



Shropshire Children's Services Quality Assurance Framework

SECTION 1: Introduction

Shropshire Children's Services were recognised to provide services to children, young people and their families that are overall 'Good' in November 2017, by Ofsted. This grading was impacted by their recognition of a robust Quality Assurance Framework implemented across Children's Services by Senior Leaders.

"The robust quality assurance framework and good use of audits and peer reviews contribute effectively to performance information and practice improvements. Managers know very well the strengths and weaknesses of their services, and accurately assess their own performance". (Ofsted, November 2017)

We have worked hard to embed our Quality Assurance Framework and raise our standards for practice, changing the culture within children's services to ensure that work is completed in a timely way and that expectations for quality is understood.

"An embedded quality assurance culture, underpinned by rigorous performance monitoring, audits and peer reviews with a strong focus on safeguarding and early help in 2015 and 2016, has informed learning and practice development across all areas of the service." (Ofsted, November 2017)

We were pleased that this and subsequent inspections recognised our improvement journey, but we are not complacent. This is an exciting time for practice in children's social care with many national developments and reviews. We are working together to improve our practice regionally through the ADCS and Principal Social Worker networks, alongside the Teaching Partnership. As practice evolves, we have also been evolving our approach to Quality Assurance, utilising innovative tools and continuously ensuring that we have a shared understanding of 'Good' practice to reach our vision for children.

The vision for Shropshire's Children's Social Care is:

"By treating our children and young people with respect, love and trust and with the right amount of encouragement we can inspire them to dream big, build relationships and connections that matter and together with kindness and a sense of belonging we can do great things."

Shropshire Children's Services exist to make a positive difference to every child, and we know we only have one chance to get it right. The delivery of quality services is dependent upon a whole system approach to organisational competence, which reflects continual improvement and a learning organisation. Thus, quality assurance activity is an essential part of our work to ensure that we are providing the best services we can to children, young people and their families. The Quality Assurance Framework provides us with a range of mechanisms to identify good practice and areas for development, measuring our progress against our priorities and ultimately improve outcomes for children.

SECTION 2: Aim of the Quality Assurance Framework

The overall aim of this framework is to:

- **Ensure services are effective and high quality** - We are accountable for providing services, which are of a high standard. Professional staff working with children, young people and their families come to work because they want to make a positive difference to people's lives.
- **Demonstrate continuous improvement** - Share findings of Quality Assurance reports, provide feedback to staff and managers and identify areas for improvement, which contribute to subsequent action plans to improve practice.
- **Meet national requirements for self-assessment and quality assurance** - Key recommendations from review bodies has called for strong quality assurance and auditing systems. This includes how we are using evidence to identify improvements. This includes actively seeking the views of children, young people and their families in the planning and delivery of services.
- **Measure the impact of service delivery** - This is central to achieving improved outcomes for children at all levels of need. Our systems collect information from a range of sources, which inform analysis of local needs at a community level, at a service performance level, and information relating to individual children and their families already receiving services. This information helps us to check that services are being delivered effectively and to standards that enable children's welfare to be safeguarded, promoted and makes a difference.
- **Ensure the voice of the child** has been heard and taken into account of in assessment, planning and decision-making.

Everyone who works within children's social care and wider children's services has an important contribution to make to ensure we do the best we can for the children and their families that we work with. The aim of this document is to create a framework, which is easily understood by all workers, and managers across Children's Social Care with mechanisms to quality assure practice and services delivered. Ultimately we aim to ensure and evidence that children's outcomes are improved by our intervention and their lives are better for it.

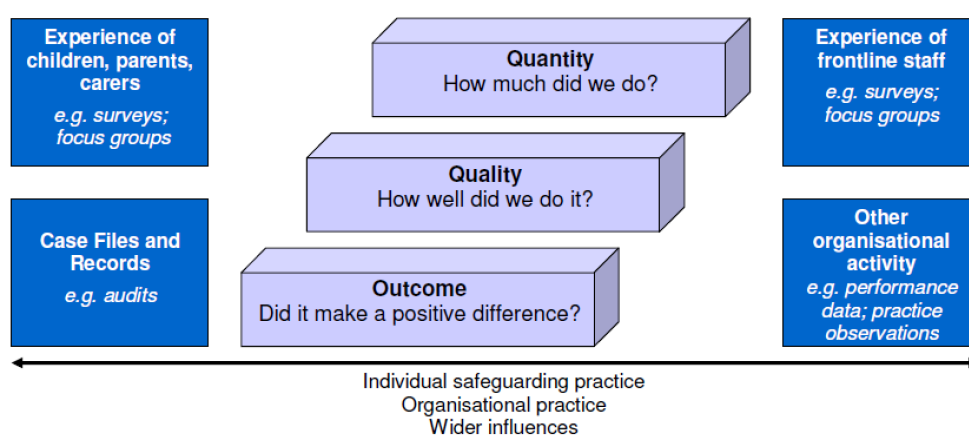
SECTION 2: Our Approach Quality Assurance

Definition of Quality Assurance

Quality assurance is an umbrella term, which embraces all activity that contributes to service improvement through satisfying the organisation that agreed standards are being met. Quality assurance is more than meeting targets and counting activity, it includes a qualitative approach, which measures standards and identifies areas for improvement, utilising a range of methods and intelligence. It is systematic and themed, cross agency and single agency.

There are three key elements of our approach to Quality Assurance:

What are the key elements of the Framework?



- **Quantitative:** Regular monitoring of performance data to ensure that we are meeting our performance indicators and targets and delivering good quality services to be delivered.
- **Qualitative:** Regular measuring of the quality of the work being carried out, utilising audit, observation and management oversight.
- **Outcomes:** Utilising an outcome focused approach wherever possible to measure the impact of services delivered to service users.

The combination of these three elements enables Children's Social Care to review work carried out and provides learning and areas of focus for improvement. Analysis of this information creates intelligence we can use to assess the appropriateness and effectiveness of services. Information helps us understand whether we are delivering services to children and their families in a timely way to a good standard. It enables us to benchmark performance against other Local Authorities so that we can identify and consistently deliver best practice.

Our framework for quality assurance and service improvement is both reflective and pro- active. By examining past service delivery against good practice standards e.g. through audit, and considering service users views about the services received, we can measure the impact and quality of service delivery. By learning from this work

and providing training, supervision and support to our staff we will seek to resolve identified issues before they become entrenched as poor practice.

Service User Feedback and the Child's Voice

We recognise the importance of child and family feedback to quality assure practice and services. Ensuring that the 'child's voice' is evident in practice is part of all review and audit activity carried out in the Children's Social Care Service. Shropshire Children's Services has high standards for ensuring that children and young people are seen alone, have an opportunity to share their views and be involved in their plans and creating outcomes for their families. There are three levels of engagement and consultation utilised including:

Individual level: Consultation by workers and managers with families through visits and meetings.

Group level: Consultation with groups of children, young people and their families, through surveys and the use of existing service user forums. This enables opportunities to influence strategy, planning and recruitment.

Strategic level: Consultation with groups of children, young people and their families regarding strategic decisions e.g. the Looked after Children strategy with the Corporate Parenting Board.

We are re-launching the IMPACT project in February 2022 and the Principal Social Worker for Quality, Performance and Assurance will chair the steering group. The purpose of the Steering Group is to improve and embed the feedback of children, young people and their families across Children's Services.

The Steering Group will work to ensure consultation methods are developed and embedded within practice and improve the gathering and reporting of Service User feedback. The group will develop relationships with different Forums to allow effective engagement to consult on proposals and developments across the service and mechanisms for capturing the views of service users.

The priorities of the project are:

1. To further embed our consultation documents/app across service areas
2. To develop and utilise Service User Forums
3. To hold a Service User in Practice Week

The IMPACT Project will allow Children's Services to evolve and develop, influenced directly by the people the service is for. It will allow us to identify areas of good practice and overcome barriers in service user engagement.

Practice Priorities

In order to support our continuous improvement journey, we have created 5 practice priorities informed by previous learning from our quality assurance framework. This helps our practitioners and managers to focus on the right areas for improvement. Our practice priorities for 2021 to 2022 are:

- 1) **Seeing and Hearing the Child** – We will make sure that children are seen, and their wishes and feelings are heard and taken into account. Visits will be timely, purposeful and include direct work which creates change for families. Children will be seen alone, and their wishes and feelings will be clearly recorded.
- 2) **Supervision and Management Oversight**- We recognise that effective supervision is the foundation of good quality social work practice. Through quality supervision utilising high support, high challenge we aim to develop autonomous practitioners. The child's records will clearly demonstrate the decisions made and the reasons why, so that they can understand their life story. Supervision and management oversight will be restorative, reflective, offer support to promote the timely progression of children's plans and outcomes.
- 3) **Assessments** – Every child will have an up-to-date assessment of their needs, risk and resilience, where their needs, risk and resilience, where their individual wishes and feelings and their identity, cultural needs and ethnicity have all been taken into account. We will be able to identify good outcomes and progression for children, through robust analysis, which will be underpinned by evidence and research, utilising a range of tools.
- 4) **Plans and Planning**- Every child will have an outcome focused and SMART plan that meets their individual needs. Plans will be informed by evidence-based assessments of risk resilience and need and updated after every review. The plan will be able to be understood by the child and the outcomes will focus on what is important for the child. Planning for permanency will evidence careful consideration of all options for the child with clearly recorded decision making which promotes progression and avoids drift and delay.
- 5) **Meetings and Reviews** - Restorative practice promotes meetings where families are “worked with” and not “done to”. They will feel supported and empowered to make changes identified. Strengths will be identified in their family and friends, to create a support network which is valued by professionals and is an enabler for change. Meetings will be focused on progress for children and their families, creating solutions together.
- 6) **Leadership** - The Leadership team will provide visible leadership, which promotes and models restorative practice, and effective and regular supervision that supports innovative, child focused decision making, develops our workforce and ensures that they have the tools to do the job.

Equality and Diversity

Shropshire is committed to delivering consistent and high-quality services across children's services and to ensure that all children, young people and their families will have equal access to the services provided that meet their level of need.

Quality Assurance Framework 2021– 2023

Shropshire Children's Services recognise the diversity of the children, young people and families we work with. We recognise that each family has their specific needs and the range of specialist services that we provide reflects this, enabling families to make sustainable changes. Anti-discriminatory practice will continue to be promoted across the service and permeate all quality assurance activity carried out and all children, young people and their families' views will be included in our work regardless of language, culture, disability and gender. This is now embedded within our practice priorities.

We practice a zero tolerance to racism policy which starts with our own staff –

“Our staff at Shropshire Children's Social Care and Safeguarding come to work to support children and families, not to become victims of violence, threatening behaviour, physical, verbal, racial abuse or discrimination. We operate a Zero Tolerance policy towards abuse of our staff and action will be taken against anyone who abuses a member of our team”

SECTION 3: Quality Assurance Framework

The Quality Assurance Framework permeates the work we do and all managers are required to carry out quality assurance activity as part of their day-to-day role to ensure that children and their families are receiving a high standard of services, which meet their individual needs.

The Quality Assurance Framework is clearly led and participated in by the Senior Leadership Team.

“Senior managers are visible and know their services well. They use effective quality assurance information, performance reports, single-agency and multiagency audit activity, peer reviews and feedback from staff and complaints to scrutinise and improve practice and its impact for children and their families.” (Ofsted, November 2017)

Quality and performance is an established agenda item at meetings across the service including team meetings, Senior Leadership Team meetings and End-to-End and performance management meetings. Quarterly Quality and Performance Meetings are held with the Senior Leadership Team and chaired by the Executive Director of People and the Assistant Director for Social Care and Safeguarding chairs a meeting for all team managers with this focus.

We recognise the importance of communicating the findings from Quality Assurance Activity across the workforce and utilise a range of methods including the “Weekly Brief” communication, which is sent to all children’s services workers and managers.

A ‘Practitioner’s Forum is held on a regular basis to gather the views of practitioner’s within children’s services and discuss practice improvement, chaired by the Principal Social Worker. This works to identify any barriers to practice improvement and innovate solutions to address these.

Feedback from frontline staff regarding Quality Assurance activity such as performance data is also communicated back regularly to senior management by managers within the service and the Principal Social Worker, who reports to the Executive Director of Children’s Services on a monthly basis.

Performance Data Collection and Analysis

We recognise the importance of performance data in enabling managers to:

- Improve and maintain services.
- Report against targets, metrics, programmes and activities.
- Ensure performance meets both local and national targets and informs performance against statistical neighbours.
- Understand the direction of travel and evaluate the impact of change.

Data tells us the story of the child’s experience through the system, to those that need to know. Children’s Social Care produce a range of performance reports and

Quality Assurance Framework 2021– 2023

dashboards measuring key performance indicators (KPI), and key activities and outcomes that are reported to the Directorate Management Team, Corporate Management Team, SSCP, and scrutinised by Members. Performance data is embedded across children's services and workers can check their own performance information at any time through the team manager's matrix, ensuring that they proactively meet KPI's. We also produce a 'weekly scorecard' for teams which allows all managers to understand team performance and respond and follow in real time.

Children's Services is subject to a wide range of standards both national and local. The Council's overall performance is measured against externally reportable performance indicators, which contribute to judgements made to assess performance.

Audit Activity

A fundamental part of the Quality Assurance Framework is case file audit. Audit is not a 'one size fits all' activity and can be used in a variety of ways to:

- Gain an overview of a child's life
- Ensure that the child's voice is present in work undertaken
- Review social work/ manager compliance with key standards; For example, case recording/supervision notes/statutory reviews
- Gain a snapshot of current practice; for example, the quality of core groups
- Gauge the quality of practice across the service; for example, evidence of supervision, participation and contribution of partners.
- Understand the impact of practice for children.
- Gauge the quality of practice in a certain part of the service; for example, children seen alone as part of the assessment process.
- Understand and analyse specific trends; for example, the numbers of out of date assessments.
- Review multi agency audits; for example, SSCB audits

Effective case file audits are part of a broader quality assurance process, which links audit findings to changes in practice, whether individual or organisational, and review.

The Quality Assurance Cycle:



Our QAF is based on a cycle of quality assurance activities for information to be routinely collected and used to improve services and to improve outcomes for children and young people. The framework works on a continuous programme of quality assurance activities throughout the year. The programme identifies roles, responsibilities, frequency and the purpose of those activities based on the following cycle of activities:

Stage 1 — Set Priorities / Standards/ Review

This relates to having a consistent set of standards by which we are measuring the quality of our work and performance against the priorities set for Children's Services. Quality is the degree of excellence provided, or the degree of worth derived from a service from the point of view of children, young people and families.

Services involved in working with children and young people have several standards to which they work: as individuals through targets / appraisal; as teams and services – through team / services plans and performance measures; and with partners. Some standards are set nationally – for example by Ofsted; some are statutory, and others are set locally to reflect the Council's aspirations for continuous improvement in the provision of Children's services. Consequently, standards vary in terms of how and what is measured, some may be performance indicators, some are qualitative – such as the views of children or learning from complaints; others are outcomes from audits against set criteria. Standards enable us to measure the impact of our services against set targets, outcomes or criteria and use this to inform services for the future.

Stage 2 — Programme of Quality Assurance Activities

The quality assurance framework operates through a programme of planned quality checks and activities, which identifies specifies roles, responsibilities and the purpose of those activities. These activities and quality checks are undertaken at all levels of the organisation, including the Director for Children's Services.

Stage 3: Gathering, Analysing and Interpreting Information

Analysis and interpretation of the range of quantitative and qualitative information gathered through the quality assurance framework is used to inform standards, measure progress against priorities, measure impact and outcomes for children and young people, and to inform improvement and changes to services.

Systematically capturing this information, analysing and interpreting this broad range of information and outcomes from quality assurance activities enables services to measure impact, identify trends in performance, and predict future demand and plan. This analysis is contained within the quarterly performance reports.

Stage 4 — Feedback/Sharing of Findings

Clear communication of how the system is performing against our quality standards promotes staff satisfaction when things are going well and begins the process by which we start to identify and make improvements when they are going less well. We do this through the quarterly quality assurance reports and weekly brief, alongside discussion and presentation at quarterly performance meetings. To be aspirational, we should aim to share this with service users as it raises confidence that we are listening to their views and that we are committed to continuous improvement.

Stage 5 — Review and Improve

Evidence, learning and intelligence produced through the QAF and the programme of activities, and the standards are reviewed and benchmarked against other providers to identify areas for development, where we are delivering best practice, and to identify other providers or local authorities who deliver best practice. This enables us to measure how well our services are meeting the needs of children, young people and their families and implement changes to services to reflect those needs.

Quality Assurance Framework Tools

There are a range of mechanisms and tools that are utilised to gather information and to improve practice once learning has been gained and actions for improvement identified. These include:

1. HR and Staffing

Use of HR and staffing information is essential for services and managers in being able to plan and provide a quality, sustainable and consistent service. This includes information about vacancies, staffing numbers, starters / leavers, levels of qualification, performance development of staff, DBS checks of staff, recruitment and retention and more. This element of the QAF enables services to manage workloads; to inform and develop services; in succession planning; and informs strategy.

Recruitment and retention of experienced professional staff is a challenge to all local agencies, none less than children's social care. Shropshire continues to invest in the prioritisation of this activity and works hard to ensure that it is the local employer of choice for social workers.

The Workforce strategy works alongside the QAF and has a key focus on staff retention through continuous development of social workers with career pathways supported by training and development opportunities.

Feedback from staff is sought in a range of ways – in supervision, employee surveys, children's social work health check, working groups, practitioner's forum team meetings and through the Council's whistle blowing process.

2. Workforce Development

Shropshire invests in an ongoing training programme for professional social workers to support continuous professional development. The programme incorporates promoting performance, quality, improving outcomes for children and their families, value for money and assessment of learning and development.

The Directorate (Social Care) Practice and Learning hubs support a workforce of staff dedicated to working with children and young people who have met threshold criteria for social work service. Continuous Professional Development arrangements are in place.

An annual health check of Children's Social Work services has been well established and is also extended to non-social work qualified staff. In 2021 Shropshire has joined the national Health Check of Children's Social Work. This will be reviewed to understand whether a local Health Check is still required.

The Workforce Development and Learning Lead works closely with others in the Quality, Performance and Assurance service and the Principal Social Worker to ensure that we are able to embed the learning from the quality assurance framework in our training and that the workers have the right tools and knowledge to do the job.

3. Supervision and Appraisal

Shropshire has a clear policy regarding the use of the supervisory relationship between social worker and manager. It is expected that supervision provides critical reflection and analysis of practice. As a result of the pandemic, and new hybrid ways of working, supervision files are being moved to a secure supervision site on SharePoint and monthly supervision audits will recommence in April 2022. Each manager is offered observation of supervision on an annual basis.

Performance Appraisals are held annually and reviewed every six months to ensure all staff can maximise their competence. There are also well-established Capability and Disciplinary Procedures which can be followed if performance issues are identified in staff. We do not operate a 'blame culture in Shropshire children's social care – issues in practice are identified at the earliest opportunity and we work together to address these.

4. Observation of Practice

Practice observation is undertaken of the quality of professional practice across a range of roles and responsibilities. This is a key quality assurance activity, which promotes reflective practice; assure compliance with policy and procedures, and

staff development. This has been halted during the COVID-19 pandemic (apart from for ASYE) and we plan to re-instate these in May 2022. Observations of supervision have begun to take place online, however these will be moved to in-person supervision in April 2022, from which date all supervision is expected to happen in the office, COVID-19 restrictions permitting. Prior to COVID-19 we held 'Service User and Feedback Week' twice annually, which will involve each manager at every level in the organisation observing practice in an open case utilising a standard analysis tool – the IMPACT project will re-establish this in 2022.

5. Practice Workshops

Workshops and briefing sessions are used in front line teams to promote good practice. The focus may be dictated by issues emerging from qualitative audit, new practice initiatives, learning from complaints, best practice identified from performance or customer feedback, or any other element of the quality assurance framework. The Principal Social Worker also regularly visits team meetings to communicate key themes from audits and any practice changes.

6. Case File Audit Programme

Audits are approached by:

- Looking systematically and objectively at samples of practice, using the Audit Schedule and its associated tools;
- Seeking the views of service users at various points of delivery
- Collating and analysing the findings
- Sharing the issues which emerge with staff, managers and others
- Deciding the actions needed both to promote good practice identified and to make improvements where needed.
- Providing support for staff to achieve required changes
- Re-auditing to measure that improvements have been achieved and maintained.

All managers and IROs complete Child Journey audits on a monthly basis.

We have a long-established culture of carrying out group audits, which are also attended by Senior Managers including the Chief Executive and helps to develop more consistent auditing.

We regularly carry out themed audits which are responsive to themes from performance data or that identified from child journey auditing. This approach allows us to understand current practice issues.

7. Oversight of the IRO/CP Chair

After every CLA review or CP conference, a Dispute Resolution (DRP) is completed, this is locally known as a 'Rag'. This allows the chair to indicate if

there are any practice problems or drift and delay which is then highlighted to the worker and the team manager. Themes are gathered on a quarterly basis for DRPs/Rags and actions created. DRP Group supervision takes place on a Monday morning and IROs and CP Chairs discuss the best route for progressing DRPs restoratively.

8. Shropshire Safeguarding and Community Partnership (SSCP)

Shropshire Children's Social Care play an active part in the operation of the SSCP as one of the key statutory partners. We take part in rapid reviews and their outcomes and proactively embed the learning. We attend all subgroups and contribute to the development and embedding of action plans. We take part in multi-agency audits and implement the suggested actions from these.

9. Complaints, Compliments and Customer Feedback

Our Statutory Children's complaints procedures and processes include capturing and utilising learning from both compliments and complaints. Learning is gathered and shared with services and teams, is incorporated into supervision and training with staff, and is used to develop services and improve outcomes. Learning from compliments is a valuable source of customer feedback and is shared with services to inform best practice and improve outcomes for service users.

The Complaints Service monitors complaint activities, trends, timescales for resolving complaints, across teams, services and at all levels of the organisation. Regular reports on themes and trends are reported to services, management and leadership teams, and feeds into the quality assurance framework. There the Children's Complaints Annual Report is an important source of learning to improve future performance and is an opportunity for scrutiny by Members about the performance of the Complaints Service itself, to identify trends and themes around complaints, and to give Members opportunity challenge performance and outcomes from the complaints process.

10. Voice of the Child

Services and staff actively ensure children, young people and their families are involved in decisions affecting them and can influence these.

A range of tools are used to gather the views of children and young people at every contact by social workers and by IRO's. Managers authorise all assessments and plans for children.

Assessment

The views wishes and feelings of children, young people and their families are actively sought, recorded and taken into account when an assessment is being

undertaken. These views do influence the planning of services in response to identified need.

Children who are Looked After (CLA)

- Views and wishes of Children who are Looked After (CLA) are sought at every contact and in assessment and reviews.
- Views of children are sought in preparation for the annual review of foster carers.
- Parents and children are surveyed following statutory reviews where the plan for the child is to leave care to seek views about the review and service delivery by the Independent Reviewing Officers,
- The Corporate Parenting Panel links with the Children in Care Council to gather views on services and developing needs from children in care and care leavers.

Child Protection

Children, young people(if in attendance) and parents are asked to complete a questionnaire (written or interview) after the child protection conference where it was decided that the child protection plan was no longer needed, to ascertain their views about services received (what worked!). These are included in this framework and will be included in quarterly reporting to inform performance analysis.

Children of sufficient age and understanding are invited to complete consultation documents to express their views to conference if they do not attend.

Service user feedback is also gained from child journey audits. Mind of my Own is available for young people to feedback at any time and this feedback is saved on the child's file.

11. Multi-agency Audits

Senior Managers contribute to multi-agency themed audits as part of the SSCP quality framework as required. Partners also contribute to audits relating to the effectiveness of Early Help.

12. Closing the Loop

There is an emphasis on 'closing the loop' on learning from quality assurance activity. The Principal Social Worker and Service Manager collates all quality assurance activity and learning for Quality, Performance and Assurance and analyses the impact of this utilising the following methods:

- Regular reporting and discussion of themes from audits at key managers meetings and identification of actions.
- Regular attendance at team meetings to share learning and actions with staff.

Quality Assurance Framework 2021– 2023

- Tracking of 'Inadequate' audits quarterly to ensure that actions have been completed and actions have been done.
- Chairing of the Practitioner's Forum by the Principal Social Worker to identify any barriers to practice and any innovations to address this.
- Introduction of audit-learning afternoons for managers twice a year, to gain a greater understanding of how to identify learning from audits, develop consistency in quality, and develop a shared understanding of grading in practice.
- Introduction of audit moderation panels to ensure consistency in the quality of audits.

This framework includes a suite of audit and quality assurance tools, to build a cumulative picture focussed on outcomes, good practice and compliance.

All summaries or findings from the various audit processes are returned to the Quality, Performance and Assurance Manager for evaluation and analysis. An analysis tool is included in the framework for this purpose.

The Quality, Performance and Assurance Service Manager, in conjunction with others (Advanced Practitioners, Performance colleagues, etc.) produces **quarterly analysis and learning reports** to clearly communicate our performance against our priorities and outcomes for children and young people.

13. Senior Management Oversight and Leadership

The role of the Chief Executive and Senior Managers is to ensure that services for children are well-organised, timely in delivery, and constitute value for money. Senior managers will have meetings with front line teams; chair their own management team meetings, look at case files and trouble-shoot in situations where practice or management issues arise. Senior Managers ensure quality assurance processes are consistently implemented and that learning informs practice change to safeguard and improve outcomes for children. This is ensured for example through Corporate Parenting Panel, Senior Leadership Team meetings; Social Work (monthly) End-to-End, Quarterly Performance Meetings and individual supervision and appraisals.

14. Lead Member and Scrutiny Oversight

The political processes in Shropshire are intended to ensure that good delivery of quality and timely services for children sits alongside value for money and appropriate strategic planning that fits with the overall local priorities.

The Lead Member for Children's takes an active role in the work of the partnership and scrutiny of children's social care.

Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee, as part of Local Authority political oversight, receives a regular report in Safeguarding from senior officers. Children and Young People's Scrutiny receive regular performance reports across a range of

performance activities. The Leader of the Council has overall political oversight and informal cabinet receive performance data.

15. Statutory inspections

OFSTED is the regulatory body that has responsibility for inspections of services provided for children. We have continued to embed the learning from our previous inspections and from that of our regional colleagues.

16. Sector Led Improvements

Shropshire Council is actively engaged with ADCS West Midlands that supports local authorities and their wider public sector partners in their drive to increase efficiency and improve local public services. We also have close links with West Midlands Teaching Partnership and the Principal Social Worker network.

SECTION 5: Next Steps

In 2022-2023 there will an emphasis on:

- Re-instating supervision file audits
- Introducing audit learning afternoons.
- Re-instating the IMPACT project
- Continuing the audit framework.

Role	QA Task	Method	Frequency	Purpose
Elected Members	Monitor Performance via Cabinet and Children's Scrutiny Committee	Report	Quarterly	To monitor performance, benchmarking, practice, decision-making, outcomes and the views of children and young people.
	Offered Opportunities to Meet with Children and Young People	Extended EMT Service User and Feedback Week	Bi-annually	
	Receive Annual Statutory Complaints Report for Children's Services	Report	Annually	
	To be given an opportunity to consider the quality of social work practice.	Regular opportunities	Bi-annually	
	Consider annual reporting	Report/Presentation	Annually	
Lead Member	Offered visits to Social Work Teams for discussion with front line staff in relation to professional work	Extended EMT Service User and Feedback Week	Annually	To meet, seek feedback in relation to practice, pressures and issues with front-line staff
	Monitor quality of Corporate Parenting	Chairs Corporate Parenting Board		To ensure the LA is meeting its obligations as Corporate parent; monitoring quality of care to CLA and developing services to meet the needs of the CLA population
	Receive IRO Annual Report and Virtual Head teacher Report	Report	Annually	To ensure the LA is meeting its obligations as Corporate parent; monitoring quality of care to CLA and developing services to meet the needs of the CLA population
	To be given an opportunity to consider the quality of practice.	Opportunity to undertake a visit as part of service user and practice week.	Bi-Annually	Able to observe and give feedback on practice of social workers and experience of service users.
Role	QA Task	Method	Frequency	Purpose

	Attend Group Audits	Observations	Annually	To meet, seek feedback and review practice pressures and issues with front-line staff
	Monitoring via 1:1 with Director	Meeting and Report	Monthly monitoring	To maintain overview of service and performance issues
	Receive SSCB Annual Report	Report	Annually	To maintain overview of service and performance issues
	Receive IRO Annual Report and Virtual Head teacher Report	Report	Annually	To ensure the LA is meeting its obligations as Corporate parent; monitoring quality of care to CLA and developing services to meet the needs of the CLA population
	To be given an opportunity to consider the quality of practice.	Undertake a visit as part of service user and practice week.	Bi-annually	Able to observe and give feedback on practice of social workers and experience of service users.
Role	QA Task	Method	Frequency	Purpose
Director of Children Services	Meet with Children and Young People	Extended EMT Service User and Feedback Week	Six monthly as a minimum	Hear child's voice / share their journey experiences
	Offer regular 'drop in' sessions with staff	Meeting	Bi - Annually as a minimum	To meet, seek feedback and review practice pressures and issues with front-line staff
	Audit 1 child (with social worker)	Audit	Monthly	Monitor children's records, quality of assessment, planning, management analysis, decision-making, evidence of multi-disciplinary activity
	Supervision of Assistant Director	Meeting	Monthly	To assess the effectiveness of the service area.

	Regular 121s with the Principal Social Worker for Quality Performance and Assurance	Meeting	Monthly	To receive information on the quality of practice and the experience of the workforce.
	Receives Quarterly Quality Assurance Reports and meet with service managers to review quality assurance.	Reports	Quarterly	To review all aspects of the Quality Assurance Framework to give assurance on robustness of quality of work taking into account Service User Feedback.
	Receives Quarterly & Annual Statutory Children's Complaints Report	Report from Complaints Manager	Quarterly & Annually	To monitor and review complaints processes; gather assurance on performance, learning, actions and outcomes from complaints and compliments.
	Review and scrutinise key performance measures from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children's Senior Management Team Performance Team 	Reports to Meeting Reports \ Dashboard	Quarterly Quarterly Quarterly Monthly \ Quarterly	To review performance and benchmarking; gather assurance on performance and outcomes Overview of Performance and QA and inform services.

	Receive SSCP Annual Report	Report	Annually	To maintain overview of service and performance issues
	Receive IRO Annual Report and Virtual Head teacher Report	Report	Annually	To ensure the LA is meeting its obligations as Corporate parent; monitoring quality of care to CLA and developing services to meet the needs of the CLA population
Role	QA Task	Method	Frequency	Purpose
Assistant Director	Audit of a child's file with the worker	Audit	Monthly	To assess the effectiveness of practice and identify areas for development for individuals and the service.
	Observations of front-line practitioners across children's services, including discussion with front-line staff	Visual Management e.g. early bird meetings, observations	Minimum 6 monthly	To gather assurance about practice and service standards, provide opportunity for front-line staff to air concerns and identify areas for improvement individually and corporately.
	Receives Quarterly & Annual Statutory Children's Complaints Report	Report from Complaints Manager	Quarterly & Annually	To monitor and review complaints processes; gather assurance on performance, learning, actions and outcomes from complaints and compliments.
	Monitor and scrutinise performance data	Performance meetings	Quarterly	To monitor and scrutinise performance data
	Make decisions on all homes for children outside of their immediate families.	Decision Making	As required	To quality assure appropriateness of the need for accommodation requests.

	Observe and QA Legal Planning Meetings	Audit	Fortnightly	To ensure that decision making is robust in relation to initiating care proceedings.
	Support thematic audits	Audit	As identified through performance, quality assurance or complaints	Identify areas for improvement individually and corporately.
	Learning from Reviews	Internal Management Review \ Learning Review	As required	Review and Action plans reported to DCS and monitored by Directorate Leadership Team
Role	QA Task	Method	Frequency	Purpose
Service Managers	Maintain oversight of performance information pertinent to service areas	Performance Reports \ Care First reports \ Meetings	Reports – monthly; Meetings - Quarterly	To monitor and scrutinise performance data
	Audit Childs Journey 1 child per month	Audit	Monthly	Monitor the child’s journey, child’s records, quality of assessment, planning, management analysis, decision-making, evidence of multi-disciplinary activity

	Themed audits pertinent to service areas	Audit	As and when required	To drill down on areas of practice to understand strengths and challenges in that area and to take action where required.
	Learning Reviews	Internal Management Review \ Learning Review	As required	Review and Action plans reported to DCS \ AD \ SSCP
	Receives quarterly Statutory Children's Complaints Report	Report from Complaints Manager	Quarterly	To monitor and review complaints outcomes; gather assurance on performance, learning, and actions.
	Direct observations of front-line practitioners and Team Managers \ IROs	Visual Management e.g. attend meetings; observations	Quarterly	To gather assurance about practice and service standards, and provide opportunity for front-line staff to air concerns etc.
	Audit of worker's supervision file.	Audit	Up to 4 Per Year	To assess the effectiveness of the supervision and identify areas for development for individuals and the service.
	Observe Supervision of Team Manager with supervisee.	Appraisal	Annually	To ensure that supervision is of good quality in line with supervision model contained in Shropshire's supervision policy.

	Complete quarterly Quality and Performance Reports to the Director of Children's Services	Report	Quarterly	To ensure there is a clear understanding of issues across the Service areas and to identify what actions are being taken to improve performance, and to overcome challenges and barriers to social work practice.
Role	QA Task	Method	Frequency	Purpose
Team Mangers and Senior Social Workers	QA checklist all files at closure and at transfer between workers or teams	Audit	As and when this occurs	Ensure adherence to policy and procedures and any areas requiring attention are directly addressed with the worker concerned.
	Observations of Practice	Observation	1 for each staff member per year	To ensure practice is to a required standard, and support professional development of individuals, as well as contribute to the learning of the organisation.
	Childs Journey Audit	Audit	Monthly 1 child	Monitor the child's journey, children's records, quality of assessment, planning, management analysis, decision-making, evidence of multi-disciplinary activity.
	Monitor and scrutinise performance data	Performance Reports \ Care First reports	Reports – weekly \ monthly in Team meetings and supervision	To monitor and scrutinise performance data
Role	QA Task	Method	Frequency	Purpose
Principal IRO	Analysis of Quality Assurance RAG ratings from conference and CLA reviews	Audit Analysis	Monthly (Quarterly report)	To ensure rigorous challenge and overall effectiveness of frontline practice.

	Quality Assure minutes of Conference and Statutory Reviews	Oversight	Monthly	To support managing performance
	Themed audits pertinent to service areas	Audit	As and when required	
	Direct observations of CP Chairs and IROs	Appraisal Observation	Annually	To ensure practice is of good standard, keeping children safe and preventing drift and delay.
Role	QA Task	Method	Frequency	Purpose
IRO \ Conference Chairs	QA of case management	Complete the Quality Assurance Form (RAG)	Every Statutory Review & CP	Gather assurance of quality, practice, standards and outcomes.
	QA Care or CP planning	Through review of CP and CLA procedures	Every child who becomes CP or CLA	To ensure the safety and robust planning for our most vulnerable children
	Ascertaining the views of others	Complete consultation with children, young people, their families and carers and other professionals	At CLA Review or at the end of a Child Protection episode	To consider the quality of practice afforded to families who are journeying through procedures
	Themed audits that they as a service may have identified or involvement in SSCP audits	Audit	As identified through performance, quality assurance or complaints	To gather assurance about practice and service standards
	Child Journey Audit	Audit	Monthly	To give provide scrutiny on practice in the service and support to improve this as well as recognising examples of good practice.

Role	QA Task	Method	Frequency	Purpose
Compass Service Manager	Audit of Front Door Decision Making <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sample audit where a decision is made for children not to progress to a social work assessment or s47 • A sample of children that have required a social work visit to inform the referral decision • All strategy meetings that have resulted in no further social work response • A sample audit of outcomes of referrals confirming written feedback and rationale to the referrer. 	Audit	As required	To Quality Assure the decision-making at the front door, and to take action to ensure continued improvement.
Role	QA Task	Method	Frequency	Purpose
Principal Social Worker and Service Manager for Quality, Performance and Assurance	Chair the Practitioner's Forum	Meeting	Bi-monthly	To understand any barriers to practice improvement and any innovations suggested by workers and relay these to the Senior Managers.
	To undertake themed audits including Multi Agency audits	Audit	As learning emerges as and when required	To gather assurance about practice and service standards
	Chair Audit moderation panel	Audit	Monthly	To understand the quality of audit and develop consistency in grading.
	Chair group audit days (2 per year for each team manager).	Audit	Quarterly	Develop consistency in grading for audits and a shared understanding of what good practice looks like.

	Quarterly Reports regarding performance against the quality assurance framework and priorities.	Report	Quarterly	To share learning and actions from audits, ensuring that practice is improving at the required momentum and identifying any required actions to support this. Identifying any key themes in our current practice.
	Appreciative Enquiry Days	Meeting	Quarterly	To learn from good practice and develop actions to replicate these across the service.
	QA of LPM	Observation and Audit	Monthly	To understand the quality of legal planning for children.
Role	QA Task	Method	Frequency	Purpose
Staff in the Quality, Performance and Assurance Service area	To produce information to support the analysis of quarterly quality assurance information and develop actions to embed learning.	Report	Monthly	Contribute towards the analysis of quality of practice and share learning.
Role	QA Task	Method	Frequency	Purpose
Practitioner Representatives from all Teams as required:	Multi- Agency Audits: SSCP Early Help Stakeholder	Audit	As and when required	To share insight into frontline practice.