



Children and Learning

Learning Together:
Camden Children's Services
Quality Assurance Framework

1 Introduction

Camden's ambition for children and young people in the borough is for them to have the best start in life, from the early years to the point at which they take the first steps towards work, training or higher education and their adult life. To meet this ambition, all services in the Children and Learning portfolio need to make sure that the services we provide make a real difference to the lives of children, young people and families that we work with.

This document sets out our Quality Assurance framework, describing the standards we work to and the mechanisms we use to constantly monitor the quality of our practice and service delivery. We aim to foster a culture of excellence driven by continuous improvement based on our learning and feedback from children, young people and families.

2 About Quality Assurance

2.1 What is Quality Assurance?

Quality Assurance is the process by which we set standards for our practice and service delivery and measure how well we do against these standards so that we can continually learn and improve on our performance.

2.2 Why is Quality Assurance important?

Quality Assurance activity helps us to find out about the quality of our service delivery and whether it makes a positive difference to outcomes for children and young people. Quality Assurance can tell us whether we are achieving our core objectives:

- keeping children safe
- supporting families to care for their children
- ensuring children can thrive
- providing a safe and supportive environment for staff in which they can practice effectively
- ensuring the voices of those we serve contributes to service delivery and design
- keeping children, young people and the community safe

2.3 How Quality Assurance supports our practice

Our Quality Assurance framework allows us to:

- set standards and benchmark practice
- measure outcomes for children
- recognise strengths and weaknesses in our practice and services
- reflect on our values and practice
- use our learning to drive continuous improvements
- support staff development
- become a learning organisation

2.3.1 Our Quality Assurance Cycle



3 Our Values, Principles and Practice Standards

3.1 Our Values

When working with children, young people and families, these are our values we wish to attend to:

- Social justice and empowerment
- Compassion
- Collaboration
- Integrity
- Learn and adapt
- Dignity and worth
- Honesty and accountability

We work within a framework of anti-discriminatory practice, celebrating diversity and promoting equality to ensure everyone is treated with respect and has the same opportunity to access services and support. Our practice will be informed by understanding the social GRRACCEESS and families lived experience of structural inequality and discrimination.

3.2 Our Principles

The principles we work to are:

- The child's welfare is paramount. Everything we do will be protecting them from harm, promoting their welfare and making a positive difference to their lives.
- We work in partnership with parents and carers to support them to care for their child so that families can stay together.
- We listen to the views, wishes and feelings of children and their parents, ensuring our interventions are purposeful and consistent with the child's welfare.
- We provide the right service at the right time, focussing on early intervention and prevention.
- We intervene only at the most appropriate level based on the child's needs and assessed risk.
- We work jointly with our colleagues in other agencies, ensuring good communication, information sharing and joined-up service delivery.
- We ensure our professional skills and knowledge are continually developed, use all available research and resources to reflect critically on our practice and drive improvements.
- We celebrate good practice and improve practice through a high support/high expectation approach.

3.3 Our Practice Standards

Our standards are based on:

- The Children's Social Care National Framework
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan
- Legislation and statutory guidance which are incorporated into our policies and procedures
- Social Work England professional standards for social workers
- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Framework
- The Camden Plan and corporate policies
- Learning from best practice and research
- Youth Justice Board Case Management Guidance
- Youth Justice Board National Standards

In practice, this means every child we work with:

- Has an inclusive assessment that they have been involved in.
- Has a SMART plan which is written in accessible language. For Early Help families the plan helps them achieve their My Family Goals which are their aspirations for better outcomes.
- Is seen regularly, with a clear purpose to visits.
- Has their individual and family identity (social GRRACCEESS) considered and specifically named in their assessment, plans and reviews. For every child, this information is used to understand how the family dynamic operates and give insight into the child's lived experiences.
- The information that was gleaned about the family make up and identity helps practitioners understand the family world view, family culture, how they exist in the community and the impact on their relationships.
- Will have the work that is delivered to them and their family regularly quality assured.
- Who has Special Educational Needs and/or disabilities are happy and healthy, achieving their potential, are part of the communities and are as independent as possible, making choices about their future.
- In the Youth Justice Service all children have a trauma informed assessment with a tailored SMART plan and will be seen in line with National Standards and Case Management guidance. Plans are written collaboratively and with parental support.

Please see Appendix 1 for 'What good looks like' for further details

4 Our Practice Models

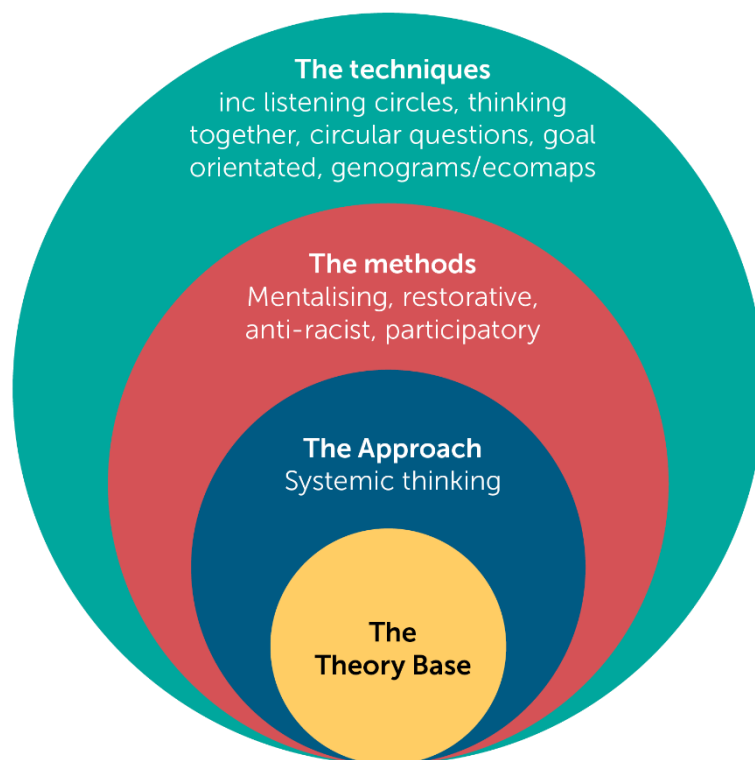
Our values, principles and standards underpin our practice framework

4.1 Practice Framework

Our framework is relational, recognising the importance of relationships as a conduit for change. It incrementally builds upon our two previous practice models, taking the best of practices, and recognising the significant role of communities. We know that a relational approach is a fundamental requirement to support children, young people, and families when they encounter a range of experiences over their lifespan.

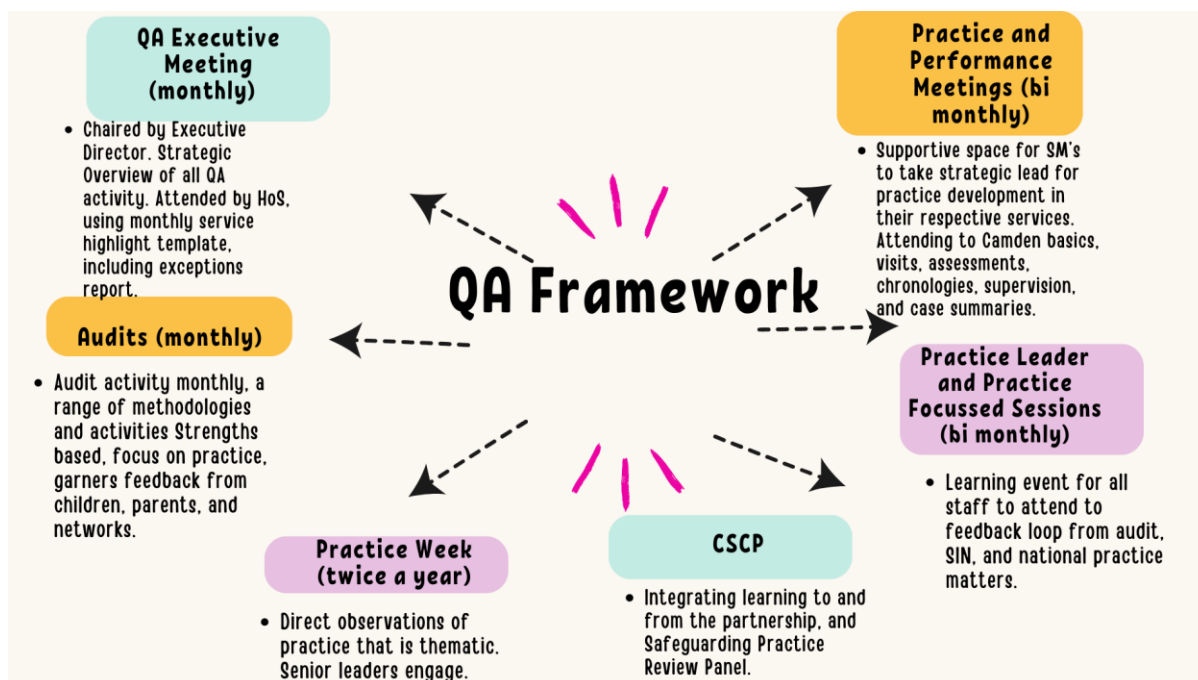
Our methods include systemic theory, anti-racist practices, restorative practices, and mentalisation. We know that we have to work together across multi-agencies to attend to 21st century challenges, simultaneously respecting the expertise that families and communities bring.

At the heart of our Centre is relational Camden



A unique practice framework supporting honest, compassionate and collaborative relationships.

5 Our Quality Assurance Framework



Our Quality Assurance activity has been designed to help us answer the following questions:

- **What do we know about the quality and impact of our practice – what is the data telling us?**
- **How do we know it – what evidence is there?**
- **Based on this information, what do we need to do to maintain or improve practice?**

The Quality Assurance framework looks at all practice from the following viewpoints:

5.1 How much we do

Quantitative data is provided on staffing and levels of work activity (assessments, visits, reviews) across teams. Each service generates summary reports from the electronic case recording system on activity and weekly dashboards for managers.

5.2 How well we do it

5.2.1 Listening to Children, Young People and Families

Our core approach to ensuring quality of practice is to listen and learn from children, young people and families. In Camden we have a wide range of opportunities, activities and forums available in which to gather feedback that can directly impact on the development and quality of services.

We hear from children, young people and families via:

- consultation forms for children and parents ahead of key meetings
- service user questionnaires on the quality of meetings
- feedback obtained during learning conversations and observations
- outcomes from complaints
- forums such as the Children in Care Council and the Family Advisory Group
- Parent and Carer panel and other co-design forums
- Experience of Service questionnaires

5.2.2 Learning Conversations

Case learning conversation is a key quality assurance mechanism and is the main method for gathering direct evidence and information on the quality of practice, decision making and interaction with children, young people, families and the professional network.

It is a collaborative process of engaging colleagues, children, young people, and families. By considering the outcomes for the child/young person and the impact of our work, we are better able to understand their experiences within organisational processes and structures. With this knowledge we can identify what works, and where the barriers and challenges are to delivering quality professional practice.

We have a comprehensive programme of monthly case learning conversations, undertaken ten months of the year, allowing for breaks in August and December. Service managers across the Directorate and managers within the Quality Assurance and Practice and Learning Services carry out one learning conversation a month. Team managers across operational services undertake learning conversations on a bimonthly basis.

The Head of Quality Assurance and the Head of Practice and Learning, along with their service managers will undertake a case learning conversation once per month and moderate one learning conversation per month. The Quality Assurance, Audit and Practice Development Officer has capacity to undertake more learning conversations and moderations. The service managers may also do additional learning conversations and moderations.

Operational Heads of Service will complete four moderations a month. Combined, these total 12 moderations per month across the services. This provides the Heads of Service with a broader understanding and learning for the work across their services and teams. Flexibility is maintained if any Head of Service wishes to hold a learning conversation additionally or cover for any that are incomplete in their service area.

All learning conversations graded 'Outstanding' and 'Inadequate' and a selection of learning conversations graded 'Good' and 'Requires Improvement' will be moderated each month.

Other quality assurance learning activity includes:

- Dip sampling
- Themed audits
- MASH audits
- Joint audit/learning conversations

5.2.3 Children and Young People with Disabilities and special educational needs (SEND)

Camden Children's Services captures the voices of SEND children and young people as part of the assessment, care planning and review process in Children's services including Early Help, CYPDS, Children in care, CIN services:

- Children's services participate in multiagency quality assurance activity led by the SEND Service, which includes regular auditing of Education Health and Care Plan work (EHCP), attending multiagency SEND panels, joint supervisions and case discussions as and when necessary, joint training and joint service meetings

5.2.4 Quality assurance of the 18-25 cohort of SEN and Disability for young people with complex needs:

- Individual voices of young people and their carers supported by CYPDS are captured as part assessment, care planning and review in line with Care Act 2014 and Mental Capacity Act.
- Regular auditing activity is undertaken by Team Managers, Service Manager and Head of Service with a focus on empowerment, proportionality, protection, prevention, partnership and accountability
- Learning from Complaints and Compliments
- Attend fortnightly multi-agency Quality Assurance panels in Adults Social Care, with a focus on SEND young people supported by CYPDS
- Ensure performance dashboards for this area are available and Team Managers and Service Manager have weekly oversight on What Matters assessments and reviews, visits and supervisions.
- Carers Assessments are undertaken regularly, and quality assurance systems are in place to monitor this.

- All learning from across the system will be shared with the Quality Assurance service and the Academy, to be shared back into the learning cycle as described, including presentations to the Quality Assurance Executive Board

5.2.5 Youth Justice Service (YJS)

The YJS has its own Quality Assurance [Framework](#) and a Quality & Performance group that oversees it's work. The group is made up of the Service Manager, Team Managers, Advanced Practitioners, Quality & Improvement Officer, and Information Manager.

All learning from across the system will be shared with the Quality Assurance service and the Academy, to be shared back into the learning cycle as described, including presentations to the Quality Assurance Executive Board

5.2.6 Observations of Practice

There is an expectation that managers at every level, from team manager upwards complete observations of practice routinely as part of their ongoing management oversight and feedback to practitioners.

Observations of practice are an excellent way to provide real time feedback and evaluation of practice at every level.

Early Help, Social work, SEND and Youth Justice Services participate in "Getting Closer to Practice" Week in Camden, which takes place twice per year and observations are a fundamental and integral part of those activities.

5.2.7 Other Quality Assurance activity

Quality Assurance activity also includes:

- Case oversight and escalation by operational managers, Child Protection and Independent Reviewing Officers, and the Legal Proceedings and Case Progression Service Manager.
- Listening to feedback via staff surveys, forums and supervision.
- Multi-agency audits and learning conversations including Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, Rapid Reviews, Appreciative Inquiries and Section 11 audits. Multi-agency audits measure the effectiveness of partnership working with other safeguarding agencies.
- Practice oversight via the bi-annual "Getting Closer to Practice" Week which features discussions between staff and managers, direct observations of practice, and learning events.
- Reflective practice groups.

6 Learning from Quality Assurance Activity

We aim to ensure that learning from quality assurance activity is embedded into our practice so we can affect continuous improvement to our practice via our Learning Loop.



We gather information from a variety of sources through our quality assurance activity to analyse and determine what the data is telling us about our practice.



Findings are reported to the monthly Quality Assurance Board attended by Heads of Service and chaired by the Executive Director of Children and Learning. The Board provides strategic oversight of quality assurance across Children’s Services, looking at the findings to identify the learning points and draw up an action plan for embedding the learning into everyday practice.

Bi-monthly Practice and Performance Meetings are held with Service Managers included, to focus on key performance areas, discuss best practice and challenges from findings and learning, and to hold the service accountable.

Bi-monthly practice leader and practice focus sessions led by the Children and Learning Academy are held for all staff to disseminate learning from quality assurance activity on practice issues.

Learning is also disseminated through monthly staff bulletins and team and service meetings.

The Children and Learning Academy ensures that learning from quality assurance activity is reflected in the learning offer to all staff and disseminated to staff through a variety of learning events such as workshops and seminars and via the work of the Practice Development Officers based in the Academy who work with a range of groups to improve practice.

7 Quality Assurance is Everyone's Responsibility

Everyone delivering services for children, young people and families has a role to play in making sure we are providing the right support at the right time. To be truly effective, Quality Assurance needs to be embedded at every level, from teams and services, across the whole Directorate and the multi-agency partnership. Quality Assurance is an integral part of each and every practitioner's daily duty and should be seen as "business as usual".

Practitioners, including social workers will:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to the standards set by the Children and Learning Directorate. • Ensure their practice is relational and reflects the Relational Practice Framework. • Quality assure their own work including recording. • Use supervision sessions to reflect critically on practice. • Take up all opportunities to enhance their learning and development.
Team Managers will:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to the standards set by the Children and Learning Directorate. • Continually monitor team performance through performance indicators and dashboards. • Check the quality of case decisions, recording and assessment through management oversight and learning conversations. • Read and act on recommendations from learning conversations and moderations. • Monitor individual worker's performance and learning needs through supervision. • Act on a worker's performance where needed. • Deal effectively with complaints. • Consider their team's learning and developmental objectives and ensure they are able to take up learning opportunities. • Report progress to and raise issues with the service manager on a regular basis. • Act on feedback from children and families.

<p>Service Managers will:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to the standards set by the Children and Learning Directorate. • Monitor their service area performance through performance indicators and dashboards. • Oversee the team managers' quality assurance role. • Check the quality of case work and case decision making through learning conversations and other relevant quality assurance work. • Monitor the frequency and quality of supervision. • Contribute to Quality Assurance forums and ensure learning is disseminated within their service.
<p>Child Protection and Independent Reviewing Officers will:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to the standards set by the Children and Learning Directorate. • Monitor the quality of child protection work through learning conversations. • Monitor the quality-of-care planning and practice in CLA through learning conversations. • Chair CP conferences and CLA reviews. • Raise issues with workers and managers through the escalation policy. • Ensure children and families can participate in decision making. • Provide specialist advice and consultation for social workers on child protection and CLA.
<p>The Quality Assurance Service will:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to the standards set by the Children and Learning Directorate. • Collect, collate, analyse, moderate and report on management information data including that from learning conversations. • Provide managerial oversight of the child protection and CLA systems. • Track and have management oversight of PLO and court cases. • Provide managerial oversight of learning conversations. • Provide a learning loop alongside the Academy from learning conversation activity into the learning and development forums across Children's Services. • Coordinate and support all complaints that come into Children's Safeguarding and Social Work, produce an annual report on findings, and disseminate learning from complaints.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a first point of contact for partner agencies on safeguarding advice via the LADO.
The Children and Learning Academy and Principal Social Worker will:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide the learning and development framework for the division. • Oversee the commissioning and delivery of the division's learning programme. • Support practice development. • Promote a culture of learning. • Provide the policy and the recording framework for the division. • Facilitate forums and other opportunities for staff to have a voice.
The Senior Management Team will:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote a culture of excellence with a "high support, high expectation" ethos. • Promote and support quality assurance activity and learning across services. • Have oversight of quality assurance activity and its outcomes, holding managers to account for the quality of their services. • Be open to feedback to ensure the conditions for practice to thrive are present.
The Quality Assurance Board will:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have an overview of quality assurance in the Directorate, including setting standards, ensuring resources and approving action to improve standards of practice and service.
The Youth Justice Service will:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow its own Quality & Performance Framework. Members of the Q&P group will oversee audit activity, actions for completion and actions and improvement plans

Appendix 1: What good looks like – CSFH schedule of standards and quality assurance

Area of work	Standard	How we measure
The front door (MASH/Early Help)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referrals are dealt with in a timely manner. • Thresholds are understood and applied consistently. • Decision making is timely, effective and proportionate to presenting issues/needs • Decision making is overseen at the most appropriate managerial level. • Attend to social GRACES to attend to potential for bias, and a means to understand families lived experiences. • Ensure the voice of children, young people, families, and communities are garnered and placed at the heart of practice. 	Management oversight PIs/dashboards Joint CSFH dip samples
Assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are timely and proportionate. • Have clearly captured the voices of those in receipt of help. • Attended to social GRACES and intersectionality in understanding the families lived experiences. • Are dynamic and respond to emerging information and changing situations. • Include a wide range of information including social history with use of chronologies and genograms. • Are evidenced-based using relevant research. • Identify protective factors, needs and risks • Provide a good analysis of the child's experience. 	Management oversight PIs/dashboards including on completion of assessments Learning conversations
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All children have a clear plan that is child-centred and SMART and includes measurable actions. • Plans are regularly reviewed within statutory and Early help timescales and decisions on escalation, step down and closure are taken appropriately and in a timely manner 	Management oversight PIs/dashboards Case learning conversations Step up/step down learning conversations

Dealing with safeguarding concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory requirements around child protection are met. • Concerns are identified and acted on swiftly with timely and proportionate action. • Multi-agency strategy meetings and child protection conferences are held within the prescribed timescale and are effective in sharing information and decision making. • Concerns about professionals and carers are dealt with effectively by the LADO. 	Management oversight CPO alerts PIs/dashboards Learning conversations LADO Annual Report
Participation and engagement of children, young people and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The views of children, young people and families are regularly sought and acted on where appropriate. • Children, young people and families understand why social care is involved and are enabled to take part in assessments and planning meetings. • Children, young people and families feel able to give feedback on the service they receive and know about their right to complain or to use an advocate. 	Questionnaire feedback/forums Feedback obtained during learning conversations Complaints
Relationships/multi-agency working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children, young people and families have positive and stable relationships with workers and work in partnership to build resilience. • Families are encouraged to harness their strengths and find solutions through Family Group Conferences and other forums. • Children and young people are seen and visited at home/placement by workers regularly and are seen alone. 	Management oversight PIs/dashboards Family feedback Learning conversations CSCP multi-agency audits and learning conversations
Recording and management oversight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recording is up to date and accurate using respectful and plain language. • There is clear evidence on file of management oversight. • Effective and reflective supervision is held regularly. • Decisions and the reasons for these are recorded on the child/young person's file. 	PIs/dashboards Staff feedback CPO/IRO alerts Learning conversations

<p>Workforce development and learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff receive regular supervision and have clear learning and development plans. • Learning and development opportunities are effective and relevant and open to all. • Staff feel valued and supported 	<p>Management oversight PIs/dashboards Staff feedback Peer to peer learning conversations/observations Practice forums “Getting Closer to Practice” week</p>
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