

Dorset Quality Assurance and Practice Improvement Framework for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)



“We wish for nothing more than to see our daughter grow, develop, and achieve to the best of her ability. It was reassuring for us to be able to recognise our child in this document. This EHC plan is the first step in the journey to support our daughter.”

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1 Introduction to the framework

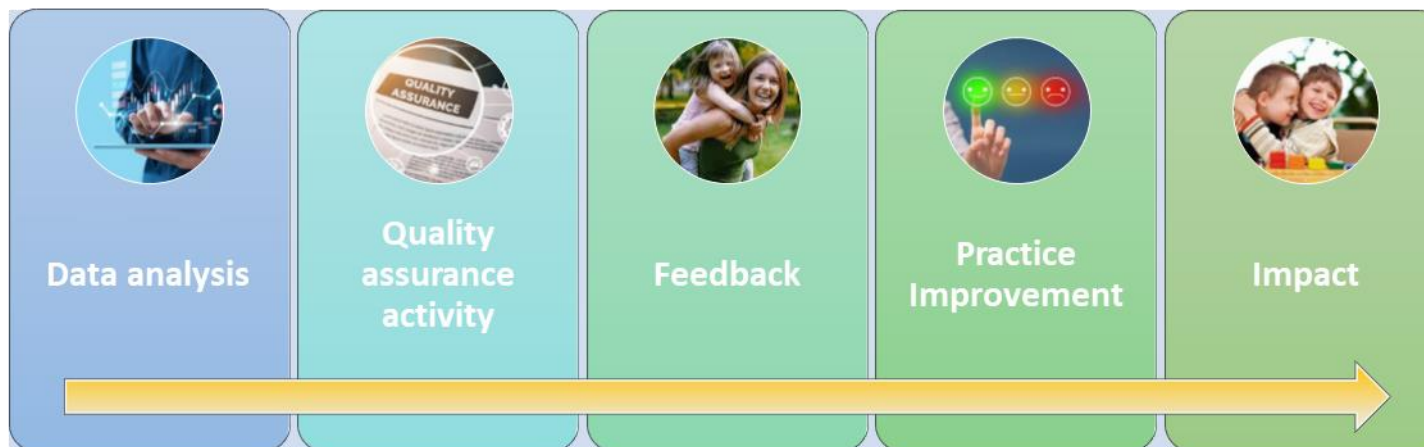
Our vision

“We want our children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) to be healthy, happy, and safe, and able to achieve their potential to lead a fulfilling life. We want them to have, and to expect, the same opportunities in life as other children and young people.”

As part of our improvement journey, we are developing an ambitious programme of SEND quality assurance and practice improvement.

Our SEND Quality Assurance and Practice Improvement framework considers the impact of our arrangements for our children and young people with SEND. It sets out our approach to Dorset SEND quality assurance and practice improvement across the partnership. There is a focus on those children and young people who are undergoing an Education Health and Care (EHC) Needs Assessment, or who have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHC Plan).

We will use a range of quantitative and qualitative evidence, to help us evaluate the effectiveness of our services. We will use our learning to develop and improve our services. This will be central to ensuring that children, young people, and their families receive the right services at the right time and that those services have a positive and lasting impact.



2 Purpose

We will undertake a range of activities and draw on a range of sources of information to identify both ‘what is working well and why’ and ‘what we need to do better’ to ensure children and families receive high quality services that improve their lives. This will enable a joined-up approach to a continuous cycle of learning, improvement and evidencing our impact for children and young adults.

Effective use of data and performance indicators is an essential element when considering the quality of practice and services provided; in addition to this, we will ensure that effective quality assurance systems are in place to determine the story behind the data.

The accountability brought about by the framework will help to ensure that education, health, and social care services work together with families to fulfil their duties for with children and young people with SEND.

A robust cycle of quality assurance and data analysis will support us to:

- evaluate the quality and impact of our SEND services
- ensure our services are consistent, timely and of a compliant standard
- identify areas of strength and areas where we could improve our services
- use our learning to develop and improve our services and strengthen our practice
- support the development of a skilled and accountable workforce which is focused on improvement and high-quality services.

This will enable us to regularly evaluate the impact of our SEND arrangements to ensure:

- our families have positive experiences of our SEND services
- all our children, young people and their families receive the same high-quality services
- children, young people, and their families fully participate in decision making about their individual plans and support
- children and young people’s needs are identified accurately and assessed in a timely and effective way
- EHC Needs Assessments, EHC Plans, and Annual Reviews are high quality and compliant
- children and young people are well prepared for their next steps, and achieve strong outcomes
- we are making a positive impact for children and young people



3 Judging what is 'Good'

Audits will be graded Outstanding, Good, Requires Improvement, or Inadequate.

Our target is for at least 80% of all audits to be judged Good or above.

Judgement gradings will be determined using grade descriptors based on the following:

- The SEND Code of Practice: 0-25 years (Scop) 2015
- Dorset Council SEND Practice Standards
- Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted)
- Our children and young people, their families, and other key stakeholders



The SEND Code of Practice: 0-25 years (Scop) 2015

[SEND Code of Practice January 2015.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Audit judgements will be backed up by detailed grade descriptors based on the following criteria:

- A clear focus on the participation and contribution of children and young people, their parents, and carers.
- A strong focus on high aspirations and improving outcomes for children and young people, to enable them to have an independent future.
- A greater focus on support to enable those with SEND to succeed in their education and make a successful transition to adulthood.
- An emphasis on the joint planning and commissioning of services to ensure close co-operation between education, health and social care.
- Specific guidance for education and training settings to apply a graduated approach to identifying and supporting pupils and students with SEND.
- For children and young people with more complex needs there will be a coordinated assessment process.
- Integrated our public duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the Mental Capacity Act 2005 into the Code of Practice.

Dorset Council SEND Practice Standards

The following standards will be used throughout the audit process:

- The plan clearly records the views, interests and aspirations of the child, young person, their parents, and carers and these are (a) fully represented within the plan and (b) inform the outcomes within the plan.
- Plans are clear, concise, understandable, accessible and outcomes are SMART. In addition, they should be aspirational, person centred and identify prior attainment.

- Plans are holistic, all agencies involved with the child, young person, their parents, and carers have contributed to the plan within timescales. The outcomes include both what is important to the child or young person and what is important for them.
- Plans are focussed on individual special educational needs and not medical diagnosis, highlight strengths and capabilities as well as the need for support or intervention.
- Plans specify the provision required and how education, health and care services will work together to meet the child or young person's needs and support the achievement of the agreed outcomes, including transition planning.

Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted)

[Area SEND inspections: framework and handbook - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/area-send-inspections-framework-and-handbook)

Our quality assurance and practice improvement work will also be underpinned by the evaluation criteria set out by Ofsted:

The impact of the local area partnership's SEND arrangements on the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND, including the extent to which:

- children and young people's needs are identified accurately and assessed in a timely and effective way
- children, young people, and their families participate in decision-making about their individual plans and support
- children and young people receive the right help at the right time
- children and young people are well prepared for their next steps, and achieve strong outcomes
- children and young people are valued, visible and included in their communities

Our children and young people, their families, and other key stakeholders

It is crucial that we collaborate with our children, young people, and their families, and with our partnership organisations, so that we can develop a shared understanding of what 'Good' looks like. This work is in the initial stages but will be developed as a priority.

The aims of this work are to:

- Enable us to further strengthen our quality assurance and practice improvement activity
- To build an open and transparent collaborative culture which will strengthen our relationships and improve the experiences and outcomes of children, young people, and their families.

4 Ensuring learning leads to impact

Impact: Measuring the impact of service delivery and proactively seeking the views and feedback from our partners are crucial to achieving improved outcomes for children/young people.

We measure our impact in the following ways:







Ensuring learning is embedded (closing the learning loop): Quality assurance activity findings will be analysed monthly to identify strengths, themes, trends, and identify areas for improvement. Learning will be shared monthly with SEND team managers and Service Managers, reflecting the months activity, findings and suggested next steps. Practice improvement and development activities will then be delivered in response to the identified learning. Practice and performance will be regularly reviewed to ensure continuous improvement and close the learning loop. Exceptions identified through auditing will be reviewed at monthly Triple Lock meetings to ensure robust management oversight.

Governance: This framework will be reviewed annually through the Children's Services Practice, Policy and Procedure (PP&P) group. All quality assurance and practice improvement activity will be analysed and learning reported quarterly to the Quality of Practice and Action Group (QPAG), which will ensure appropriate wider learning, actions, and service development are progressed. Membership includes senior management representation from across Children's Services including SEND, Early Help, and Social Care teams. Learning will also be reported to the SEND Board to ensure robust oversight across the wider SEND Partnership. Membership includes representatives from education, Health, Social Care, Dorset SEND Information and Advice Support Service (SENDIASS), and Dorset Parent Carer Council (DPCC).

5 Quality Assurance and Practice Improvement Activity

Activity to strengthen the Education Health and Care Needs Assessment



Audits of statutory advice for an EHC needs assessment 	Why we will do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure quality and timeliness of statutory advice for an EHC needs assessment Positive impact on quality of EHC plans
	How we will do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audits completed in partnership with key stakeholders 12 Educational Psychologist statutory advice audits: 2 for each locality 12 Health statutory advice audits: 2 for each locality 12 Social Care statutory advice audits: 2 for each locality 12 school statutory advice audits: 2 for each locality Advice will have been provided for an EHC NA or Annual Review in the previous 2 months Annual review of grade descriptors and audit templates
Statutory advice training 	Why we will do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure quality and timeliness of statutory advice for an EHC needs assessment Ensure compliance of statutory advice
	How we will do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training devised and delivered in partnership with key stakeholders Virtual training to maximise reach
Audits of EHC Needs Assessments 	Why we will do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure quality and timeliness of EHC needs assessments
	How we will do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12 audits: 2 for each locality EHC needs assessment will have been completed within the previous 2 months. Annual review of grade descriptors and audit templates
Responsive practice development 	Why we will do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure learning from quality assurance activity is embedded into practice Ensure practice is 'Good' and that practice is consistent across all locality areas
	How we will do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tailored training sessions with a specific focus, in response to the audit learning Themed locality learning circles Coaching /mentoring sessions (1-1 and in Locality Teams) and drop in training sessions

How we will know we are making a difference

- The quality of and timeliness of statutory advice for an EHC needs assessment improves: target: 80% of audits graded 'Good' or better
- Positive family feedback following an EHC needs assessment

- 80% of EHC plans graded audit 'Good' or better



Activity to strengthen decision making related to EHC needs assessments, EHC plans and EHC plan (Annual) reviews

SEND Panel Decision Standardisation Workshops  	Why we will do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure decision making takes the views of the child/young person and their family into account • Ensure decision making meets the special educational needs of the child/young person • Ensure decision making meets the requirements of legislation and the Scheme of Delegation • Ensure consistency and parity of decision making across locality areas
	How we will do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 panel decisions moderated by panel chairs and key stakeholders • Comprised of 3 locality decisions (to issue an EHC plan) and 3 HNB decisions

How we will know we are making a difference

- 80% of panel decisions will be graded 'Good' or better and 90% of panel decisions will be agreed through standardisation
- 100% of panel decisions will be compliant with legislation
- There will be a reduction in upheld complaints relating to panel decisions



Activity to strengthen EHC plans

EHC plan audits 	Why we will do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure quality, timeliness, and compliance of EHC plans • Ensure the content takes the views of the child/young person and their family into account • Ensure EHC plans are clear, concise, understandable, and accessible • Ensure EHC plans specifies the outcomes being sought for the child or young person • Ensure EHC plans are forward looking, considering independence and preparation for Adulthood
	How we will do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 Team Manager audits: 1 for each locality area • 6 SEND Provision Lead learning audits: 1 for each locality area • Audits consider EHC Plans that have been finalised in the previous 2 months • Key stakeholder moderation of audits • Annual review of grade descriptors and audit templates
Responsive practice development 	Why we will do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure learning from quality assurance activity is embedded into practice • Ensure practice is 'Good' and that practice is consistent across all locality areas
	How we will do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tailored training sessions with a specific focus, in response to the audit learning • Themed locality learning circles and coaching /mentoring sessions (1-1 and in Locality Teams) • Drop in training sessions

How we will know we are making a difference

- The quality and timeliness of EHC plans improves: 80% of EHC plans graded audit 'Good' or better
- Positive family feedback following an EHC plan being finalised

Activity to strengthen EHC plan reviews



EHC plan Review Audit 	Why we will do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure quality, timeliness, and compliance of EHC plan reviews • Ensure the child/young person and their parent or carer are consulted about the EHC plan • Ensure the views, wishes and feelings of the child/young person and their parent or carer are considered • Ensure the child's or young person's EHC plan outcomes are reviewed • Ensure any new professional advice or change in special educational needs is identified • Ensure EHC plan reviews consider independence and preparation for adulthood • Ensure the EHC plan reviews plan for the next stage of education • Ensure the parent of the child or young person are notified of the Local Authority decision about whether to maintain, amend or cease the EHC Plan is made within four weeks of the meeting
	How we will do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 audits completed: 2 for each locality area • Audits consider Annual Reviews completed in the previous 2 months • Key stakeholder moderation of audits • Audits consider paperwork received from settings/schools • Review of grade descriptors and audit templates
Responsive practice development 	Why we will do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure learning from quality assurance activity is embedded into practice • Ensure practice is 'Good' and consistent across all locality areas
	How we will do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tailored training sessions with a specific focus, in response to the audit learning • Themed locality learning circles • Coaching /mentoring sessions (1-1 and in Locality Teams) • Drop in training sessions • Training for school SENCOs/settings, delivered through SENCo Forum meetings and planned training opportunities

How we will know we are making a difference

- The quality and timeliness of EHC plan reviews improves: 80% of audits graded 'Good' or better
- Positive family feedback following an EHC needs assessment
- 80% of EHC plans graded audit 'Good' or better Target: 80% of audits graded 'Good' or better

- Family feedback
- EHC plans graded audit 'Good' or better





Activity to strengthen all case practice related to children and young people with SEND

Child Case audits 	Why we will do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure quality and timeliness of case practice for children/young people with special educational needs • Ensure the views, wishes and feelings of the child/young person and their parent or carer are considered • Ensure case work considers how skills for independence and preparation for adulthood are being built • Ensure the child/young person is making progress towards their outcomes • Ensure the child/young person has a positive lived experience and where this is not the case, ensure that appropriate steps are being taken to address this • Ensure the child/young person is accessing appropriate full time education and where this is not the case, ensure that appropriate steps are being taken to address this
	How we will do this	<p>Children's Services Audits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14 cases where the child or young person is known to Children's Social Care and has SEND • Audits completed in collaboration with key stakeholders <p>Thematic and dip sample audits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertaken in response to identified service needs • Focus on identified key themes or vulnerabilities for children or young people with SEND
Continuous professional development 	Why we will do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure learning from quality assurance activity is embedded into practice • Ensure practice is 'Good' and consistent across all locality areas • Ensure practice meets all statutory requirements
	How we will do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsive practice development sessions in response to audit learning • SEND team core training programme - 2 year cycle • SEND Quality Assurance Meetings to share learning and develop practice improvement • Team Manager and locality team meetings • Monthly practitioner supervision meetings

How we will know we are making a difference

- The quality and timeliness of case practice relating to children and young people with SEND will improve: 80% of audits graded 'Good' or better
- Children and young people with SEND will be making progress towards their outcomes
- Children and young people with SEND will have the skills needed for independence and will be prepared for adulthood
- Increase in positive family feedback and a corresponding reduction in complaints

Activity to strengthen the lived experience of the child and their family

Parent/carer/young person feedback 	Why we will do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build a culture of transparent and collaborative working with parents, carers, children, and young people • Inform our service development and design • Identify good practice, learn from it, and build upon it to strengthen our practice • Identify and resolve any concerns at the earliest opportunity • Identify and learn from feedback themes to strengthen our practice
	How we will do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuously seeking feedback through all communications with parents/carers and young people • 12 'Lived experience' phone calls to parents/carers and young people who have recently (within the previous 2 months) completed the EHC Needs Assessment process • Online feedback form shared with parents, carers and young people following an EHC plan being finalised • Compliments and complaints monitoring, analysis, and reporting • Themed feedback events • Annual SEND Survey
Analysis of SEND data 	Why we will do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure quality and timeliness of EHC needs assessments, EHC plans and EHC plan reviews • Ensure compliance with SEND legislation and guidance
	How we will do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly locality exceptions monitoring and reporting • Annual whole service comparative data analysis of national/statistical neighbours and local data
SEND Quality Assurance and Practice Improvement Framework  	Why we will do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a shared understanding of what 'Good' looks like for children and young people with SEND and their families. • Agree a shared plan of quality assurance and practice improvement • Ensure children with SEND meet their full potential and experience good outcomes
	How we will do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An annual review of the Framework in collaboration with parents, carers, children and young people and other key stakeholders. • Collaborative production of a statement and/or grade descriptors to define what 'Good' looks like

How we will know we are making a difference

- The quality and timeliness of case practice relating to children and young people with SEND will improve: 80% of audits graded 'Good' or better
- Children and young people with SEND will be making progress towards their outcomes
- Increase in positive family feedback and a corresponding reduction in complaints

6 Timetable of Activity

ACTIVITY DETAILS				ACADEMIC YEAR											
SEND Stage	Activity	Frequency	Completed by	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
All stages	Lived experience phone calls	Monthly	SEND QA												
EHCNA	Educational Psychologist statutory advice training	Termly	Educational Psychologists												
EHCNA	Educational Psychologist statutory advice audits	Termly	Educational Psychologists												
EHCNA	Health statutory advice training (Pan-Dorset)	Termly	Health, SEND QA												
EHCNA	Health statutory advice audits (Pan-Dorset)	Termly	Health, BCP, Dorset, SENDIASS, DPCC, PCT												
EHCNA	Social Care statutory advice training	Termly	CSC, ASC, SEND QA												
EHCNA	Social Care statutory advice audits	Termly	CSC, ASC, SEND QA, SENDIASS, DPCC												
EHCNA	School statutory advice training	6 monthly	Settings SEND QA												

EHCNA	School statutory advice audits	6 monthly	Settings SEND QA												
EHCNA	EHC needs assessment audits	6 monthly	SEND QA												
EHCNA/ EHCP	Practice development sessions	Weekly	SEND QA												
SEND Stage	Activity	Frequency	Completed by	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
EHCNA/ EHCP	Learning circles	Monthly	Team Managers SEND QA												
EHCNA/ EHCP	Coaching /mentoring sessions	Weekly	Team Managers SEND QA												
EHCNA/ EHCP	SEND Panel Decisions - Standardisation Workshop	Termly	Panel Chairs SEND QA												
EHCP	Children's Services case audits	Monthly	CS Managers SEND QA												
EHCP	EHC plan audits	Monthly	Team Managers												
EHCP	EHC plan audits moderation	Quarterly	All stakeholders SEND QA												
AR	EHC plan review audits	Termly	Team Managers SEND QA												
All stages	SEND Team induction training	As required	Team Managers, SEND QA												
All stages	SEND Team core training	Monthly	Team Managers SEND QA												
All stages	Analysis of SEND data	Monthly	Team Managers SEND QA												

All stages	Dip sample audits	As required	Team Managers SEND QA															
All stages	Thematic audits	As required	Inclusion Project SEND QA															
All stages	SEND Quality Assurance and Practice Improvement Framework	Annually	All key stakeholders SEND QA															

7 Links to other documents

This framework links to the following plans, legislation, and standards:

Dorset Council
SEND Strategy 2021 to 2024 - Dorset Council Children's Services Quality Assurance Framework
Legislation
Children and Families Act 2014 (legislation.gov.uk) Education Act 1996 (legislation.gov.uk) Care Act 2014 (legislation.gov.uk) Equality Act 2010 (legislation.gov.uk) Children Act 1989 (legislation.gov.uk) Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 (legislation.gov.uk) Health and Social Care Act 2012 (legislation.gov.uk) Mental Capacity Act 2005 (legislation.gov.uk) Children and Young Persons Act 2008 (legislation.gov.uk)
National standards
SEND Code of Practice January 2015.pdf (publishing.service.gov.uk)

8 Version control and version history

Version Control				
Effective Date	10/10/2023			
Review Date	10/10/2024			
Review Frequency	Annually			
Policy Owner	Dorset Council Children's Services			
Policy Authors	Emma Adlem, Safeguarding Standards Advisor (SEND)			
Approval Bodies	Practice Policy and Procedures Group			
Approval Date	10/10/2023			
Version	V1.3d			
Version History				
Version	Date	Amendments Made	Requested by:	Made by:
V1.1d	31/03/2023	N/A	N/A	Emma Adlem
V1.2d	11/08/2023	Revised in line with QA Manager review	SKH/KC/ML	Emma Adlem
V1.1f	11/10/2023	Final amendments made in line with PP&P oversight	PP&P	Emma Adlem

