

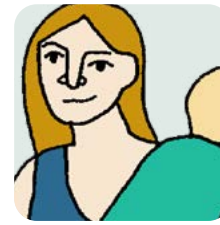


SEND Quality Assurance Framework



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1. Introduction

Our SEND and Inclusion Strategy (2024-2028) sets out how our local area SEND partnership will make things better for children and young people (CYP) with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The strategy describes 6 clear priorities underpinned by 54 commitments. The 6 priorities are:

1. Understanding needs
2. Listening to families
3. Right help right time
4. Inclusive educational provision
5. Preparing for the future and
6. Feeling safe and included

This Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) sets out how we will ensure we understand and improve our performance in these areas, specifically in relation to the quality of the education health and care (EHC) needs assessment process, education health and care plans (EHCPs) and annual reviews.

The framework describes a continuous cycle of reflection, monitoring and improvement, overseen by all partners working together for children and young people with SEND. It reflects our commitment to quality, timely and person-centred support and our understanding of the need for ongoing learning and improvement, based on data and feedback to ensure this is every family's experience.



2. Principles

This quality assurance framework is based on CLEAR principles used across the Children and Families and Education directorates in Bristol City Council:

- **Child centred:** All quality assurance will include a focus on the experiences of and outcomes for CYP on their journey through the SEND system. Children and families' views and experiences are central to how we understand the quality and impact of the work we are doing and how we learn and improve.
- **Learning focused:** Our quality assurance work will focus on identifying and sharing areas for development and good practice. We will use this information to support the development of staff and services through support and challenge.
- **Engagement:** To be effective, we all need to engage with and act on learning identified from quality assurance activity. Commitment to the quality assurance framework will be modelled and prioritised by all involved.
- **Accountability:** All individuals and leaders across the system are accountable for their own work and ongoing improvement as part of a system wide learning culture. Leaders within the system are also accountable within SEND governance arrangements for reporting on the impact of the quality assurance framework.
- **Reflection:** We believe that individuals and systems improve where there is high quality safe space for thinking and reflection, and opportunities for exploring different perspectives.



3. Quality assurance for improved performance

Our approach to quality assurance is based on a continuous cycle of activity, designed to improve performance over time, and consequently, the experiences of children and young people with SEND and their families.

- a.** Set practice standards
Establishing clear standards for practice in SEND that set out what 'good' looks like and expectations of professionals.
- b.** Collect information
Information gathered at this stage of the quality assurance cycle may include the findings of audits, feedback from CYP and parent carers and observations of practice.
- c.** Analyse information
Evidence gathered is compared to agreed practice standards, identifying what is going well and where improvements may need to be made.
- d.** Share and embed learning
The findings of the analysis are shared with services who contribute to statutory SEND processes including education, health and social care teams. This feedback may be shared in writing with teams or discussed with small groups but may also include feedback to individuals whose work has been looked at during quality assurance activity.
- e.** Implement change
Services, teams and individuals make changes to their practice based on the learning from the quality assurance activity.
- f.** Monitor impact
The impact of the agreed changes on practice is tracked prior to the quality assurance cycle starting again.

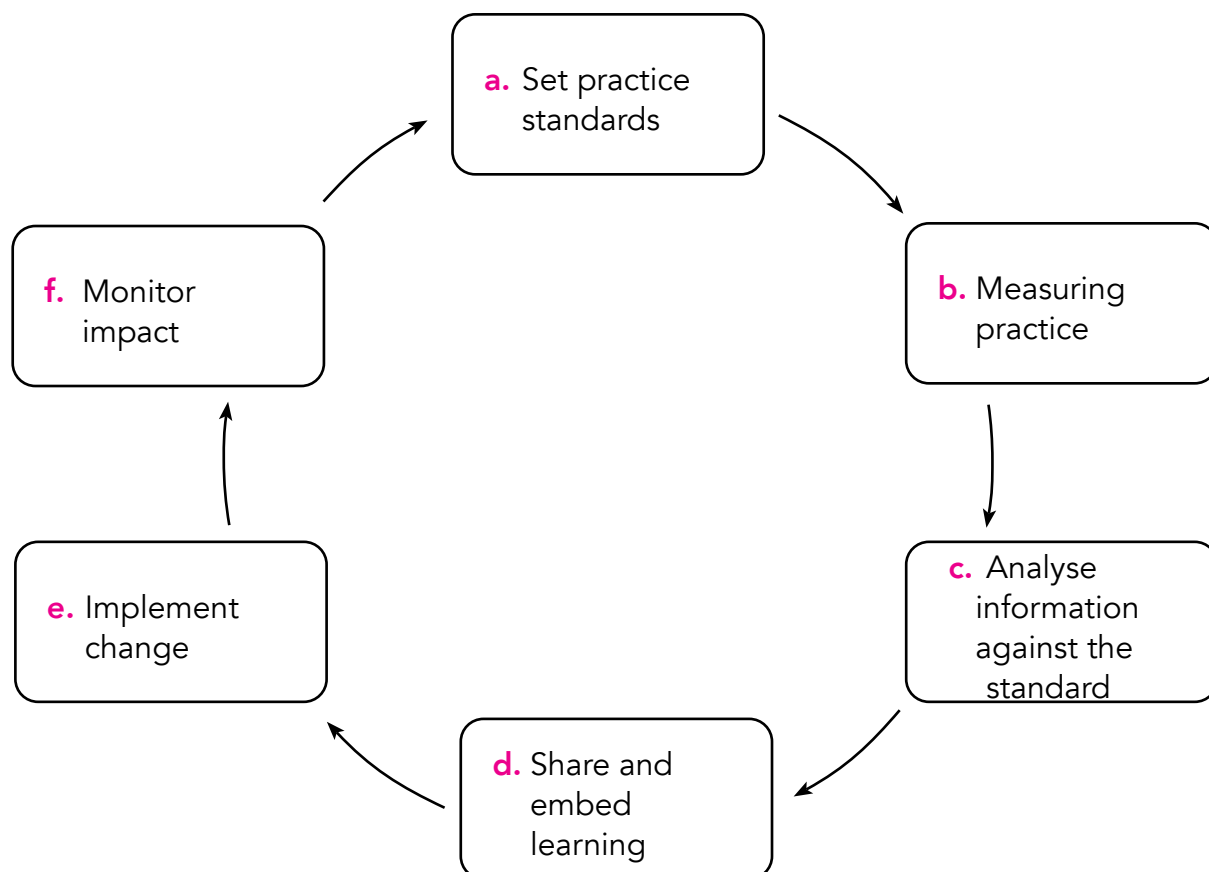


Figure 1. Quality assurance cycle

In Bristol, learning from practice is central to our commitment to continuous improvement. Our quality assurance framework sets out how we monitor, evaluate, and reflect on our work to ensure children are kept safe, families are supported effectively, standards are upheld, and positive outcomes are achieved.

Quality assurance is more than auditing, and auditing is more than gathering information. It's about how we use that information to strengthen practice, reflecting on where we are, what have learnt, and how we respond to these insights.

Our quality assurance tools and use of data give us a robust understanding of the quality of our work and inform our improvement activity. They allow us to identify our strengths and areas for development, through:

1. Conversations: seeking feedback from and listening to professionals, parent carers and children and young people
2. Free narrative and appreciative inquiry: looking at what has gone well and how we can build on these strengths
3. Monitoring and analysing our performance data
4. Working together and engaging with families, professionals and educational settings as part of our local area approach to [coproduction](#)
5. Learning from focused practice conversations and auditing activity, identifying good practice and improvements needed



4. Quality assurance toolkit

In Bristol, we use a combination of quantitative and qualitative information to evaluate our practice and outcomes for children, young people, and families. Drawing on a range of tools, our quality assurance activities focus on one or more of the following:

- Whole service issues and cross-cutting themes
- Service-specific and key improvement areas
- Local level quality assurance activity. This may involve in-depth case reviews, a focus on particular groups, or explore specific issues within an area of practice.

Responsibility for quality assurance

Responsibility for quality assurance is shared between the partner organisations contributing to SEND processes in the local area, (education, health and social care with support from Bristol Parent Carers). Additionally, all levels of the partner organisations have a role to play in quality assurance, including individual professionals, practice development leads, team managers and senior leaders.

Individual responsibilities

All staff contributing to the EHC needs assessment process, EHCPs and annual reviews have a responsibility to ensure their work is of the highest quality. In practice this means:

- All professionals contributing to EHC needs assessments and annual reviews should ensure their work is completed in line with agreed practice guidance and the [SEND legislative framework](#).
- Any professional experiencing difficulties with producing work to a suitable standard has a responsibility to bring this to the attention of their line manager and request support and/or training in order to make improvements.
- All professionals should take action to improve their work based on feedback from their line manager and/or quality assurance activity and sustain these improvements over time.

Practice development leads

Practice development leads in the Statutory SEND team are a key part of quality assurance in the council, supporting reflection, professional curiosity, and consistent practice across assessment coordinators and SEND officers.

Practice development leads work alongside team managers to support individuals through structured practice learning conversations reviewing work together with practitioners. Actions are agreed with the practitioner based on the findings of the conversation, good practice identified is shared with the wider team, and concerns are escalated where needed.

Managers' responsibilities

Managers of teams contributing to EHC needs assessments, EHCPs and annual reviews have a responsibility to ensure that their staff know what quality practice looks like and understand their individual strengths and areas for development. Managers also have a responsibility to support their teams and individual members of staff to make improvements. In practice this means:

- Monitoring and reporting on the quality of work within the team over time, including the impact of actions taken to improve quality. This includes ensuring processes are in place to check the quality of work before it is shared more widely, for example checking the quality of draft EHCPs written by assessment coordinators before they are sent to parent carers.
- Providing regular opportunities to discuss the quality of work and agree actions needed where appropriate through supervision and performance management meetings.
- Arranging whole team discussions focused on the quality of work and providing training where needed.

Single and multi-agency audits

Regular auditing ensures we understand our strengths and areas for development and can assess the impact of our improvement activity. Auditing is carried out by individual teams contributing to the statutory SEND processes and as a multiagency activity

including Bristol Parent Carers, our SEND parent carer forum. The tools we use to audit our work can be found on the [SEND Share Point site](#). The table below describes our regular auditing activity.

| | Activity | How we will do this | Future developments |
|--|---|---|---|
| EHC needs assessments and EHCPs | Single agency: Quality of professional advice for EHC needs assessments | 4 audits per month in each of the following teams: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Social care hub – led by the Social Care Hub Coordinator ● Educational Psychology (EP) Service – led by a Senior EP 1 audit per month in the following teams: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Therapies – coordinated by Sirona SEND Lead | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Purchase Invision360 software for quality assurance of EP advice ● Agree process for inclusion of teams such as Specialist CAMHS and community paediatricians in quality assurance activity |
| | Multiagency: Quality of EHCPs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 EHCP audit per agency per month (including scrutiny of professional advice and contributions from family and educational setting). The audit will involve Social Care, Sirona SEND Lead, Statutory SEND, EPS, Bristol Parent Carers and the Head of Inclusion. ● Quarterly moderation meeting focused on consistency of evaluations, impact of actions taken, focus for next EHCP audits and content of report to SEND and AP Executive Board. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Request parent carer, CYP and educational setting feedback as part of EHCP audit ● Purchase Invision360 software for quality assurance of EHCPs ● Inclusion of EHCPs amended following annual review ● Focus multiagency audits on EHCPs for particular cohorts, for example children in care or young people with English as an additional language ● Clarification of Designated Clinical Officer (DCO) involvement following reduction in ICB capacity |

| | Activity | How we will do this | Future developments |
|-------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Annual reviews | Single agency: Quality of annual reviews (decision making and amendments) | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop and introduce audit tool focused on decision making and amendments to EHCPs following annual review (Statutory SEND team) |
| | Single agency: Quality of professional contributions to annual reviews and families' experiences of annual reviews | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop and introduce audit tools and process focused on professionals' contributions to annual reviews (educational settings, social care, health and education) ● Purchase of Invision360 Quality of Annual Review software focused on CYP and families' experiences of annual review meetings |
| Local area SEND system | Multi-agency: SEND case audits of the impact of CYP's plans and support | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pilot approach to multi-agency SEND case audits involving education, health, social care and educational settings focused on the impact of CYP's support and plans | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Embed approach to multi-agency case audits based on learning from pilot |

Additional quality assurance activity

In addition to the regular audit activity described above, the local area carries out quality assurance in a number of ways.

Local area partnership SEND Self Evaluation

Once a year we carry out a complete self-evaluation of the impact of our local area arrangements on children, young people and families. This self-evaluation supports our continuous improvement and the delivery of high quality services. Typically, the findings of our self-evaluation will be shared as part of the SEND inspection framework and will also be discussed with Ofsted during Annual Engagement Meetings focused on our local area arrangements.

Analysis of performance data

Across the partnership, we use performance data and dashboards to understand demand, workflow, and the quality and timeliness of our work. These tools help managers and practitioners gain insight into service users' experiences and support timely, informed decisions.

Bristol City Council's Performance Clinic takes an outcomes-based approach, asking:

- What is working well and how do we know that this is intentional positive performance?
- What are we concerned about in terms of performance and what steps are we taking to respond to these?
- What is the real impact on children and young people?

Routinely asking these questions ensures that our data leads to action and drives better outcomes for children, young people and families.

Complaints and Compliments

Complaints and compliments received are analysed as part of our quality assurance activity. Themes identified in this analysis support the interpretation of performance data and ensure there is an ongoing focus on the experiences of children, young people and families.

In Bristol City Council, regular reports about performance are provided by the Complaints team and presented to the Education Directorate Management Team to agree actions needed to address any areas for development identified.

Reporting and governance

The findings of the SEND quality assurance activity described in this framework will be reported at three levels of the local area SEND organisational structure. Report formats can be viewed on the [SEND Share Point site](#).

| Level | Quality assurance activity | Reporting | Frequency |
|--|--|--|---|
| 1 (team or service) | Management quality assurance of individual and team work | Examples, (dependent on team), include: supervision and/or performance management meeting minutes to individual member of staff; regular report on overall quality of practice to Senior Leadership Team | Dependent on team but typically monthly |
| 2 (SEND Quality Assurance Group) | Single agency audits of professional advice for EHC needs assessments Multiagency EHCP audits Single agency audits of annual reviews | Report of detailed findings of audits, actions agreed and progress against actions | Monthly |
| 3 (Bristol City Council Performance Clinic) | Statutory performance data analysis | Meetings of clinics including actions agreed for individuals and teams | Monthly |
| 4 (SEND and AP Executive Group) | All SEND quality assurance activity undertaken in the previous quarter including multi-agency case audits | Summary of quality assurance findings, actions agreed, impact, risks and mitigations | Quarterly |

This framework will be reviewed in May 2026. This review will include discussion about additional SEND activity to be included in the framework in the second year of delivery and beyond.

Documents available in other formats:

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