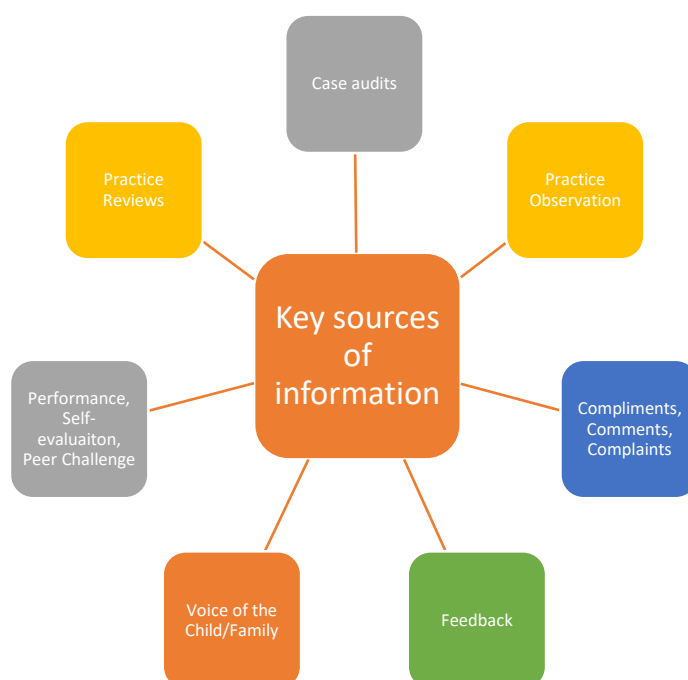
As a learning organisation that is committed to continuous learning, we understand that it is imperative that learning from all quality assurance activity is captured, addressed, implemented and monitored. It is important that this learning is shared with the right people

and used in a meaningful way which will contribute to improved practice and in turn improved outcomes for children, young people and families.

Learning is disseminated across the service in various format including

- Newsletter, managers meeting, AYSE meetings, AP meeting

In addition to learning captured from specific quality assurance activity it is vitally important that other sources of information are considered when developing ways in which to improve practice. A whole system approach to quality assurance and performance management is required to fully understand the learning and development needs of the service.



**Diagram 3 – Whole System Approach**

Once considered, improvement can be supported via a number of routes including:

- Providing a proportionate and diverse training offer.
- Providing coaching and mentoring to individuals
- Dissemination of information i.e. through one-minute briefings, PSW practice briefing, team / service meetings etc

## 8 Impact of Quality Assurance

Evidencing the impact of learning from quality assurance activity is central to ensuring services make a difference to children, young people and families. All areas of practice improvement identified through the activities above are logged and monitored on a RAG rated learning log, which tracks areas of practice improvements and action taken to implement learning. This enables evidence of the effectiveness of quality assurance activity dissemination and embedding of learning and improvement to practice across teams. To ensure the framework is truly child and family centred and follows the journey of the child, the impact of the Framework will be judged annually on the following factors:

- Is quality assurance activity being carried out in partnership with service users and professionals?
- 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 quality assurance activity driving service improvement and creating better outcomes for our children and our workforce?

## Appendix 1 – Hillingdon Children and young people plan. (plan on a page)



### HILLINGDON HIGH FIVE

Hillingdon Children and  
Young People's Plan  
2021–2024

#### OUR FIVE PRIORITIES



- Contextual Safeguarding
- Neglect
- Where Our Children Live
- Innovative Targeted Help
- Our People

#### OUR FIVE BEHAVIOURS



- Know and understand our children, know and understand who cares for our children, know and understand what life is like for our children
- Be compassionate and collaborative in our relationships
- Always consider, 'How could this be better?'
- Give, seek, receive and learn from feedback
- Seek to always provide the right help, at the right time, by and for the right people

#### FIVE DESIRED OUTCOMES FOR OUR CHILDREN



- To Be the best versions of themselves
- To enjoy good physical, mental and emotional health
- To have pride and understanding of their unique identities
- To have a stable home where they feel they belong
- To be and feel safe and loved and empowered

#### FIVE WAYS TO ACHIEVE THEM



- Strengthening our relationships with children and their families, with clear focus on co-production
- Continued support and development of our people
- Supporting innovation in how and when we deliver help to those who need it
- Focus on good transitions throughout childhood
- Investing in internal and external partnerships to build resilience and strong helpful networks for our children and families across the Borough

#### FIVE WAYS TO MEASURE OUR SUCCESS



- What our Social Care data tells us
- What our Hillingdon Partnership data tells us
- Supporting Families success markers
- What our Quality Assurance Framework tells us
- What our children and families tell us