Quality Assurance Framework

Guidance for all managers and staff in the People Group

Warwickshire County Council

Working for Warwickshire

Foreword

Quality is important. We all know how it feels when a service exceeds our expectations. We tell our family, friends, neighbours and others about it and recommend it to others. It feels personal and shows us that we are important. We can trust a high quality service. It works in partnership with us and genuinely wants to know our experience of using the service to find out how it can improve in the future. A high quality service wants to know what it does well and how it can do better in the future. It learns and improves.

We also know when a service fails to meet our expectations. We feel disappointed, let down, sometimes angry and even unsafe. We tell our family, friends, neighbours and others about it. We may complain and tell others to avoid the service. We can sometimes be at risk because of poor service quality.

The relationship between high quality and excellent outcomes is clear. Our key message is that a high quality service for our customers is everyone's business. Our customers have a right to expect this from us. We must all strive to ensure it is consistently delivered.

Our Quality Assurance Framework can help identify the things we do well. It can enable our high quality practice to be celebrated, shared and built upon. It can quickly highlight areas for improvement so that prompt and effective action is taken. The framework can support organisational learning and develop a culture of continuous improvement.

Understanding customer and service users' experiences is always the starting point for assuring quality.

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Part 1: Introduction

1.1 The Aim of the Framework

This framework was launched across the People Group in April 2016 and reviewed in summer 2017. The original framework has been updated in the light of implementation.

The aim of the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) is to achieve excellent outcomes for people through high quality services provided and commissioned by the People Group. The QAF promotes a consistent approach to quality, ensures clear governance arrangements and supports organisational learning.

1.2 Objectives

The aim will be achieved through the following objectives. They are:

- To apply quality standards across the People Group;
- To take a consistent approach to monitor and evaluate quality;
- To implement clear and robust governance arrangements for quality assurance;
- To celebrate good practice and take action to improve when necessary; and
- To contribute to organisational learning.

1.3 Intended Audience

The intended audience for the QAF are the Group Leadership Team, Service Managers, Operational Managers, commissioners and practitioners in the People Group.

It should be noted that there are other key stakeholders who should be aware of and involved in the QAF. They include:

- Potential and existing service users and customers;
- Carers;
- Families;
- Providers; and
- Partners working with the same children, young people, adults and families.

1.4 Scope

The scope of the QAF includes:

- All business units in the Warwickshire County Council People Group;
- Services provided and commissioned by the People Group;
- Service users and customers from pre-birth to end of life; and

- Quality as distinct from activity and outcomes.

1.5 Context and Behaviours

2017-18 will continue to be a period of significant change. Warwickshire, like other local authorities, faces difficult financial challenges. Warwickshire Cares and the equivalent Children and Families model represent a refreshed approach to transforming social care between now and 2020. It is the start of new conversations with people, communities and organisations, placing an emphasis on prevention and early help, enabling individuals and communities to support themselves at home or as close as possible to their homes.

The aim is to put people, customers, friends and relatives at the heart of improving the health, wellbeing and quality of life of Warwickshire residents by providing more relevant and community based support that helps people live safe, healthy and independent lives. It is a chance to break down traditional boundaries, working collaboratively with our customers, partners and colleagues, sharing information, ideas and learning.

In this context, Warwickshire County Council's One Organisational Plan 2020, emphasises the need for a new type of conversation on how we deliver services in the future. It sets out six key behaviours for employees that they will:

- Do what we say;
- Help people and communities to find their own solutions;
- Move with purpose and energy;
- Build strong working relationships;
- Focus on solutions; and
- Be the best we can be.

1.6 Relationship with Other Quality Standards

The QAF fits with other quality assurance arrangements for social care and health services in Warwickshire. It does not replace them but instead provides a local driver for quality improvement. Examples are included in Appendix 1.

1.7 Organisational Learning

The QAF supports organisational learning in the People Group by developing knowledge on quality. It supports a culture of continuous learning among employees, critical thinking and risk taking with new ideas. Organisational learning values employee contributions, learning from experience including from mistakes and disseminating this learning throughout the organisation to inform practice. The QAF can provide invaluable learning for the People Group including insight into customer experience.

1.8   Using the Framework

The People Group uses the QAF in a number of ways. They include:
- Embedding a shared definition of quality;
- Clear standards as indicators of high quality;
- Providing the Group Leadership Team with oversight of quality;
- Sharing examples of high quality and applying learning from them across the Group;
- Highlighting where quality needs to improve and ensuring action is taken; and
- A shared understanding of high quality among practitioners, commissioners and managers.

Part 2: Quality

2.1 Definition of Quality

The council and its health partners strongly endorse the components of a high quality care and support service as outlined in the *Transparency in Outcomes: A Framework for Quality in Adult Social Care, Department of Health, March 2011.* It is embedded within the QAF and states:

> *'A high quality care and support service must consist of the following three core components: **Positive Customer Experience, Safety** and **Effectiveness.** A service cannot be judged to be good quality because it is safe whilst ignoring its effectiveness or people's experiences and ensuring value for money.'*

High quality is only achieved where all three components are present at the same time. However, it is important to acknowledge that service user and customer experience are impacted by a range of service experiences including the NHS, Warwickshire County Council and the voluntary and community sector. The QAF is likely to identify good practice and areas for improvement in integrated services or those provided by partner organisations.

2.2 Quality Assurance

Quality assurance is the process to evaluate and improve service user and customer experience, safety and service effectiveness. The QAF describes the process for evaluating the quality of People Group services. It gives the Group Leadership Team (GLT) assurance that it has an accurate understanding of quality in the People Group including good practice and areas for improvement. This means successes can be celebrated and improvements implemented in a timely manner.

A consistent and structured approach for quality assurance can drive improvements in service quality for service users and customers. People Group business units can use it to focus on quality in everything they do.

## 2.3 Quality Assurance Activity in the People Group

The People Group undertakes significant activity to assure the quality of its services. This includes participation in sector-led improvement, for example, Peer Challenge. All services should seek information on quality from the four sources described in 4.1. The experience of service users, customers and families is particularly important. The implementation of the QAF should focus services on measuring quality.

Part 3: The Quality Assurance Framework

3.1 The Quality Assurance Cycle

The People Group quality assurance cycle places the individuals and families who use services at the centre. This is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: **The Quality Assurance Cycle**
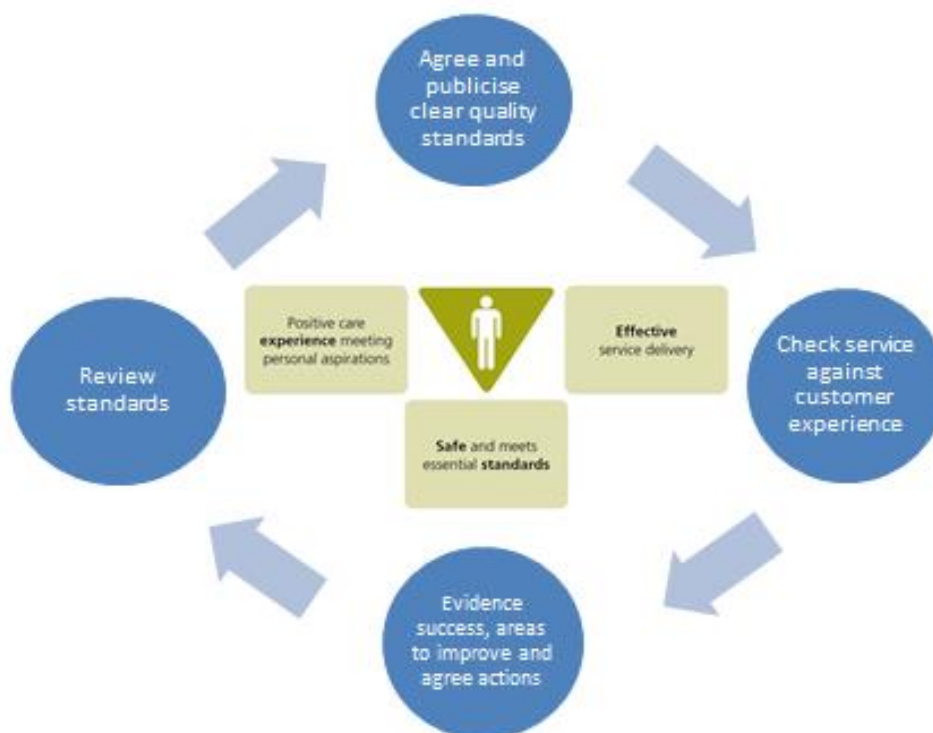
The cycle begins with setting and publicising clear standards for the quality of services. It proceeds through checking and monitoring services against the experience of customers and staff, subsequently identifying areas for improvement and addressing poor performance and sharing success. The cycle is completed by reviewing standards in the light of findings, to ensure continuous improvement and effective feedback to service users, customers, providers and professionals.

There are a number of critical success factors to implement the QAF. They include:

- Service user and customer involvement ensuring their views are at the heart of quality assurance;
- Clear quality standards;
- Systems in place to collect and analyse information;
- Reporting timescales;
- Clear responsibilities for oversight;

- Identifying and sharing examples of high quality; and
- An escalation process for risks and issues ensuring that effective action is taken to drive improvements.

3.2   The Quality Standards

The QAF standards can be used to understand 'what good looks like' and to judge the quality of local services. The People Group business units should clearly set out their commitment to quality, placing quality improvement at their heart.

The QAF has five overarching quality standards to measure quality. Each is underpinned by more detailed standards. An example is given in Appendix 2. The People Group can use the standards to measure service quality.

The People Group quality standards are:

- Standard 1: People are safe and their independence and wellbeing promoted
- Standard 2: People have a positive experience of services
- Standard 3: The workforce is skilled, motivated and valued
- Standard 4: Equality and diversity are integral to services
- Standard 5: Services make efficient and effective use of resources

Appendix 3 shows grade descriptions based on ratings used by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC). They can be used to evaluate service delivery and support improvement. For example, they are used in the People Group case file audit tools.

Part 4: Using the Quality Assurance Framework

4.1 Methods for Using the Framework

The QAF should be used by each business unit in the People Group. Quality assurance can be included in plans. The following methods should be used to assure quality:

- The experience of service users, customers and families - It is important to regularly gather information from service users, customers and families. Service user and customer satisfaction surveys, the use of social media including phone apps for service users and customers to give feedback on quality are useful and can provide quantitative and qualitative information. However, this should not replace conversations with customers where a more in-depth understanding of their experience can be obtained. Focus groups, interviews and case studies can be used.
- The experience of frontline staff - It is important to regularly gather information from staff including those in partner organisations and providers. This should be through regular supervision or 1-2-1 meetings and in team meetings where quality assurance should be a standing agenda item. 'Walking the floor' by managers is an opportunity to gather information on the experience of staff.
- Service user and customer case records - Case records are an important, rich source of information. The People Group audit service user and customer records by staff with relevant professional expertise to obtain information and key findings from a sample of cases in order to improve service delivery. Case file audits are a part of regular management oversight. Conversations with staff can cross-reference records with case facts.
- Other organisational activity - Service user and customer feedback through compliments, representations and complaints should be used in quality assurance activity to improve practice and service delivery. Human resources, health and safety and learning and development information can also be sources of information about quality.

4.2 Governance Arrangements

All business units are responsible for oversight of quality within their own unit. This includes ensuring that planned actions and timescales are implemented and result in measurable improvements in quality. It also includes taking action to share good practice, success and lessons learned. Each business unit implements the People Group QAF in their own way.

The governance arrangements for quality assurance must ensure that managers and group leadership/management teams have an oversight of quality and improvement. Business unit Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and Senior Management Team (SMT) meetings should:

- Oversee quality including strengths and areas for improvement;
- Support quality improvements by ensuring that timely and effective action is taken;
- Recognise staff achievements by celebrating high quality; and
- Risks and issues relating to quality should be escalated by exception to SLTs/SMTs and GLT (and not limited to quarterly reporting). Quarterly performance reports should identify key messages on quality.

4.3   Roles and Responsibilities for Quarterly Reporting

The Planning, Performance and Improvement team co-ordinates and produces quarterly performance reports for the Group Leadership Team (GLT). The reports include a section on the QAF to summarise headlines on quality in the People Group.

The Group Leadership Team should receive assurance that success and good practice are celebrated, lessons learned are shared and can support action for improvement. GLT can seek further assurance from business units or direct action when required.

4.4   Closing the Loop: Taking Action to Improve Quality

Senior Leadership Teams (SLT) and Senior Management Teams (SMT) have an important role to ensure action is taken with the desired impact.

The Group Leadership Team will have an oversight through the quarterly performance report.

Part 5: Monitoring and Reviewing the Quality Assurance Framework

5.1 Monitoring

The QAF will be monitored by SLTs/SMTs. Monitoring should include service user and customer feedback.

5.2 Reviewing

The QAF will be reviewed annually.

<u>Appendix 1</u>: Other Quality Assurance Processes

- The Ofsted framework and evaluation schedule for the inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers (single inspection framework) and reviews of Local Safeguarding Children Boards;
- The Ofsted framework for school inspection;
- The CQC essential standards used to inspect and judge the quality and safety of health and social care services in England (including registered care providers);
- Sector-led improvement including Peer Challenge;
- The Think Local, Act Personal Making It Real 'I statements';
- The National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (NICE) quality standards;
- The NHS Quality, Improvement, Productivity and Prevention (QIPP) Agenda;
- The Healthcare Quality Improvement Healthcare Quality Improvement Partnership (HQIP);
- Professional Regulation of social workers, occupational therapists, registered managers, nurses and others. Professionals have a responsibility and accountability to their professional regulator such as Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC);
- Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) gathers information about best practice in care and support and produces practical resources for the care sector; and
- Skills for Care and the NSA (National Skills Academy) supports the social care workforce to ensure appropriately skilled, competent and confident people are available to deliver high quality care, properly equipped with the leadership, management and commissioning skills they need.

Appendix 2: Examples of Quality Standards

The following examples of quality standards should be used as a guide. However, it is recommended that the use of 'I' statements is considered, for example, the Making It Real 'I' statements.

Standard 1: People are safe and their independence and wellbeing promoted

- People are safe from abuse, neglect and mistreatment;
- Staff and contracted service providers are aware of their roles and responsibilities for safeguarding with statutory guidance;
- All staff working primarily and directly with children, young people and vulnerable adults cleared by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) in line with Warwickshire County Council policy and procedure;
- Staff and contracted service providers know how to use the local safeguarding procedures;
- Referrals are made in accordance with safeguarding procedures;
- Assessment is completed in a timely manner taking full account of the information and professional opinions provided by agencies that know the customer and family;
- Information is shared appropriately in accordance with procedures;
- Plans and reviews are timely taking full account of the information and professional opinions provided by agencies that know the family;
- Services planned for the family are holistic and use the resources of the wider family network and partner agencies;
- Risks and how they will be managed are clearly recorded; and
- There is evidence of positive personalised outcomes for service users and customers.

Standard 2: People have a positive experience of services

- People's views are sought and recorded throughout their contact with the People Group;
- Consent to seek and/or share information is obtained;
- People and their families participate in decisions about the services they receive;
- Outcomes are based upon the preferences and needs expressed by people and their families;
- There is evidence of positive outcomes for people;
- People know the service standards to expect;
- People are enabled by the service to live independently with dignity and control over their circumstances;
- People including carers are supported to make choices and manage identified or anticipated risks, and contingency plans are in place;
- Differences in views between people and/or carers and assessing staff are clearly identified and addressed;
- All feedback and information from people and their families will be used to ensure that concerns and complaints are dealt with effectively and in a timely manner;

- People and families will be informed of the outcome of their complaint;
- The views of children, young people, adults and families are considered in the design, development and delivery of all services;
- People and their families' experiences of services are used to drive quality improvement; and
- People and their families rate their services highly.

Standard 3: The workforce is skilled, motivated and valued

- Staff are actively involved in improving quality;
- Supervision takes place regularly at an appropriate frequency to the role;
- Outcomes, decisions and timescales for action are recorded in supervision;
- All staff have an annual appraisal;
- Staff take advantage of professional development opportunities;
- Staff development supports staff in practicing appropriately to enable people to achieve positive outcomes;
- Compliments are celebrated and shared with and between staff to highlight success and to inform continuous service improvements; and
- Managers maximise opportunities for shared training and workforce development.

Standard 4: Equality and diversity are integral to services

- People are treated with compassion, dignity and respect;
- Consideration is given to personal, religious and cultural beliefs and the impact on individual's choices;
- Communication with people and their families respects their language, religion, culture and identity;
- Service delivery is informed by impact analysis reports that are reviewed regularly;
- Services and plans empower people and their families to address and overcome social exclusion; and
- Organisational culture and practices that contribute to discrimination and disadvantage are challenged effectively.

Standard 5: Services make efficient and effective use of resources

- People have access to information, advice and guidance including the range of support networks and resources available within the community to meet identified needs;
- Self-directed support and opportunities for service users to manage their own care needs are encouraged;
- Assessments are holistic in approach, addressing people's needs within their family and wider community;
- Assessments, care plans and reviews build on strengths as well as identifying needs;
- Assessments, plans and reviews are recorded, signed and circulated in accordance with procedures;

- Reviews are undertaken in a timely manner, identifying the support being provided and the progress against measurable outcomes;
- Recording is appropriate, jargon-free and demonstrates the purpose and outcome of each contact concerning the family;
- Recording is concise, analytical, distinguishes between fact and professional opinion, and is appropriate for customer access;
- Information about the family is written and stored in accordance with Data Protection and Information Sharing protocols and meets the requirements of performance measurement and data monitoring;
- Management oversight ensures there is effective decision making and timely action;
- Decisions are transparent and open to challenge;
- Managers audit case records on a regular basis and require action to be taken where necessary; and
- The service can evidence a positive impact on outcomes for people and their families.

Appendix 3: Grade Descriptions

The following grade descriptions are based on ratings used by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC). They can be used to evaluate service delivery and support improvement. For example, they are used in the People Group case file audit tools.

Grade	Summary	Description
Outstanding	Service or practice demonstrates excellence	People's feedback about their **experience** of the service describes it as consistently excellent. It often exceeds their expectations. Their views and experiences are regularly sought about service quality and impact. People are at the centre of service design and influence development and strategic thinking. There is a real sense of partnership between people and the service. The service keeps people **safe** (and maximises their personal control). It ensures risk and choice are balanced appropriately. There is a high level of understanding of the need to make sure people are safe. People who use the service and staff tell us they are actively encouraged to raise their concerns and to challenge when they feel people's safety is at risk. They tell us there are no recriminations for doing this and it is seen as part of day-to-day practice. Staff have exceptional skills and the ability to recognise when people feel unsafe. The service is **effective**. It delivers measurably improved personalised outcomes, has skilled staff and delivers value for money. It has a clear vision and values that includes honesty, involvement, compassion, dignity, independence, respect, equality and safety. These are consistently put into practice. There is a strong emphasis on continually striving to improve. The service sustains outstanding practice and improvements over time. Staff and services are willing to go 'the extra mile' for people. There is robust evidence that the service meets all of the People Group **QAF standards**.
Green	Service or practice demonstrates	People's feedback about their **experience** of the service describes it as consistently good. It often meets their expectations. Their views and

	good practice and is moving towards excellence	experiences are often sought about service quality and impact. Their views and experiences are often influence development and strategic thinking. The service keeps people **safe**. It ensures risk and choice are balanced appropriately. People who use the service and staff tell us they can raise their concerns and challenge when they feel people's safety is at risk. They tell us there are no recriminations for doing this. Staff recognise when people feel unsafe. The service is usually **effective**. It usually delivers measurably improved personalised outcomes, has skilled staff and delivers value for money. It has a clear vision and values that are put into practice. There is an emphasis on striving to improve. The service sustains good practice and improvements over time. There is robust evidence that the service meets many of the People Group **QAF standards**.
Amber	Service or practice has reached the required minimum standard	People's feedback about their **experience** of the service describes it as satisfactory. It often meets their expectations, but this is not always the case. Their views and experiences are sometimes sought about service quality and impact. Their views and experiences sometimes influence development and strategic thinking. The service keeps people **safe**. It often balances risk and choice appropriately. People who use the service and staff sometimes raise their concerns and challenge when they feel people's safety is at risk. Staff often recognise when people feel unsafe. The service is often **effective**. It often delivers measurably improved personalised outcomes, has skilled staff and delivers value for money. It has a vision and values that are put into practice. There is an emphasis on striving to improve. The service sustains some good practice and improvements over time, but others are not sustained. There is evidence that the service meets some of the People Group **QAF standards**. However,

		some of the standards are either not being met or not met consistently.
Red	Service or practice has failed to reach the minimum standard required and immediate action is required	People's feedback about their **experience** of the service describes it as consistently unsatisfactory or poor. It often does not meet their expectations. Their views and experiences are rarely sought about service quality and impact other than through complaints and comments. The service sometimes does not keep people **safe**. There are serious failures that create or leave people being harmed or at risk of harm and/or their welfare not safeguarded and promoted. It does not balance risk and choice appropriately. People who use the service and staff often do not raise their concerns or challenge when they feel people's safety is at risk. Staff sometimes do not recognise when people feel unsafe. The service is often not **effective**. It does not have or lacks evidence of measurably improved personalised outcomes and value for money. There is little or no emphasis on improvement. The service does not sustain improvements over time. The service does not meet many of the People Group **QAF standards** or is inconsistent in meeting standards.