HOW GOOD ARE WE NOW?

HOW WELL DO WE PROTECT CHILDREN AND MEET THEIR NEEDS?

HOW GOOD CAN WE BE?

children services for

HMIe
improving Scottish education

HOW WELL DO WE PROTECT CHILDREN AND MEET THEIR NEEDS?

children services for

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CONTENTS

Self-evaluation within and between services to protect children and young people has evolved significantly since the first joint inspections of child protection services were undertaken. Increasingly services are using self-evaluation on both a single agency basis and collectively to improve the quality of the work undertaken on behalf of vulnerable children and their families.

This framework supports staff working in child protection services to carry out self-evaluation. It builds on the first framework for self-evaluation *'How well are children protected and their needs met'* published by HM Inspectorate of Education in 2005. Users should find this document compatible with the earlier framework for self-evaluation as well as with a range of current frameworks for self-evaluation used in education, social work and in wider children's services. The framework can also be used in conjunction with other quality management systems. Our intention is that the framework will remain relevant as the scrutiny bodies undergo change.

The quality indicators which are illustrated in the framework are those which will be used by inspectors in external evaluation of services. As inspection becomes increasingly proportionate, external evaluation will focus on fewer quality indicators and self-evaluation will help to determine the scope of each inspection. Using the same set of quality indicators reinforces the partnership between internal and external evaluation of services, which has been a hallmark of the first cycle of joint inspections of services to protect children and young people.

The focus on delivering positive outcomes for service users and the expectations of the National Performance Framework have confirmed the need for all staff working in child protection services to embrace self-evaluation. This guide to self evaluation, therefore, is designed to help staff identify what they are doing well and how they can further improve outcomes for children and families using services.

Graham Donaldson

HMIE published the first guide to the self-evaluation of services to protect children[1] in 2005. The aim of this publication was to provide a framework to evaluate the help children got when they needed it. The publication outlined an approach using Quality Indicators (QIs) which could be used by staff across services within a local authority area to evaluate the quality of their work to protect children. HMIE has now updated this Quality Improvement Framework to reflect contemporary national guidance and to support continuous improvement within the context of inter-agency provision of services to protect children. Using the framework will ensure that self-evaluation contributes to both the improvement of services and to the inspection process.

NATIONAL PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK AND REFERENCE QUALITY INDICATORS

The Scottish Government has identified an increase in the overall proportion of Local Authority Areas receiving positive child protection inspection reports[2] as one of the 45 national indicators towards the achievement of the national outcomes within the National Performance Framework.[3]

This national indicator informs progress in relation to the Smarter and the Safer and Stronger Strategic Objectives. It shows the extent to which improvement is evident in the level of success being achieved by services in keeping vulnerable children and young people safe, thereby allowing them to prosper in terms of their education and their broader development. For the purposes of national reporting, the following reference quality indicators from this framework are used:

REFERENCE QUALITY INDICATORS

2.1 Children and young people are listened to, understood and respected

2.2 Children and young people benefit from strategies to minimise harm

2.3 Children and young people are helped by the actions taken in immediate response to concerns

2.4 Children and young people's needs are met

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[1] How well are children protected and their needs met? Self-evaluation using quality indicators, HM Inspectorate of Education 2005. **http//www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/hwcpnm.pdf**

[2] The definition of positive inspection reports is the percentage of Local Authority areas receiving *satisfactory* or better in all of the reference subset of quality indicators.

[3] **http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/scotPerforms/indicators**

COMMUNITY PLANNING, INTEGRATED CHILDREN'S SERVICES PLANNING AND SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENTS

Integrated Children's Services Plans (ICSPs) are a statutory obligation for local authorities and should include planned action to take forward improvements in services to protect children and meet their needs. They should be seen as the children and young people's component of Community Plans, but should become increasingly focused around the needs of children and families, rather than around systems and processes.

The next generation of Single Outcome Agreements (SOAs) will be drawn up with Community Planning Partners and local Community Plans will form their foundations. The case for better integration between the Community Plan and the ICSP is reinforced by this Quality Improvement Framework. It emphasises the development of community capacity as a key support for children in need of protection and recognises the community planning system as an opportunity to improve outcomes.

LINKS TO HIGH LEVEL SOCIAL POLICIES

A number of high level Scottish Government and COSLA initiatives underpin the approach promoted within this document. The *Early Years Framework*[4] places a strong emphasis on the duty of all services to identify and manage the risks early in life that perpetuate inequality, to tackle entrenched inequality and improve outcomes. The *Equally Well implementation plan*[5] identifies children's very early years and mental health and wellbeing as key priority areas. It sets out a programme for change which shifts the focus from providing services (doing things for or to people) to building the capacity of individuals, families and communities. The implementation plan supports further progress and change, both at local and national level. It describes how the Government and Community Planning Partnerships will plan action in the short to medium term.

GETTING IT RIGHT FOR EVERY CHILD (GIRFEC) AND A CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE

Getting it Right for Every Child[6] seeks to improve the wellbeing of all children and is a key foundation for all action with children and families. Wellbeing is characterised by eight indicators; safe, nurtured, healthy, active, achieving, respected, responsible and included. The approach puts the child and family firmly at the centre of planning and action and seeks to build solutions with and around them. *GIRFEC* applies to all children, whatever their level of need, and to all services. Holistic, streamlined planning, assessment and decision making processes which lead to the right help at the right time to address children's need and risks are at the heart of the approach. The emphasis is on improving outcomes. Other elements of the *GIRFEC* approach are common values, information sharing, risk assessment models and the development of a lead professional role.

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[4] Early Years Framework, A joint Scottish Government and COSLA policy statement.
http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/03/14121428/0

[5] Equally Well Implementation Plan, Scottish Government 2008
http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/12/10094101/3

[6] Getting it right for every child: An overview of the Getting it Right Approach, Scottish Government 2008
www.scotland.gov.uk/gettingitright

A *GIRFEC* approach requires effective working arrangements between staff who work with children, a single system of assessment and access to one record for each child. Where action to support children involves multi-agency activity, there should be one integrated plan and the child and family should be involved in its development and implementation. These practices should become embedded within services and should be taken into account when making evaluations on how well services protect children and meet their needs.

Curriculum for Excellence[7] aims to enable all of Scotland's children to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. Children's wellbeing is a necessary requirement for this to be achieved. It is clear that a collaborative approach will be most successful in addressing this aim and it is expected that the full range of professionals working with children will be familiar with it and contribute to achieving it.

EQUALITIES

Tackling inequalities is fundamental to ensuring positive outcomes for all children including those in need of protection. The equalities agenda is applicable across all QIs within this framework. It is expected that services using the framework for the purpose of self-evaluation will take full account of the relevant legislative duties[8] for public sector organisations.

SELF-EVALUATION FOR IMPROVEMENT

Self-evaluation is central to continuous improvement. It is not a bureaucratic or mechanistic process. Rather, it is a reflective process through which Child Protection Committees (CPCs) and partner organisations get to know themselves well and identify the best way to improve their services. The framework of QIs is designed to help this by:

- encouraging us, at all levels, to reflect upon practice and identify strengths and areas for improvement;

- recognising the work we are doing which has a positive effect on the lives of children and their families;

- identifying where good quality needs to be maintained, where improvement is needed; and where we should be working towards achieving excellence; and

- allowing us to inform stakeholders about the quality of services to protect children in their area.

Self-evaluation is forward looking. It is about change and improvement, leading to well considered innovation in service delivery. It is based on our professional reflection, challenge and support and involves us in taking informed decisions about actions which result in clear benefits for children. Rather than a one-off activity which is done in preparation for inspection, it is a dynamic process which should go on throughout the year. It establishes a baseline from which to plan to improve outcomes for children and promotes a collective commitment to set priorities for improvement. Used effectively, continuous self-evaluation helps us to monitor progress and impact.

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[7] A Curriculum for Excellence, The Scottish Executive,
http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/curriculumforexcellence
[8] www.equalityhumanrights.com

The process of self-evaluation

Put simply, self-evaluation for improvement broadly focuses on answering three key questions.

- ✪ How good are we now?
- ✪ How do we know?
- ✪ How good can we be?

How good are we now?

This question should help CPCs and partner organisations identify strengths within and across service delivery and begin to consider areas for improvement.

How do we know?

In considering this question, services should be gathering evidence and developing auditing processes which illustrate how well children are protected. There are a number of sources of evidence which can inform CPCs and services about the quality of their work.

How good can we be?

This question should help to take forward what we have found so far and to develop a set of clear and tangible priorities for improvement.

THE QUALITY IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK

The QIs are arranged under six high-level questions which HMIE and other scrutiny bodies have adopted for evaluative purposes. CPCs and children's services are asked, individually and collectively, to answer these questions.

- ✪ What key outcomes have we achieved?
- ✪ How well do we meet the needs of our stakeholders?
- ✪ How good is our delivery of services for children and families in need of protection?
- ✪ How good is our management?
- ✪ How good is our leadership?
- ✪ What is our capacity for improvement?

These six simple but powerful questions are set out in a quality framework of **ten key areas** as shown in appendix 1.

A COMMON APPROACH

The framework of indicators in this publication is used by a number of public services. Education authorities use the framework to evaluate the quality of services they provide across the range of their work. The same framework is used by professionals working in children's services,[9] youth workers and by the Social Work Inspection Agency. Using the same framework provides a common language and understanding about quality which makes it easier for everyone involved in supporting children in need of protection to share their findings and to work together to improve the children's experiences and outcomes.

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9 A guide to evaluating services for children and young people using quality indicators, HM Inspectorate of Education 2007.
http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/Evaluating%20Services.pdf.PDF

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The framework is consistent with a number of quality models and awards including Customer Service Excellence, Investors in People, the Excellence Model of the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) and aspects of ISO 9000. It can also be used in conjunction with them. The approach is also consistent with the principles of Best Value, the statutory framework provided within the *Local Government in Scotland Act 2003*.

This framework can also be used in conjunction with the Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF) which provides a useful tool for corporate self-assessment within public service organisations. Key areas of the child protection Quality Improvement Framework can be aligned to the PSIF Criteria where a closer look at services to protect children is part of corporate self-assessment evidence.

QUALITY INDICATORS

The QIs in this framework cover the key aspects of the work of CPCs and services involved in protecting children from harm. Each indicator contains illustrations which describe very good and weak practice. These can be used to gauge the quality of services. Where appropriate, the illustrations are based on those contained in the first self-evaluation guide and used in the Joint Inspections of Services to Protect Children. They have been revised to put greater emphasis on impact and outcomes for children and families. They are not designed to be used as checklists, they are intended to be used alongside other evaluation tools and sources of evidence.

The QIs will assist CPCs and partner organisations to plan services for children with a focus on improvement. Inspectors will use them to evaluate the quality of services to protect children.

The QIs can be viewed as a three-part model consisting of inter-related areas:

✪ the outcomes and impacts services have on the lives of children;

✪ the processes that make up the work of services; and

✪ the individual and collective vision and leadership of the services.
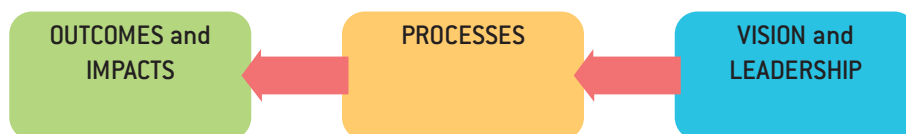
The vision should set out what services hope to achieve in relation to protecting children. This should be a shared vision across the CPC and among all partner organisations who have responsibility for ensuring that children are protected and their needs met. As part of self-evaluation, services need to be aware that this vision is the main driver for their practice.

Improvement in outcomes for children and families is the central aim of self-evaluation. Whatever the planning structures for taking forward improvement, the focus should be on those areas of most concern. It will have a more positive impact on children and families if a manageable number of priorities are taken forward effectively.

This diagram shows how self-evaluation contributes to **planning for improvement**.
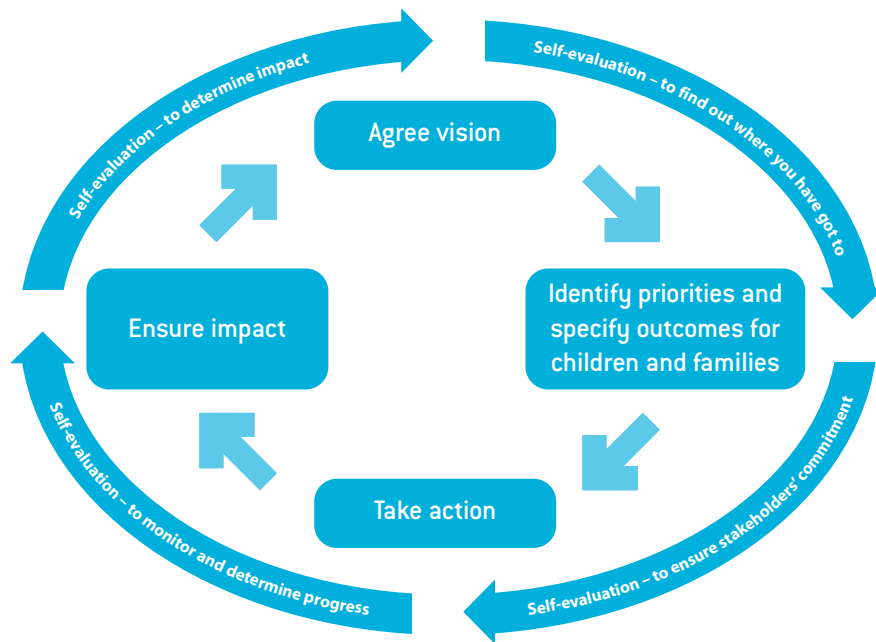
The improvement plan should have:

- a small number of **improvement priorities** which focus on improvements for children and families and are **observable and measurable**;
- clearly identified **responsibilities** for implementation linked to named individuals and/or teams;
- clear **timescales** with milestones and deadlines; and
- **measures of success** which include performance data, quality indicators, and stakeholders' views.

USING INDICATORS AND SOURCES OF EVIDENCE TO EVALUATE SERVICES TO PROTECT CHILDREN

Quality needs to be considered from different angles and evaluations need to be checked for consistency. By using a range of indicators and sources of evidence, it is possible to arrive at a holistic view of quality.

The quality framework as shown in appendix 1 provides a structure for self-evaluation. The starting point in self-evaluation is to ask *How good are we now?* and consider the **outcomes and impacts** which our services have on children in need of protection and their families. We need to evaluate the **direct** outcomes on children and families. Next we should look at the processes we use to achieve the outcomes and impacts we want for children and their families. In order to do this, we should select key QIs from the **processes that make up the work of our services to children and families in need of protection**. By asking the question, *How good are we now?* we can identify strengths and areas which we need to improve or further develop. Sometimes a more comprehensive approach may be needed, for example, when we are reviewing the ICSP, preparing for a forthcoming inspection or there has been a significant change of leadership within the CPC or partner organisations. These may provide appropriate opportunities to take stock of the progress made and to revisit our shared vision to ensure it reflects priority areas for improvement. Improvement should be central to our self-evaluation. By focusing on the first five high-level questions and coming to a view of *How well do we protect children and meet their needs?,* we can then focus on the sixth high-level question, form a view of our capacity to improve and decide *How good can we be?*

It is important to test out the strength of evidence through 'triangulation'. This involves comparing one source of evidence with a second and third source. For example, if considering the effectiveness of the CPCs training programme we could consider the initial evaluations from staff attending courses and further evaluation of the impact this had on their individual and collective day to day practice. We could then compare these findings with the experiences of children and families who have received services through the child protection system.

The key sources of evidence should include:

- ✪ **performance data** collected nationally, locally or within a service;
- ✪ surveys of **stakeholders' and service user views**;
- ✪ **direct observation** and auditing of practice; and
- ✪ review of a **range of documentation** that evidences decision making and assessment of risk.

In taking this approach to self-evaluation, CPCs and their partner organisations have the best possible opportunity to arrive at well thought out and robust conclusions. This then allows identification of the most appropriate course of action to ensure improvement is realistic, achievable and likely to impact positively on outcomes for children.

It is important to bear in mind that what is written down is not necessarily the same as what actually happens. Progress reports on improvement plans are helpful but will need to be checked against what has actually been delivered. What really matters is the impact of all the key activities of the partner organisations on children and their safety.

The following framework of indicators is designed as a toolkit to help with evaluating and improving the quality of services to protect children. This approach enables professional reflection on practice within and across services. Where best practice is identified, it should be celebrated and shared with others. If impacts and outcomes are not as good as expected, the source of the issues can be tracked down by focusing on some appropriately selected indicators. This proportionate approach allows a focus on areas of priority, rather than routinely covering all aspects of work. Finally, this will allow us to focus on our capacity to improve.

Number	Quality Indicator	Themes
Key performance outcomes		
1.1	Improvements in performance	✪ Performance data and trends over time ✪ Overall quality of services to protect children. ✪ Performance against the relevant aims, objectives and outcomes set for children in improvement plans.
1.2	Fulfilment of statutory duties	✪ Compliance with legislation and responsiveness to guidance and codes of practice
Impact on children and families in need of protection		
2.1	Children and young people are listened to, understood and respected	✪ Communication ✪ Trust
2.2	Children and young people benefit from strategies to minimise harm	✪ Support for vulnerable children and families ✪ Children's awareness of keeping themselves safe
2.3	Children and young people are helped by the actions taken in immediate response to concerns	✪ Initial response of staff to children and families who need help ✪ Impact of immediate actions by staff to keep children safe
2.4	Children's and young people's needs are met	✪ Meeting needs ✪ Reducing the longer-term effects of abuse and neglect
Impact on staff		
3.1	Impact on staff	✪ The extent to which staff are and report that they feel motivated, committed, valued and have positive experiences within and across services ✪ The extent to which staff within and across services improve their practices through training and development activities
Impact on the community		
4.1	Being aware of protecting children	✪ Confidence of the public in services to protect children ✪ Responses to concerns raised by members of the public about a child's safety or welfare
Delivery of services to children and families in need of protection		
5.1	Involving children and families in key processes	✪ Keeping children and their families informed and involved ✪ Addressing dissatisfaction and complaints
5.2	Information sharing and recording	✪ Appropriate sharing of information ✪ Joint understanding of information ✪ Management and recording of information
5.3	Recognising and assessing risks and needs	✪ Recognising a child needs help ✪ Initial information gathering and investigation ✪ Assessment of risks and needs
5.4	Effectiveness of planning to meet needs	✪ Decision making, identifying responsibilities and meeting needs ✪ Taking account of changing circumstances
5.5	Improvement through self-evaluation	✪ Commitment to self-evaluation ✪ Management of self-evaluation ✪ Service improvements

Number	Quality Indicator	Themes
Policy development and planning		
6.1	Policies and procedures	✪ Range of policies and link to vision and aims ✪ Managing, disseminating, evaluating and updating policies
6.2	Operational management and planning	✪ The effectiveness of operational management ✪ The use of management information to plan and develop services to protect children
6.3	Involving children and families in developing policies and services	✪ Seeking views of children and families and involving them in developing policies and services to protect children
Management and support of staff		
7.1	Staff sufficiency, recruitment and retention	✪ Identifying and meeting human resource needs ✪ Safe recruitment ✪ Care and welfare ✪ Equality and fairness ✪ Recognition and parity of esteem
7.2	Staff deployment and teamwork	✪ Appropriateness and clarity of remits across service boundaries ✪ Deployment of staff to achieve planned priorities ✪ Teamworking ✪ Communication and involvement in decision making
7.3	Staff training, development and support	✪ Professional confidence and competence ✪ Training and development
Partnership and resources		
8.1	Partnership working	✪ Clarity of purpose and aims ✪ Working across services and disciplines ✪ Staff roles in partnerships
8.2	Management of resources	✪ Strategic resource planning ✪ Resource deployment ✪ Efficiency and effectiveness in use of resources
Leadership and direction		
9.1	Vision, values and aims	✪ Coherence of vision, values and aims for protecting children ✪ Sharing and sustaining the vision ✪ Promotion of positive attitudes to social and cultural diversity
9.2	Leadership and direction	✪ Joint leadership and planning within and across services ✪ Strategic deployment of resources
9.3	Developing people and partnerships	✪ Developing leadership capacity ✪ Building and sustaining relationships ✪ Teamwork and partnerships
9.4	Leadership of improvement and change	✪ Support and challenge ✪ Creativity, innovation and step change ✪ Continuous improvement

◄───────────────────────────────────────►
How good can we be?
Capacity for improvement

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The Quality Indicators with Illustrations

What key outcomes have we achieved?

1. **Key performance outcomes**
1.1 **Improvements in performance**

THEMES

- ✪ Performance data and trends over time
- ✪ Overall quality of services to protect children.
- ✪ Performance against the relevant aims, objectives and outcomes set for children in improvement plans.

KEY FEATURES

This indicator is concerned with what has actually been achieved in terms of overall performance. It relates to how successful services have been in realising aims and objectives for protecting children and in making improvements to outcomes.

LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- ✪ We have compared our performance for children in need of protection and their families with previous reports on the inspection of services to protect them and can use this to demonstrate significant improvements. We have compared our performance data relating to children in need of protection and their families, as evidenced by other inspection bodies such as the Care Commission, SWIA, Audit Scotland and NHS QIS with other CPC services and can use it to demonstrate that we are delivering very high quality services to protect children.

- ✪ We have clearly defined key outcomes for all our child protection services, including those delivered in partnerships, and we have systems in place to gather relevant data and measure these. Data gathered demonstrate that our services are improving.

- ✪ Our priorities set in planning children's services have had measurable impact on improving the experiences of children in need of protection and on the overall work of our services. We can provide data that shows that children in need of protection and their families receive specialist help and support sooner than before.

LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- ✪ We have carried out some comparison of our performance for children in need of protection and their families, from previous reports on the inspection of services to protect them. However it does not show improvements. We have looked at performance data relating to children in need of protection and their families, as evidenced by other inspection bodies such as the Care Commission, SWIA, Audit Scotland and NHS QIS. The data provides evidence that services to protect children have important weaknesses.

- ✪ We have defined a few key outcomes for all our services, including those delivered in partnerships, but we do not have effective systems in place to gather relevant data and measure it. The small amount of data collected cannot clearly demonstrate that services are improving.

- ✪ We have carried out improvement planning and this has led to some improvements in services to protect children. However, it has not been used effectively to identify or implement priorities which improve the experiences of, and outcomes for, children in need of protection.

1.2 Adherence to statutory principles and fulfilment of statutory duties

THEME

✪ Compliance with legislation, and responsiveness to guidance and codes of practice

KEY FEATURES

This indicator relates to the impact of services' compliance with legislation and the fulfilment of statutory duties. It covers cross-cutting and sector-specific legislation as well as legislation on matters such as confidentiality, data protection and information sharing. The indicator considers the extent to which managers ensure that staff comply with legislation, guidance and codes of practice relevant to protecting children.

LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

✪ We fully comply and actively engage with statutory requirements and codes of practice. Our staff, including those working mainly with adults, have a sound knowledge and understanding of relevant legislation, guidance and codes of practice relating to protecting children. We make full use of all appropriate legal measures in our work to protect children and keep them safe.

LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

✪ There are weaknesses in our implementation of statutory requirements, legislation and codes of practice. Some of our staff, including those working mainly with adults are not fully familiar with all relevant legislation, guidance and codes of practice relating to protecting children. We make limited use of appropriate legal measures in our work to protect children and keep them safe.

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How well do we meet the needs of our stakeholders?

2. Impact on children and families in need of protection

2.1 Children and young people are listened to, understood and respected

THEMES

- Communication
- Trust

KEY FEATURES

This indicator focuses on the quality of communication which children and families experience when using services related to child protection. It considers the extent to which they feel that they are respected and can trust staff who are there to help them. It includes the extent to which they have confidence that their views will be taken into account when decisions are being made about them.

LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- Children and families benefit from very effective communication with staff. They confirm that we know them very well and they feel we understand their needs. They report that our communication is consistently clear and that they understand what we mean and what we expect of them. They are confident that we listen to, understand and take their views seriously when making decisions about them. Even where they disagree with actions taken, they understand the reasons for these actions. They know how to challenge decisions and are supported to do this appropriately. Children or family members with learning or communication difficulties, or for whom English is not their first language, are helped to understand as much as possible about what is happening to them and to communicate effectively. Very young children, or those whose disabilities make it difficult to communicate their feelings and views, benefit from our careful observation to identify and understand any changes in their health, behaviour or emotional wellbeing.

- Almost all children and families report that we have taken time to get to know them and understand their strengths and needs. They tell us that they have been able to build up relationships with consistent adults and that they trust us enough to talk to us when they need help. They have a named person to help them. They see that person regularly and can discuss personal issues, in confidence when appropriate, whenever they want to. They feel that we are supporting them to help themselves and that they feel fully involved in decision making.

LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- Our communication with children and families is not always effective. They feel that we do not know them well enough and that we do not fully understand their needs. They report that we do not always communicate well with them. They are sometimes unclear about what we mean or what we expect of them. They feel that we do not always respect, listen to and understand their views when making decisions about them. They do not always understand the reasons for these decisions. They sometimes feel unable to challenge decisions and actions. Children or family members, whose first language is not English or who have communication difficulties, do not always receive sufficient support to understand what is happening and to take part in meetings or interviews. The needs of very young children, or those whose disabilities make it difficult to communicate their feelings and views, are sometimes overlooked because we do not carefully observe their health, behaviour and emotions to identify and understand any changes.

LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION (continued)

✪ Children and families report that frequent staff changes or shortages make it hard for them to build up consistent relationships. They have to speak to several different people and feel that no one person is there to help them. They feel that we have not taken time to get to know them and build a helpful relationship with them. Not all children have a named person to help them or know who that person is and how to contact them. Some children do not have a staff member they trust enough to talk to, in confidence when appropriate, about personal issues. Children and families sometimes feel unfairly judged or excluded by staff members. They do not feel that they are receiving the support they need to be able to help themselves.

2.2 Children and young people benefit from strategies to minimise harm

THEMES

- Support for vulnerable children and families
- Children's awareness of keeping themselves safe

KEY FEATURES

This indicator relates to the effectiveness of support available for children and families. It includes a focus on the quality of support at an early stage to prevent difficulties arising or increasing, and action taken to give children skills and knowledge to keep themselves safe. It considers whether children are safer and have improved life chances as a result of the help they and their families receive.

LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- Children in need of protection and their families benefit from support to help them with any difficulties for as long as they need it. They are supported early enough, frequently enough, at times, in places and in ways which meet their needs. Children receive the services they need, even if their parents or other family members are unable or unwilling to accept help. Children and families receive the right help at the right time to reduce risks. They are supported to actively contribute to reviewing the effectiveness of the help they receive and children are safer as a result. Children who have been excluded from school are given very effective support to continue their learning. Children missing from education are tracked very effectively to make sure that they are safe.

- Children have very good awareness of personal safety. They understand their right to be safe and to have positive relationships. They know who to contact if they are worried about themselves or another child. They clearly understand the risks to personal safety which can result from the use of communications technology, for example the Internet, chat rooms and mobile phones.

LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- Children in need of protection and their families may receive short term support from services to help them with difficulties they are experiencing. Sometimes they do not receive this help early enough, frequently enough, at times or in places to fully meet their needs and reduce risks – or to stop difficulties becoming chronic. Children whose parents are unable or unwilling to accept help are sometimes not given sufficient support to access the services they need. Children and families are not given sufficient help to understand the benefits of services so that they are motivated to participate. Children who have been excluded from school are given limited assistance to continue their learning. Children missing from education are tracked but this is not always fully effective in making sure that they are safe.

- Children show some awareness of personal safety. They understand their right to be safe and have positive relationships but are unsure about whom they can contact if they are worried about themselves or another child. They have limited awareness of the risks to personal safety which can result from the use of communications technology, for example the Internet, chat rooms and mobile phones.

2.3 Children and young people are helped by the actions taken in immediate response to concerns

THEMES

- The initial response of staff to children and families who need help
- Impact of immediate actions by staff to keep children safe

KEY FEATURES

This indicator focuses on the immediacy and effectiveness of the response received by children and families about whom there are child protection concerns. It considers the extent to which children and families are kept informed about further investigations and the possible implications of these. It also focuses on the use and impact of appropriate legal measures and alternative accommodation to keep children safe.

LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- Immediate concerns about children and their families which are brought to the attention of our staff are treated seriously, respectfully and without delay. Children and families get the help they need and are given a clear explanation of what is going to happen next and why, in ways they understand. They have very effective help to feel as safe and secure as possible and are kept fully informed about any further enquiries, investigations or criminal proceedings. They are fully supported to understand the reasons for any actions taken to help them and they are aware of the implications of these for themselves and others. Children and their families benefit from helpful advice and support while these processes are taking place.

- Children in need of protection are kept safe or protected from further harm because we are very clear about our responsibilities to protect them, alert to circumstances and signs that they may be at risk and respond promptly, at all times, to ensure that those who need immediate help get this without delay. They are helped, where necessary, by the exercise of our authority to ensure children are protected by appropriate legal measures and the provision of alternative accommodation. They are given very effective support and report that they feel protected by our actions which are proportionate to the risks and needs which we have identified.

LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- There are sometimes delays in our response to immediate concerns about children and their families which are brought to the attention of our staff. They are given the help they need but there are delays and our explanations about what is gong to happen next and why are unclear. They understand the reasons for any action taken to help them and are helped to feel safe and secure in the short term. They are not fully informed about any further enquiries, investigations or criminal proceedings and may be unaware of the implications of these for themselves and others. Children and their families receive limited support while these processes are taking place.

- Some children are not fully protected because our staff do not always respond quickly enough to concerns or because we do not take appropriate and effective action. The help they receive is limited by our reluctance to exercise our authority to ensure children are protected by appropriate legal measures. On occasion, children may be left in unsuitable situations because of a lack of alternative accommodation. Some children may feel unsafe as a result of disproportionate responses by our services to identified risks and needs.

2.4 Children and young people's needs are met

THEMES

- Meeting needs
- Reducing the longer term effects of abuse and neglect

KEY FEATURES

This indicator focuses on how well children's short and long term emotional and wellbeing needs are met and on the impact of the help they are given to recover from abuse and neglect. It considers whether there are improvements in their long term wellbeing as a result of the services they have received.

LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- Children and families affected by abuse and neglect receive all services necessary to fully meet their long and short term needs. They experience very effective emotional support through any assessment or investigation processes. Their welfare and safety have been improved as a result of the services they have received. Where children cannot express their views about their welfare and safety, for example because of age or disability, there is clear evidence that their welfare and safety has improved.

- Children and young people in need of specialist services to overcome longer term effects of abuse or neglect receive appropriate high quality services. These services are available without delay and children are helped to continue attending for as long as they need them. As a result of services to support recovery, children make progress towards good physical and mental health and towards developing their full potential and skills for adulthood. Children consistently report that the support they receive has helped them recover from the impact of abuse and neglect and feel positive about their futures.

LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- Children and families affected by abuse and neglect are provided with only limited services to address their short and long term needs. They receive limited services to address these needs. They experience limited emotional support through any assessment or investigation processes. Their welfare and safety have been improved as a result of the services they have received, but this is only in the short term. Where children cannot express their views about their welfare and safety, for example because of age or disability, it is unclear to what extent their welfare and safety have improved.

- Children and young people in need of specialist services to overcome longer term effects of abuse or neglect receive a limited range of services. They may experience delays in accessing these services and are not given sufficient help to attend for as long as they need them. Children experience only limited progress towards good physical and mental health and towards developing their full potential and skills for adulthood as a result of services to support recovery. They report that the support they have received has had limited success in helping them to recover from the impact of abuse and neglect.

3. Impact on staff

3.1 Impact on staff

THEMES

- The extent to which staff are and report that they feel motivated, committed, valued and have positive experiences within and across services
- The extent to which staff within and across services improve their practices through training and development activities

KEY FEATURES

This indicator relates to our impact on our staff, whether they provide services solely for children in need of protection or as part of wider work. It includes the extent of impact as indicated by data, observation and staff reporting.

LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- We have a clear understanding of what is involved in providing high quality joint services for children in need of protection. We are highly motivated and fully involved in developing services. We experience a high level of professional satisfaction, are rarely absent from work and are clear about our own and others' responsibilities. We receive appropriate levels of support and challenge. We are regularly consulted by managers and participate in development activities with staff from partner organisations. We are effectively engaged and valued by our own service and by colleagues in partner organisations.

- We benefit from joint training with colleagues from other services and have a high level of participation in training events. We have access to regular professional consultation. We have opportunities for effective career development and high quality CPD programmes. These increase our confidence and competence to provide high quality services to children in need of protection and prepare us well for future leadership roles.

LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- We do not always have a clear enough understanding of what is involved in providing high quality joint services for children in need of protection. Our professional satisfaction is low, we sometimes lack motivation. We are frequently absent from work. We are not always clear about how our roles relate to colleagues' in other services. Support and challenge are available when we request this, but we do not routinely receive it. We are consulted by managers but this is inconsistent and leads to a lack of leadership and ownership. We are not always fully involved in the development of services for children in need of protection.

- We have limited access to joint training with colleagues from our own and other services and for professional consultation. We have few opportunities for effective career development and the quality of CPD programmes is too variable. Those which we have are not always successful in increasing our confidence and competence to provide high quality services to children in need of protection. Insufficient attention is given to preparing us for future leadership roles.

4.   Impact on the community

4.1 Being aware of protecting children

THEMES

- Confidence of the public in services to protect children
- Responses to concerns raised by members of the public about a child's safety or welfare
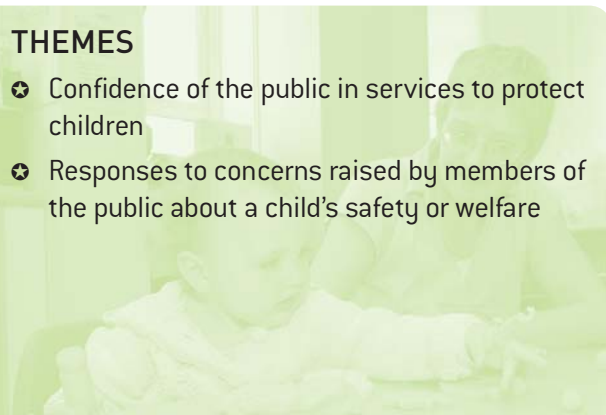
KEY FEATURES

This indicator focuses on the extent to which the community understands its responsibility to protect children. It considers the degree of confidence felt by members of the public in services for children in need of protection and deals with the effectiveness of responses to concerns raised by members of the public.

LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- Members of the community have a high level of awareness of local services to protect children. They know who to contact when they have concerns about a child. They make referrals to appropriate services and are confident that appropriate action will be taken as a result of their contact.
- When members of the community make referrals to our services about children's safety or welfare, they are given helpful feedback so that they know that their concern has been taken seriously and acted upon.

LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- There is limited awareness amongst members of the community of local services to protect children. They are unclear about who to contact if they have concerns about a child. There are very few referrals from members of the public and there is limited confidence that appropriate action will be taken as a result of their contact.
- When members of the community make referrals to our services about children's safety or welfare, they are given limited or no feedback. As a result they are unclear about whether their concern has been taken seriously and acted upon.

How good is our delivery of services for children and families in need of protection?

5.   Delivery of services to children and families in need of protection

5.1 Involving children and families in key processes

THEMES

✪ Keeping children and their families informed and involved

✪ Addressing dissatisfaction and complaints

KEY FEATURES

This indicator relates to involving children and their families in child protection processes. It focuses on seeking and recording views of children and keeping them informed. It considers how well children and families are actively involved in decision making and helped to express dissatisfaction or make a complaint. It looks at how effectively complaints are dealt with.

LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

✪ We listen to children and families and take their views seriously. We record what they have said. We make very effective arrangements to ensure that children and families, including those with learning or communication difficulties, or for whom English is not their first language, are able to express their views and take an active part in meetings. We ensure that children and families are actively involved in making decisions about the help they need, unless this compromises their own safety or that of other children. Where children and families are not actively involved in decision making, we record the reasons for this.

✪ We make available to all children and families easily understood information about how to express dissatisfaction or make a complaint. We take children and families' dissatisfaction seriously and address it quickly. We support them to make a formal complaint where required and ensure they have access to advocacy services to help them through the process. We understand the links between the procedures for making a complaint, child protection and employee discipline. We investigate complaints thoroughly and objectively. We specify how long the investigation will take and feed back the results of the investigation and any action taken as a result. We regularly review and analyse the range and nature of complaints received.

LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

✪ We generally listen to children and their families and help them express their views but we do not do this consistently. We ask children and families for their views but we do not always record what they have said or take sufficient account of their views when making decisions. We have good contact with children and families but we are not always clear about our roles and responsibilities. Children are not always told who to contact if they want information about what action is being taken to help them.

✪ We do not always provide children and families with information about how to express dissatisfaction or make a complaint unless they ask for it. We give written information but it is hard to follow and not suitable for children. We often deal with expressions of dissatisfaction slowly and sometimes dismiss them without making necessary enquiries. We help children and families make a formal complaint when required but we give them limited support through the process. When investigating complaints we are not always clear how relevant procedures link together. Whilst we record complaints about services, we do not systematically review and analyse the information.

5.2 Information sharing and recording

THEMES

- Appropriate sharing of information
- Joint understanding of information
- Management and recording of information

KEY FEATURES

This indicator relates to the sharing and management of information about children and families. It highlights the importance of gathering information from all relevant sources. It considers children's and families' consent to sharing their information to protect them from harm. It focuses on managing and recording information to ensure it is reviewed and analysed to help children at risk.

LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- We are aware of the need to share information to protect children from harm. We clearly understand when to share information about children and their families and about adults who may be a risk to children and do this very effectively to protect children from harm. We share information relevant to the long and short term needs of children. We have clear and effective systems in place to ensure information is appropriately shared between staff responsible for monitoring sex offenders and those with responsibilities for children. When we assess the risks to and needs of a child, we gather information from all relevant sources, including from staff involved with other family members. We tell children and families what information we hold about them and ask them what information they are content to share freely. Their views are taken into account when we are deciding to share information without their consent and we give them reasons when this happens.

- We communicate effectively to ensure the significance of shared information is fully understood by the recipient. We are clear what is fact and what is opinion and we agree on expected actions. We record what information has been shared, why and with whom.

- We record the information we hold about children and families very accurately and succinctly in accordance with our services' policies. A dated list of significant events and contacts is maintained, reviewed and analysed regularly to help us understand key events in children's lives. We store information securely but it is readily accessible to those who have a right of access. Where there are arrangements for sharing files or electronic systems, we follow clear protocols which are understood by all staff, including staff who are managing data bases.

LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- In some cases we are unsure about what information we can and should share. We sometimes do not pass on information which may have important implications for the safety of a child because we believe it to be confidential. Sometimes we inappropriately pass on information without consent or without explaining why it is necessary.

- Sometimes we share confidential information without ensuring it is used responsibly in the best interests of a child. We do not routinely seek information from all other services, including voluntary organisations, which may have had contact with the child or other members of their family. We do not consistently record important details about information which has been shared.

- We record the information we hold about children and families in accordance with our services' policies. A dated list of significant events and contacts is kept to help us understand key events in children's lives but this is not kept fully up to date or regularly analysed. We store information securely but we are unclear about who has right of access to it. We have some arrangements for sharing files or electronic systems, but our protocols for the management of these are not clearly understood by all relevant staff.

5.3 Recognising and assessing risks and needs

THEMES

- ✪ Recognising a child needs help
- ✪ Initial information gathering and investigation
- ✪ Assessment of risks and needs

KEY FEATURES

This indicator relates to the recognition and assessment of risks to and needs of children and families. It looks at the extent to which staff recognise signs that children may be at risk of harm and that immediate action should be taken to protect them. It focuses on the process of gathering information from all relevant sources and joint decisions about actions required. The importance of initial assessment in the short term and comprehensively for the longer term is stressed.

LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- ✪ All of our staff, including those who work with adults, are alert to and recognise the signs that children may need help or protection from harm. If a concern raised about a child requires further exploration, we have the skills to gather relevant information. We take immediate action to ensure that no child is exposed to continued risk of harm. When we receive concerns about a child we ensure someone known to the child sees them, reassures them and establishes the nature of the concern and any immediate risks.

- ✪ We immediately assess the risk to a child and any other associated children when concerns are referred to the police, social work and/or the Children's Reporter. We respond in a consistent way to calls about children at risk of harm. We do this whenever the call is made, and whether the call is from a staff member or a member of the public. The person raising the concern is provided with appropriate feedback. We always give careful thought to the need for an initial referral discussion involving police, health and social work to ensure that all relevant information is available and that all of the child's needs are properly considered. We decide together what further action is required in the best interests of the child and record our decisions clearly. We plan jointly any enquiry or investigation. We give due weight to the welfare of the child and the gathering of evidence, for example during joint forensic medical examination. Part of our assessment considers whether to refer a child to the Children's Reporter.

- ✪ When relevant we follow up our initial assessment with a more comprehensive assessment of risk and need. This considers the child's circumstances and his/her emotional, social and developmental needs in a holistic way. Our assessment considers the child's resilience and how they are likely to respond to their circumstances. We also assess the family's capacity to protect each child and meet individual needs, including those of children affected by domestic abuse or parental substance misuse. We consider the implications of all of this information for the child's wellbeing. Based on all available information, including the views of the child and family, we make informed judgements about the needs of each child. We do not delay taking action to help a child while we are making our assessment. Our assessment reports clearly distinguish fact from opinion, identify personal and family strengths and support networks, and clearly describe the needs of the child. Services share an agreed approach to assessment, which is child-centred and ensures that all aspects of risk and need are covered. We recognise that assessment is not a single action but an ongoing process and continue to assess each child's needs and risk of harm as circumstances change.

5.3 Recognising and assessing risks and needs (continued)

LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

✪ Although we have some knowledge about how to respond when a child needs help, we do not consistently recognise when we should further assess the situation. If we do not have direct responsibility for children, we do not always take appropriate action when we see vulnerable children in the course of our work. We pass on our concerns if a child seems at immediate risk, but we sometimes overlook signs of neglect or harm.

✪ We are sometimes unsure how to respond when we are concerned that a child or young person may be at risk of harm and do not always consider the risks to other children who are not the subject of the referral. We do not always carry out immediate risk assessments after initial referrals are made to police and social work. We do not consistently secure information from all relevant agencies at the time of the initial referral. For example we may omit health information and reduce the effectiveness of the decision making process. We normally plan investigations jointly but there are occasions when a single service takes a course of action without fully considering the holistic needs of the child.

✪ When further assessment is undertaken, we focus on limited aspects of the child's needs, for example, social work assessments do not take account of the child's educational needs. We make our assessments on a single agency basis, so that a child and family may have to describe their concerns several times. Our assessments do not give sufficient attention to the impact of different courses of action. Our assessment reports describe the child's and family's circumstances, but do not clearly reflect the judgements made on the current or future needs of the child. We have developed guidance for individual services but they do not take account of practice in other services involved in the assessment. We do not have a joint policy or guidance on assessment. Our guidance focuses on bureaucratic requirements rather than promoting good professional practice.

5.4 Effectiveness of planning to meet needs

THEMES

- ✪ Decision making, identifying responsibilities and meeting needs
- ✪ Taking account of changing circumstances

KEY FEATURES

This indicator relates to the effectiveness of planning to meet the needs of children. It highlights the importance of staff planning together to protect children through careful consideration of assessments of risk and needs. It focuses on joint decision making and effective identification of responsibilities. It focuses planning for meeting children's needs in the longer term and taking account of changing circumstances.

LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- ✪ We plan carefully together to protect each child and meet their needs taking account of all available assessment information. We consider the support networks and resources currently available, any gaps and the resources and options to fill these. We carefully consider how to involve family members in planning to meet a child's needs, for example through family group conferencing. We take children and families' views into account during the process of planning. We make carefully considered decisions about children which put their safety and needs first. We consider planning for the child's long term and immediate needs. Our decisions are clearly recorded in a plan which identifies roles, responsibilities, monitoring and review arrangements. We clearly identify the person with lead responsibility for ensuring the plan is implemented. We carry out agreed action and provide any help or support to the child or the family that has been identified in the plan for as long as it is needed. As a result of the action agreed in the plan there are improvements in the situation of the child or young person.

- ✪ When we plan for a child we consider alternative actions which may help the child if our original decisions in the plan do not continue to meet the child's needs. If the level of risk changes or there is lack of progress, we quickly review the arrangements made and take any actions to help the child, amending and updating the plan where necessary.

LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- ✪ We agree a general plan but action to help the child is may be delayed because we have not clearly identified who is responsible for ensuring it is implemented. We do not have an agreed system for monitoring and reviewing progress against the plans we have made. We meet together and agree a plan but do not take sufficient account of the views of the child or family. We make good arrangements for the safety of the child to meet immediate needs, but we do not take sufficient account of longer term needs, for example, whether a placement can give long term stability to the child.

- ✪ Occasionally we do not fully implement all relevant parts of an agreed protection plan and we do not give enough consideration to alternative actions which may help the child if our original decisions do not continue to meet the child's needs. If the level of risk changes or if there is a lack of progress we do not always act quickly enough to amend the plan and take any actions necessary to help the child.

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5.5 Improvement through self-evaluation

THEMES

- ✪ Commitment to self-evaluation
- ✪ Management of self-evaluation
- ✪ Service improvements

KEY FEATURES

This indicator relates to services' arrangements for improvement through self-evaluation and commitment to this. It highlights the importance of gathering and responding to the views of service users and other appropriate parties and involving them in reviewing the effectiveness of services. It focuses on the extent to which services know themselves well and make an effective contribution to protecting children and meeting their needs.

LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- ✪ We recognise the importance of reflecting on the work we do, in order to achieve the best possible outcomes for children in need of protection. Managers at all levels consistently promote self-evaluation and review, and support staff to do this effectively. We work well together to evaluate our services and make any changes necessary to improve. We have very effective systems to gather the views of service users, staff and others about the quality of our work. Our collective vision, values and aims are used as a basis for reviewing our work.

- ✪ Our self-evaluation focuses on key aspects of the wellbeing of children in need of protection. It draws on a wide range of evidence and is rigorous, systematic and transparent. We reflect on current practice and evaluate any initiatives or changes we have introduced. We clearly identify strengths and areas for improvement and we share good practice.

- ✪ Our services take a collective approach to improvement for children in need of protection. We have a shared commitment to acting on the results of self-evaluation and can show clear evidence of continuing improvements as a result.

LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- ✪ We vary in the extent to which we evaluate our work effectively. Not all of our staff understand the importance of reflecting on their work, in order to improve services for children in need of protection. Managers do not consistently promote self-evaluation and review or support staff to do this effectively. We regard self-evaluation largely as the responsibility of senior managers and do not sufficiently involve service users and staff. Our self-evaluation needs stronger professional commitment and focus on improving outcomes for children in need of protection.

- ✪ Our processes in the CPC and services for evaluating and improving quality are not well developed and their effectiveness is limited. We evaluate aspects of our services but use a limited range of approaches. These do not always place sufficient emphasis on improving the wellbeing of children in need of protection. Our approaches to forming views on strengths and areas for improvement sometimes lack rigour. We are unable to demonstrate the impact our work is having on children in need of protection and their families.

- ✪ Our self-evaluation has limited impact on improving the wellbeing of children in need of protection. It is not informed by relevant and reliable management information and is not used well to evaluate progress and plan improvements.

How good is our operational management?

6.   Policy development and planning

6.1 Policies and procedures

THEMES

- Range of policies and link to vision and aims
- Managing, disseminating, evaluating and updating policies

KEY FEATURES

This indicator relates to the effectiveness of policies and procedures across services and how these link to the CPC's vision, values and aims. It considers how policies and procedures to protect children are disseminated, updated and evaluated.

LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- We have clear and appropriate policies and procedures and systems that protect children and keep them safe. Our policies, procedures and guidelines clearly reflect the Child Protection Committee's vision, values and aims. Guidance and procedures for working together identify the roles and responsibilities for each service in their statutory duty to protect children. Procedures help us to make well considered decisions and take prompt and effective action to protect children. Our policies and procedures ensure that priority is given to keeping children safe and that there is consistency across all staff working with children.

- We disseminate policies and procedures to all staff and we are clear about what they mean and how and when to use them. We regularly evaluate the effectiveness of policies and guidelines and update them to take account of changing circumstances, staff views and national and local priorities. We have effective systems to obtain the views of children and families and we take these views into account when developing policies, procedures and guidelines to protect children. We have a systematic approach to monitoring and evaluating the impact of policies and procedures, which ensures that they are understood and implemented consistently.

LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- Our policies provide some detail of the responsibilities of staff in protecting children but they do not give us sufficient guidance. Our policies have some link to the vision, values and aims of our CPC. However, we have not always taken full account of important local and national priorities and improvement objectives in policy development. Some of our policies and procedures do not provide us with clear, practical and appropriate direction on the actions we should take to protect children. Some policies have been developed in isolation and do not always ensure a consistent approach across all staff working with children.

- While some of our policies have been reviewed and updated, we do not have a clear and agreed system which ensures this is routinely done. Some policies and procedures do not take sufficient account of changing circumstances and national and local priorities. We do not routinely involve front line staff, children and families and other stakeholders in the review and development of policies and guidance to protect children. Our staff do not always follow procedures consistently, which sometimes has an adverse effect on children and families.

6.2 Operational management and planning

THEMES

- The effectiveness of operational management
- The use of management information to plan and develop to protect children

KEY FEATURES

This indicator relates to the effectiveness of operational management in implementing strategic plans to protect vulnerable children. It considers the use of management information in planning and developing services to protect children.

LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- Our operational managers have a sound understanding of our strategic plans and priorities. They use these to inform local operational plans and service delivery. They help front line staff to understand the implications of strategic plans for their work and the need to plan and work together. Our operational managers promote and sustain positive working relationships across services.

- Our operational managers ensure that they receive regular management reports to inform their work and the work of their staff. We are aware of local trends relating to children in need of protection. We jointly identify areas where services are insufficient or ineffective and use this information to develop and implement plans to make improvements

LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- Our operational managers have an awareness of our strategic plans and priorities but they are not sufficiently informed or committed to using them to develop local plans and services. They do not always give frontline staff enough support and encouragement to understand the implications of strategic plans for their work and for local planning and the need for us to work together across all services. Our operational managers do not always give enough priority to promoting and sustaining positive working relationships across services.

- Our operational managers collect management information but do not analyse this systematically to inform their work and the work of their staff. While we collect some information about vulnerable children, we are not always aware of local trends relating to children in need of protection. We do not always make best use of management information to identify areas where resources are insufficient or services are ineffective and require improvement.

6.3 Involving children and families in developing policies and services

THEME

✪ Seeking views of children and families and involving them in developing policies and services to protect children

KEY FEATURES

This indicator focuses on how services seek children and families' views about their needs and the effectiveness of services. It relates to the involvement of children and families in developing policy and services to protect children.

LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

✪ We value the views of children and families and use these to plan and improve services to protect children. We have established very reliable systems which allow us to gather the views of vulnerable children and families including those with learning or communication difficulties or for whom English is not their first language. We regularly seek their views on the effectiveness of our services and use this information to evaluate our service provision and how well we work together. We routinely seek the views of service users when planning and designing services or developing policy.

LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

✪ We recognise the need to seek the views of children and families when planning and improving policy and services to protect children. However, we do not yet have effective systems to gather the views of vulnerable children and families. We occasionally seek their views on the effectiveness of our services but we make limited use of this information to evaluate the effectiveness of our services and how well we work together. When planning and designing our services, we occasionally seek the views of service users.

7. Management and support of staff

7.1 Staff sufficiency, recruitment and retention

THEMES

- ✪ Identifying and meeting human resource needs
- ✪ Safe recruitment
- ✪ Care and welfare
- ✪ Equality and fairness
- ✪ Recognition and parity of esteem

KEY FEATURES

This indicator relates to the recruitment and provision of staff within and across services and to the effectiveness of arrangements to ensure their care and welfare. It focuses on safe recruitment, equality and fairness and the extent to which services recognise the achievements and expertise of staff within their own and other services.

LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- ✪ Across services, we have sufficient staff to provide consistently high quality services for children who are at risk of harm and in need of protection. We have very effective human resource management frameworks supported by appropriate policies and procedures. Individually and collectively, we have established appropriate staffing standards to ensure the effective delivery of priorities identified for child protection in the CPC business plan and other key children's services plans.

- ✪ Within and across services, we have safe recruitment procedures in place, including vetting of staff who have contact with children. We have robust arrangements in place to ensure that these are applied consistently. We have effective procedures for investigating alleged abuse by staff and these link explicitly to our disciplinary procedures.

- ✪ Across services, we have established a positive culture where staff are highly aware of their rights and responsibilities. We are fully aware of our duty of care towards our staff. Within our policies and procedures, we clearly set out the standards of conduct, care and welfare which our staff can expect and which are expected of them.

- ✪ We have well established equal opportunities policies which make specific reference to race, religion, ethnicity, disability, age and gender. These underpin our procedures for recruiting and supporting staff. We train and support our staff to promote anti-discriminatory practices.

- ✪ We have established a strong ethos of positive recognition of achievement within which staff working to support children in need of protection are supported and encouraged to do their best. We routinely identify and celebrate good practice and we fully recognise the professional skills and expertise of staff across disciplines.

LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- ✪ Across services, staffing levels are not sufficient for us to provide consistently high quality services for children who are at risk of harm. Although we have human resource policies and procedures in place, there are gaps in staffing in key areas. Individually and collectively, we have established some staffing standards but these are not comprehensive enough to ensure the effective delivery of the priorities identified for child protection in the CPC business plan and other key children's services plans.

- ✪ Within and across services, although we are aware of the need to apply safe recruitment procedures, we do not have arrangements in place to ensure that we do so consistently. We have procedures in place for investigating alleged abuse by staff but these do not link explicitly to our disciplinary procedures.

LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION (continued)

- ✪ Across services, our staff have an awareness of their rights and responsibilities. We have an awareness of our duty of care towards our staff, but we are sometimes unclear about the scope of this. Our policies and procedures do not explicitly set out the standards of conduct, care and welfare which our staff can expect and which are expected of them.

- ✪ We have equal opportunities policies in place. However, these do not always fully inform our procedures for recruiting and supporting staff. Our support for staff in promoting anti-discriminatory practices is inconsistent.

- ✪ Although we recognise and value the contributions of staff working to support children in need of protection who report directly to us, we have yet to establish a wider ethos of recognition for success and achievement. We do not routinely identify and celebrate good practice and we have limited awareness and recognition of the professional skills and expertise of staff across disciplines.

7.2 Staff deployment and teamwork

THEMES

- Appropriateness and clarity of remits across service boundaries
- Deployment of staff to achieve planned priorities
- Teamworking
- Communication and involvement in decision making

KEY FEATURES

This indicator relates to the effectiveness of individual and team contributions to supporting children in need of protection. It focuses on the extent to which there is effective deployment of staff to achieve planned priorities, the effectiveness of teamwork within and across services and the involvement of staff in decision making.

LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- Across services, all our staff involved in delivering services to support children in need of protection are clear about the positive benefits of multi-agency working in this area which is demonstrated in practice. We provide clear job descriptions and remits and these are focused on the needs of service users. Lines of accountability are well understood and our staff are clear about their respective roles and responsibilities. We consistently and appropriately empower, challenge and support our staff.

- Across services, we work closely together to ensure that our staff are effectively deployed in implementing the priorities identified for child protection in the CPC business plan and other key children's services plans. They have a firm understanding of the role they are expected to play in providing effective services to children in need of protection.

- Across services, we have established a collaborative and collegiate approach to our work to support children in need of protection. A climate of professional engagement between services is evident and we have very effective arrangements in place for liaison amongst staff working with individual children.

- Staff across our services are very positive about the frequency, sufficiency and quality of information they receive. They feel that they are widely consulted and have opportunities to be involved in making decisions which affect their work. We have made very effective arrangements for sharing management information related to children in need of protection between our services.

LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- Across services, all our staff involved in supporting children in need of protection are generally aware of the positive benefits of multi-agency working but there is not a full commitment to making it happen in practice. We provide job descriptions and remits but these are not always clear or sufficiently focused on the needs of service users. Lines of accountability have been established but some of our staff are unclear about their respective roles and responsibilities. We do not consistently empower, challenge and support our staff.

- Within services, we deploy our staff to support children in need of protection. However, staff are unclear of how their work relates to the wider context of the child protection priorities in the CPC business plan and other key children's services plans. Joint approaches to staff deployment across services are not yet well developed.

- Professional engagement between our services is at an early stage. Our staff are involved in some joint approaches to support children in need of protection. However, the effectiveness of these approaches is highly dependent on individual staff members establishing links with other services. We do not yet have well established arrangements in place for liaison between our staff who are involved jointly with individual children. They are not always fully aware of each other's contributions.

LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION (continued)

✪ Staff across our services do not feel that they receive sufficient information or that they are consulted and have opportunities to be involved in making decisions which affect their work. Our arrangements for exchanging management information related to children in need of protection between our services are at an early stage.

7.3 Staff training, development and support

THEMES

✪ Professional competence and confidence

✪ Training and development

KEY FEATURES

This indicator relates to services' arrangements for the development, support and supervision of staff involved in supporting children in need of protection. It focuses on the provision of training within and across services.

LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

✪ We ensure that our staff are supported, supervised and accountable in their work to support children in need of protection. We offer help and advice when they need it but they are allowed to exercise appropriate initiative and professional judgement. We have very effective arrangements in place for staff appraisal. These are used to ensure that our staff are confident and competent in their work and have the correct knowledge skills and qualifications to deal with difficult situations.

✪ We individually and collectively audit the training needs of our staff, including those who do not work directly with children but need to know how to respond when they see a child who may need help. We plan and deliver a high quality child protection training programme to meet the needs of our workforce. This takes account of local and national priorities for improving services for protecting children and meeting their needs. Our induction processes routinely address child protection issues. We systematically evaluate training and the effect it has on practice.

LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

✪ We have systems in place to review staff progress. However, we do not always focus on the specific skills required for the roles individual staff carry out to protect children from harm. We have arrangements for supervision in place, but these are often informal and in response to an identified immediate need. They do not ensure that our staff have access to regular supervision and debriefing.

✪ We identify training needs and, individually and collectively, we make available training which takes account of local priorities for improving services for children in need of protection. However, we do not give sufficient guidance to staff about the levels of training they should undertake. Staff who work directly with children are made aware of their responsibilities to protect children at induction. However, induction for other staff groups does not routinely include child protection. Systems to monitor training and evaluate its impact have not yet been fully developed.

8. Partnership and resources

8.1 Partnership working

THEMES

- Clarity of purposes and aims
- Working across services and disciplines
- Staff roles in partnerships

KEY FEATURES

This indicator relates to the effectiveness and impact of services' partnership arrangements to support children in need of protection. It focuses on clarity of purpose and aims and the extent to which services work effectively in a range of multi-disciplinary partnerships.

LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- Across services, we have very effective joint working which makes a difference to the experience of children in need of protection. We are clear about those areas for which a single service takes lead responsibility and those which require high quality partnership working to maximise the benefits for our service users. We have a clear framework and effective procedures to evaluate the impact of our joint working on individual children and families and on groups of children in need of protection. Our staff are committed to working together and routinely engage with those from other services.

- Partnerships across our services, including those from the voluntary sector, to support children in need of protection work very effectively. We successfully promote a clear commitment to multi-disciplinary working. We routinely plan, deliver, monitor and evaluate a range of joint initiatives. We provide very effective support to children in need of protection through our partnerships and our staff are very clear about their distinctive contributions. Our staff participate actively in initiatives led by other services.

- Our services are clear about our respective roles and responsibilities for providing support to children in need of protection. We have opportunities to meet and share training across services. Our joint arrangements for communicating, assessment, planning and review and for recording and reporting are clearly understood by our staff and work very effectively. Our services work well together to identify local priorities.

LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- Although some joint working meets the needs of children in need of protection, there is potential for some partnerships to make a greater contribution. We are not always clear about which areas require a single service to lead and those which require effective partnership working to maximise the benefits to our service users. Our procedures for evaluating the impact of our joint working on children and families and on groups of children in need of protection are not yet well developed. Many of our staff are committed to working together and engage actively with those from other services but we lack a consistent approach.

- We are committed to working together to support children in need of protection, but we do not actively promote this commitment across services. Our services do not always work effectively together and we do not yet routinely plan and deliver a range of joint initiatives. Our partnerships provide effective support to some children in need of protection but this is not yet consistent.

- Our services work in partnership but we are not always clear about each other's roles and responsibilities for providing support to children in need of protection. There are some weaknesses in our joint arrangements for communicating, assessment, planning and review and for recording and reporting. Our staff do not always have a clear understanding of these. Our arrangements for jointly identifying local priorities are not yet well developed.

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8.2 Management of resources

THEMES

- ✪ Strategic resource planning
- ✪ Resource deployment
- ✪ Efficiency and effectiveness in use of resources

KEY FEATURES

This indicator relates to the impact of services' individual and collective approaches to the planning, deployment and management of resources to support children in need of protection.

LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- ✪ Across services, we work closely together to make transparent, evidence-based decisions on the provision and allocation of resources to support children in need of protection. We have agreed a clear strategic resource planning framework which links closely to the planning cycles of the CPC business plan and other key children's services plans.

- ✪ Our services have agreed a joint approach to the deployment of resources to support children in need of protection. We target our resources very effectively and transparently to meet national and local improvement objectives. Our decisions are informed by the priorities identified for child protection through the work of the CPC and other key children's services.

- ✪ Our services have established very effective collaborative approaches to monitoring the efficiency and effectiveness of the resources which we have jointly allocated to support children in need of protection. These are informed by our shared focus on scrutiny, self-evaluation and quality assurance.

LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- ✪ Our services do not yet have an agreed approach to the strategic provision and allocation of resources to support children in need of protection. Our strategic planning of resources is not yet systematic and links with the planning cycles of the CPC business plan and other children's services plans are not yet well established.

- ✪ Our services have not yet agreed a joint approach to the deployment of resources to support children in need of protection. We target our resources to meet the short term needs of individual children, but the links between our decisions and agreed national and local improvement objectives or the priorities for child protection identified by the CPC and other key children's services are not always clear.

- ✪ Our services have not yet agreed on a systematic shared approach to scrutiny, self-evaluation and quality assurance. Our collaborative approaches to monitoring the efficiency and effectiveness of resources which have been allocated to support children in need of protection are not yet fully developed.

How good is our leadership?

9   Leadership and Direction

9.1 Vision, values and aims

THEMES

- Coherence of vision, values and aims for protecting children
- Sharing and sustaining the vision
- Promotion of positive attitudes to social and cultural diversity

KEY FEATURES

This indicator relates to how the partner organisations and the CPC work together to create a shared vision and sense of purpose for protecting children which is ambitious and challenging. The indicator focuses on the extent to which the vision values and aims guide planning for and have an impact on the quality of child protection work and its outcomes for children and their families.

LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- We ensure as partner organisations that there are clear links between the vision, values and aims of our own organisations and those contained within national priorities and our plans for children's services. Our vision, values and aims in relation to protecting children are shared and clearly stated. Our work is directed by the clear statement of our shared vision, values and aims.

- We continually revisit and reinforce our vision, values and aims with staff and other stakeholders through shared events and activities. This results in a strong sense of common purpose throughout all partner organisations. We take full account of our shared vision, values and aims when we review our work, implement improvements, and shape future direction. Leaders ensure that each organisation's improvement plan is informed by the shared vision, values and aims.

- Our vision, values and aims sets out clear expectations for, and positive attitudes to, diversity. We are strongly committed to equality and we promote equity and celebrate diversity and inclusion. This commitment is reflected in our operational plans.

LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- We may have established a vision, values and aims related to national priorities and local plans for protecting children. However, these are not shared across organisations and do not impact on processes or outcomes for children in need of protection. We do not always demonstrate the same level of commitment to agreed priorities in relation to keeping children safe. We do not always give sufficient emphasis to our vision, values and aims and do not fully explain these to our staff.

- We do not have a strong sense of a shared vision, values and common purpose. A vision has been developed to direct the work of our child protection services but this has not been developed with our political leaders or shared with the leaders of other services. The vision, values and aims have limited relevance for our work in protecting children and are rarely used to inform our improvement planning.

- Our aims and vision set out expectations for and positive attitudes towards diversity and inclusion but these are not fully embedded in an appropriate range of operational policies and procedures.

9.2 Leadership and direction

THEMES

- Joint leadership and planning within and across services
- Strategic deployment of resources

KEY FEATURES

This indicator focuses on joint leadership to plan future developments in child protection linked to the vision values and aims. This includes setting demanding but realistic targets and providing high level support to achieve these. It focuses on leadership skills and knowledge, professional and personal commitment and the creation of processes which give direction.

LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- Our political leaders, the CPC, Chief Officers and senior managers have a clear understanding of the local and national context and provide strong leadership and direction in developing services to protect children. We have clear lines of accountability within and across our organisations and our strategic planning arrangements give high priority to child protection. Our CPC works closely with senior managers to ensure that highly effective services are delivered to protect children and keep them safe. We take full account of relevant national guidance about protecting children.
- We identify and share resources and make transparent and evidence-based decisions on the allocation of resources to protect children. We ensure that resources are targeted appropriately to meet needs. We involve voluntary and private organisations in the planning, development and delivery of services.

LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- Our political leaders, the CPC, Chief Officers and senior managers have developed a broad direction for our work in child protection. However, we have not fully developed a strong commitment to collective leadership. Personal involvement of our leaders in strategic meetings and activities related to child protection is patchy and inconsistent. Individually, we are committed to improving the quality of child protection services but there is only a limited shared approach.
- The CPC, Chief Officers and our senior managers emphasise the need to protect children in their strategic and operational plans. However, we do not target resources well enough to support work in this area. Decisions about strategic deployment of resources are not transparent and do not match national guidance. We do not always take opportunities to share budgets and as a result we do not, on occasion, have sufficient resources to deliver positive outcomes for children in need of protection. Our staff are sometimes unable to access the resources they need for early intervention and support for families to prevent harm. Our partnerships with voluntary and private organisations are not well enough developed to maximise the support available to children and families.

9.3 Developing people and partnerships

THEMES
- Developing leadership capacity
- Building and sustaining relationships
- Teamwork and partnerships

KEY FEATURES
This indicator relates to the effectiveness of key services and the CPC in building capacity for leadership at all levels and securing positive working relationships and successful outcomes for children. It relates to the ethos and culture of key partnerships and to the effectiveness of those with leadership responsibilities, their deployment, responsibilities and team working. Delegation to and empowerment of staff across services are important features.

LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION
- We focus on very high quality child protection processes and planning as the key to keeping children safe. We adopt appropriate leadership styles and demonstrate strong leadership across partner organisations to motivate each other and our staff to do their best to protect children. We promote an empowering culture where staff at all levels in all partner organisations understand their contribution to protect children. When appropriate we drive forward action directly. We make very good use of our collective knowledge and skills to make a positive impact on outcomes for children in need of protection.
- We have developed a supportive working environment in which adults share a sense of responsibly for keeping children safe. Working relationships between partner organisations including the voluntary sector are built on trust. We have effective systems in place to support our staff to share information, tackle challenging situations and address difficulties. We ensure that staff have opportunities to jointly develop skills and learn from each other. We value and encourage staff and we recognise and celebrate their achievements.
- We have a high level of commitment to partnership working to secure continuous improvement. We promote an ethos of teamwork and we evaluate our teams' performance regularly against shared objectives.

LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION
- Some of our staff display weaknesses in their leadership skills or give insufficient priority to protecting children. This affects the overall effectiveness of our corporate leadership. There are gaps in the range of skills within our leadership teams which impact on their overall effectiveness. Our political leaders, the CPC and our senior managers do not demonstrate a consistently clear view of their leadership role. We are not always successful in gaining the full commitment of stakeholders to protect children. We support some initiatives to improve child protection within our area but do not routinely seek suggestions from staff to improve our services.
- We recognise the need to develop positive working relationships to deliver effective services to protect children. However we have not yet done enough to ensure consistency in the quality of our relationships within and across our services. As leaders, we have some opportunities to meet and discuss our work to protect children but these are infrequent. In some teams, the achievements of our staff are not fully recognised or celebrated. We have not yet developed a culture which is conducive to feedback on performance.
- Together, we have built and sustained some teamwork and have some examples of effective partnership working, but the overall picture is inconsistent. We do not systematically demonstrate commitment to partnership working or take a positive role in activities initiated by our partners. In general, teamwork is not well established. We do not regularly evaluate our teams' performance against shared objectives.

9.4 Leadership of improvement and change

THEMES

- ✪ Support and challenge
- ✪ Creativity, innovation and step change
- ✪ Continuous improvement

KEY FEATURES

This indicator is concerned with leaders' effectiveness in maintaining high levels of quality and promoting continuous improvement and excellence in services to protect children. It focuses on the need for leaders to support and challenge staff to improve the quality of child protection services. This includes setting demanding but realistic targets and providing high level support to assist them to achieve these. The indicator also relates to the ability of those with leadership roles at all levels to encourage and support innovative practices which bring about improved outcomes.

LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- ✪ We are committed to planning and implementing strategies to continuously improve services to protect children. We understand the need to support and challenge our staff and set demanding targets to secure improvement. We use best practice in self-evaluation to continuously improve services. We manage the pace of change well and we take account of the capacity of all partner organisations when planning for improvement.

- ✪ We have a strong strategic overview of what constitutes best practice in services to protect children. We routinely explore, research and adopt best practice being taken forward in other areas. We recognise and celebrate excellent and innovative practice. and have effective arrangements in place to share this with other areas. We routinely use the results of self-evaluation and other service reviews to consolidate what we do well and we promote innovative methods of ensuring integrated delivery of services to protect children. We routinely apply the principles of risk management when considering change and innovation. We lead and manage strategic change effectively by identifying and focusing on a manageable number of high priority initiatives. We communicate these well to staff at all levels across services.

- ✪ We play a strong role in leading improvement and innovation in services to protect children with a constant focus on outcomes for children and their families. We have clearly understood roles across services in relation to quality assurance. We routinely explore ways to drive up capacity for improvement through self-evaluation and provide opportunities for shared and distributed leadership and expertise. We act as a collaborative group in support of the shared vision for protecting children. We work constructively to enhance capacity for improvement. Our leadership has led to high quality services to protect children and has promoted continuous improvement.

LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- ✪ We do not always manage the pace of change effectively. We do not consistently support and challenge staff or focus sufficiently on setting targets for improvement. Our self-evaluation processes are not yet well enough developed or targeted to improve the quality of outcomes for children in need of protection. We do not allocate sufficient time and resources for some developments. We do not always take full account of our capacity for improvement or of the need to gain the commitment of staff.

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LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION (continued)

- ✪ We are aware of examples of good practice in work to protect children within our own services. We are less aware of good practice in other services and we have not yet developed a strategic overview of best practice. We do not routinely identify and disseminate innovative practice. There is an inconsistent approach taken to the management of risk when considering change and innovation. We tend to take an operational and service specific approach to change management rather than a joint approach. Our communication is often insufficient to enable staff to understand the reasons for, or the anticipated benefits from, implementing change.

- ✪ Our role in driving forward continuous improvement is not sufficiently high profile. We tend to focus on systems, functions and processes rather than on delivering the strategic vision of improved outcomes. We demonstrate commitment to our own areas of provision. However, we do not act effectively as a collaborative group in support of the shared vision for protecting children.

APPENDIX 1

The Child Protection Quality Improvement Framework

1 What key outcomes have we achieved?	2 How well do we meet the needs of our stakeholders?	3 How good is our delivery of services for children and families in need of protection?	4 How good is our operational management?	5 How good is our leadership?

1. Key performance outcomes

1.1 Improvements in performance

1.2 Fulfilment of statutory duties

2. Impact on children and families in need of protection

2.1 Children and young people are listened to, understood and respected

2.2 Children and young people benefit from strategies to minimise harm

2.3 Children and young people are helped by the actions taken in immediate response to concerns

2.4 Children and young people's needs are met

3. Impact on staff

3.1 Impact on staff

4. Impact on the community

4.1 Being aware of protecting children

5. Delivery of services to children and families in need of protection

5.1 Involving children, young people and families in key processes

5.2 Information sharing and recording

5.3 Recognising and assessing risks and needs

5.4 Effectiveness of planning to meet needs

5.5 Improvement through self-evaluation

6. Policy development and planning

6.1 Policies and procedures

6.2 Operational management and planning

6.3 Involving children and families in developing policies and services

7. Management and support of staff

7.1 Staff sufficiency, recruitment and retention

7.2 Staff deployment and teamwork

7.3 Staff training, development and support

8. Partnership and Resources

8.1 Partnership working

8.2 Management of resources

9. Leadership and direction

9. 1 Vision, values and aims

9.2 Leadership and direction

9.3 Developing people and partnerships

9.4 Leadership of improvement and change

HOW GOOD CAN WE BE?
What is our capacity for improvement?

APPENDIX 2

The six-point scale

LEVEL 6	*excellent*	outstanding or sector leading
LEVEL 5	*very good*	major strengths
LEVEL 4	*good*	important strengths with areas for improvement
LEVEL 3	*satisfactory*	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
LEVEL 2	*weak*	important weaknesses
LEVEL 1	*unsatisfactory*	major weaknesses

An evaluation of **excellent** will apply to performance which is a model of its type. The outcomes for children, young people and their families along with their experience of services will be of a very high quality. An evaluation of *excellent* will represent an outstanding standard of performance, which will exemplify very best practice and will be worth disseminating beyond the service or area. It will imply these very high levels of performance are sustainable and will be maintained.

An evaluation of **very good** will apply to performance characterised by major strengths. There will be very few areas for improvement and any that do exist will not significantly diminish the experience of children, young people and their families. While an evaluation of *very good* will represent a high standard of performance, it is a standard that should be achievable by all. It will imply that it is fully appropriate to continue the delivery of service without significant adjustment. However, there will be an expectation that professionals will take opportunities to improve and strive to raise performance to excellent.

An evaluation of **good** will apply to performance characterised by important strengths, which taken together clearly outweigh any areas for improvement. An evaluation of *good* will represent a standard of performance in which the strengths have a significant positive impact. However, the quality of outcomes and experiences of children, young people and their families will be diminished in some way by aspects where improvement is required. It will imply that the services should seek to improve further the areas of important strength, but take action to address the areas for improvement.

An evaluation of **satisfactory** will apply to performance characterised by strengths, which just outweigh weaknesses. An evaluation of *satisfactory* will indicate that children, young people and their families have access to a basic level of service. It represents a standard where the strengths have a positive impact on the experiences of children, young people and their families. However, while the weaknesses will not be important enough to have a substantially adverse impact, they will constrain the overall quality of outcomes and experiences. It will imply that professionals should take action to address areas of weakness while building on its strengths.

An evaluation of **weak** will apply to performance, which has some strengths, but where there will be important weaknesses. In general, an evaluation of *weak* may be arrived at in a number of circumstances. While there may be some strengths, the important weaknesses, either individually or collectively, are sufficient to diminish the experiences of children young people and their families in substantial ways. It may imply that some children and young people may be left at risk or their needs not met unless action is taken. It will imply the need for structured and planned action on the part of the agencies involved.

An evaluation of **unsatisfactory** will apply when there are major weaknesses in performance in critical aspects requiring immediate remedial action. The outcomes and experiences of children, young people and their families will be at risk in significant respects. In almost all cases, professionals responsible for provision evaluated as *unsatisfactory* will require support from senior managers in planning and carrying out the necessary actions to effect improvement. This may involve working alongside other staff or agencies. Urgent action will be required to ensure that children and young people are protected and their needs met.

The illustrations provided in the indicators describe two of these levels, namely, **very good** **(level 5)** and **weak** **(level 2)**. We can identify whether our practice fits best with one of these levels or use the illustrations at these two levels to judge whether our practice is better than level 5 or is somewhere in between levels 5 and 2 (either at level 4 or 3) or is worse than level 2.

Evaluations against the quality indicators are not an end in themselves. They indicate aspects of good or weak practice, which need to be looked at more closely. Evaluations should not be aggregated across different indicators or turned into percentages. In such cases, percentages can be at best meaningless and at worst deceptive. We are not trying to add up evaluations and give our area a "score" or a clean bill of health.

It can be very useful to look at patterns of evaluations across particular indicators, particularly if we are using the quality indicator to evaluate across services. This can help identify whether a particular strength or weakness is within one service, or one locality or replicated across the area. This can help focus on the underlying causes of weaknesses and identify appropriate development priorities, or resource allocations. Over time, trends in evaluations can indicate whether the implementation of particular processes or new guidance has brought about the improvements sought.

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