

# Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

## Quality Assurance Framework 2022 - 2024

Version 14



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

## VERSION CONTROL

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## 1. Introduction

The Birmingham City Council SEND Strategy 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, keep healthy and access meaningful occupation, employment and life-long learning opportunities.

Within the Quality Assurance (QA) Framework, the terms 'SEND' and 'child/young person/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, the joint Strategic Action Plan, and the Accelerated Progress Plan 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:

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

This multi-agency Framework sets out a shared approach to QA across partner agencies, each of whom have their own internal quality assurance processes. This enables a co-ordinated and coherent approach to the cycle of learning / continuous improvement and action monitoring that demonstrates impact for children, young people and young adults.

## 2. Quality Assurance

Quality Assurance (QA) systems are involved in defining, assuring, maintaining and improving quality. With the SEND Code of Practice as a central statutory point, QA processes in Birmingham are central to ensuring that children, young people, 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 clear definitions of the standards expected, ongoing self-assessment and evaluation.

## 2.1 Purpose:

- To ensure quality checks are in place to assure compliance with the SEND Code of Practice
- To promote a culture of high aspirations for all CYP with SEND
- Embed quality definitions and checks into all agencies and service processes to evidence strengthened frontline practice and to improve both the child/young person's/young adult's experiences of the service and their outcomes.
- Embed quality into services through monitoring the 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, young people 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 and 'What Good Looks Like':

- It is focused on the 'lived experience' of children/young people/young adults and the contribution made by the services they receive.
- It is underpinned by statutory compliance with SEND Code of Practice 2015
- It values the contribution of children, young people, 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 quality improvement cycle.

Reviewing evidence, the impact of the changes made following quality checking is an essential part of the quality feedback loop.

## 2.3 QA systems are supported by:

- All partners having a clear definition of the quality standards they are working to as a Local Area
- Transparency and a willingness to address and learn from errors
- All members of the workforce having access to comprehensive policies, standard operational procedures, practice guidance and information about research evidence to inform their practice and professional development
- QA systems are 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.
- Key messages from a wide diverse evidence base being available in an ongoing way to provide an overview of quality and learning and support activities that drive continuous improvement.

### **3. Quality Assurance is Everyone's responsibility**

It is essential that everybody working in the SEND partnership contributes to driving forward high-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, supervision, case discussion, focus groups, workshops, or forums.

#### **3.1 The role of staff working across SEND partnership:**

Everybody employed within the SEND partnership will be provided with the tools to allow for high quality input. Each person will be individually responsible for ensuring that their work is of a consistently high quality. People will be held accountable for ensuring that practice standards are always met.

#### **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.

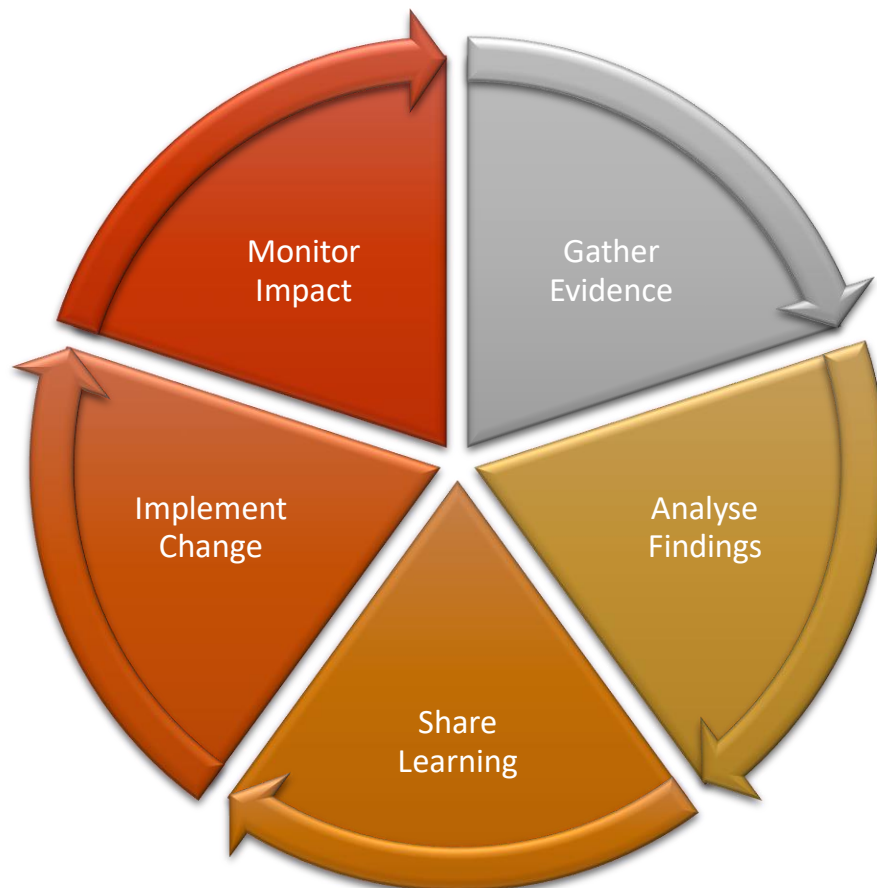
## 4. Continuous Improvement Cycle

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

- Improve outcomes for individual children,
- Support the professional development of staff across agencies,
- 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.

Model 1

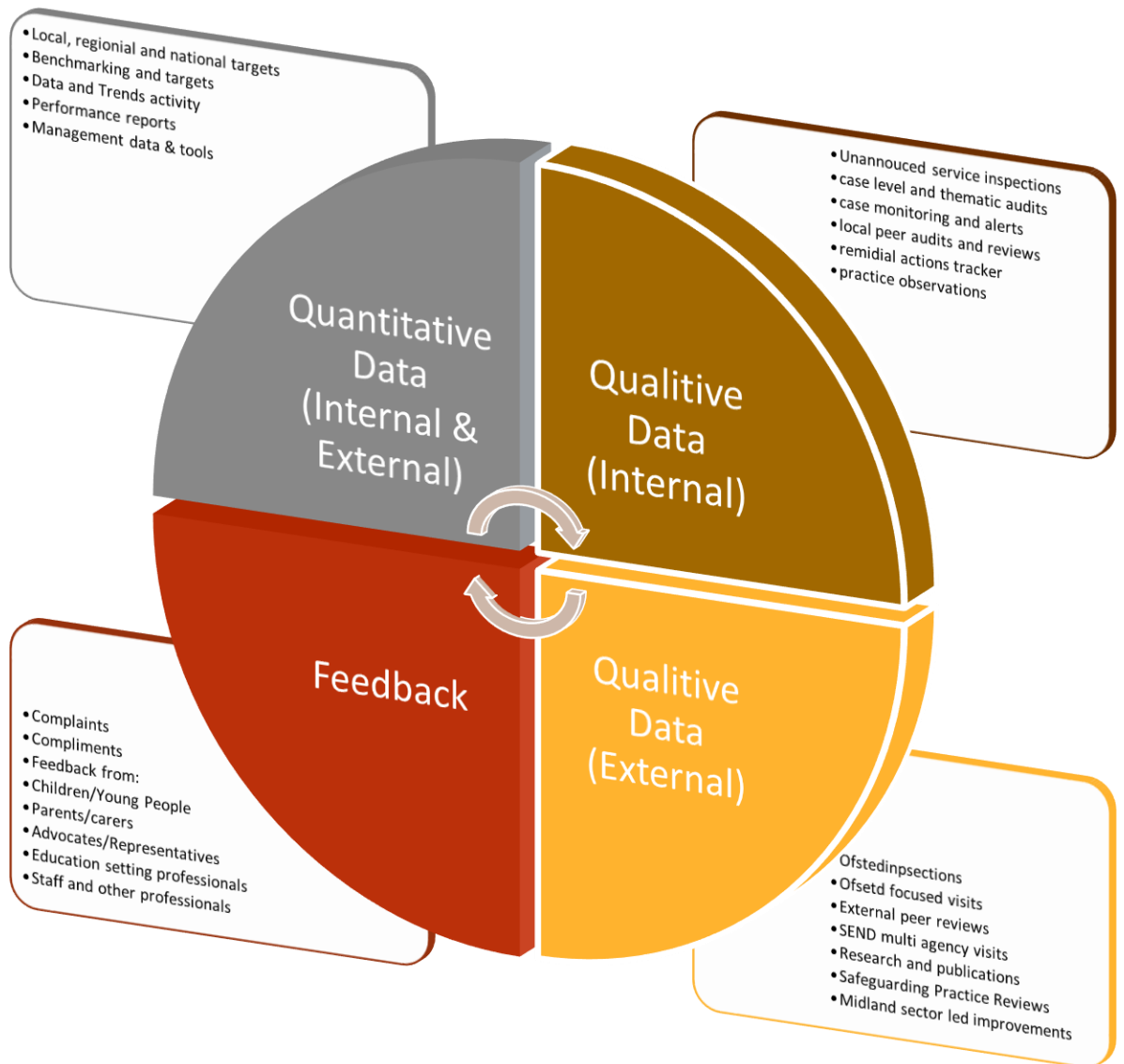




Gather Evidence

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

Model 2





**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 under development to support this.

**System Compliance:** We want the experience of children, young people, young adults 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.

**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. This rigorous commitment to systematic audit is fundamental to inform learning.

**Themed audits** are to be 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, 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.

**Staff Supervision** 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 Quantitative Data

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.
- CQC inspections
- LGA and peer reviews.
- Learning from multi-agency audits.
- Sector Led Improvement networks in the 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.
- Collation of emerging themes from SEND Tribunals

#### 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 (such as RISE Youth Forum) are represented on the SEND Partnership Groups and Executive Board to ensure service users can influence and inform policy and practice development. The SEND Partnership Groups, plan to continue to coproduce with children, young people, young adults, parents/carers, a structured and planned approach to seeking their feedback with a 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 SEND meetings and reviews. A plan will consolidate arrangements for gaining service user feedback and other consultation activities and inform regular reporting.

**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 SEND meetings and reviews.

### 4.3 Quality Assurance across SEND provision

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

##### **Level One – Moderation and 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 EHC needs assessment process.

All partners service leaders will have arrangements in place to spot check the quality of professional advice and to provide supervision and/or training to address any concerns identified.

##### **Level Two – Parental Satisfaction Survey**

We want to understand Parent/Carer satisfaction with both the process that is followed to develop the EHCP and the quality and content of the plan. We will therefore develop a survey, which will be issued Parent / Carers when they receive their final EHCP. The survey will provide us with data that can be used to improve the process and quality of the plans. Survey questions will be co-produced with all partners and will be reviewed on an annual basis.

##### **Level Three – Multi-agency Audit of EHC 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 to audit the quality of EHC plans following an EHC needs assessment or an amended EHC plan following an annual review.

To examine:

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

##### **Method**

The EHC Plans will be audited using the Invision 360 tool. Auditors will be appointed from the partnership and will receive training on the use of the tool. The Invision 360 tool will support assigning the audit of a single EHCP to a maximum of 5 auditors. This provides the options to do both multi-agency audits of a single plan or to assign a single plan to a single auditor.

An audit of a minimum of 8 (two each from Early Years, Primary, Secondary and Post-16) EHCPs each half term. The focus will be on new EHCPs issued in the previous term and EHCPs that have been issued following a recent review. Cases considered should attempt to ensure there is a wide and fair representation of the demographic of Birmingham.

Both single and multi-agency audits will be themed. Additional focused questions

may be asked using Microsoft Forms to support the themed audit. Themes may include children and young people, at risk of permanent exclusion, looked after children, preparation for adulthood, or children, young people, young adults with specific types of medical or other need.

A BCC staff member will be given the role of QA Officer and will work with the SEND Improvement Board to provide a forward plan of audits and identify the EHCPs that are to be audited. The QA officer will use the Invision 360 tool to assign audits to auditors and co-ordinate and develop the reports that will be used to inform the System Leader Case Review process. The QA Officer will ensure that in each tranche of audits, 10% of the EHCPs are audited by at least 2 auditors and can be moderated to ensure consistency of the audit process.

Initially, Parent / Carers and young people will not be asked to undertake audits of the EHCPs however the SEND Improvement Board will review their involvement with the process at each termly Case Review and provide a recommendation for how and when they should be involved in the process. A Data Sharing agreement will need to be agreed before Parent / Carers and young people undertake audits. The Agreement will need to clearly outline the personal data that can be shared and the level of anonymisation that will need to be undertaken before the EHCP can be shared.

### Level Four – System Leader Case Review

In addition to the Level Three single and multi-agency audit, representatives from the SEND Improvement Board will moderate the EHCP plan audits on a termly basis. They will, with the support of the SEND QA Officer, review individual plans identified through the activity completed within the Level 3 audit, based on a thematic approach (e.g., transitions, annual reviews, PFA etc.). This moderation activity will include plans from all year settings. 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.

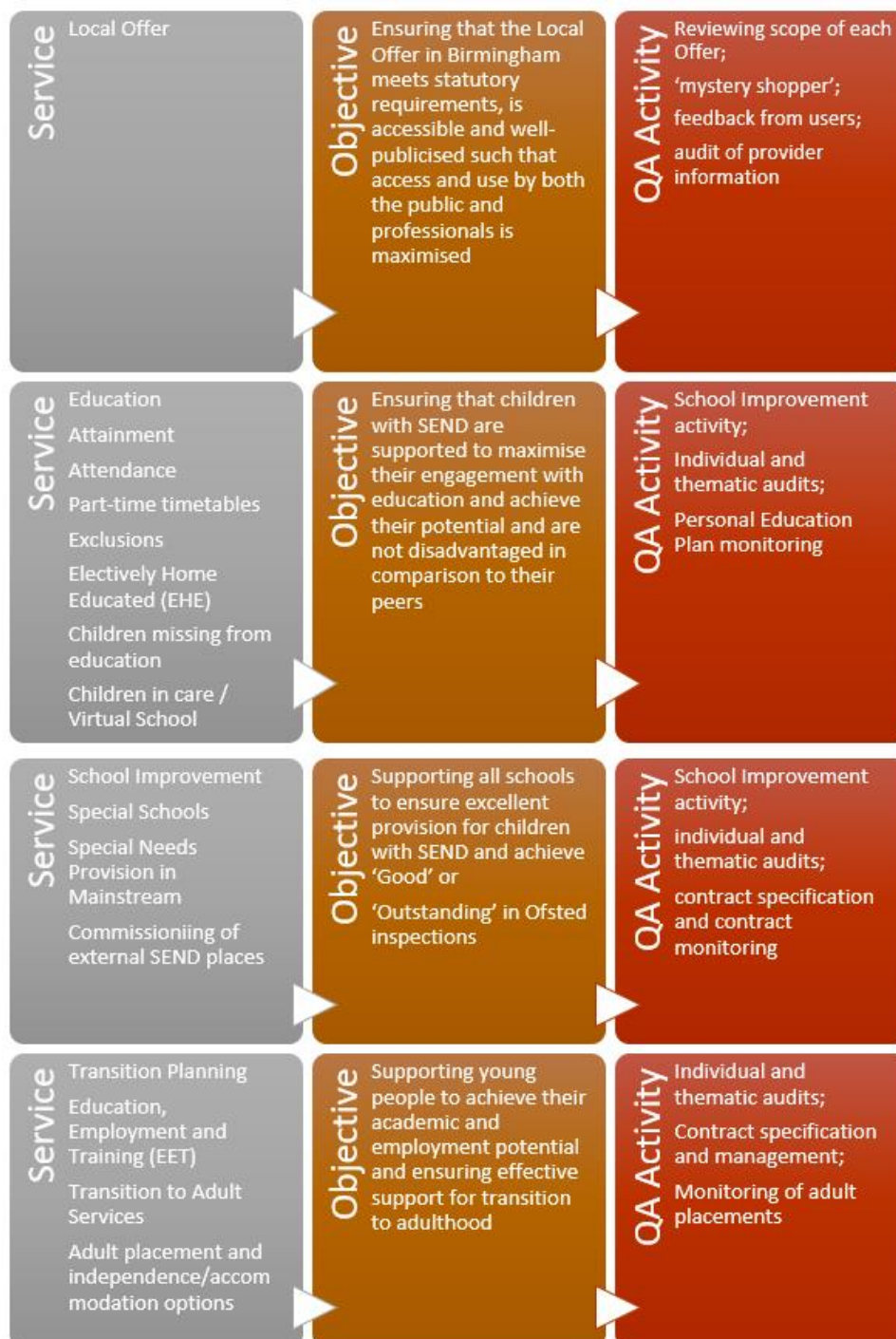
Model 3:



**Quality Assurance at a local area strategic level:**

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, young adults 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. This should inform the continuous self-evaluation of the local area.

Model 4





## Analyse Findings

### 4.4 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 (level 3) will be subject to analysis and reports and practice briefings will be produced.

**A Termly Quality Assurance Report from QA 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

### 4.5 Driving system learning and improvement

Audit reports and short practitioner briefings will be disseminated following audits by services and health providers and available via 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 C, YP/YA with SEND.

**Termly reports** prepared by the SQA 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 Compliments and Complaints (SEND) Briefing** circulated to staff will share learning from anonymised compliments and complaints received.

The **Workforce Development Plan** will be informed by QA activity. SENAR will invest 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.



#### 4.6 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 and adjust their practice to improve the impact that their work has on a learner's outcomes.
- 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.



## Monitor Impact

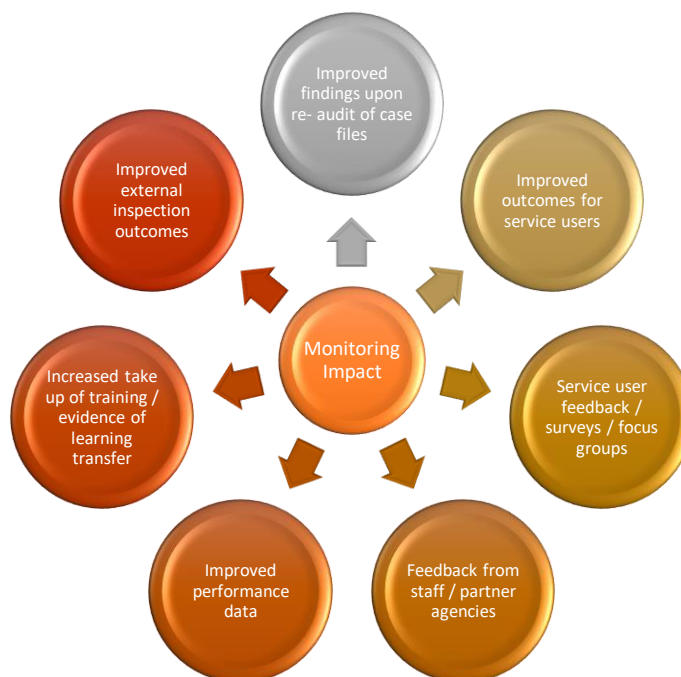
### 4.7 Monitor Impact

The SEND Partnership Groups, and Executive Board will seek evidence of service improvement and **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 learner outcomes
- Improved staff feedback through surveys.
- Improved feedback from professionals from all 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/ 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





## 5. Summary

Just as SEND is 'everyone's business', so is quality assurance and the responsibility for ensuring that children, young people and young adults with SEND receive timely, 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 critical appraisal of service planning and delivery.

The Quality Assurance Officers for SEND in liaison with the SEND Partnership Groups will co-ordinate 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, young people and young adults with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, and their families.

## Appendix 1

**This Appendix will be revised to align it with the SEND Strategy that is being developed**

### 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 below.

#### SEND is Everyone's Business

- Parents/carers report increased confidence at transition points between services and where there are changes in provision (e.g., primary to secondary phase)
- Annual monitoring of joint commissioning contracts shows that arrangements take a person-centred approach
- Data from all agencies (e.g., referrals data, SEND audits) shows timely identification of need
- The majority of children, young people with an Education Health 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 (LO) 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 (EHE), attendance data, youth offending, emergency health admissions, social care services)
- Annual surveys carried out by parent/carers 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 there is a continuing increase in the number of parents/carers, children, young people, and young adults 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, young people, and young adults have their needs met locally, reducing reliance on out of area 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