



DURHAM CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE: QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

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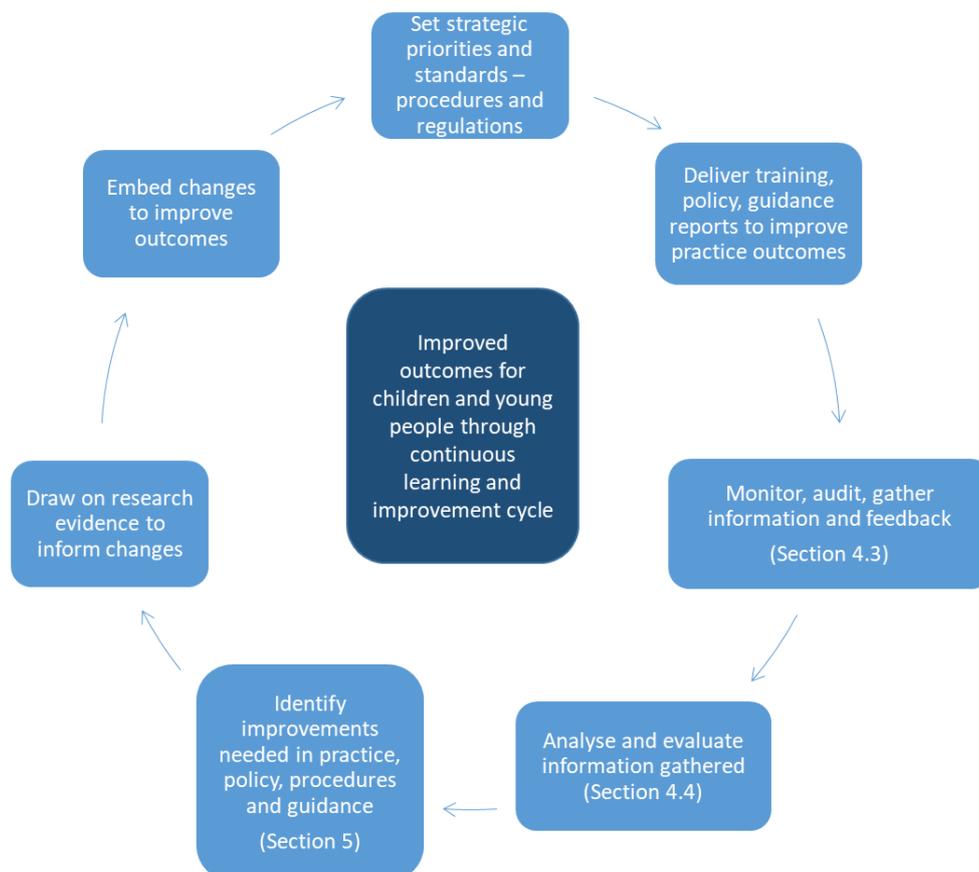
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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Quality Assurance Framework sets out how Durham Children’s Social Care Services will ensure a focus on a single framework that continuously drives improvement in the quality of practice which in turn leads to improved outcomes for children and families in Durham. We believe that every child and young person should have a safe, loving and stable home so that they can explore the world around them safely and become the young adult that they want to become.
- 1.2 This document describes how we have integrated our Performance Management Framework and Audit Framework. It builds on the work described within the Research in Practice paper “Building a quality culture” and the learning from a number of Local Authorities who have effectively used this approach to drive improvement and achieve better outcomes for Children and Young People.

2. CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT

- 2.1 We understand that improvement is a continuous process and this framework sets out mechanisms that support the improvement cycle that is shown below.



2.1 The continual improvement cycle will achieve better outcomes for children and young people through:

- Ensuring all staff have a role to play in the improvement of practice and practice outcomes;
- A bottom up approach which will empower staff to bring effective challenge, the ability to inform practice and ownership to drive through improvements;
- Enabling regular review of strategic, policy and practice guidance to respond to issues, with all staff clear of the standards they are required to work to;
- Ensuring all staff are clear on our quality of practice process and how this shapes improvement and outcomes;
- Delivering robust analysis will ensure full understanding of issues affecting practice and outcomes, recommendations and changes will be made from a position of being fully informed;
- Researching the sector and aiming to learn from best practice to inform improvement in our practice.

3. THE PRACTICE SYSTEM

3.1 The way in which we work with families has a direct impact on the outcomes that they achieve. Our chosen Practice Framework in Durham is Signs of Safety and the diagram below sets out our values and principles of best practice.

Children and Young People's Service - Principles of Best Practice

"Every conversation matters, every day counts"

Our Values



Outcome Focused

We work together to achieve the best for people



People Focused

We put people and communities at the heart of everything we do and value our employees



Empowering

We value, trust and support each other



iNnovative

We embrace change and look for better ways to deliver services

Our Principles

- **The Best For Our Children:** We want every child to be safe, have the best start in life, good health and access to good, quality education, training and employment. We will strive to be a good parent when children are looked after in our care.
- **Think Family/Think Inclusion:** We will work with other agencies to deliver good outcomes for all children and young people through childhood, into adulthood and independence. Wherever appropriate, there will be one lead practitioner to coordinate a whole family plan.
- **Timeliness:** We know that childhood is precious and that every day counts. We will work hard to ensure there is no delay for children and young people's plans as a result of our work.
- **Stability:** We know that moving placements or schools can be hard for children and young people and can affect their progress and wellbeing. We will work hard to minimise moves for children and support smooth transitions.

- **Working With:** We will work with children, young people, families and each other with compassion and humility and in a context of high support, high challenge. We will try to ensure everyone receives the right support at the right time.
- **Child Focused:** We will ensure that we spend time with every child and young person so that we understand what life is like from their perspective, what 'good' looks like for them and to help prepare them for their next steps.
- **Relationships Matter:** We will take responsibility for creating and maintaining effective relationships with children, young people, families and each other using language that everyone can understand. We will strive to provide consistency of workers as we know this is important in building trusting relationships.

- **Strengths Based:** We will discuss with children, young people and families what we are worried about, ensure that we understand what is going well in their family and help them find their own solutions. We will adopt an evidence-based approach to assessing need and managing risk.
- **Supporting Families And Communities:** We believe that children and young people should remain living in their families and local communities with support where it is safe to do so. We want communities to be confident that our services safeguard and protect when they need to.

- **Transparency And Accountability:** We will work with partners to make sure there is clarity in who makes decisions for and with children and young people and why these decisions are made. We will regularly review situations to ensure that decisions and support remain appropriate and ensure that we spend public money wisely.
- **Creative:** We will be creative in finding the best way to support every individual child and family to achieve good outcomes as soon as issues are identified as well as working to reduce their reliance on services.



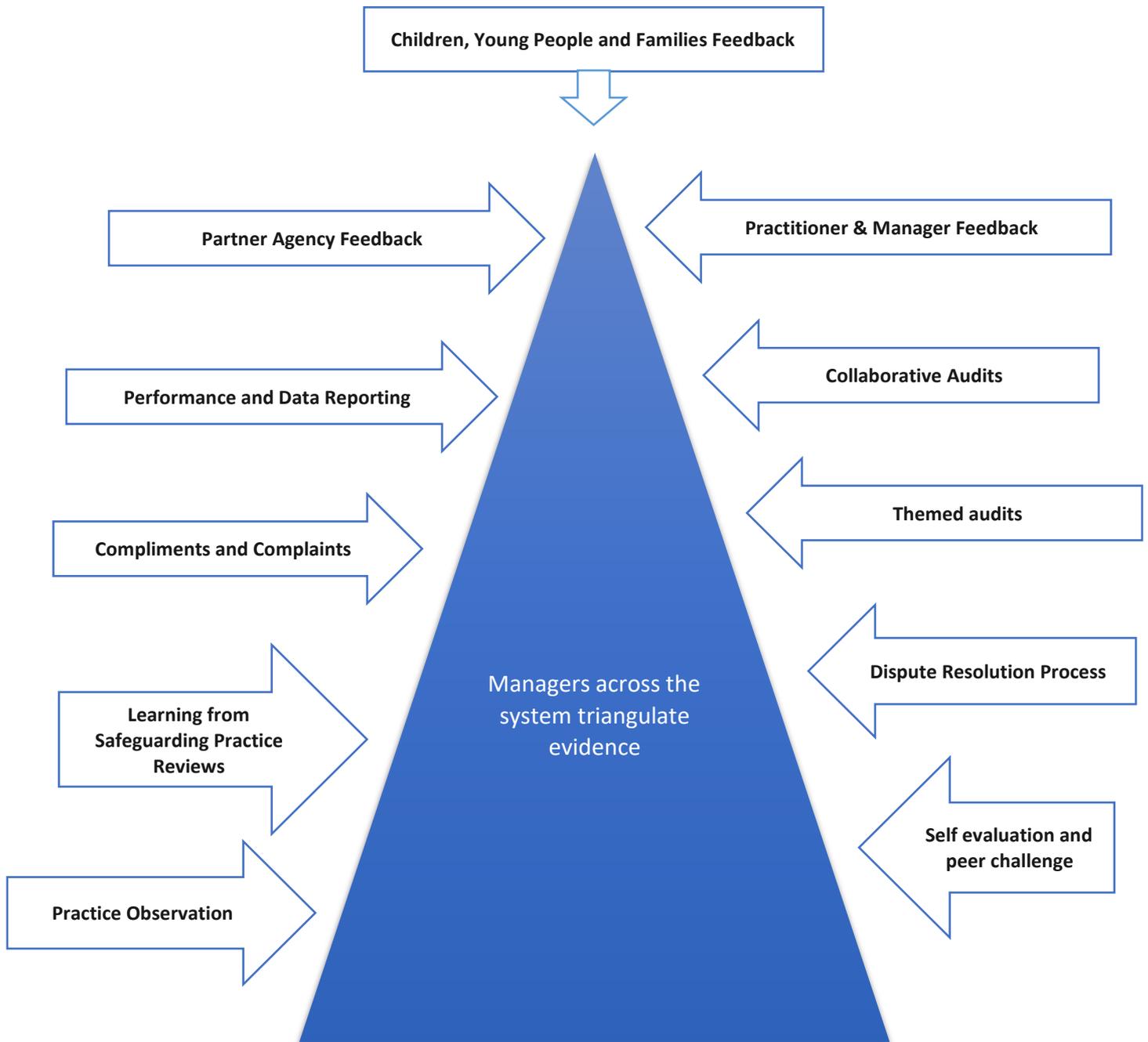
4. THE QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

4.1 This Quality Assurance Framework combines both the quantitative performance data that we collect and the qualitative evidence that we gather from a range of sources across our Social Care system. The key components of this data are described below:

Quantitative	How much?
	How many?
	How often?
Qualitative	How did we do?
	What did children, young people and their families think and feel about it?
	What did the front line think about it?
	What do frontline practitioners and managers think about it?
	What feedback have we had from partners?
Impact/Outcomes	What difference have services, strategies, interventions, and individuals made to the lives of children and young people?
	Is anyone better off and how do we know?
	How can we improve?

4.2 The ultimate aim is to accurately understand what the quality of practice is in Durham and what difference this is making to outcomes for children and families. The framework below illustrates the key sources of information that we use to do this.

Framework for a whole-system approach to assurance and performance management



4.3 The table below shows how each of the sources of information will be gathered and used to inform practice improvement.

Information source	How does this inform practice improvement?	Frequency
<p>Children, Young People and Families Feedback</p>	<p>We have a range of mechanisms across services to capture feedback from Children, Young People and their Families. Our Participation and Engagement worker is pivotal in ensuring that this work is strengthened and that we effectively use this feedback to influence practice and service development.</p> <p>Key themes from this feedback are captured in the monthly Performance and Outcomes meetings and reported quarterly in the Quality of Practice report that is presented to the Quality Improvement Board.</p>	<p>Monthly and quarterly</p>

Information source	How does this inform practice improvement?	Frequency
<p>Practitioner & Manager Feedback</p>	<p>Feedback from practitioners is captured formally through the annual Organisational Health Check and DCC Staff survey.</p> <p>The Principal Social Worker hosts a forum with practitioners every 8 weeks where feedback is gathered. The Principal Social Worker takes responsibility for ensuring that this feedback is fed into the Raising the Bar Board so it can be acted upon.</p> <p>Practice Weeks are held bi-annually and consist of all Senior Managers undertaking visits and observations of practice to all areas of the service to hear about challenges and celebrate good practice. The feedback is reviewed by the Senior Management Team and agreed actions are communicated to staff via Team Manager and Practitioner Briefings.</p> <p>Head of Service Team Manager Briefings are held quarterly which provide an opportunity for Team Managers to feedback directly to the Senior Management Team.</p> <p>Head of Service Practitioner Briefings are held bi-annually which provide an opportunity for practitioners to feedback directly to the Senior Management Team.</p> <p>Key themes relevant to practice improvement are considered at the fortnightly Children’s Social Care Management Team business meeting.</p>	<p>Annual</p> <p>Bi-monthly</p> <p>Bi-annually</p> <p>Quarterly</p> <p>Bi-annually</p> <p>Fortnightly</p>
<p>Partner Agency Feedback</p>	<p>The Multi-agency audit programme provides an opportunity for partner agency feedback. The learning from these audits are discussed at the Embedded Learning Sub-Group of the DCSP and actions to improve practice are agreed and monitored.</p>	<p>Monthly</p>

Information source	How does this inform practice improvement?	Frequency
<p>Performance and Data Reporting</p>	<p>Regular, routine performance information is shared with managers at all levels of the organisation to encourage the timely and proactive identification of issues and ensure oversight of any challenges faced. Data is benchmarked and trends, existing and emerging, highlighted. Practice improvement actions taken to address these issues are agreed and communicated. The Key Performance Questions provide a framework for performance reporting across the service, from the front door to care leavers. These questions are listed in appendix 2.</p> <p>Senior Managers within the service are held to account and face challenge from colleagues, both within and outside of CYPS. Further areas for analysis are identified which also enable targeted practice improvement.</p> <p>Bespoke performance and data reporting also exists for specific aspects of the service and key partnerships as well as real-time information dashboards providing day-to-day management information.</p>	<p>Monthly</p>
<p>Compliments and Complaints</p>	<p>A summary of the learning from Compliments and Complaints are reported to the Quality Improvement Board where decisions are made about what actions need to be taken to improve practice or celebrate good practice.</p>	<p>Quarterly</p>
<p>Safeguarding Practice Reviews</p>	<p>Safeguarding Practice Reviews will be led by the DSCP and all learning will be taken into the Embedded Learning Sub-Group.</p>	<p>Monthly</p>
<p>Practice Observation</p>	<p>All practitioners are observed by their line managers twice yearly. The learning from the observations is discussed directly with the practitioner and provide a rich source of feedback, both in terms of celebrating good practice and identifying areas of improvement.</p>	<p>Bi-annual</p>

Information source	How does this inform practice improvement?	Frequency
Collaborative Audits	There is a comprehensive programme of collaborative audits across the service. Case file audits are undertaken with the practitioner and it is expected to be a strength based process, highlighted both good practice and areas for improvement. The outcomes of these audits are analysed by the Service Improvement Manager and reported quarterly the QIB in the Quality of Practice Report. They are also shared with Team and Operations Managers so that they can be triangulated with performance information at the Performance and Outcome meetings.	Quarterly
Themed Audits	There is a programme of themed audits that is informed by performance information or feedback suggesting further understanding of practice is required, or where improvement activity has taken place and we want to understand whether or not it has had the desired impact. Learning is shared at the Social Care Quality Improvement Board and disseminated through Management meetings, Practitioner Briefings and the Raising the Bar Newsletter.	Quarterly
Dispute Resolution Process	This process is well embedded and is used by the IRO service to ensure that there is effective challenge where necessary and that this challenge is ensuring that care planning for children and young people is effective, timely and making a difference to the quality of practice and that the experience of children and families is improved.	Monthly
Self evaluation and peer challenge	<p>The Strategic Manager for Professional Practice and Safeguarding is responsible for the continuous review of the Self-Evaluation document. This is shared with OFSTED on an annual basis and used to inform our strategic planning process.</p> <p>A range of Partners in Practice and Regional peer challenge activity is undertaken to provide an external view of our practice. The learning from this activity is reported to the Senior Management Team and practitioners and managers through management meetings, practitioner briefings and the Raising the Bar Newsletter. Any improvement activity arising from it is tracked by the Quality Improvement Board.</p>	Continuous

4.4 Method of triangulating evidence

4.5 The above sources of information are all valuable and many will lead to direct actions being taken to improve the quality of practice. However, it is also important that there are opportunities for these sources of information to be viewed together so that we get a holistic and accurate understanding of the quality of practice.

4.6 Appendix 1 illustrates an overview of the meeting structure that has been designed to achieve this. The meeting structure has been designed to facilitate a “bottom-up” conversation about the quality of practice from front-line managers to the Chief Executive and to enable the triangulation of a range of both qualitative and quantitative evidence.

Meeting	Frequency	Who
LAC & Permanence Performance and Outcomes	Monthly	Team Managers Operations Managers Strategy
Families First Performance and Outcomes	Monthly	Team Managers Operations Managers Strategy
Children’s Social Care Performance and Outcomes Clinic	Monthly	Head of Service Strategic Managers Operations Managers Strategy Systems and Data
CYPS Senior Management Team Performance and Outcomes Clinic	Monthly	CYPS senior leadership team: Corporate Director and Heads of Service Strategy
Chief Executive Performance and Outcomes Clinic	Monthly	CYPS Senior Management Team Director of Transformation and Partnerships Director of Resources

Meeting	Frequency	Who
		CEO Head of Strategy

4.7 Appendix 3 shows the pro-forma that is used to structure the conversation through this cycle of meetings. At the beginning of each monthly cycle Team Managers are supported to respond to the Key Performance Question Analysis Reports and performance exceptions and are given the opportunity to provide additional information about the quality of practice within their respective teams. Operations Managers are then asked to present this information to the Children’s Social Care Performance and Outcomes meeting which enables them to maintain accountability for the quality of practice in their respective services and provides a forum for effective scrutiny and challenge.

4.8 This scrutiny and challenge by senior managers is then continued as the outcomes of the Children’s Social Care Performance and Outcomes meeting are presented to the CYPS Senior Management Team and subsequently to the Chief Executive Performance and Outcomes meeting.

4.9 The effective challenge and scrutiny on a monthly basis will ensure that performance issues that are specific to individual teams can be addressed and supported in a timely way. It also provides a forum to identify potential systemic issues that require further exploration via a themed audit, or that need a service wide response. Additionally, it creates a forum to identify areas of best practice that need to be celebrated and shared widely to support the continuous improvement of practice.

5. QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

5.1 The **Social Care Quality Improvement Board (QIB)** is chaired by the Head of Service for Social Care and is the primary mechanism for ensuring that the learning from the Performance and Outcome meetings is captured and that both the audit programme and improvement plan are aligned to what we have learnt about the quality of practice.

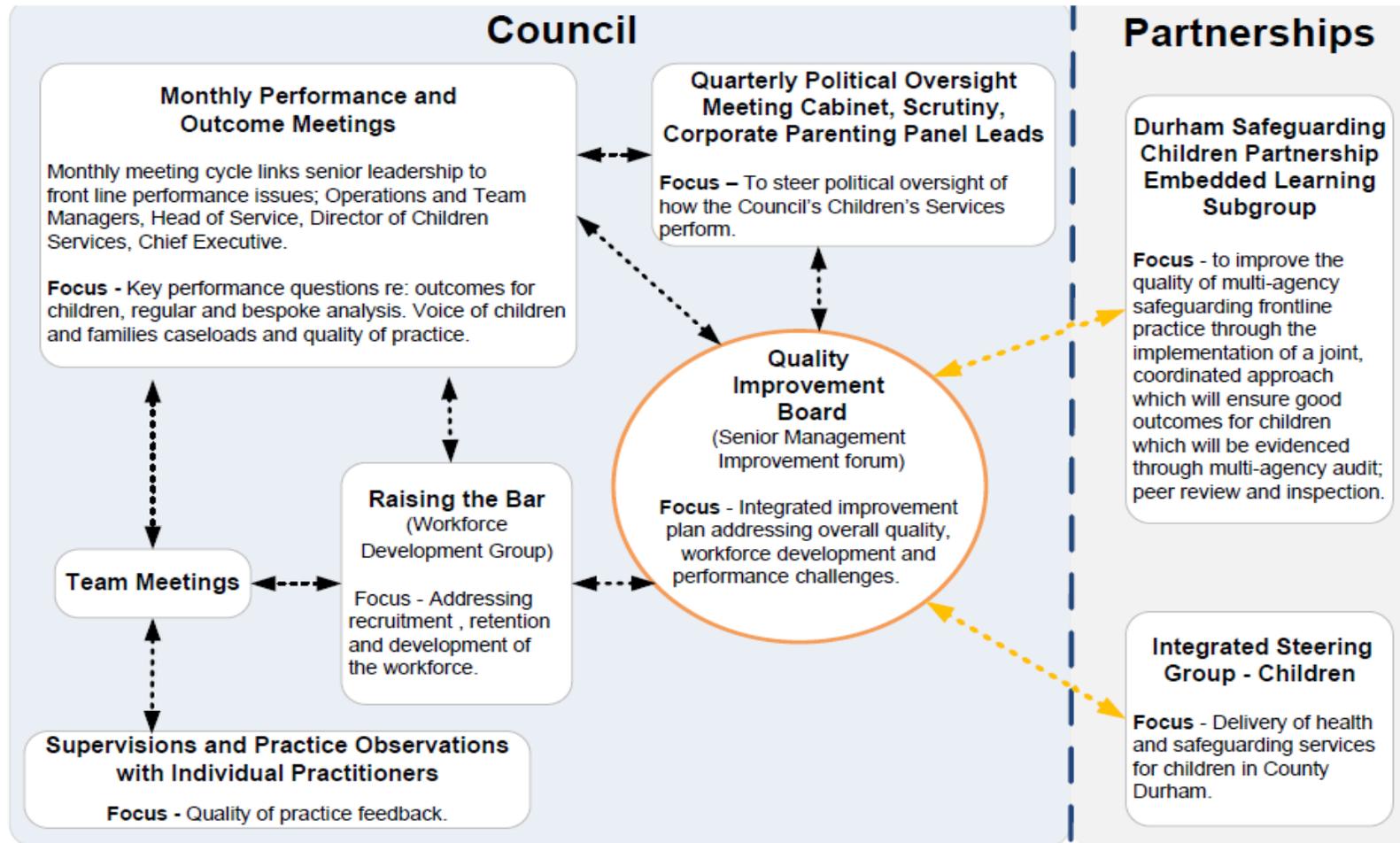
5.2 In addition to the learning from the Performance and Outcome meetings, the learning from the below sources of information will be collated and reported on a quarterly basis to the QIB by the Operations Manager, Professional Practice:

- Themes from Audits (that have not been discussed at the Performance and Outcome meetings)
- Children, Young People and Families Feedback (that has not been discussed at the Performance and Outcome meetings)
- Safeguarding Practice Reviews
- Peer Challenge activity
- Dispute Resolution Process

- 5.3 There is a single Quality Improvement Action plan which brings together all improvement activity across Children's Social Care. This plan is routinely monitored by the QIB to ensure that it is driving improvement in the quality of practice and improving outcomes for children and families.

Appendix 1: Quality Assurance Meetings Framework

Quality Assurance Meetings Framework



Appendix 2 – Key Performance Questions

These key performance questions reflect the core performance framework within children's social care. A range of performance and outcome data are used to evaluate our position against each question and initiate regular discussions about the impact of our social care work. The questions are;

1. Are referrals allocated in a timely manner and are children seen in accordance with timescales?
2. Does every child have an assessment of need without drift and delay which results in the right outcome?
3. Are the right children in the child protection process and are they receiving a robust and timely child protection response?
4. Are social work caseloads manageable and do they meet our quality standards?
5. Are children seen often enough and alone?
6. How do we respond to different abuse types
7. Do children involved in care proceedings receive good and timely outcomes?
8. Are the right children in care and are they there for the right amount of time?
9. Do we achieve good outcomes for our children in care and care leavers?
10. Are supervision taking place in a timely manner and are staff being effectively managed?

To supplement these core key performance questions, additional performance reporting is used within specific areas of social care.

Children's Social Care Performance Exceptions

Name	Operations Manager
Locality	Locality Name

This briefing should be completed and forwarded to your Strategic Manager and Head of Service before the HoS monthly performance clinic. Where relevant please refer to any actions from previous performance discussions. This briefing will be used to shape performance discussions in your next performance clinic with your Head of Service and you will be asked to respond to these issues.

Data Exceptions

- Pre-populated with some key points about team level performance
- E.g. Assessments, ICPCs, Referral within five days, child seen alone, caseloads, supervisions etc
- Focus should be on inequality of outcome for children i.e. highlighting any areas of significant poor (or excellent) performance

What's Working Well?

- Briefly summarise what you think is effective practice in your team
- What improvements have you made recently?

What are you worried about? What are you most proud about?

- Briefly summarise what you are worried about/proud of

What Actions are you taking and what are your leadership priorities?

- Briefly summarise current priorities for your teams

What are collaborative practice reviews showing?

- Pre-populated with locality results from the quarterly Collaborative Evaluation report

How else do you know practice?

- Pre-populated with number of stage 1 and 2 complaints for locality (from Gill Horsfield)

How do you know how practitioners are feeling and what is your response as leader?

- Staff morale