

# Quality Assurance and Improvement Strategy for Children's Social Care



**Portsmouth**  
CITY COUNCIL





# Contents

▪ <b>Section 1: Our Vision for Quality and Improvement</b>	<b>4</b>
▪ 1 What is the Quality Assurance and Improvement Strategy?	5
▪ 2 Key Goals	5
▪ 3 Essential Components to deliver a Quality Service	6
▪ <b>Section 2: The Quality Improvement Framework</b>	<b>7</b>
▪ 1 Policies, Standards and Procedures	8
▪ 2 Staff Training and Supervision	8
▪ 3 Observation of Practice	9
▪ 4 Internal and Multi-Agency Audit	9
▪ 5 Participation	10
▪ 6 Learning and Improving Services	10
▪ <b>Section 3: Quality Improvement Framework Responsibilities Table</b>	<b>11– 17</b>

# 1

## Our Vision for Quality and Improvement

Children tell us that their Social Workers are helping them and making things better (CIN and LAC Survey's 2016). This is really important to us and we want to continue to improve their lives in the future.

We have a simple vision for Children's Social Care in Portsmouth:

- **To support our staff to learn and achieve,**
- **so that we support vulnerable children and families to be safe, learn and be healthy and achieve their full potential**

Portsmouth City Council is committed to providing a high-quality service for children and their families. To achieve the highest possible standards of service delivery we work to restorative principles, working with families to empower them to find their own solutions, keep the child at the centre of all we do, ensure services are delivered to nationally and locally agreed standards and meet our associated performance targets.

Measuring the impact of service delivery is central to achieving improved outcomes for children. In Portsmouth we have a strong learning culture and a quality assurance system in place that evidences services are being delivered effectively and to standards that enable children's welfare to be safeguarded and promoted.

Participation is vital to shaping a safe and efficient service; our commitment is to listen effectively and respond appropriately to children, families and our staff. We actively involve children, young people and parents/carers in the planning, delivery and evaluation of services and as such, this strategy must be read in conjunction with the Participation Strategy.

A quality service cannot be fully achieved without effective multi- agency joint working, and training. This strategy must be seen alongside the Children's Trust Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy, and the Portsmouth Safeguarding Children Board quality assurance activity via the Monitoring and Evaluation and Scrutiny Committee (MESCC).

Other key Documents that underpin our service delivery are:

- Thresholds Document
- Professional Standards for Children's Social Care
- Workforce Development Strategy
- Participation Strategy
- Corporate Parenting Strategy

## **1. What is the Quality Assurance and Improvement Strategy?**

1.1 The Quality Assurance and Improvement Strategy is our plan for ensuring we are doing things right and strive to improve further in the future. We ensure that the work that we are doing meets the required statutory standards and makes a sustained improvement to the lives of the children and families that we work with.

1.2 We promote a learning culture and encourage staff in all levels of our organisation to reflect upon the work that they are doing and use this to inform future practice. A formal framework of quality assurance is embedded throughout the organisation; this supports the learning culture and provides clarity and understanding about how quality assurance is systematically managed in the organisation.

## **2. Key Goals**

2.1 The key goals of the Quality Assurance and Improvement Strategy are to:

- Provide support to enable staff to get it right the first time
- Routinely monitor the quality of services against service specifications and standards
- Be clear about the chain of accountabilities and responsibilities
- Listen to children, young people and their families and use that feedback to improve what we do.
- Robustly challenge our practice and thinking
- Be courageous and curious when seeking and giving feedback on practice and making improvements
- Deliver services based on timely and holistic assessments of need
- Learn from our practice and the practice of others to consistently improve our service to children and their families

# 1

## Our Vision for Quality and Improvement



### 3. Essential Components to deliver a Quality service

**3.1 Organisational:** having effective quality assurance systems and procedures in place

**3.2 Cultural:** an ethos that promotes learning, critical reflection and curiosity

**3.3 Leadership:** That supports and champions reflections, participation, feedback and improvement

**3.4 Management:** to monitor and evaluate individual's practice against standards

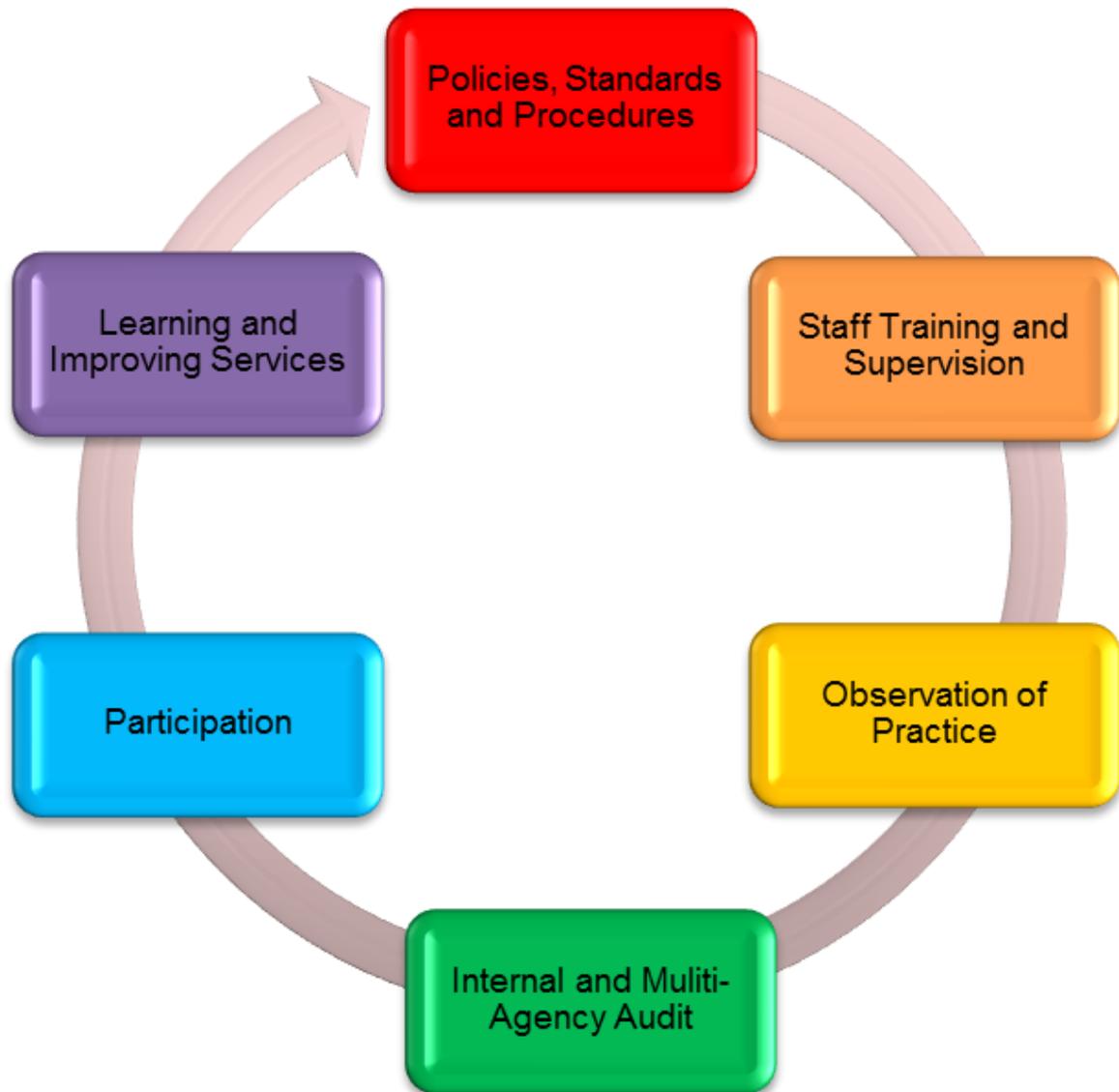
**3.5 Workforce:** be supported to take responsibility for their practice.

**3.6 Service users:** validate that requirements of the standards have been adhered to

# 2

## Quality Improvement Framework

The Quality Improvement Framework is a continuous process which allows us to learn and shapes our practice



Continuous consultation, review, participation and feedback are intrinsic to the Improvement Framework. It is a continuous process that constantly seeks to refresh and update itself.

# 2

## Quality Improvement Framework

### 1. Policies, Standards and Procedures

1.1 Policies, Standards and Procedures underpin the expectations for practice in the service. They give guidance and ensure that all staff are aware of the consistent standards that they need to meet. Our policies and guidance are not static they are refreshed and updated on a regular basis as a result of both changes to legislation, guidance and regulation as well as learning in our organisation through our Quality Assurance Framework. One minute guides are available on a number of topics to signpost staff to good practice and the policies and procedures that they need to work within.

1.2 To ensure that our staff understands what is expected of them we have a range of practice standards for them to work within.

1.3 Induction, training and development standards ensure staff know what they are required to do and the required outcomes, and provides support through a range of training and development activities.

1.4 ASYE standards are written into the ASYE agreement to ensure that Newly-Qualified Staff undertaking the programme are clear of what is provided and what is expected of them.

1.5 Standards of conduct of all social work staff are set by The College of Social Work Professional Capabilities Framework

<https://www.basw.co.uk/pcf/>

as well as the Health and Care Professions Council

<http://www.hcpc-uk.co.uk/>

### 2. Staff Training and Supervision

2.1 Portsmouth Children's Social Care has a strong emphasis on training and development from the beginning with good induction and a comprehensive academy programme for Newly-Qualified Social Workers. Portsmouth City Council recognise the contribution that Newly-Qualified Social Workers make to the workforce and are committed to running a robust programme of training to ensure they are equipped to undertake the Social Work task in a statutory setting.

2.2 Portsmouth has positioned its Social Work Matters Skills Academy in the Quality Improvement part of the service in order to ensure that it is firmly part of the improvement cycle. The Academy has an important role in ensuring that Newly-Qualified Social Workers are trained to follow the most

recent, policy, procedure and guidance and that the training responds to feedback thorough all of the areas of the quality improvement framework. The Academy also takes a role in providing learning sets, guidance and training to staff to ensure that practice is shaped as a result of the feedback from a wide range of quality assurance activities.

2.3 Supervision is well embedded in Portsmouth with an emphasis on both case-work and reflective supervision. Supervision standards for Newly-Qualified Social Workers is particularly high with a minimum standard of fortnightly 1:1 sessions with either a case work supervisor or a assessor who will focus on reflective supervision.

### **3. Observation of Practice**

3.1 Managers regularly observe staff as part of their role. All staff are observed in their practice at least once per year. Feedback from this observation is discussed with them in their next supervision and will also be part of the information presented to their PDR. Any agency learning will be fed into the Quality Assurance Framework via the Head of Safeguarding Monitoring.

### **4. Internal and Multi-Agency Audit**

4.1 There is a programme of internal case file audits that are undertaken within Children's Social Care throughout the year. The themes are fluid and taken in response to concerns about performance measures, practice or as

a result of local and national developments. Audits are undertaken on a monthly basis and are completed by all Service Leaders, Head of Service and the Deputy Director of Children's Services.

4.2 The learning from monthly case audits is disseminated as an individual audit to the worker and discussed in supervision and to the team in a team meeting if appropriate and as a collective audit report drawing together the learning from all of the audits to the service. These reports will have actions sometimes regarding casework and others regarding changes on a more structural basis.

4.3 Planned Multi-Agency Audits are undertaken quarterly and are managed by the Portsmouth Safeguarding Children's Board (PSCB) via the Monitoring and Evaluation and Scrutiny Committee (MESC). The theme of the audits are set by the MESC and learning is fed back via the PSCB into Children's Social Care's Senior Management Team. Individual learning is fed back to the practitioners through supervision. Any actions are fed into the Quality Assurance Framework.

# 2

## Quality Improvement Framework

4.4 In addition to the case file audits internal or external themed audits are undertaken as and when necessary to understand changes in performance and statistics. Performance and statistics are scrutinised by the senior management team on a monthly basis and additional audits are requested to provide context or test data. These audits are fed into Senior Management Meetings and also MESC for Multi -Agency audits. Any learning is fed into the Quality Improvement Framework to enable any practice changes to be made. Individual learning is fed back to the practitioners through supervision.

4.5 Scrutiny panels are held by members to look at a particular piece of practice and provide an overview and recommendations for the future. The recommendations and learning would feed into the QIF.

### 5. Participation

5.1 Participation is an important element of the Quality Assurance Framework and is fully documented in Portsmouth Children's Social Care's Performance Strategy. The Performance Strategy outlines how we work alongside children, parents, foster carers and staff in order to co-produce future developments and receive feedback on the service we provide.

5.2 Participation feeds into the Quality Assurance Framework at all levels. Formal Reports are produced of our annual surveys which report to the relevant boards.

### 6. Learning and Improvement Services

6.1 It is crucial that the information gathered about the way that our service is performing enables us to learn and develop our service further. We endeavor to support our staff to develop their practice by giving them a range of feedback about their performance and use this to inform training. We use the information that we receive from audit about what works to consider future guidance to staff. The feedback that we get from those using and delivering our services are used to make it more effective and family friendly.

# 3

## Quality Improvement Framework Responsibilities

Role	QA Task	Frequency	Purpose
<b>Elected Members</b>	Monitor Performance via Cabinet, Corporate Parenting Board, Portsmouth Safeguarding Children Board (PSCB)	Quarterly	Monitor performance, practice, decision-making and outcomes
	QA via Fostering and Adoption Panels, including Lead Member's direct contact with Panel chairs	Monthly panel meetings. Annual/ Bi-annual reports.	
<b>Chief Executive</b>	Visits to SW teams and children's homes for informal discussion with front-line staff	Annual Programme of Visits	Meet and review practice pressures and issues with front-line staff
	1:1 with Director	Quarterly Performance Review	Meet and review practice pressures and issues with front-line staff
	Annual report by the Chair of the PSCB to Cabinet on the effectiveness of interagency safeguarding arrangements.	Annual	Detailed discussion to reflect accountabilities for outcomes for <a href="#">Children in Need</a> of protection and safeguarding
	Annual report on the effectiveness of Quality assurance arrangements for Looked After Children.	Annual	Detailed discussion to reflect accountabilities for outcomes for <a href="#">Children in Need</a> of protection and safeguarding
	Annual report to the on complaints received and outcomes over the last calendar year	Annual	Detailed discussion to reflect accountabilities for outcomes for <a href="#">Children in Need</a> of protection and safeguarding

Role	QA Task	Frequency	Purpose
<b>Director of Children's Services</b>	Lead focus group discussion with front-line social care managers, with a focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity</li> <li>• Demand for services</li> <li>• Recruitment</li> <li>• Training</li> <li>• Integrated area safeguarding solutions</li> <li>• Management and supervision</li> <li>• Strengths and challenges</li> </ul>	Annual & Via 'Working Together Better Meetings.'	Gather information about service standards and challenges
	Review and scrutinise key performance measures	Quarterly Performance Review	Gather assurance on performance and outcomes, feeding back requirements for further action or scrutiny as required
	Visits to front line teams/services for informal discussion with front-line staff	Annual Programme of Visits	Meet and review practice pressures and issues with front-line staff Review Interagency effectiveness
	Observe a child protection case conference to ensure the quality of the internal and multi-agency process	Bi-annual	Monitor practice standards and inter-agency process
	Scrutinise Internal Case File Audit's	Quarterly	One audit to be scrutinised to give oversight of practice and the quality assurance
	Bi-Annual Meeting with CiCC	Bi-Annual	To gain feedback from young people

Role	QA Task	Frequency	Purpose
<b>Deputy Director of Children's Services</b>	Audit 1 case file	Monthly	Monitor case records, quality of assessment, planning, management analysis, decision-making, etc
	Audit 1 supervision file	Quarterly	Monitor regularity and quality of supervision
	Attend team meetings across the service	Annual	Hear from front-line staff about what works, where improvement is needed
	Practice review observation	Quarterly	Observe social work practice
	Welcome meeting for new starters	Monthly	Clarify strategic priorities for new starters; feedback on progress for affirmation/corrective action
	Adoption Agency Decision Maker	Monthly	Monitor practice standards and outcomes
	Supervision/PDR's of Heads of Service /PDR Adoption Chair	Monthly supervision Annual PDR	Monitor & Develop practice standards, service delivery & strategic direction
	All staff forums	Bi-Annual	Provide key service information and strategies, feedback from staff and focus on key improvement areas
	All managers meetings	Monthly	Provide key management information containing detailed analysis, discussion and implement corrective action
	Meet with Children in Care Council	Bi-annual	Hear from children and young people about what works, where improvement is needed, inform strategic planning
	Attend Foster Carers Liaison Group	Quarterly	Feedback from foster carers about current practice and sharing of current strategic plans
	Observe a child protection case conference to ensure the quality of the internal and inter-agency process	Bi-annual	Monitor practice standards and inter-agency process
	Monitor and scrutinise performance data via scorecards/audit & business plan	Weekly/ Monthly	Take remedial action where necessary
Bi-monthly round table meetings with front-line staff	Bi-monthly	To gain feedback from front-line staff	

Role	QA Task	Frequency	Purpose
<b>Complaints Manager</b>	Monitor Complaints and action plans arising from complaints against Children's Social Care to ensure they are collated and disseminated	Quarterly	Ensure lessons learnt are assimilated and shared across the service
<b>All Heads of Service</b>	Audit 1 case file	Monthly	Monitor case records, quality of assessment, planning, management analysis, decision-making etc
	Audit 1 supervision file	Monthly	Monitor regularity and quality of supervision
	Supervision/PDR's of Team Service Leaders	Monthly supervision Annual PDR	Monitor & develop practice, and improve practice delivery
	Undertake 2 observations visits with staff	Quarterly	Understand key issues facing front-line staff and monitor practice
	Monitor and scrutinise performance data via scorecards	Weekly/ Monthly	Feedback to Senior Management Team requirements for further action or scrutiny
	Monitor and scrutinise action plans arising from case file audits	Monthly	Feedback to Senior Management Team requirements for further action or scrutiny
	Attend All Managers Meetings	Monthly	Provide key service information and strategies, feedback from staff and focus on key improvement areas
	Attend All Staff Forum	Bi-annually	Provide key management information containing detailed analysis, discussion and implement action
	Observe a Practitioner from own service in Practice	Quarterly	Understand key issues for frontline practitioners and monitor practice
	Provide final scrutiny to key reports and safeguarding decision making identified in Scheme of delegation	On-Going	Ensure documents and plans are fit for purpose
	Attend each Team Meeting within own Service	Annually	Understand key issues impacting on staff and provide information on strategic service development
Provide Supervision / PDR to managers reporting to them	Monthly / Annually	Monitor and develop practice, provide scrutiny and guidance	

Role	QA Task	Frequency	Purpose
<b>Head of Assessment &amp; Intervention</b>	Review & monitor planned and emergency admissions to care	Weekly	Ensure practice is of good quality and feedback to Senior Management Team requirements for further action or scrutiny
	Monitor PLO cases/court applications through legal case tracking	Weekly	To ensure legal process is adhered to and plans and applications are on track and appropriately quality assured
<b>Head of Looked After Children</b>	Attend Foster Carers Liaison Group	Quarterly	Feedback from foster carers about current practice and sharing of current strategic plans
	Attend Children In Care Council	Bi-Monthly	Hear from children and young people about what works, where improvement is needed, inform strategic planning
	Attend Participation events	As required	Hear from children about the impact of the service
	Monitor Out of Authority placement quality and planning for children placed out of area	6 Monthly	Assess quality of service based on user experience
	Produce report outlining key issues and findings arising from Reg. 44 visits	At <a href="#">Statutory Review</a> and through SLA monitoring	Ensure provider delivers high quality placements appropriate to needs. No child/YP remains away from Portsmouth longer than they need to
	Scrutinise Audit Activity from Fostering and Adoption	Quarterly	To monitor performance and feedback any recommendations for action
<b>Head of Safeguarding Monitoring</b>	Manage the internal Audit Programme and provide a Report on Audit Activity to SMT	Monthly	Provide an overview of learning and recommendations for action
	Ensure all Case-holders have at least one case audited in each Financial year	Annual	Ensure practice is consistently scrutinised
	Review all cases of CP Plans that end within 3 months and those that continue 18 months +	Quarterly	Monitor practice and feedback

Role	QA Task	Frequency	Purpose
<b>Head of Safeguarding Monitoring</b>	Complete themed audits as requested by Senior Management Team	As required	To provide further scrutiny to practice and performance
	Observe a Child Protection conference and provide feedback	Quarterly	Monitor compliance to standards required for chairing case conferences
	Observe a LAC review and provide feedback	Quarterly	Monitor compliance to standards in the IRO Handbook
	Audit a CP Conference record	Monthly	Monitor quality of CP practice and produce action plans as
	Adoption Agency Decision Maker	Monthly	Monitor practice standards and outcomes
	Sign off all Regulation 44 visits	Monthly	Monitor practice standards
	Audit a LAC Review record	Monthly	Ensure rigor of QA processes
<b>Service Leaders</b>	Ensure all Practitioners in Team have at least one practice observation by a team leader or above in each financial year and that the feedback feeds into their PDR	Annually	Monitor practice and extent to which individual changes / develops
	Audit case files	On closure/ transfer	Ensure objectives are met, <a href="#">chronologies</a> checked for gaps/ trends, key data recorded, overall quality of work acceptable and stepdown plan in place
	Audit 1 case file from another part of the service	Monthly	Ensure objectives are met, <a href="#">chronologies</a> checked for gaps/ trends, key data recorded, overall quality of work acceptable
	Quality Assure key aspects of work as detailed in the Scheme of delegation	Monthly	Monitor case records, quality of assessment, planning, management analysis, decision-making, evidence of multi-disciplinary activity
	Ensure Action Plans from Case File Audits are completed for own Team	Monthly	Ensure Quality Improvement is achieved
	Ensure Team members regular receive supervision and PDR's	Monthly/ Annually	Monitor & develop practice, and improve practice delivery

Role	QA Task	Frequency	Purpose
<b>Service Leaders for Fostering and Adoption</b>	Oversee allegations management in respect of adopters and foster carers	Ongoing	Ensure that allegations are dealt with robustly and following Procedure
	Audit a foster Carer / Adopters file	Monthly	Ensure Practice is monitored and feedback to Senior Management Team requirements for further action or scrutiny
<b>Team Leaders</b>	Undertake monthly supervision with all practitioners they are responsible for	Monthly	Monitor & develop practice, and improve practice delivery
<b>Service Leader IRO</b>	Ensure all IRO's are observed chairing a LAC review at least once annually by self or Head of Safeguarding Monitoring	Annually	Provide key management information containing detailed analysis and suggest possible corrective action
	Report on Independent Reviewing Officer Service, including key areas of improvement and learning	Annually	Monitor practice and extent to which individual changes / develops
	Monitor performance improvement	Monthly	Ensure performance reports are monitored and reasons for targets not being met are understood
<b>Service Leader CP / LADO</b>	Ensure all IRO's are observed chairing a LAC review at least once annually by self or Head of Safeguarding Monitoring	Annually	Provide key management information containing detailed analysis and suggest possible corrective action
	Report on Independent Reviewing Officer Service, including key areas of improvement and learning	Annually	Monitor practice and extent to which individual changes / develops
	Monitor performance improvement	Monthly	Ensure performance reports are monitored and reasons for targets not being met are understood
<b>Independent Reviewing Officers/Child Protection Chairs</b>	Quality assure all Child protection & LAC planning	In line with statutory intervals	Ensure clear, focused and appropriate plans are in place and reviewed for all children subject to CP plans or LAC. Provide Robust Challenge to practice as required
<b>Child Protection Chairs</b>	Undertake Reg 44 reviews of Children's Homes	Monthly	Required standards of care are in place and monitored, corrective action identified and implemented

• Published: **November 2016**