



# Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) Quality Assurance Framework



## 1. Introduction.

This EHCP Quality Assurance Framework describes how all partners in St Helens will work together to ensure the quality of the Education, Health and Care assessment and planning arrangements across the borough. It sets out the approach and measures taken to improve and sustain quality of assessment, planning review and provision for children and young people with SEND, as well as how information will be reported into accountability and governance structures.

This document has been approved by the SEND EHCP Development Group, a multi-agency partnership including parents and those professionals who deliver support and services for children and young people with SEND and their families.

The purpose of this framework is to support and further promote our culture of continuous reflection and improvement. As such this document sits within a range of performance and quality measures.

## 2. Wider Performance / Quality Assurance Measures.

This framework for assuring the quality of EHCPs is part of a broader range of tools to aid the monitoring and development of the local authority's statutory performance and quality of practice.

The local authority has set a series of internal performance indicators, collected monthly and reported quarterly as part of the internal audit / scrutiny cycle. These performance indicators are:

- CYP-29: % of Education, Health and Care Plans completed within a 20 week period.
- CYP-30: % of Professional assessments completed within a 6 week period.
- CYP-36: Children and young people perceive themselves to be actively involved in their EHCPs

St Helens, we are striving to develop a 'Quality Dashboard' which will provide real time data on:

- Timeliness of EHCPs
- Timeliness of professional advice.
- Service User Experience, this will include feedback not only from the EHCP process, but also information regarding mediations and tribunals.
- Complaints and Compliments.
- Reports from independent partners, (SENDIASS and Together Trust)
- Workforce development.

## 3. Principles.

### The following principles underpin our agreed standards of practice:

- EHCPs include the views, wishes and aspirations of children, young people and their families and carers.
- EHCPs are clear and accessible.
- EHCPs set out how all partners will work together to support the child or young person.
- EHCPs include specific outcomes agreed by the child, young person and their family, including those related to preparation for adulthood.
- EHCPs clearly identify the needs of the young person.

The Quality Assurance Framework sets out a system of review and audit to ensure that:

- The Local Authority is working to discharge the **statutory duties** set out in key legislation:
  - Children and Families Act, (2014).
  - The Care Act, (2014).
  - The Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act, (1970).

And associated regulations<sup>1</sup>.

- There is **consistency and quality** throughout the application of the EHCP process.
- Children and Young People with SEND and their families are supported to receive the **right support** at the **right time**.
- EHCPs contain **SMART outcomes**, (Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-Bound) agreed by young people and their families.
- EHCPs can be **effectively reviewed** to ensure that they continue to have the maximum impact for children, young people and their families.

## 4. Quality Standards.

The current SEND Code of Practice contains a number of principles underpinned by Section 19 of the Children and Families Act, (2014). It challenges the partnership to ensure that day-to-day practice evidences:

- A strong focus on high aspirations and improving outcomes for children and young people.
- The active participation of children, young people and their families in decision-making at both individual and strategic levels.
- A focus on inclusive practice and removing barriers to learning.
- Successful preparation for adulthood, including independent living and employment.
- The joint planning and commissioning of services to ensure close co-operation between education, health and social care.

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<sup>1</sup> Regard will also be given to the following related guidance:

- The Equality Act, (2010).
- Working Together to Safeguard Children, (2013).
- The Children Act, (1989) Vol 2, (Care Planning and Placement) and Vol 3, (Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers).
- The Mental Capacity Act, (2005).
- Reasonable Adjustments for Disabled Pupils, (2012).

- The application by education and training providers of a 'graduated approach<sup>2</sup>' to identifying and supporting pupils and students with SEND.
- A well-coordinated assessment and planning process leading to timely, well informed decisions.

In order to evidence these principles, the following **Quality Standards** have been devised to support the process of auditing EHCPs:

### **2.1: Quality Standard One:**

There is clear evidence within the plan of the views and aspirations of the child or young person and their family and these have been used to inform the outcomes listed in Section E.

### **2.2: Quality Standard Two:**

EHCPs are clear, accessible and outcomes are SMART, (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-Bound) and relate to preparation for adulthood, including independent living and employment.

### **2.3: Quality Standard Three:**

All partners involved in supporting the child or young person, including their families have contributed their views and advice to the EHCP within the timeframe specified in Section 9 of the Code of Practice.

### **2.4: Quality Standard Four:**

The strengths and needs of the child or young person are clearly identified and represented in the EHCP.

### **2.5: Quality Standard Five:**

EHCPs describe provision in a manner that is specific, quantified and matched to the outcomes agreed in Section E. There should be evidence that Education, Health and Care Services are working together to ensure these outcomes are achieved.

## **5. Services Contributing Advice to EHCPs.**

Prior to the audit process described below, it is the expectation of the partnership that each agency contributing advice to the EHCP process should have quality assurance arrangements in place to assure the quality of advice submitted to the local authority.

### **Children, Young People and their families.**

A 'tell us once approach' will allow children, young people and families to contribute advice to their EHCPs in a manner that is meaningful and accessible to them. Agencies that collect the child's voice will give regard to the duties specified in the Equality Act, (2010) around ensuring that this is collected in an accessible manner.

### **Educational Settings.**

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<sup>2</sup> More information on the graduated approach in St Helens can be found at: [www.sthelens.gov.uk/send](http://www.sthelens.gov.uk/send)

Prior to submitting educational advice for an EHC needs assessment, all Educational settings will complete a quality assurance exercise to ensure that the advice includes:

- Pupil and Parent Views.
- Information on the 4 areas of SEND detailed in the SEND Code of Practice.
- A chronology of the graduated response, including service involvements and actions taken.
- IEPs and Reviews.
- Any existing relevant assessment and progress information.
- A timetable / timeline of support received and the impact that it has had.
- Any care plans, (if necessary).
- Evidence of implementation of professional recommendations and their impact.

### **Educational Psychology Service.**

When providing Psychological Advice as part of the EHC needs assessment, the Educational Psychology and Learning Support Service will:

- Screen all requests in relation to previous Educational Psychologist and Specialist Teacher involvement and adherence to the graduated approach,
- Notify parents/carers/young person of the intention to complete Psychological Advice,
- Analyse information received and examine work previously undertaken,
- Endeavour to engage in a multi-agency and person-centred process involving parents/carers, children and young people, relevant professionals and educational staff,
- Implement a common approach for providing Psychological advice and attend joint outcome meetings where possible,
- Engage in an internal quality assurance process of review and reflection in relation to Psychological Advice and its affiliated processes,
- Consider guidance provided by relevant professional bodies in relation to providing Psychological advice.

### **Social Care Services.**

To ensure that the Social Care contributions to the statutory assessment process are of high quality, the local authority ensures that:

- All requests for advice from social care services are routinely sent to the social care 'front door' for initial screening and to ensure that the relevant social care teams are involved.
- Advice provided by social care teams clearly demonstrates that existing duties for social care under the Children Act 1989 are being met.

### **Health Services.**

Each CCG Health Service is required to:

- Attend initial EHCP training provided by the DCO, which is recorded in each healthcare professional's PDR.

- Establish a secure e-mail for the health service to communicate with the St Helens SEND Assessment Team.
- Establish an internal tracker to record the commencement of statutory assessment and associated requests for advice. This will be used to evidence the monthly health submission data to the DCO.
- Establish an agreed EHCP advice template for health submissions.
- Establish a service-specific supporting guidance document with regard to contributing written advice to statutory assessment.
- Establish an internal quality assurance process which includes the counter-signing of every health advice by a senior clinician within statutory timescales, with contingency plans in place to ensure these are upheld.

## **6. The Audit Process.**

Auditing the quality of EHCPs against the 5 agreed quality standards will be administered via a 'phased' approach:

### **3.1: Phase 1 – Initial QA and Compliance Testing.**

This initial phase is overseen by Casework Managers based in the SEND Assessment Team and will be carried out on completion of each EHCP. Activity will be carried out by the Casework Managers, both individually and as a group.

#### **Individual Casework Manager Compliance Checks.**

Throughout the drafting of the plan and following completion, the Casework Managers will have regard to a Practitioner Guide and Compliance Checklist, based on those produced by the Council for Disabled Children and developed across the North West region. These are intended to be prompts for the practitioner, highlighting key questions to ask at the draft stage, to ensure that sufficient information is gathered to enable the EHCP to achieve the five quality standards.

Casework Managers will ensure that:

1. All advice collected as part of the statutory assessment process is presented in the draft in a manner that is clear and accessible.
2. The quality and quantity of advice contributed by professionals is monitored and co-ordinated to ensure that the plan is a representative document. This may involve the implementation of contingency/escalation procedures to ensure the plan is drafted in a timely manner.
3. The content of each section of the EHCP complies with the requirements set out in Sections 9.62 – 9.77 of the SEND Code of Practice. This will be evidenced by the completion of the compliance checklist.
4. Any concerns relating to the quality of professional submissions will be raised with the appropriate professional in the first instance.
5. The draft plan produced adheres to the five agreed quality standards.

#### **Moderation by Senior SEND Casework Manager.**

Casework Managers are responsible for co-ordinating the assessment process and generating a final EHCP that can be effectively reviewed.

As EHCPs are drafted, the Senior SEND Casework Manager will conduct casework supervision sessions with each Casework Manager to ensure consistency and quality. It remains the responsibility of each Casework Manager to ensure that feedback from these sessions is used to ensure that each of their EHCPs is written to meet the requirements set out in the SEN Code of Practice and the five quality standards.

### **Moderation by Designated Clinical Officer, (DCO).**

All completed draft plans will be moderated by the DCO prior to approval.

The DCO will give regard to:

1. The **5 Quality Standards**.
2. The **quantity and quality of the health advice** submitted to the process and how this has been represented in the EHCP.

Any concerns relating to the quantity and quality of individual health submissions affecting the overall quality of the plan will be discussed by the DCO with the specific health service lead in the first instance. Emerging quality themes will be discussed with the relevant operational manager at DCO SEND update meetings. Service-specific training will be provided to address any persistent themes.

3. Sections C, E, F, G, J and K to determine whether the health advice submitted has been recorded in the **correct sections** of the plan and **interpreted appropriately**.

Any concerns relating to either the interpretation or inclusion of health advice within the plan will be discussed in the first instance with the specific Casework Manager within the 2 weeks allowed for this process. Any amendments agreed will be communicated to the Senior Casework Manager in order that these can be monitored and any emerging quality themes be addressed via individual or team training.

This information will also be included in the report presented to the EHCP development group, (See section 3.3 – Moderation and Governance).

4. Moderation arrangements.

### **3.2: Phase 2 – Multi-Agency Audits.**

A Multi-Agency working group will meet termly to carry out a qualitative audit of new EHCPs. The agreed quality standards will be used to inform and develop good practice across the SEND partnership.

Plans to be audited will be randomly selected from new EHCPs completed since the previous Multi-Agency audit took place.

Auditors will be asked to compare the plans with the five agreed quality standards and provide:

- An overall judgement on the quality of each plan.
- A summary of their findings.
- Recommendations for further actions.
- Areas of good practice that have been identified.

## **Judgement Criteria:**

Plans to be audited will be compared by auditors against the five agreed quality standards and assigned on of the following judgements:

<b>Outstanding:</b>	Plan clearly meets all five quality standards.
<b>Good:</b>	Plan meets most of the five quality standards.
<b>Requires Improvement:</b>	Plan does not meet a number of the quality standards.
<b>Inadequate:</b>	Plan does not meet any quality standards.

The summary of recommendations collected as part of this process will be referred for action to the appropriate agency or service.

A summary report will be produced and presented to the Moderation Group.

Key themes will be identified and used to celebrate good practice and contribute to workforce development as appropriate.

The Multi-Agency group will consist of:

- Parent Forum Representative
- Head of SEND (0-25)
- PfA Lead
- Principle / Senior Educational Psychologist
- Designated Clinical Officer
- Senior SEND Casework Manager
- Manager from Children's Social Care Services

### **3.3: Phase 3 – Moderation / Governance**

The moderation group will consist of senior managers from across the SEND Partnership.

This group will moderate a selection of plans from Phase 2 in order to ensure the audits are consistent with the agreed quality standards.

The group will also use the findings of the Phase 2 audits to present a report to the EHCP Development Group with comments on overall quality of plans, including any further thematic work and the timeframe for this in order that it can be included in the overall EHCP Development Action plan.



