City of York Safeguarding Children Partnership Families First

Quality Assurance Framework May 2026

Stay Home • Come Home • Safe & Connected

A confident, integrated and multi-disciplinary workforce that acts as a single partnership 'team around the family'. We move away from siloed service delivery toward a culture of collaboration, ensuring that families receive non-stigmatizing, community-based support at the earliest possible opportunity.

Purpose & Scope

The purpose of this framework is to set out how the safeguarding partnership will:

- Assure the quality, effectiveness, and impact of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements
- Provide a consistent, evidence-based approach to evaluating safeguarding practice
- Support continuous improvement, learning, and strong multi-agency accountability.

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026) sets out what safeguarding children partnerships must do for Quality Assurance

- Oversight of practice quality
- Independent scrutiny of effectiveness
- Accountability across all agencies
- Transparent evaluation through annual reporting
- Consistent, measurable multi-agency standards

- Clear mechanisms to address concerns or disputes
- Resource allocation that supports continuous improvement

This framework applies to:

- Safeguarding partners (Local Authority, Integrated Care Board, Police)
- Relevant agencies (education, early years, health VSCE sector, sports, youth justice, probation etc)
- All multi-agency safeguarding activity, including early help, Family Help, child protection, contextual safeguarding, and responses to extra-familial harm.

Governance & Accountability

Strategic Leadership

- Partnership executive provides strategic oversight of safeguarding quality
- Senior leaders from each partner agency are accountable for performance and improvement

Roles & Responsibilities

- **Safeguarding Partners**: Set priorities, approve QA plans, monitor system effectiveness
- **Relevant Agencies**: Provide data, participate in audits, implement recommendations
- **Independent Chair and Scrutineer**: Provides objective evaluation of effectiveness and impact

What Good Looks Like

This framework does not replace individual agency expectations and measures in relation to practice standards, and it is important that individuals retain professional identity and expertise and comply with relevant regulations. However, it is important that we agree what good looks like so that we can work collaboratively towards shared goals.

Our ambition for York is aligned with the Children's Social Care National Framework Outcomes (2026) – which sets out what we are working to achieve

1. Children, young people and families stay together and get the help they need
2. Children and young people are safe in and outside of their homes
3. Children and young people are supported by their family network

   Children in care and care leavers have stable, loving homes

Which are enabled by:

- Enabler: multi-agency working is prioritised and effective
- Enabler: leaders drive conditions for effective practice
- Enabler: the workforce is equipped and effective

We work together to support children to achieve the 7 SEND outcomes:

1. I am healthy
2. I have a choice and am heard
3. I am safe
4. I achieve my goals
5. I am included
6. I can overcome challenges and difficulties on my own or with support
7. I am becoming independent

Our Practice Model sets out how we work with families

We are guided by shared principles

- A system that never gives up on a child
- We treat everyone with kindness, dignity and care
- We have a collective commitment to be families led
- We promote partnerships and respectful relationships

- We engage in honest dialogue to navigate and resolve professional disagreements

To read our full Practice Model, please visit: https://www.saferchildrenyork.org.uk/safeguarding-information/building-brighter-futures-practice-model

The Quality Assurance Cycle

This cycle is based on the 'assess-plan-do-review' model and draws on core evidence sources to ensure a robust, triangulated approach. Quality assurance is not a discretionary activity, and it is essential that all partners contribute to quality assurance activities.

This forms a continuous improvement cycle: Multi-agency audit > All agencies feedback loop > Performance Data > Voice - child & family > Workforce Survey > Annual/subgroup reporting > Independent Scrutineer feedback > Review & Update Strategy > Practice learning events > Multi-agency audit.

To see a visualiser of this cycle, please visit: https://i.postimg.cc/4ywYtqnq/000Picture2.png

Multi-Agency Audits

Subgroup chairs plan audit schedules across the subgroups based on horizon scanning, case review learning and key themes from data. Audits will include practice areas (e.g. Early Help, Family Help, Child Protection), thematic audits (e.g. risk outside the home) and compliance (e.g. information sharing, timeliness, threshold). Joined up planning will support capacity across the partnership for audit activities and reduce the potential for duplication or gaps. Audits will use inspection frameworks where appropriate to support familiarity with processes whilst undertaking practice learning.

Feedback loops

Each multi-agency audit will produce a 'learning on a page', an accessible summary of key learning for practitioners. Each agency will be responsible for sharing this learning with relevant teams and reporting back on how this has impacted practice.

Performance Data

The Learning, Development and Performance Subgroup oversees the preparation of the quarterly City of York Safeguarding Children Partnership data set. This will include data on Families First key performance indicators. Partners contribute a narrative analysis to support the interpretation of data provided including trend analysis.

Voice – Child and Family

Every multi-agency audit will include a question related to child voice/ lived experience. The voice subgroup will share key insights and learning from feedback/ consultation/ co-production activities with the other subgroups so this learning can be disseminated.

Every agency is expected to consider how children and families experience their services and use this to inform service development.

Workforce Survey

Annual workforce surveys will be undertaken to review practitioner experiences, confidence, learning needs and feedback.

Annual/ Subgroup Reporting

Subgroups will prepare two assurance reports per year to the Partnership Executive. Annual impact report and Section 11 compliance will inform our understanding of current priorities, key themes and areas for learning. This in turn will help shape our priorities and what we do in response i.e. development activities such as development day agenda, training opportunities and learning events.

Independent Scrutineer Feedback

The Independent Scrutineer acts as a critical friend, providing feedback and providing an additional layer of assurance through the lens of the partnership.

Review Progress & Update Strategies

Progress against partnership priorities, action plans and Families First will be reviewed regularly by subgroups and the partnership Executive to inform updates to strategies and action plans where relevant.

Practice Learning Events

Practice learning events are arranged to meet the needs of practitioners related to safeguarding practice. Training aligns with Families First,

partnership priorities and key strategies, and reflects learning needs identified by audit activities, performance data and case review.

Current Structure

It is proposed that the quality assurance framework is aligned with the existing City of York Safeguarding Children Partnership structure. Text boxes show how Families First activities will feed into this structure.

To see the structure, please visit:
https://i.postimg.cc/v8Vm71x7/image.png