Committee:	**Children's Services Scrutiny Committee**
Date:	**11 November 2013**

Title of Report:	**Quality Assurance in Children's Social Care and Early Help Services annual review 2012/13**
By:	**Director of Children's Services**
Purpose of Report:	**To inform Scrutiny Committee Members of the findings from the Quality Assurance in Children's Social Care and Early Help Services annual review 2012/13**

RECOMMENDATION:
The Committee is recommended to note and comment on the findings from the Quality Assurance in Children's Social Care and Early Help Services annual review 2012/13

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1.   Financial Appraisal

1.1   There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendation in this report.

2.   Supporting information

The Quality Assurance (QA) Framework

2.1   Measuring the impact of service delivery is central to achieving improved outcomes for children. This requires a strong QA system to be in place to evidence that services are being delivered effectively and to standards that enable children's welfare to be safeguarded and promoted. As a Council we are committed to achieving excellence through continual improvement. The delivery of quality services is dependent on a whole system approach to organisational competence, which reflects continual improvement and a learning organisation.

2.2   The purpose of the QA framework is to:

- improve outcomes for vulnerable children;
- design quality into our services through the introduction of practice standards;
- ensure services are achieving consistently high standards;
- engender an organisational culture committed to learning and continual improvement;
- improve the level of feedback on quality of service from children, their families and staff; and
- support the continuous improvement and development of children's workforce.

2.3   QA is a continual and dynamic process by which we set standards, monitor our achievements against those standards, use the information we have to improve services and undertake ongoing review.

2.4   The framework (Appendix 1) covers both social care and early help services, recognising that effective QA of safeguarding requires an overview of the whole of the experience of the children and families. Some of the requirements relate solely to social care services. Proportionate, detailed quality assurance practice within early help services is currently being reviewed and developed and there will continue to be legitimate differences in the way that quality assurance is carried out across different services.

2.5   This is a new framework which was agreed in 2012/13 and it is a working document

which will be developed, along with the reporting process, over time.

Method used to collate data

2.6   A key component of the QA framework is the identification and implementation of changes required for improving the quality of the service. The services standards are drawn from user views, corporate standards, national requirements and research. In conducting the review we have reviewed information relating to the above, including the results of audits, serious case review, performance data.

2.7   Information used to review performance and identify learning has been gathered from existing reports/documents and from discussions with relevant managers. Gaps in evidence required by the framework have been identified and will be reviewed as part of this process.

2.8   Sources of information were identified and sought for the following areas which underpin the QA Framework:

• key chief executive and elected member responsibilities;
• service provision – social care and early help;
• individual work reviews, including social care supervision, quality assurance activities in the Safeguarding Unit, reporting to the Fostering and Adoption Panels and managers' file audits; and
• monitoring and auditing of the system, including performance management information, central file and practice audits, inter-agency audits via the East Sussex Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), Ofsted inspections and peer reviews, staff and service user feedback, complaints and human resources data.

Findings

2.9   Appendix 2 sets out the key findings for the 2012/13 review. Managers will draw up an action plan in response to the findings and this will inform the quality assurance framework for 2013/14. The findings of the review and areas for development are also being considered in light of the new framework for the inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers.

2.10   A communications plan has been agreed to disseminate the key findings.

3.   Conclusion and Reason for Recommendation

3.1   The Committee is asked to note the key findings from the QA in Children's Social Care and Early Help Services annual review 2012/13. The findings and areas for development will also be considered as part of our preparation for the new inspection framework for the inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers.

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Local Members: All

Background Documents
 None

Quality Assurance in Children's Social Care and Early Help Services

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Introduction

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

East Sussex County Council is committed to achieving excellence through continual improvement. The delivery of quality services is dependant upon a whole system approach to organisational competence which reflects continual improvement and a learning organisation.

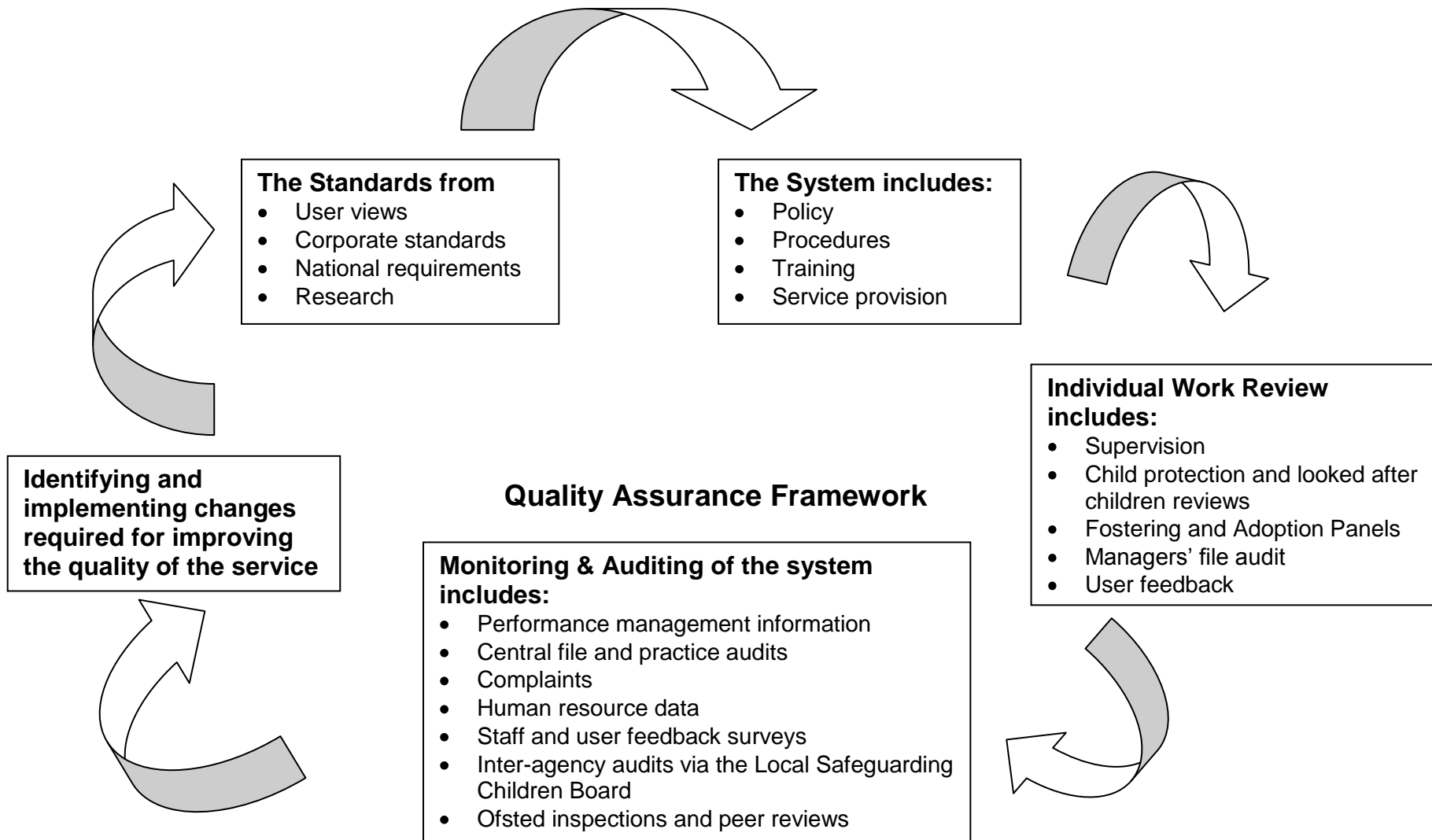A fully established quality assurance system should include the following components:
- a published commitment to quality
- specifically defined standards derived from national and local standards and modified by user feedback and findings from research
- robust policy and up-to-date procedures and guidance that match the standards, with good induction, training and support for staff
- regular monitoring and review of individual work practice from a range of sources, including user feedback
- systematic collection and analysis of information gained from the reviews of individual practice that is focussed on reviewing the whole system. This monitoring and auditing of the system should include, in addition to performance management information, findings from case file audits and inspection processes, users' perspectives and views from front line practitioners involved in service delivery.
- findings from this analysis used to inform service development influencing and developing all of the key components within the system including the standards, policy, procedures, training and service provision

Quality assurance is a term that embraces all activity that contributes to service improvement through satisfying the organisation that agreed standards are being met and outcomes for safeguarding children are being achieved. Quality assurance is a continual and dynamic process by which we set standards, monitor our achievements against those standards, use the information we have to improve services and undertake ongoing review. Quality assurance is more than meeting targets and counting activity; it is a coherent and qualitative approach, which measures standards and identifies areas for improvement. It should be both systematic and themed, cross-agency and single-agency.

This framework covers both social care and early help services, recognising that effective quality assurance of safeguarding requires an overview of the whole of the experience of children and families, including their experience of early help services. Some of the detailed specific requirements relate solely to social care services. Proportionate, detailed quality assurance practice within early help services is currently being reviewed and developed and there will continue to be legitimate differences between the way in which the quality assurance function is carried out across different services. The requirements in this framework in relation to early help services will be kept under review as practice develops.

Quality Assurance in Children's Services

The quality assurance framework is a cycle. To achieve it, the Children's Services Department must set standards, review individual work, monitor and audit the system and identify changes needed for improvement. There then must be investment in the development of the work in order to assure right outcomes for service users.

The Standards from
- User views
- Corporate standards
- National requirements
- Research

The System includes:
- Policy
- Procedures
- Training
- Service provision

Individual Work Review includes:
- Supervision
- Child protection and looked after children reviews
- Fostering and Adoption Panels
- Managers' file audit
- User feedback

Identifying and implementing changes required for improving the quality of the service

Quality Assurance Framework

Monitoring & Auditing of the system includes:
- Performance management information
- Central file and practice audits
- Complaints
- Human resource data
- Staff and user feedback surveys
- Inter-agency audits via the Local Safeguarding Children Board
- Ofsted inspections and peer reviews

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The framework is not intended to prevent or delay any action that is identified by any member of staff or manager as being needed, nor should it prevent dialogue between managers, practitioners and staff about actions that are needed. Neither does it absolve any manager or practitioner of responsibility or accountability for their actions. Rather, it enables clarity and understanding about how quality assurance is systematically managed in the organisation.

The Purpose of the Quality Assurance Framework:
- improve outcomes for vulnerable children
- design quality into our services through the introduction of practice standards
- ensure services are achieving consistently high standards
- engender an organisational culture committed to learning and continual improvement
- improve the level of feedback on quality of services from children, their families and staff
- support the continuous improvement and development of the children's workforce

Quality Assurance Framework Principles
The quality assurance framework is underpinned by a series of principles:
- Quality must relate to service-user experience and outcomes.
- Quality can always be improved.
- Everyone has a role to play in improving quality from front line practitioners to senior managers.
- All staff must be flexible in meeting people's changing needs and choices.
- Quality outcomes and improvements are most likely when there are skilled, enthusiastic and resourceful staff members.
- Quality assurance will be planned into all new services to ensure we get it right the first time.
- Comprehensive policies and procedures will be in place so staff can see what they have to do in order to meet standards.
- Quality assurance will draw together messages from a wide evidence base to provide an overview of quality.

The role of front-line staff in supporting quality assurance
One of the key principles of the quality assurance framework is that front-line staff need to be engaged in the process of quality assurance. The process must be inclusive, working 'with' staff, rather than doing 'to' them. Front-line social work and early help staff will be well-placed to assess the quality of what they do, the constraints they experience in delivering quality and to learn from an inclusive process which enables them to reflect and improve their practice.

Those conducting inspections, audits and other quality assurance approaches share responsibility for involving practitioners, and senior managers have a responsibility to enable them the opportunity to be included. To reinforce this, managers need to be very clear about their role in the appraisal process and how practice standards are included in this. They also need to demonstrate the importance of these standards by ensuring that any employee who cannot or will not meet the required standards is subject to informal/formal personnel procedures, for which managers can access professional support. Equally, managers should use all of the available processes to recognise good performance in this respect.

Part 1: The Standards

Service standards are drawn from user views, corporate standards, national requirements and research.

National Requirements
Services to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children are subject to significant legislation and regulation. The government also sets standards through statutory guidance such as *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013*, Care Planning and Review Regulations 2011, etc.

Social care services and, to a lesser extent, early help services are subject to a wide range of standards, both national and local. Overall performance is measured against external reportable performance indicators (subject to current review). These can identify strengths but also areas for attention and development. Performance indicators are not the only source of information about quality and should not be confused with practice standards which define good practice and make explicit what is expected when providing a service.

User Views
Children, their families and local residents should be at the heart of service provision and should have the opportunity to influence and shape the services they receive.

Corporate Standards
Alongside the legislation, guidance, performance indicators and standards are corporate standards of East Sussex County Council, including:
- the Council Plan
- Children and Young People's Plan
- Review of effectiveness of key strategies under the Children's Trust, e.g. arrangements between NHS bodies and local authorities under section 75 of the National Health Service Act 2006, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), etc

Research
The quality assurance framework should be informed by current research, learning from inspections, serious case reviews and local multi-agency reviews. The framework will influence service development.

Scrutiny of Service Provision
- Children's Social Care Management Team and Planning and Performance Team: key function in ensuring the Council as a whole has oversight of performance, quality of practice, service delivery and pressures within children's social care.
- Children's Social Care Management Team: to oversee the operational function of children's social care, to receive management performance information and to ensure planning is effective and improves quality.
- Assistant Directors and Heads of Service for early help services: key responsibility for overseeing the effectiveness of early help services and ensuring that service development takes account of evidence about current performance.

- East Sussex Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB): key statutory mechanism for ensuring how relevant organisations will cooperate to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and to ensure the effectiveness through:
    - o Developing thresholds, policy and procedure
    - o Communicating and raising awareness
    - o Monitoring and evaluation
    - o Child death overview panel
    - o Serious case reviews
- East Sussex Children and Young People's Trust: responsible for overseeing the scrutiny function of the LSCB and receives an annual report from the LSCB as to the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements in East Sussex.
- Chief Executive, Lead Member and Scrutiny Committee: the lead member for Children's Services is politically accountable for ensuring the local authority fulfils its legal responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. The lead member for Children's Services is a participant observer of the LSCB. The Scrutiny Committee should challenge and question to ensure service improvement.
- Corporate Parenting Panel: has a role to ensure the East Sussex County Council and its partners are being effective corporate parents to the children for whom they are responsible.
- Statutory inspections: Ofsted is the regulatory body that has responsibility for inspection of local authority children's services. A new inspection framework has been developed in 2013 for inspection of safeguarding and looked after children, covering both statutory social care and early help services. The inspections are intended to identify strengths as well as areas for development. The recommendations should form an action plan to be included in the overall quality assurance activity.

Key Chief Executive and Elected Member Responsibilities

Role	QA Task	Frequency	Purpose
1.1 Responsibilities of the Lead Member (LM) and the Director of Children's Services (DCS)	The Children Act 2004 requires every upper tier local authority to appoint a DCS and designate an LM The DCS and LM should both have an integrated Children's Services brief, ensuring that the safety and educational, social and emotional needs of children and young people are central to the local vision. Between them, the DCS and LM provide a clear and unambiguous line of local accountability.	Statutory responsibility for Children's Services	The DCS and LM are appointed for the purposes of discharging the education and children's social care functions of the local authority. This includes, but is not limited to, responsibility for children and young people receiving education or children's social care services in their area and all children looked after by the local authority or in custody (regardless of where they are placed).
1.2 Responsibilities of the LM and DCS	The LM has political responsibility for Children's Services; the DCS has professional responsibility for Children's Services, including operational matters Reporting through the Corporate Management Team (CMT), Cabinet, Scrutiny Committee, Children's Services Senior Management Team (SMT), Children and Young People's Trust Executive Group (CYPTEG), Corporate Parenting Panel(CPP) and the LSCB	As defined by individual meeting frequency	Together with the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council, the LM and DCS have a key leadership role, both within the local authority and working with other local agencies, to improve outcomes for children and young people. Resonsibility to ensure critical information is shared within East Sussex County Council and with external partners.
1.3 Responsibilities of the LM and DCS	Given the breadth and importance of Children's Services functions that the LM and DCS cover, local authorities should give due consideration to protecting the discrete roles and responsibilities of the LM and DCS before allocating to them any additional functions other than Children's Services.		Department of Education guidance: To achieve clear senior leadership understanding and focus of purpose on accountabilities and outcomes for children in need and safeguarding.
1.4 Responsibilities of the DCS	The DCS is accountable and responsible for ensuring the Chief Executive and lead members are briefed on the quality of the services and any potential vulnerability.	As required and in line with meeting frequency	To achieve clear senior leadership understanding and focus of purpose on accountabilities and outcomes for children in need and safeguarding. To monitor performance, practice, decision-making and outcomes
1.5 Responsibilities of the DCS	The DCS should have direct experience of front-line practice by practice observation and meeting with front-line social care staff and managers.	Quarterly	To gain insight of the experience of front-line practitioners

Role	QA Task	Frequency	Purpose
1.6 Chief Executive	Monitoring via one-to-one meetings with the DCS and quarterly performance reviews	Monthly monitoring Quarterly review	To maintain an overview of service and performance issues
1.7 Chief Executive	Six-monthly meeting with the DCS and senior manager for children's social care to focus on service outcomes, pressures, quality issues; every 12 months, this meeting will also include Assistant Directors (ADs) for early help services and will review data in relation to early help as well as social care.	Twice a year	Detailed discussion to reflect accountabilities for outcomes for children in need of protection and safeguarding
1.8 Chief Executive	Annual focus group with front-line social care and early help workers and managers to review service issues, pressures, outcomes and good practice examples	Annual	To hear from front-line staff about what works and where improvement is needed, etc.
1.9 Elected Members	Monitor performance via the Cabinet, CPP and the Scrutiny Committee	Quarterly to cabinet and CPP Annually to Scrutiny Committee	To monitor performance, practice, decision-making and outcomes
1.10 Elected Members	Quality assurance via Fostering and Adoption Panels	Monthly Panel meetings	To monitor performance, practice, decision-making and outcomes
1.11 Elected Members	Visits to children's homes	Monthly visiting rota	To meet young people and discuss and monitor the care they receive
1.12 Elected Members	Visits to social work and early help teams	Quarterly (twice a year for early help teams)	To meet and review practice pressures and issues with front-line staff
1.13 LSCB Chair	Meeting with the Chief Executive and the DCS	Twice a year	To maintain overview of LSCB priorities and local authority accountability

Part 2: The System

Policy

Children's Services is subject to a wide range of standards, both national and local. Overall performance is measured against external reportable performance indicators (subject to current review). These can identify strengths but also areas for attention and development. Performance indicators are not the only source of information about quality and should not be confused with practice standards which define good practice and make explicit what is expected when providing a service.

Procedures

- Sussex Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures - http://pansussexscb.proceduresonline.com/index.htm
- Operational Instructions - http://intranet.escc.gov.uk/sites/cs/Docs/CS%20Documents/Forms/Operationalinstructions.aspx
- Service specific specifications and operational instructions for early help services (to be added to czone)

Training

- **Social care**

  East Sussex invests heavily in workforce development and a comprehensive training programme. The Health and Care Professions Council (the regulatory body for social workers in England) requirements specify that continued registration is contingent on social workers providing evidence of continuing professional development activities which are a mixture of learning activities relevant for current and future practice and which contribute to the quality of practice and service delivery and benefit the service user.

  All training programmes should be informed by the analysis of the findings of the monitoring and auditing of the system, as well as requirement and guidance from the Social Work Task Force and the Children's Workforce Development Council.

  As well as identifying training needs, the Children's Social Care Management Team (CSCMT) will consider outcomes from audit and other quality assurance activity in relation to social care, incorporating this into the training programme, and will convene workshops on emerging themes to ensure a practitioner focus on continuous improvement.

- **Early Help**

  As part of the Thrive strategic development programme, a workforce development plan for early help services is currently being developed, based on a comprehensive set of competencies for early help and a learning needs analysis undertaken by individual staff members. Management of risk, including effective identification and strategies for working with families to reduce levels of risk, will be a key element of the plan for workers; training and development in effective quality assurance will be a priority for service managers.

Service Provision

A. Children's Social Care

Role	Quality Assurance Task	Frequency	Purpose
2.1 CSCMT DCS and for information to SMT	Family support services Monitoring effectiveness of contracts to provide family support services to children in need	Quarterly monitoring to SMT via contract monitoring process or service level agreements	Whether services commissioned: • are impacting on priority outcomes • are meeting quality standards, e.g. safer workforce) • provide value for money
2.2 Managers at all levels up to CSCMT SMT CPP LM	Looked after children placements Capacity/usage of internal and external placements for looked after children	Monthly for operational managers Quarterly to CPP Bi-annually for SMT At least annually to LM with more frequent monitoring and reporting through the budget monitoring process	Informs: • strategic planning for looked after children and children in need • placement strategy • recruitment, commissioning and joint commissioning of fostering and residential placements. re trends of placements being made outside local authority boundaries
2.3 CSCMT	Contract monitoring information (residential placements including short breaks and adoption) Qualitative and financial information	Bi-annual monitoring at minimum Annual report to CPP	To monitor: • usage • organisational standards including standing orders and contracting rules • value for money • trends
2.4 CSCMT, DCS and for information to SMT, CPP and LM	Fostering Service report	Requirement for elected members to review updates and modify the Statement of Purpose at least annually and to formally approve it. Annual report and Statement of Purpose to CPP and LM	To ensure; • compliance with standards and regulations • that recommendations from previous inspections are being acted on • that service users' views are heard and are affecting service improvement

Role	Quality Assurance Task	Frequency	Purpose
2.5 CSCMT, DCS and for information to SMT, CPP, LM	Adoption Service and Adoption Support Services information	Annually to include modifications to statement of purpose To CPP and LM	To ensure: • compliance with standards and regulations • that recommendations from previous inspections are being acted upon • that service users' views are heard and are affecting service improvement

B. Early Help Services

Some basic indicators are currently monitored by SMT, for example the number of families supported through one to one early help services. Further work is currently being done to identify what information on the quality and effectiveness of services it would be possible and realistic to report on a regular basis to SMT and to Lead Members.

Part 3: Individual Work Review

A. Children's Social Care

A.1   Supervision

Role	Quality Assurance Task	Frequency	Purpose
3.1 AD, Safeguarding, Looked After Children and Special Educational Needs	Audit of Head of Service supervision records	Annually	Quality assurance of supervision
3.2 Heads of Service, Children's Social Care	Audit of Operations Manager supervision records using the supervision audit tool; summary to be forwarded to the Head of Safeguarding	Annually	To quality assure supervision standards against the supervision policy. Focusing on frequency, whether decisions made are recorded with a rationale, and whether supervision develops staff and improves practice by providing challenge and support to deliver organisational priorities.
3.3 OMs, Children's Social Care	Audit of Practice Manager supervision records using the supervision audit tool; summary to be forwarded to Head of Service. If concerns are identified then this to be copied to the Head of Safeguarding	Annually	To quality assure supervision standards, e.g. whether supervision is happening at the right frequency, whether decisions made are recorded and rationale provided. Considers whether supervision develops staff and improves practice by providing challenge and support to deliver organisational priorities.
3.4 Operations Managers, Children's Social Care and CSCMT	Quantitative and qualitative audits of staff supervision	Annually to CSCMT To LSCB as appropriate	To quality assure supervision standards, e.g. whether supervision is happening at the right frequency, whether decisions made are recorded, etc, and that it develops staff and improves practice by providing challenge and support to deliver to organisational priorities.

A.2   The Safeguarding Unit

Role	Quality Assurance Task	Frequency	Purpose
3.5 Safeguarding Manager	Messages from reviews of looked after children (Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) reports), including feedback from children and young people	Bi-annually to CSCMT, and onwards as appropriate CPP Annually to LM and DCS	To: - confirm compliance with standards. - identify emerging themes, both positive and negative - improve performance and outcomes for looked after children - hear views of children and young people and evidence where action is taken in response to those views
3.6 Safeguarding Manager	Child protection chairs' quality assurance feedback	Biannually to CSCMT Annually to Lead Member and DCS	Qualitative and quantitative information about activity, adherence to quality standards and timescales, quality of planning, preparation and reporting. Emerging practice issues requiring attention
3.7 Safeguarding Manager	Quarterly monitoring reports on child protection and looked after children	Quarterly to CSCMT and LSCB	Set out the extent to which practice standards and statutory requirements have been adhered to
3.8 Child Protection Advisors (CPAs) and IROs	Deep-dive audit of one casefile to be selected from CPA or IRO's workload	One file per month	To ensure quality of practice and compliance with statutory requirements
3.9 Safeguarding Manager	Deep-dive audit of one case for each IRO and CPA	Quarterly to Head of Service Action plan to CSCMT	To ensure quality of practice and consistency of decision making

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A.3   Fostering and Adoption Panels

Role	Quality Assurance Task	Frequency	Purpose
3.10 Head of Service, Locality Social Work and Family Assessment	Private Fostering Report	Annually for consideration by the DCS. Annually to the Chair of the LSCB and CSCMT	• To ensure compliance with standards and regulations • To evaluate the outcomes of the local authority's work in relation to privately fostered children within its area • To monitor progress in responding to any recommendations following Inspection • The LSCB satisfies itself that the welfare of privately fostered children in its area is satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted, including how it co-operates with other agencies in this connection.
3.11 Chair of Panel	Feedback from chairs of the Fostering and Adoption Panels	Annually to CSCMT Three times a year to agency decision maker.	Qualitative and quantitative information about activity, adherence to quality standards and timescales, quality of planning, preparation and reporting. Emerging practice issues requiring attention

A.4   Managers' File Audits

Role	Quality Assurance Task	Frequency	Purpose
3.12 Heads of Service, Children's Social Care	Results, recommendations and action plans arising from routine, regular case record checks	Quarterly to CSCMT Annually to DCS & for information to SMT and Lead Member To CSCMT and, in some cases, to the LSCB where audits have relevance to safeguarding or child protection practice.	To identify: • whether quality standards relating to practice are being met • shortfalls/inconsistencies in practice, both in the organisation and in partner agencies • whether appropriate action is taken to correct or improve practice • to influence change to policy or procedures where this is required • to ensure that any identified training needs are responded to • to ensure that any workforce issues are identified and responded to

Role	Quality Assurance Task	Frequency	Purpose
3.13 Heads of Service, Children's Social Care	Off-line (peer) deep dive audit using case file audit tool	One case file quarterly for each team in a different service.	• Report to CSCMT to influence change to policy or procedures where this is required • To ensure appropriate response to any identified training needs. • To ensure appropriate response to any identified workforce issues.
3.14 Operations Managers, Children's Social Care	Deep-dive audit using CareFirst audit record. Document summary of each team's findings on Operations Manager feedback tool and present to Head of Service	One case file for each team per month within their service. If the audit identifies significant concerns then a further two files to be audited from that particular team.	Report quarterly to the Head of Service on key themes and action to be taken to reinforce and share good practice and address poor performance. Head of Service should randomly scrutinise a sample of these cases to ensure audit standards. (To be copied to Head of Safeguarding)
3.15 Operations Managers, Children's Social Care	Off-line (peer) deep-dive audit using CareFirst audit record. Document summary of each team's findings on Operations Manager Feedback Summary which is to be shared with relevant Head of Service.	One case file quarterly for each team in a different service.	Report to the Head of Service responsible for the team on key themes and action to be taken to reinforce and share good practice and address poor performance. (To be copied to Head of Safeguarding)
3.16 Practice Managers, Children's Social Care	Practice Managers will complete supervision case file audit using the CareFirst audit record	One case per month for each worker. If audit reveals significant concerns then a further two files from the same worker should be reviewed. Alert Operations Manager at this point. In addition, the file of concern must be reviewed within three months ensuring that the recommendations regarding safe care planning have been actioned.	Review the management of the case in line with practice standards. This includes focusing on quality of assessment, planning, analysis, decision-making, evidence of multi-disciplinary activity and working in partnership with families and consideration of children's wishes and feelings. In particular, consideration should be given to compliance with statutory requirements. Feedback to worker with recommendations regarding case planning and performance improvement if required.

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B. Early Help Services

All early help workers are required to keep effective records of interventions with families and must be given case management supervision by their managers. As part of the Thrive programme, early help services are currently reviewing the standards expected of record keeping and supervision, and exploring how case audit by managers could be strengthened. Once detailed arrangements have been agreed for each service, a summary of these arrangements, in similar format to the arrangements for social care services set out above, will be appended to this framework.

Part 4: Monitoring and Auditing of the System

A. Performance Management Information

Role	Quality Assurance Task	Frequency	Purpose
4.1 Manager, Planning and Performance Team	National and locally-agreed performance data set	Monthly to team/unit managers and CSCMT Bi-annually to Joint Divisional Meeting, SMT and LM Biannually to Chair of LSCB	Current performance in order to: • identify performance issues in specific teams • support improvement or facilitate change in practice • set targets and identify priorities for performance improvement • inform strategy
4.2 All managers up to CSCMT Early Help, Heads of Service SMT CMT LM	Budget monitoring	Monthly by team and unit managers, Joint Divisional Meeting and SMT	• To ensure performance is achieved within budget or that budget realignment can take place to reflect changing demand or reprioritising • To inform decision-making on resource allocation • To inform decision-making on income policies, grant applications, contracting and commissioning etc

B. Central File and Practice Audits

Role	Quality Assurance Task	Frequency	Purpose
4.3 Head of Safeguarding	Results, recommendations and action plans arising from specifically commissioned or themed case records or practice audits of children within or on the edge of the child protection system.	Quarterly to CSCMT after audit (with reports to early help ADs as appropriate) Annually to SMT and LM via Scrutiny Committee	To identify: • whether child protection standards are being met • shortfalls or inconsistencies in practice • what action needs to be or has been taken correct or improve practice. • where changes to policy or procedures may be required • any training needs are responded to

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Role	Quality Assurance Task	Frequency	Purpose
			• whether there are workforce issues which need to be responded to • to assure SMT of the ability of departmental child protection services to respond to new requirements or standards in a timely manner
4.4 Head of Safeguarding	Regulation 33 (Children's Home Regulations 2001) monthly visit findings and recommendations	Quarterly to CPP and LM Monthly reports sent to Ofsted	To determine whether: • looked after children are receiving good quality care from in-house provision • the organisation is compliant with Regulations and standards
4.5 CSCMT	Themed file audit Each audit to be developed in accordance with the area being focused on by Head of Safeguarding	Quarterly	• To understand quality of practice and look at shortfalls or inconsistencies in practice • To consider what action needs to be or has been taken to correct or improve practice • To consider what changes to policy or procedures may be required • To consider what training needs have to be addressed as well as wider workforce issues
4.6 Early Help and AD, Early Help & Commissioning	Each audit to be developed in accordance with the area being focused on by the AD	Quarterly	• To understand quality of practice and look at shortfalls or inconsistencies in practice • To consider what action needs to be or has been taken to correct or improve practice • To consider what changes to policy or procedures may be required • To consider what training needs have to be addressed as well as wider workforce issues

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C. Complaints

Role	Quality Assurance Task	Frequency	Purpose
4.7 Complaints Manager	Complaints reports (numbers and nature)	Quarterly up to CSCMT level and to Joint Divisional Meeting Annually to SMT, LM and the Scrutiny Committee	• Service users' views of the services they have received • Information about how effectively the Complaints procedure is being implemented by managers • To improve services and the experience of service users

D. Human Resources Data

Role	Quality Assurance Task	Frequency	Purpose
4.8 AD, Communication, Planning & Performance	Social care workforce information (recruitment, retention, vacancy, sickness levels, disciplinary activity, etc)	Monthly to CSCMT Summary Report annually to SMT and lead member as appropriate.	Enables organisation to have early information about and monitor trends in: • staff turnover • recruitment and retention • sickness/absence • use of capability/disciplinary measures • in order to determine recruitment and retention priorities, realign resources, revisit policies and procedures, if required.

E. Staff and User Feedback Surveys

Role	Quality Assurance Task	Frequency	Purpose
4.9 AD, Communication, Planning & Performance	Staff surveys, exit interviews, MORI surveys, etc and semi formal face-to-face events with staff	Quarterly to CSCMT Annually to SMT and LM	• To hear indirectly and directly from staff qualitative information affecting performance, morale and service quality to determine recruitment and retention priorities • To be available and visible • To demonstrate what has changed as a result of staff feedback

Role	Quality Assurance Task	Frequency	Purpose
4.10 Heads of Service and AD, Communication, Planning & Performance	User feedback from children and young people or on their behalf: • parents • carers • advocacy services • independent visitors • IRO service • Adoption Service • Fostering Service • Regulation 33 visits re residential services	Annually to CSCMT and Joint Divisional Meetings Annual report to CPP	• To indicate how effectively services are being delivered and are meeting the needs of service users • To inform change and improvement to experience of and outcome for the service user

F. Inter-Agency Audits via the LSCB

Role	Quality Assurance Task	Frequency	Purpose
4.11 Chair of the LSCB Quality Assurance Sub-Group	The LSCB will discharge their role in monitoring the quality of the work being undertaken with vulnerable children across agencies: • Audit or compliance with requirements of section 11 of the Children Act 2004 • Quarterly multi-agency audits of five files focusing on the referral and assessment process • Quarterly audit of one child with a child protection plan. Audit tool to be used and feedback to be disseminated to heads of service. • Multi agency themed audits to be commissioned by steering group and annual programme to be agreed by the LSCB business plan • Serious case reviews	Quarterly to the LSCB Quality Assurance Sub-Group Annually to SMT and LM	

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G. Ofsted Inspections, Peer Reviews and Senior Management Responsibilities

Role	Quality Assurance Task	Frequency	Purpose
4.12 Head of Safeguarding	Action plans arising from serious case reviews, management reviews and inspections of services	Updates on action plans to CSCMT and Joint Divisional Meeting as appropriate Reflective learning events Annually to SMT and the LSCB	To improve practice in response to child deaths or serious incidents relating to children
4.13 AD, Safeguarding, Looked After Children and Special Educational Needs	Peer review: a team led by the AD, and supported by early help ADs as appropriate, conducts a two-day review of both safeguarding and looked after children's services • Case file audit • Practitioner discussion • Observation • User feedback	One review per area per annum	Detailed deep-dive peer review, mimicking the Ofsted model to gather assurance about service standards and quality from a range of sources
4.14 DCS	Lead focus group discussion with front-line social care and early help managers, with a focus on: • capacity • demand for services • recruitment • training • locality safeguarding solutions or service developments • management and supervision • strengths and challenges	Annual	To gather assurance about service standards
4.15 DCS	Lead focus group discussion with newly qualified social workers	Twice a year	To establish the experiences of newly qualified social workers joining East Sussex County Council
4.16 DCS	Quarterly performance review to establish the experiences of newly qualified social workers joining	Quarterly	To gather assurance on performance and outcomes, holding Heads of Service accountable as appropriate

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Role	Quality Assurance Task	Frequency	Purpose
4.17 AD, Safeguarding, Looked After Children and Special Educational Needs and ADs for early help services	Lead focus group discussion with front-line social care and early help staff	Two focus groups per annum	To gather assurance about practice and service standards and provide opportunities for front-line staff to air concerns
4.18 Principal Social Worker	Bi-monthly meeting with AD, Safeguarding, Looked After Children and Special Educational Needs Twice yearly meeting with DCS	6 times a year with AD Twice a year with DCS	To triangulate practice standards and development with strategic management

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Part 5: Identifying and Implementing Changes Required for Improving the Quality of Services

Role	Quality Assurance Task	Frequency	Purpose
5.1 Policy Officer, Audit Officer and Head of Safeguarding	Review and collate all findings and emerging themes from all social care quality assurance activities and produce summary report	Annually to CSCMT, Joint Divisional Meeting, SMT and LM via Scrutiny Committee Annual meeting with key service leads to agree issues and targets	To identify and implement changes required in policy, procedures, training and service provision
5.2 Early help commissioning support team; other EH managers as required	Review and collate findings from early help quality assurance activities	Annual review to Joint Divisional Meeting and SMT	

Key findings from the Quality Assurance in Children's Social Care and Early Help Services annual review 2012/13

- Multi agency working and information sharing needs to be more effective

- Need to take account of Family History and make use of Chronologies when carrying out assessments

- Children and Young People need to be seen, listened to and practice needs to focus around their needs and experiences; and their views, wishes and feelings are evident within any assessment.

- Fathers, partners and other relevant males need to be considered carefully as part of any robust assessment

- Reviews of family support and early help plans need to be systematically undertaken on a multi agency basis

- There needs to be evidence of reflective thinking and critical challenge in supervision

- There needs to be evidence of more reflective learning from complaints, service user feedback, reviews and audit