

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Quality Assurance and Learning Framework 2020 - 2024



Improving outcomes for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

1. Introduction

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough SEND Strategy for 2019-24 sets out a vision and strategy for children and young people (0 – 25 years) with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The strategy is built upon a shared vision that *considering and providing for the needs of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) is Everybody's Business*.

The collective desire outlined in the strategy is to ensure a holistic and inclusive approach evidenced by high quality, multi-agency services and provision, focused upon enabling children and young people and young adults with SEND to:

- Lead happy, healthy and fulfilled lives, having choice and control over decisions about their health, education, employment, friendships and relationships.
- Achieve in line with, or better than, expectation in their early years, school, further education and training.
- Successfully participate in the community and access meaningful occupation, employment and life-long learning opportunities.

Within the Quality Assurance (QA) Framework, the terms 'SEND' and 'child/young adult' will be used to describe all children, young people and young adults whose needs are addressed by the SEND Strategy, hereafter referred to as the Strategy. It should be read in conjunction with the Strategy and the joint Strategic Action Plan, and the Written Statement of Action (Peterborough) and will help deliver its objectives and ensure that services are well planned and of good quality through a systematic and partnership-wide approach to case and service-level audits. This will help deliver the Strategy's commitment to ensuring that everybody can be:

Aspirational - Confident - Healthy - Included - Respected - Safe - Successful

Partner agencies will have their internal QA arrangements. This Framework sets out a shared approach to QA across the partnerships, which will enable a joined up approach to the cycle of learning / continuous improvement and evidencing its impact for children and young adults.

2. Quality Assurance

Quality Assurance (QA) is central to ensuring that children, young adults and their families receive the right services at the right time and that those services have a positive and lasting impact.

This Framework supports continuous improvement in the delivery of services to children with SEND and their families through ongoing self-assessment and evaluation. It will support the measure of impact against the key indicators of success identified in the SEND Strategy (See Appendix 1) as well as the SEND Pledge (link below), which will also inform the planning of audits and the design of audit tools.

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/asset-library/cambridgeshire-and-peterborough-send-pledge.pdf>

2.1 Purpose:

- Embed quality into practice to strengthen practice and improve both the child/young adult's experiences of the service and their outcomes.
- Embed quality into the service through adherence to the underpinning principles.
- Ensure that services achieve and maintain consistently high standards.
- Ensure regular evaluation of both the quality and impact of services.
- Ensure matters of equality and diversity, and anti-discriminatory practice will be considered, respected and promoted in all aspects of quality assurance activity.
- Support systemic organisational cultures that promote continuous learning and development of the total workforce (both paid and unpaid workers) who come into contact with children and young adults with SEND.
- Develop an accountable workforce, which is focused on delivering quality services and engaged in the quality assurance process as a means of ensuring this.

2.2 Underpinning principles:

- It is focused on the 'lived experience' of children/young adults and the contribution made by the services they receive.
- It values the contribution of children, young adults, family members, carer representatives, advocates, staff, partner agencies and others to achieving positive outcomes for children.
- It is based on current best practice, guidance and research from relevant professional and inspectorial bodies.
- Everyone in the workforce has both a responsibility for, and a vital role in improving, service quality.
- Quality assurance is not a single event but part of a continuous improvement cycle.

2.3 QA is supported by:

- All members of the workforce having access to comprehensive policies, procedures, practice guidance and information about research evidence to inform their practice and professional development.
- QA being built in from the outset as an integral part of any new service development to ensure that practice and the delivery of outcomes for recipients can be monitored and evaluated including effective management oversight.
- The availability of key messages from a wide evidence base to provide an overview of quality and learning and support activities that drive continuous improvement.

3. Quality Assurance is Everyone's Business

It is essential that everybody working in the SEND partnership contribute to driving forward good quality work. Those conducting inspections, audits and other quality assurance activities share responsibility for ensuring that all levels of staff are actively

engaged in the quality assurance process, whether this be through auditing, observations, case discussion, focus groups, workshops or forums.

3.1 The role of staff working across SEND partnership:

Everybody employed within the SEND partnership is individually responsible for ensuring that their work is of a consistently high quality. People will be held accountable for ensuring that practice standards are met at all times.

3.2 The role of managers working across the SEND partnership

Managers need to be very clear about their role in the appraisal process and how practice principles and success indicators are included within this. They also need to demonstrate the importance of these principles by ensuring that any employee who is unable to meet the required principles receives the appropriate support. Managers should also use quality assurance processes to recognise and praise good performance.

3.3 The role of the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service and the SEND partnership

Across Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council, the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance (SQA) Service is responsible for supporting quality assurance and service improvement activity across the SEND partnership.

Operational managers retain lead responsibility for their services the SQA service complements their role by providing a 'critical friend' and undertaking 'arms-length' quality assurance activity in a systematic way across the whole system.

It does this through:

- Developing and implementing an annual Audit Plan to ensure a systematic approach to audit and internal inspection / review activity.
- Reporting on audit outcomes, including the development of service improvement, or action plans.
- Identifying the need for, and undertaking, themed audits in conjunction with partners on a single, or multi-agency basis.
- Recognising and promoting good practice and highlighting any concerns to operational managers.
- Offering support and constructive challenge, focusing on standards of practice and optimising outcomes for children.
- Monitoring and tracking the delivery of actions following audit completion.
- Contributing to the development of policy and procedures, quick guides, checklists and other tools to support practice.
- Identifying the need for and undertaking wider quality assurance activities, including the delivery of learning events, including workshops and reflective spaces, observation of operations and consultation with service users and staff.
- Supporting and at times undertaking activity that seeks feedback from children, young people, families and carers through consultation and participation work to ensure service users' views inform service delivery.

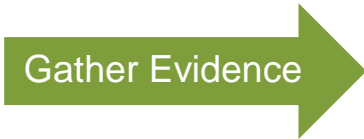
4. Continuous Improvement Cycle

The SEND Quality Assurance Framework is modelled on a continuous improvement cycle to:

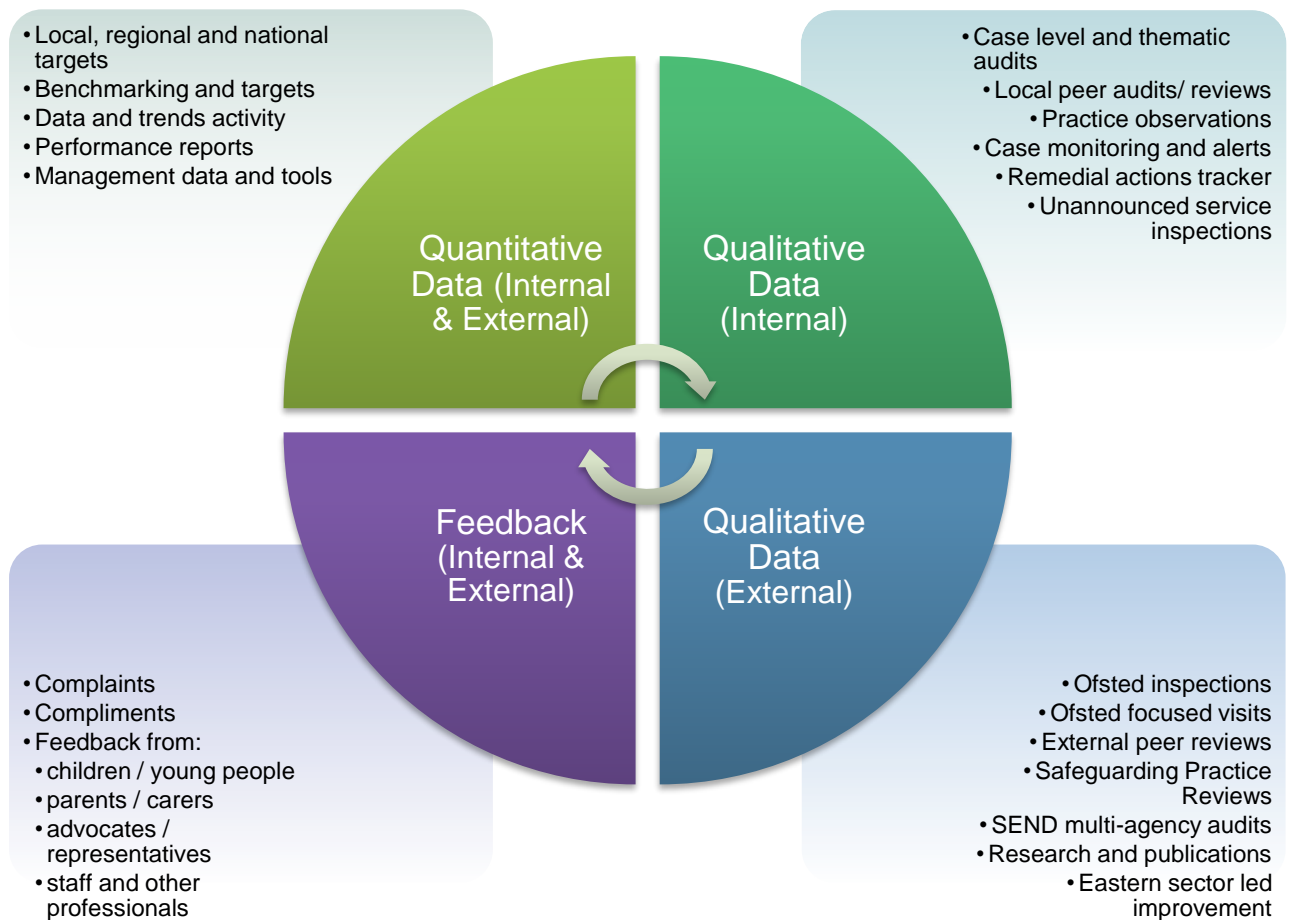
- Improve outcomes for individual children,
- Support the professional development of staff,
- Improve frontline practice, and
- Identify areas for service improvement.

The model below (Model 1) involves the analysis of evidence gathered about service delivery and practice to identify themes and patterns to inform service development and continuous improvement.





Evidence about practice is found from quantitative and qualitative data (both internal and external) and feedback in accordance with the quality assurance activity model (Model 2) below:



Quantitative data: The SEND partnership delivers services in accordance with local, regional and national standards and overall performance. Performance indicators will provide an internal and external reporting mechanism with which to measure performance, identifying practice strengths and areas requiring improvement. They will also allow national comparison between areas. The multi-agency data dashboard will include reference to many nationally available data sets for comparative purposes is under development to support this.

System Compliance: We want the experience of children and young people and their parents and carers to be positive. As a minimum, this means doing what we say we will do within the expected timescales. We will track and report the timeliness of the

completion of EHC Plans and the Annual Review processes as well as other SEND services. The partnership will also monitor performance against key performance indicators, to identify strengths and areas for improvement and areas for further QA activity to gain a more in-depth understanding of practice and the experience of children and their parents/carers.

Qualitative data: Evidence can include feedback from service users, mystery shoppers and case audits. Qualitative data also comes from external inspections, such as by Ofsted and peer reviews.

SSEN and EHCP Case work audits using structured audit tools designed to test compliance and impact, at an individual or service level will be completed on a half termly basis by all levels of managers across the SEND partnership and the SQA service. This rigorous commitment to systematic audit is fundamental to inform learning.

Themed audits are set out in the annual audit programme and linked to themes identified by QA activity, performance data, and feedback from the SEND Partnership Groups and Executive Board, OFSTED inspections of the services we provide, peer reviews and senior management in line with prevailing needs.

Dip sample audits are undertaken to explore themes, trends and areas of concern that arise from performance data, service user feedback and audits completed, in order to identify the root cause of problems and make recommendations for improvement.

Approved audit tools will be used for all audits undertaken. These are subject to ongoing review based on local SEND arrangements, good practice guidance and changes in legislation and regulatory framework.

Observation of staff in their everyday work is an important element of quality assuring professional practice and identifying areas of professional development. Frontline staff will be observed to assess the quality and impact of their practice with children and families. Direct observation will be conducted by managers of all levels. Direct observation activity will incorporate an element of service user feedback through direct interviews and / or exit questionnaires as well as structured feedback from the observer. Key measures will be the extent to which practice reflects the SEND practice principles and standards and the impact on outcomes for children and families.

4.1 Qualitative Data - External

Learning from external quality assurance processes will be essential components of this framework to inform continuous learning and development. External evidence will come from a range of external partner agencies, statutory bodies, providers and stakeholders:

- Ofsted inspection and focused visit findings and service action plans, including learning from inspections of comparable authorities.
- LGA and Eastern Region peer reviews.
- Learning from multi-agency audits.

- Sector Led Improvement networks in the Eastern Region Learning from other multi-agency partnership reviews including Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, Domestic Homicide Reviews, Child Death Reviews, and other multi-agency learning Reviews.

4.2 Learning from the views and experiences of children and young people and their parents and carers

We are grateful to the children and young people that contribute their time and share their experiences, this contribution is critical to how we improve what we do, and how we do it.

Parent/carer forum representatives along with other stakeholders are represented on the SEND Partnership Groups and Executive Board to ensure service users have the opportunity to influence and inform policy and practice development. The SEND Partnership Groups, plan to continue to coproduce with children, young adults, parents/carers a structured and planned approach to seeking their feedback with a particular focus at the individual level. This will include ensuring Voice is also at the heart of our local area EHC Planning and Review processes including mechanisms for feedback from children, parents and carers following EHCP planning meetings and reviews and other key multi-agency planning SSEN meetings and reviews. A plan will consolidate arrangements for gaining service user feedback and other consultation activities and inform regular reporting.

4.3 Learning from other feedback

Compliments and complaints help us identify areas that we need to develop, and good practice that we can share. Training, learning and support opportunities will be provided to individuals and teams where required

Compliments: Each member organisation of the SEND Executive Board have arrangements in place to collate and share compliments that they receive. This is an important step in celebrating and sharing what we do well. It is proposed that these compliments will be shared with the SEND Executive Board on a regular basis.

Each member organisation of the SEND Executive Board have arrangements in place to log and respond to complaints that they receive. For example:

- Within Peterborough and Cambridgeshire Councils: All complaints and Ombudsman enquiries relating to SEND (EHCPs, practice and/or transport) are collated, analysed and reported on a quarterly basis, to include analysis of themes, learning and what steps are being taken as a result.
- Within the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust / CCGs: complaints will be managed through the pre-existing complaints process with support from the Designated Clinical Officer (DCO).

The SQA service will incorporate data on and learning from compliments and complaints into their Quality Assurance quarterly report, which will be available to the Executive Board.

Building on individual agency arrangements, we will ask partners to commit to share themed information about local area complaints with the SEND Executive Board every six months. Doing so will highlight system wide learning opportunities. They may also determine the themed audits.

PCC and CCC SEND services commission advocacy services for children using SEND services. **Advocacy services** produce quarterly reports to the commissioning service with information on type, levels and details of activity, outcomes, feedback, complaints and compliments received. Advocacy services also report on challenges faced and reports include learning for SEND services.

Staff feedback is critical to inform judgements about good practice, barriers to progress and next steps. The SEND Partnership Groups will consider commissioning periodic staff surveys.

Feedback from key partners is essential to the triangulation of data to identify service improvement to improve outcomes for children. We will devise and implement feedback forms for professionals following EHCP planning meetings and reviews and consider this for feedback following other key multi-agency planning SSEN meetings and reviews.

4.4 Quality Assurance across SEND provision

Audit of EHCPs and annual reviews process (Model 3):

Level One – Single Agency Audit of EHC Plans and Reviews

We want to drive learning and improvement across the local area. Our starting point is the arrangements that individual agencies have in place to audit the quality of their own contributions to EHCs.

In **Education**, this may mean:

Schools and other education providers will have in place appropriate audit arrangements focussing on the quality and timeliness of their contribution to EHC assessments (referral, advice and review). They will also ensure mechanisms are in place to share good practice and areas of development through appropriate networks e.g. SENCo network.

In **Health**, this may mean:

Health providers will have in place appropriate audit arrangements focussing on the quality and timeliness of their contribution to EHC assessments (referral, advice and review). They will also ensure mechanisms are in place to share good practice and areas of development through appropriate networks.

In **Social Care**, this may mean:

Children's Social Care will have in place appropriate audit arrangements focussing on the quality and timeliness of their contribution to EHC assessments (referral, advice

and review). They will also ensure mechanisms are in place to share good practice and areas of development through appropriate networks.

Level Two – Audit of Draft and Final EHC Plans by the Statutory Assessment Team

The SEND Statutory Assessment Team is responsible for producing EHCPs that are compliant with the SEND Code of Practice (2015) and the SEND Regulations (2014). SEND caseworkers write EHCPs. The Team will have in place appropriate audit arrangements focussing on the quality and timeliness of their contribution to EHC assessments (referral, advice and review). They will also ensure mechanisms are in place to share good practice and areas of development through appropriate networks. Audit activity may include:

- EHC Plans reviewed at the SEND Moderation Panel.
- EHC Plans and drafts peer reviewed by caseworkers using an agreed checklist.
- EHC Plans and Reviews (draft and final) audited by the SEND SAT service managers.

Level Three – Multi-agency audit of plans and reviews

We want to drive learning and improvement across the local area. Alongside single agency audit, partners have put in place multi-agency arrangements to audit the quality of EHCPs and the review process. This means:

An audit of six EHCPs each half term. The focus will be on EHCPs issued in the previous year alongside a recent review and the EHCP that was issued following review.

To examine:

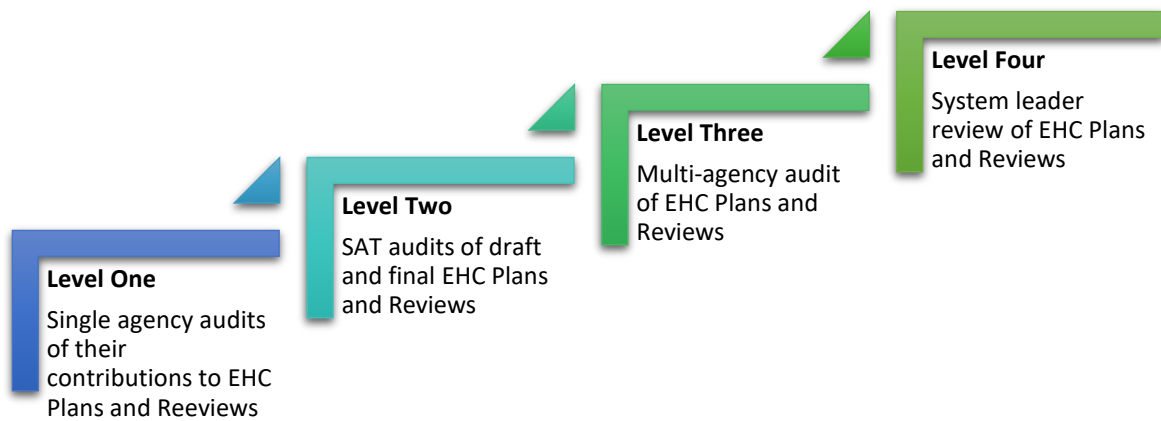
- Whether EHCPs and review documentation identify progress and/or barriers to progress?
- Whether children and young people in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough with EHCPs are making good progress?

Both single and multi-agency audit may be themed. Themes may include; children and young people at risk of permanent exclusion, looked after children, preparation for adulthood, or children with specific types of need.

Level Four – System Leader Case Review

In addition to single and multi-agency audit, on a termly basis representatives from the SEND Executive Board will, with the support of the SEND QA Officer, review an individual plan or review. With consent, this will include meeting with the child or young person and their parent or carer to understand their views, ambitions and any perceived barriers.

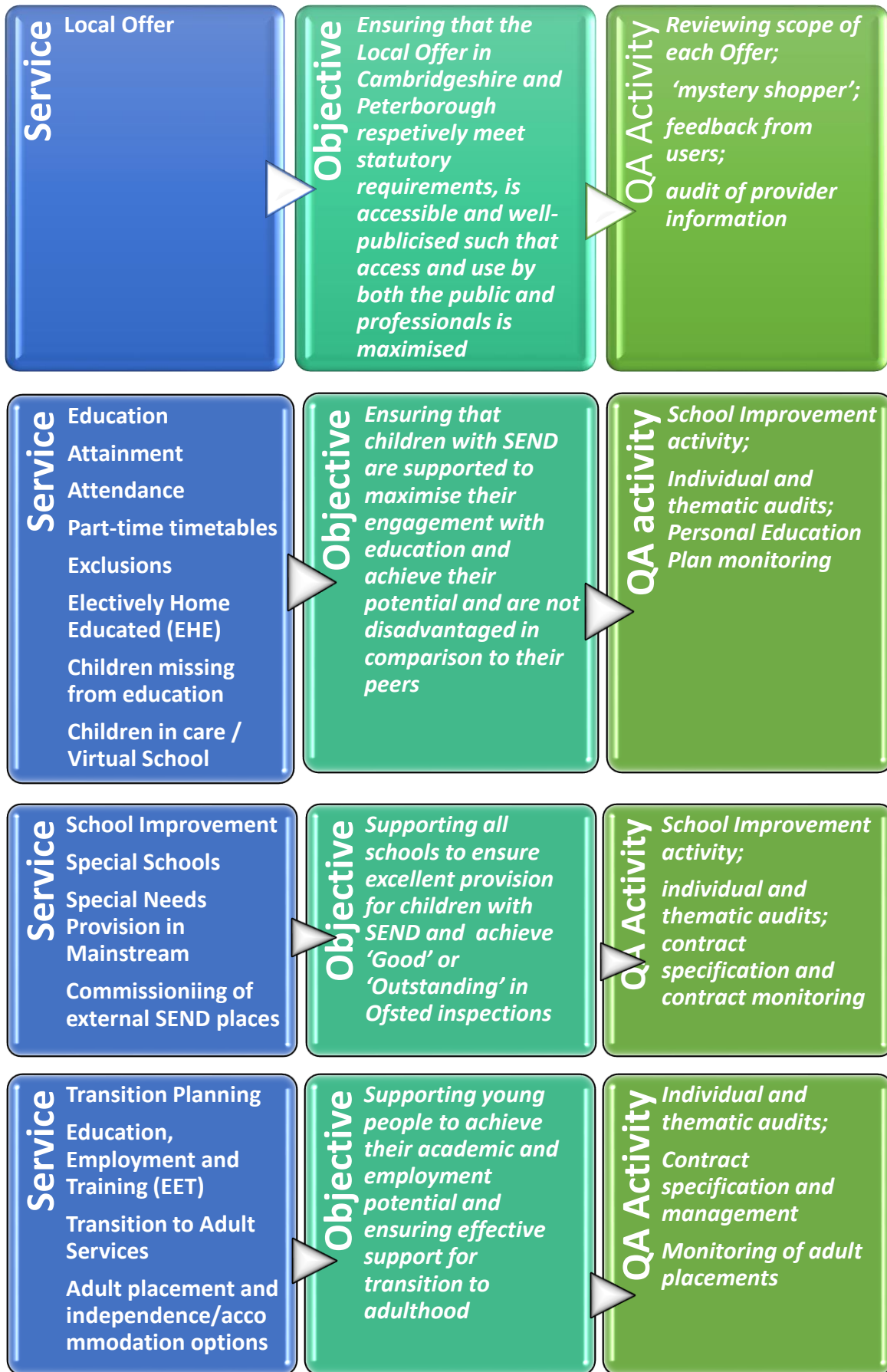
Model 3:



QA of other SEND activities:

The systemic approach to quality assurance set out in this Framework is intended to apply to the range of SEND activities and processes, some single agency, others having multiple partner involvement. Across the partnership, it is anticipated that service user surveys and feedback both individual and event-based; staff surveys; schools feedback; and SEND Partnership Groups challenge will be key to ensuring services meet the needs of children, young people and their families.

The table of activities (Model 4) below is not exhaustive, but gives examples of some of these services and the QA activity that might evaluate their quality and impact:





Analyse Findings

4.5 Analyse findings

QA activity will be regularly analysed for themes, trends, learning about strengths to build on and identifying areas for improvement and that this information is disseminated accordingly. Analysis will help to measure and evidence the impact of QA on improving service user outcomes and maintain focus on continuous improvement.

All audits completed as part of the SEND Partnership Audit Program will be subject to analysis and reports and practice briefings will be produced.

A Termly Quality Assurance Report from SQA will pull together an analysis of the learning from relevant EHCP QA activity. In addition all SEND partners will prepare a termly report of their QA activity to include analysis of strengths and areas for development. It will identify areas of good practice and propose possible remedial activity for service development.

A regular Participation Report will pull together an analysis of feedback from service users and co-production activity and its impact for service delivery and development.



Share Learning

4.6 Driving system learning and improvement

Audit reports and short practitioner briefings will be disseminated following audits and these will also be available on the QA pages of the PCC and CCC intranet as well as the relevant SEND partnership portal.

Remedial actions or safeguarding concerns identified during audit activity are communicated directly to the case responsible worker and their team manager at the time they are identified. Remedial actions and case alerts are recorded on a tracker by the QA Team. Themes of remedial actions and escalations are analysed to inform professional development. Any case audit identified as being 'inadequate' will form a case escalation, which will also be sent to the Head of Service / relevant senior manager. These processes ensure that any safety concerns that come to light in audits will be addressed immediately.

As part of this framework the SEND Executive Board will receive regular reports from all agencies to satisfy themselves of the quality of services received by CYP/YA with SEND.

Termly reports prepared by the SQA service and by partners will be presented to the SEND Partnership and Executive Boards and it is expected that individual partner agencies will feed the learning into their own organisational management meetings to ensure agency specific learning is taken forward.

A **termly 'Quality Matters'** publication is part of the PCC and CCC e-magazine to staff and highlights key areas of strengths and learning from QA activity as well as information about up and coming key QA events and activities.

A **termly Compliments and Complaints (SEND) Briefing** circulated to staff will share learning from compliments and complaints received.

The **Workforce Development Plan** is informed by QA activity. SEND invests in a comprehensive training programme for all SEND staff and managers. This commissioned learning and development programme centres on the service user journey and experience.

QA Practice Workshops complement training programmes, and are based on themes identified by the QA service and following QA activity including audit, dip samples, inspection and surveys.



4.7 Implement change

The reporting of findings and learning from QA activity to the SEND Partnership Groups and Executive Board will contribute to the ongoing review of the implementation of the SEND Strategy and joint SEND strategic action plan to inform future strategic planning and service development.

Learning from individual audits and other QA activity will also inform individual agency service processes and delivery. Once learning is identified and shared, it can support service improvement as:

- Staff develop their understanding of required practice, and complete remedial actions arising from audits.
- Staff reflect upon learning with their managers and peers.
- Line managers support staff professional development through supervision and the appraisal process.
- Workforce development managers review the training 'offer' in light of audit findings and a broader understanding of the emerging needs of practitioners.
- Agencies review their procedural / practice requirements and documentation to better reflect required practice.



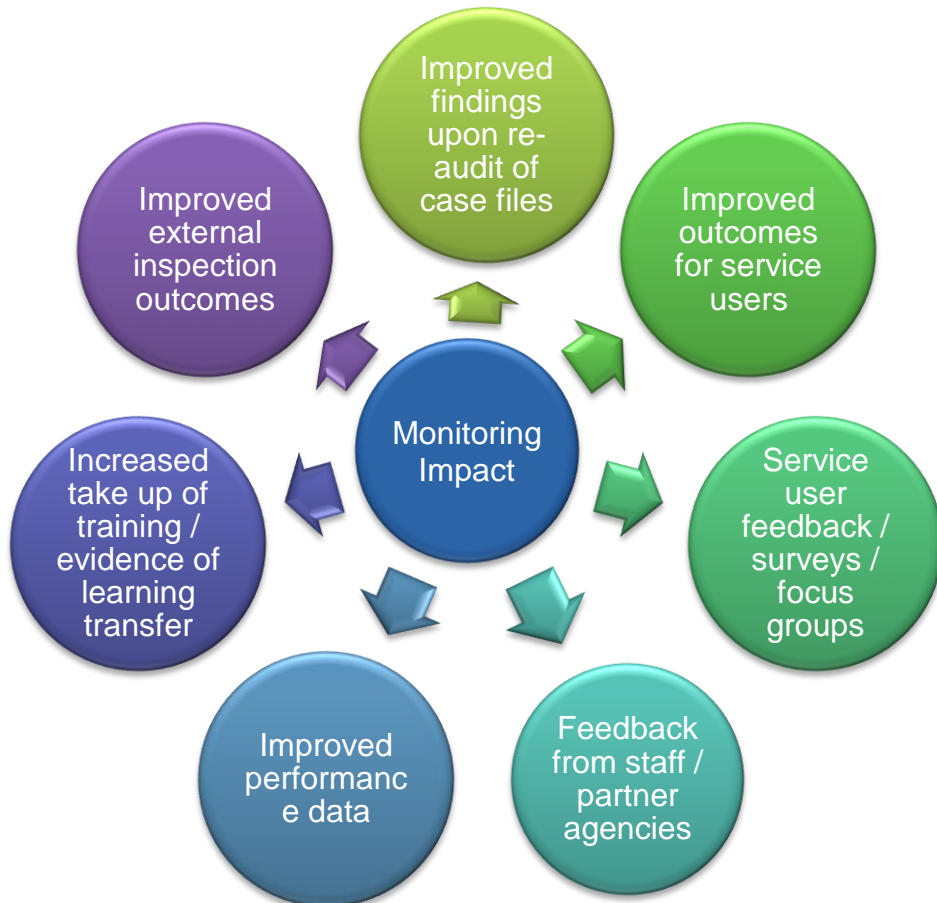
4.8 Monitor impact

The SEND Partnership Groups and Executive Board will seek evidence of service improvement and the **positive impact** of quality assurance activity including against the joint SEND strategic action plan, through:

- Re-audits and observations showing evidence of practice improvements.
- Improved service user feedback collated from partners' surveys, focus groups and the analysis of compliments / complaints received.
- Improved staff feedback through surveys.
- Improved feedback from professionals from all the partner agencies.
- Increased take up of staff training and evidence of learning transfer to practice.
- Improved performance, as demonstrated through data.
- Continuous improvement in findings from internal and external reviews and inspections.

Model 5 below illustrates the activities designed to measure and evidence the impact of QA on children with SEND and their outcomes:

Model 5



4.9 Summary

Just as SEND is 'everybody's business', so is quality assurance and the responsibility for ensuring that children and young adults with SEND receive high quality services designed to meet their assessed needs.

This Framework is intended to build on each agency's responsibilities by introducing a shared approach to quality assurance which will add a degree of independence to the critical appraisal of service planning and delivery.

The Quality Assurance Officer for SEND in liaison with the SEND Partnership Groups will coordinate an annual Audit Plan of activities designed to test services and help assure the Partnership that they are of good quality and provided consistently across the area.

This Plan will be informed by the priorities and 'indicators of success' within the Strategy and joint SEND Strategic Action Plan to ensure it meets the requirements of the SEND Partnership Groups for the continuous improvement of services for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, and their families.

Appendix 1

SEND Strategy: Indicators of success

The Strategy and joint SEND Strategic Action Plan identifies key indicators of success for each of the three key priority areas as below. (It should be noted that these are reviewed and may be amended so the reader would need to check for any published updates):

SEND is everybody's business

- Parents/carers report increased confidence at transition points between services and when there are changes in provision (e.g. primary to secondary school).
- Annual monitoring of joint commissioning contracts shows that arrangements take a person-centred approach.
- Data from all agencies (e.g. referrals data, SEN audit) shows timely identification of need.
- The majority of children and young people with an education, health and care plan (EHCP) are educated in their local mainstream school - nationally published data shows that the balance of those with an EHCP in mainstream is in line with national, regional and statistical neighbours.
- All professionals know the local offer and what the contribution of their service and other services should be.
- There is a reduction year on year in the number of fixed term and permanent exclusions of children and young people with SEND.
- Key data shows proportionate representation of children and young people with SEND (e.g. elective home education, attendance data, youth offending, emergency health admissions, social care services).
- Annual survey carried out by parent/carer forums shows evidence that year on year parents/carers have increasing confidence in the system and, where issues persist, there is clear evidence of follow-up action to address.
- Service development/provision and commissioning of services clearly reflects user feedback.

Identify and respond to needs early

- Feedback from parents/carers shows satisfaction with early identification of need, by all agencies.
- Data shows less conflict in the system e.g. number of Tribunals registered, number of appeals.
- Numbers of children and young people identified will be in line with population expectations.
- Healthy child programme quarterly report shows all checks carried out note SEND issues.
- Quality of all assessments will reflect a child centred approach and demonstrate joined-up working.
- Annual local authority and parent/carer survey data shows that there is a continuing increase in the number of parents/carers, children and young people

who report a positive experience of, and confidence in, the SEND support system.

- Practitioners report they are confident and have the tools, resources and access to CPD they need to be effective.
- The progress and attainment of children and young people receiving SEND support is as good as, or better than, their peers in comparable authorities at all key stages.

Deliver in the right place

- A termly audit of EHCPs and other plans related to SEND shows that they reflect a holistic package that enables families to flourish locally.
- Children and young people have their needs met locally, reducing reliance on out of county places with a reduction in travel time and number of reported incidents during travel.
- Data systems are in place that enable appropriate measurement of the timeliness and quality of input to EHCP processes and other plans from all statutory agencies.
- Quarterly reports/audits show an increase in the number of creative, collaborative and flexible packages of support with a clear link between the identified needs/outcomes in plans and decision making processes.
- There is a year on year increase in the take up of personal budgets particularly by young people post-16.
- There is evidence that the increases in take-up of personal budgets is stimulating the market range.
- Improved outcomes for vulnerable groups with SEND (looked after children, children in need, children in the youth justice system) are demonstrated as a result of an increase in collaborative commissioning.
- There is good planning for adult life with young people and their families reporting increased choice and control with regard to living independently, having good health and opportunities to take part in a range of activities including employment.
- All children and young people leave school with an option of further education, employment or training - there is a drop in numbers of those with EHCP who are not in education, employment or training (NEET).
- The commissioning of SEND services and provision is based upon data and considers the needs of both local authorities.
- The number of children and young children with a diagnosable mental health condition receiving treatment increases in line with NHS targets.