

Improving: Services for children

How good is our
corporate parenting?
How good can we be?

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1. INTRODUCTION

This guide to self-evaluation and improvement builds upon the advice given in the publication *A Guide to Evaluating Services for Children and Young People Using Quality Indicators*¹ (A summary of the quality indicators (QIs) is reproduced in Appendix I). People who are responsible for providing services for children and their families can use *How good is our corporate parenting?* to help evaluate and improve their corporate parenting capacity and skills. It should be read alongside *These Are Our Bairns – a guide for community planning partnerships on being a good corporate parent*² which is designed to provide guidance and support to local authorities in exercising their legal duties and to other agencies in supporting them to achieve the best possible outcomes for children and young people. It recognises the joint responsibility for corporate parenting of all council services including social work, education, culture and leisure, and housing. It also recognises the critical contribution of partners from health, police and voluntary sector services in meeting the needs of all looked after children, including:

- ✦ children looked after at home, subject to a requirement from a children's hearing;
- ✦ children looked after away from home in foster care, residential placements and in kinship care arrangements; and
- ✦ young people receiving throughcare and aftercare services.

The aim of this self-evaluation guide is to assist services to evaluate and improve the quality of their corporate parenting and improve outcomes for each looked after child.

Of the 14,886 looked after children in Scotland at 31st March 2008, 43% were looked at home by their parents and a further 16% by other family members (kinship care). Twenty nine per cent were cared for by foster carers and 11% were cared for in residential accommodation, including secure settings.

1 A Guide to Evaluating Services for Children and Young People Using Quality Indicators, HM Inspectorate of Education (2007)
<http://www.hmie.gov.uk>

2 These Are Our Bairns, a guide for community planning partnerships on being a good corporate parent Scottish Government (2008)
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/08/29115839/24>

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

Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)³ seeks to improve the wellbeing of all children and is a key foundation for all action with children and families. Wellbeing is characterised by the following eight indicators and all services must play their part in making sure that children and young people are:

Safe: protected from abuse, neglect or harm at home, at school and in the community.

Healthy: having the highest attainable standards of physical and mental health, access to suitable healthcare, and support in learning to make healthy and safe choices.

Achieving: being supported and guided in their learning and in the development of their skills, confidence and self-esteem at home, at school, and in the community.

Nurtured: having a nurturing place to live, in a family setting with additional help if needed or, where this is not possible, in a suitable care setting.

Active: having opportunities to take part in activities such as play, recreation and sport which contribute to healthy growth and development, both at home and in the community.

Respected: having the opportunity, along with carers, to be heard and involved in decisions which affect them.

Responsible: having opportunities and encouragement to play active and responsible roles in their schools and communities and where necessary, having appropriate guidance and supervision and being involved in decisions that affect them.

Included: having help to overcome social, educational, physical and economic inequalities and being accepted as part of the community in which they live and learn.

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.

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, ideally, 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 met the needs of looked after children and young people.

*Curriculum for Excellence*⁴ 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.

3 *Getting It Right for Every Child: An overview of the Getting it Right Approach*, Scottish Government (2008) www.scotland.gov.uk/gettingitright

4 *A Curriculum for Excellence*, The Scottish Executive, <http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/curriculumforexcellence>

3. EQUALITIES

Tackling inequalities is fundamental to ensuring positive outcomes for all children, including those children 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 duties⁵ for public sector organisations.

4. EFFECTIVE CORPORATE PARENTING

In 2006, the Social Work Inspection Agency's review of services and outcomes for looked after children⁶ concluded that:

[...] the single most important thing that will improve the futures of Scotland's looked after children is for local authorities to improve their corporate parenting skills.

The importance of high quality corporate parenting was reinforced in the Scottish Executive's 2007 report *Looked After Children and Young People: We Can and Must Do Better*.⁷

As corporate parents, local authorities have a challenging role, and acting like good parents and being aware of the needs of their children and young people must be a key priority. In discharging their corporate parenting responsibilities, they need to put and keep the needs of the child and young person at the centre of everything they do. It is essential that the individual agencies who form the corporate parent for Scotland's looked after children and young people are more aware and alert to their children's needs and work together to deliver them.

The Scottish Government is committed to improving life outcomes for all children, with recognition of its special responsibility for those who are looked after. Much work has been done already to promote this. (A list of key publications and policies is reproduced in Appendix III.) Improving corporate parenting provides the most effective means of delivering real and lasting improvements for looked after children in the care they receive in all areas of their life. The guidance issued to community planning partnerships to support them in their corporate parenting task notes that:

Looked after children and young people are not a homogeneous group with the same backgrounds and needs. They are individual children and young people with their own personalities, needs and experiences.

The guidance summarises what good corporate parenting aims to achieve:

Young people who have experienced the care system will be successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors, whose life outcomes mirror those of their peers.

While individual services will be able to use the guide to help evaluate the outcome of their corporate parenting, it will be most effective when used in partnership with all agencies involved in the corporate parenting task. This partnership approach will provide a full picture of the support available to children and young people and how this meets their needs.

5 www.equalityhumanrights.com

6 *Extraordinary Lives*, SWIA, 2006

7 *Looked After Children and Young People: We Can and Must Do Better*, Scottish Executive, 2007

5. SELF-EVALUATION FOR IMPROVEMENT

Self-evaluation, within the overall process of planning for improvement and excellence, helps identify current good practice and positive impacts and identify areas for further development. This publication provides a flexible tool which to promote best practice in self-evaluation. It can be used at any stage of service development. It can also be used alongside the Social Work Inspection Agency's (SWIA) publication *Guide to Supported Self-evaluation*⁸, and relevant material published by the Care Commission⁹.

Self-evaluation helps to:

- ✦ recognise the work we are doing which has a very positive impact on the lives of looked after children and their families;
- ✦ encourage staff, at all levels, to reflect upon practice and identify the strengths and areas for improvement;
- ✦ identify levels of service we need to maintain or improve;
- ✦ identify what we can do to make things better for looked after children and their families; and
- ✦ inform stakeholders about the quality of services in our area.

When we self-evaluate, we look **honestly** and **critically** at our practice and at the services we provide with a view to improvement. Put simply, self-evaluation for improvement focuses on answering two key questions about our practice:

How good are we now?

This helps us to identify our strengths and development needs in key aspects of our work and the impact our work has on looked after children and their families.

and

How good can we be?

We ask this question to help us set priorities for improvement and to form a clear picture about what high quality corporate parenting would look like.

Self-evaluation, to be meaningful, has to focus on on-going improvements in outcomes. It is not a one-off activity which is done for its own sake. It is a dynamic process which goes on throughout the year. We can use self-evaluation to establish a baseline from which to plan to improve outcomes for looked after children. We can use self-evaluation as a means of ensuring our stakeholders' commitment to set priorities and change. After we have taken planned action, ongoing self-evaluation helps us to monitor our progress and determine impact.

⁸ Guide to Supported Self-evaluation – building excellent social work services SWIA (2009)

⁹ <http://www.carecommission.com>

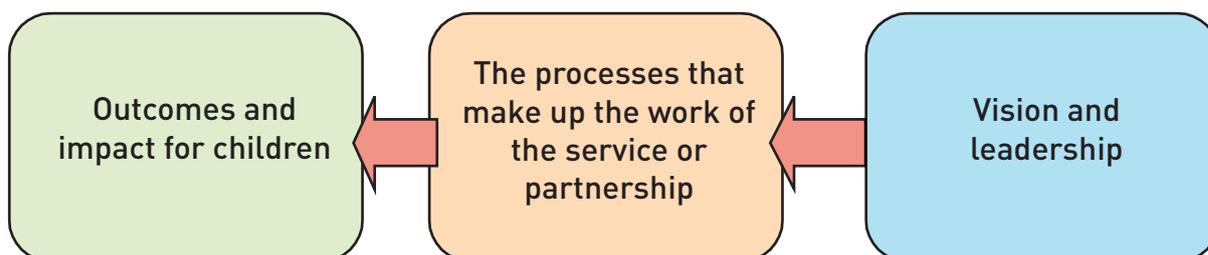
This self-evaluation guide uses the quality framework contained in *A Guide to Evaluating Services for Children and Young People Using Quality Indicators*. The framework is based around six high-level questions:

- ✦ *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 young people?*
- ✦ *How good is our management?*
- ✦ *How good is our leadership?*
- ✦ *What is our capacity for improvement?*

Each of these high-level questions relates to a number of QIs which cover the key aspects of the work of services for children. Each indicator contains illustrations which describe very good and weak practice. We can use these illustrations to check the quality of our own services.

The QIs and the six high-level questions can be viewed as a three-part model consisting of three inter-related areas:

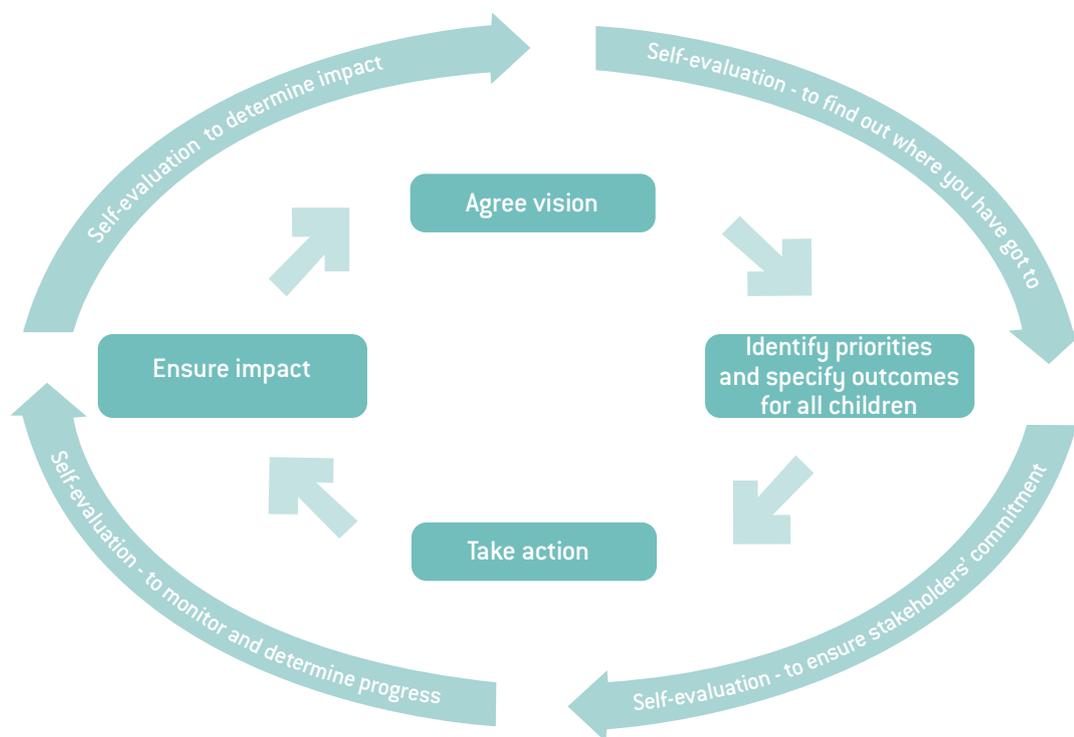
- ✦ the vision and leadership of the service;
- ✦ the processes that make up the work of the service; and
- ✦ the outcomes and impacts the service wants to have on the lives of children.



The starting point in self-evaluation is to ask *How good are we now?* and consider the **outcomes and impact** which our service has on looked after children. We should look closely at the illustrations in selected QIs from *A Guide to Evaluating Services for Children and Young People Using Quality Indicators*. It is important that we evaluate the **direct** outcomes for looked after children and families rather than only processes such as the policies, procedures or other materials which we have developed. Developing policies and procedures may be useful, but they are means to more important ends: improvements in outcomes for looked after children and positive impact on their lives. We should then look at aspects of our work and the processes we use to achieve the outcomes and impacts we want for looked after children. In order to do this, we should select key QIs relating to **the work of our service** in the model above. By asking the question, *How good are we now?* we can begin to identify strengths and areas which we need to improve or develop further.

Improvement should be central to our self-evaluation. By asking *How good can we be?* we can set goals for improvement.

This diagram shows how self-evaluation contributes to **planning for improvement**.



An **improvement plan** will have:

- ✦ a small number of **improvement priorities** which focus on improvements for looked after children 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.

Self-evaluation is a continuous process which we can use throughout improvement planning. We should use it to check our starting point and identify what we need to do. We should then use it to monitor our progress and check out the impact of the action we have taken on the lives of looked after children.

6. HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide uses a suite of QIs which have been selected from *A Guide to Evaluating Services for Children and Young People Using Quality Indicators* to help us focus on, and improve outcomes for looked after children.

By answering the question *How good are we now?* and considering the illustrations in the chosen QIs we can identify our strengths and areas for improvement. This is key to knowing if we are doing the right things, at the right time, and in the right way in order to meet the needs of looked after children. The answer to *How good are we now?* will help us to see what is working well and where we need to take steps to improve. We can then take action and monitor and determine our progress. The answer to the question *How good can we be?* will help us to check our vision in relation to the overall vision for Scotland's children and set priorities for improvement.

We should ask the questions *How good are we now?* and *How good can we be?* in relation to each of the key QIs below.

First, we should identify our priorities and the specific key **outcomes** for, and **impacts on**, looked after children that we wish to achieve.

- 1.1 Improvements in performance
- 1.2 Adherence to statutory principles and fulfilment of statutory duties
- 2.1 Impact on children and young people
- 2.2 Impact on parents/carers and families

Then, we should identify the **key aspects of our work** to focus on.

- 5.2 Provision of services that ensure children and young people are safe, nurtured, healthy, achieving, active, respected and responsible, and included
- 8.1 Partnership working
- 8.3 Resource management

We should check that that our **leadership** ensures that our work results in the best possible outcomes for looked after children and young people.

- 9.2 Leadership and direction

There is a number of sources of evidence which can inform us about how well we are meeting the needs of looked after children and what differences we are making to their lives. By using a range of evidence, we can form an overall view of quality.

There are four key sources of evidence from which evaluations can be made. These are:

- ✦ performance data;
- ✦ relevant documentation;
- ✦ stakeholders views and feedback; and
- ✦ direct observations of practice.



These sources of evidence are complementary. A single source may not provide enough evidence to enable a reliable or robust evaluation to be made.

7. SELF-EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The following pages contain selected indicators from *A Guide to Evaluating Services for Children and Young People Using Quality Indicators*. This section consists of key questions which we can use to evaluate the quality our service to meet the needs of looked after children. Each page sets out some questions and signposts to good practice for individual quality indicators. There is space to record strengths, areas for development and to set priorities for action. After recording these strengths and areas for development, it is important that we prioritise the key aspects that need to be developed. These, and the actions taken to realise them, will form our **action plan** for improvement.

This table provides a summary of the quality indicators we want to consider. Next to each indicator there is a key question that we should consider in relation to **services for looked after children and their families**. The table can be used to record a summary of the overall evaluation for each QI and proposed action.

Quality Indicator	Key Questions	Priorities for Acton
1.1 Improvements in performance	<i>To what extent can we show that we have set targets for outcomes and met these?</i>	
1.2 Adherence to statutory principles and fulfilment of statutory duties	<i>How well do we fulfil our duties as corporate parents?</i>	
2.1 Impact on children and young people	<i>What impact have we had in meeting the needs of looked after children?</i>	
2.2 Impact on parents/carers and families	<i>What impact have we had in meeting the needs of the parents/carers and families of looked after children?</i>	
5.2 Provision of services that ensure children and young people are safe, nurtured, healthy, achieving, active, respected and responsible, and included	<i>How effectively do we deliver our services to looked after children?</i>	
8.1 Partnership working	<i>How effective is our partnership working for looked after children?</i>	
8.3 Resource management	<i>How effective is our management of resources?</i>	
9.2 Leadership and direction	<i>How good is our strategic leadership for services for looked after children?</i>	

Quality Indicator 1.1: Improvements in performance

- ✦ Performance data and measures showing trends over time
- ✦ Overall quality of services delivered by service providers, individually and in partnership
- ✦ Performance against aims, objectives and targets

Questions you should ask in relation to this QI:

- ✦ What does our management information tell us about the outcomes we are achieving for our looked after children, including the suitability and stability of care and education placements, achievement and attainment and health outcomes?
- ✦ What does our management information tell us about outcomes for looked after young people as they move into adulthood, including education, training and job opportunities, securing and sustaining suitable accommodation?
- ✦ To what extent do our systems for monitoring progress show improvements over time in outcomes for looked after children and young people?
- ✦ Overall, are outcomes for looked after children and young people in our area improving?
 - those who are looked after at home?
 - those who are looked after away from home in foster care, residential placements and with kinship carers?
 - those young people receiving throughcare and aftercare services?
- ✦ Does self-evaluation and inspection by other agencies demonstrate that our services have delivered excellence to looked after children?
- ✦ Can we confidently report to the public on positive outcomes for our looked after children?

Signposts to very good practice

We monitor and evaluate strategies and services to ensure positive outcomes for looked after children. We plan, monitor and evaluate our performance against national and local objectives and individual service improvement plans or equivalent. We evaluate our performance for looked after children against the ambitions for all children, detailed in *GIRFEC*. We include such evidence in progress reports and public performance reports. We can demonstrate that outcomes are improving for all looked after children.

<p><i>How good are we now?</i> <i>What evidence do we have of our strengths and areas for development?</i></p>	<p><i>How good can we be?</i> <i>What action will we take to improve current practice?</i></p>

Example of working practices which led to improved outcomes:

Improved learning environments for children who are looked after away from home have been created by ensuring children in residential and foster placements have ready access to computers and a wide range of other learning materials. The attainment of looked after children has been raised and their educational experiences improved by providing dedicated support in school. Designated teachers get to know looked after children well and monitor their progress carefully, ensuring each child has appropriate guidance and support to meet their individual needs.

Quality Indicator 1.2: Adherence to statutory principles and fulfilment of statutory duties

- ✦ Compliance with legislation, and responsiveness to guidance and codes of practice

Questions you should ask in relation to this QI:

- ✦ How much do we know about the legislation, regulations and guidance relating to looked after children and to young people leaving care?
- ✦ How effectively have we implemented the legislation and guidance so that all looked after children are well cared for and achieve positive outcomes?

Signposts to very good practice

We have a sound knowledge of legislation relating to looked after children and young people. We know and understand the relevant legislation, guidance and codes of practice and we ensure all of our staff comply with these. We effectively fulfil our statutory duties in a way that ensures all looked after children and young people, whether they are living at home, away from home or in kinship care arrangements are well cared for and achieve positive outcomes.

<p><i>How good are we now?</i> What evidence do we have of our strengths and areas for development?</p>	<p><i>How good can we be?</i> What action will we take to improve current practice?</p>

Example of working practices which led to improved outcomes:

Effective progress has been made where work with looked after children and young people is underpinned by a corporate parenting policy developed in consultation with young people and implemented effectively by managers and staff across services. Elected members and chief officers understand what questions they need to ask about looked after children to ensure they are being effective corporate parents.

Quality Indicator 2.1: Impact on children and young people

- ✧ The extent to which children and young people are safe, nurtured, healthy, achieving, active, respected and responsible, and included
- ✧ The extent to which children, young people and their families report that services are enabling children and young people to become safe, nurtured, healthy, achieving, active, respected and responsible, and included

Questions you should ask in relation to this QI:

- ✧ For all our looked after children and young people, those who are looked after at home and those who are looked after away from home in foster care, residential placements and with kinship carers:
 - How safe are they? How safe do they feel?
 - Are they able to be looked after in a stable placement until they are ready for independence? How secure do they feel?
 - How healthy are they? How healthy do they feel?
 - Are they achieving their full potential? Do they feel they have positive learning experiences? How positive are they about their future?
 - Do they have opportunities to participate in a range of activities with their peers?
 - Do they feel respected and valued as part of their community?
 - Do they have opportunities to understand their past experiences and develop their own identity?
 - Do they feel fully involved in making decisions about matters which affect them?

Signposts to very good practice

Our work has a very positive impact on the lives of looked after children, whether they are living at home, away from home or in kinship care arrangements. Looked after children achieve their full potential as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors.

All of our looked after children and young people benefit from universal services such as education and health care services, including GP services, dentists and opticians. They can access these services without discrimination. When they need specialist services and therapies to meet their individual needs, these are provided promptly. They are, and feel they are, safe, healthy, nurtured, achieving, active, respected, responsible and included. All of our looked after children and young people benefit from regular contact with their social worker or other lead professional. They have the chance to build relationships with consistent adults who get to know them well.

Every looked after child or young person has a care plan, to which they have contributed, which clearly sets out desired outcomes and how these are to be achieved. All of our looked after children and young people are fully involved in decisions which affect them. They have opportunities to give their views and get the support and advocacy they need to do so. Their views are listened to and respected and children are confident they are taken seriously.

<p><i>How good are we now?</i> What evidence do we have of our strengths and areas for development?</p>	<p><i>How good can we be?</i> What action will we take to improve current practice?</p>

Example of working practices which led to positive action:

The *Having Your Say* Forum gives looked after young people a voice and a way of influencing policy and service developments. A number of groups operate within the Forum for different ages of looked after children and young people. Representatives from each age range meet to exchange ideas and consider the impact of services on children who are looked after in different settings. They are effectively supported to ensure their views are heard and understood by elected members and senior managers across services.

Quality Indicator 2.2: Impact on parents/carers and families

- ✦ The extent to which parents/carers and families are, and report that they are:
 - treated equally and fairly
 - satisfied with the quality of services provided
 - receiving services that are well integrated at the point of delivery
 - involved and engaged in their children's development and learning

Questions you should ask in relation to this QI:

- ✦ Do families have the support they need to provide the best possible parenting, wherever their children are living? Do they feel they have benefited from the support?
- ✦ Do parents receive regular information about their children's progress and achievements?
- ✦ How effective are our arrangements for consulting and involving parents, friends and relatives about their children?

Signposts to very good practice

Parents, carers and families of looked after children are confident that they are respected, treated equally and fairly and encouraged to become involved in their children's development.

Children benefit from support provided by well-integrated services. Parents, carers and families of looked after children are encouraged to contact services about relevant issues about their children and to become involved in appropriate activities with services and in the community. They support their children's progress through participation at appropriate meetings and forums. They feel supported to take responsibility for key aspects of their children's development, safety and health, where appropriate. Parents are confident that their views are taken seriously.

Parents, carers and families are confident that they are kept well informed on issues affecting their children's development, health and safety. We encourage and support them to work in partnership with services to meet the needs of looked after children, whether they are living at home, away from home or in kinship care arrangements.

<p><i>How good are we now?</i> What evidence do we have of our strengths and areas for development?</p>	<p><i>How good can we be?</i> What action will we take to improve current practice?</p>

Example of working practices which led to improved outcomes:

Support to extended family members is underpinned by a coherent kinship care strategy, which a number of services worked together to implement. This increases the number of looked after children who are able to grow up within their own families and communities when their parents are no longer able to care for them. Support includes financial help and advice about benefits and entitlements; prompt access to nursery placements and after school care; transport to and from school; provision of leisure passes and ongoing emotional support from professional staff and other carers.

Quality Indicator 5.2: Provision of services that ensure children and young people are safe, nurtured, health, achieving, active, respected and responsible, and included

- ✦ Range and level of services provided
- ✦ Implementation of policies, strategies and plans
- ✦ Realising the vision of safe, nurtured, health, achieving, active, respected and responsible, and included children and young people
- ✦ Integration of services to support children, young people and families

Questions you should ask in relation to this QI:

- ✦ How do we ensure that all looked after children, wherever they live, receive support and encouragement to learn and attain well?
- ✦ How well do our services support and promote the physical, emotional and mental health of looked after children? How well do we help looked after children recover from the impact of abuse, neglect or trauma?
- ✦ Are there sufficient options for young people moving from care into independent living, with appropriate levels of support?
- ✦ How well do our policies, strategies and practice across services take account of the views of looked after children?
- ✦ What do we do to sustain and promote the cultural and religious identities of looked after children and young people?
- ✦ What do we do to ensure that looked after children and young people are not stigmatised or bullied, but are treated fairly and equitably?
- ✦ What do we do to ensure that looked after children receive good advice and support for their future lives?

Signposts to very good practice

We are very successful at sustaining high quality services for looked after children, whether they are living at home, away from home or in kinship care arrangements. We have clear strategies based on GIRFEC, which take sufficient account of the need to be a good corporate parent. We have clear protocols and agreements across the community planning partners and within individual organisations on lines of responsibility and accountability for looked after children.

We take account of resource implications and regularly review and evaluate our work with looked after children. We implement our policies and plans with a clear focus on outcomes and impact on looked after children, their carers and families. All of our staff understand their responsibilities as corporate parents and are engaged in promoting services to looked after children, their carers and families.

We work in a child-centred way, promote school attendance and attainment, make additional arrangements to overcome disadvantage and encourage participation in the broadest sense. Each looked after child has a named person with lead responsibility for monitoring their progress. Our services ensure that the life outcomes of looked after children mirror those of their peers.

We have clear and effective links between all the partners acting as the corporate parent. Partnership and collaborative working is very effective and productive across all the services involved with looked after children. We are clearly guided by a shared commitment to meeting the needs of looked after children and sharing responsibility for them. Looked after children clearly benefit from better and more integrated service provision.

<p><i>How good are we now?</i> What evidence do we have of our strengths and areas for development?</p>	<p><i>How good can we be?</i> What action will we take to improve current practice?</p>

Example of working practices which led to improved outcomes:

The health of looked after children and young people has been prioritised and promoted through the provision of dedicated nurses or health teams. These ensure that all children and young people are offered a comprehensive health assessment within a short time of becoming looked after. Looked after children’s nurses promptly follow up any health issues identified, to ensure each child gets the services they need to meet their particular needs. This includes services to address any emotional or mental health difficulties and access to appropriate advice about sexual health and relationships.

Quality Indicator 8.1: Partnership working

- ✦ Service level agreement, roles and remits
- ✦ Working across agencies and disciplines
- ✦ Staff role in partnerships and teamwork

Questions you should ask in relation to this QI:

- ✦ How well do we understand our contribution to the corporate family?
- ✦ How effectively do we work together, within and across organisations?
- ✦ What evidence is there that we are jointly accountable for ensuring the best possible outcomes for looked after children, and that we value each other's contribution to community planning?

Signposts to very good practice

Partner organisations have developed a collaborative strategic framework for corporate parenting, within which joint working can be established and flourish. We encourage staff, looked after children and other stakeholders to be involved in the strategic planning and commissioning of services for looked after children and young people receiving through care and aftercare services. Our service level agreements are established at a strategic level and are monitored and evaluated across all partner organisations to ensure a positive impact for looked after children. Multi-disciplinary partnerships work very effectively and successfully promote corporate parenting. Shared protocols and clear remits, lines of communication and accountability characterise the approach to corporate parenting.

<i>How good are we now? What evidence do we have of our strengths and areas for development?</i>	<i>How good can we be? What action will we take to improve current practice?</i>

Example of working practices which led to improved outcomes:

Looked after young people receive carefully considered support to help them make the transition to adulthood. Outcomes for young care leavers have been improved by local authorities, voluntary organisations and Housing Associations working together to ensure sufficient accommodation options to meet each young person's particular needs. Options range from accommodation only, suitable for young people with an established support network, to supported accommodation with a high level of help and supervision for more vulnerable young people. Joint allocation panels meet regularly to consider all accommodation requests and ensure the best resource for each young person is made available at the right time.

Quality Indicator 8.3: Resource management

- ✦ Strategic resource planning
- ✦ Resource deployment
- ✦ Efficiency and effectiveness in use of resources
- ✦ Health and safety

Questions you should ask in relation to this QI:

- ✦ Do we provide sufficient resources to fully meet the particular needs of looked after children? Do we plan effectively for projected need?
- ✦ Do we use our resources to promote inclusion and reduce stigmatisation?
- ✦ Are decisions around looked after children made promptly and not adversely affected by financial disputes?
- ✦ Are we confident that we do not discriminate against care leavers in our recruitment practices? Do we proactively seek to address the disadvantage experienced by care leavers?
- ✦ Do we provide adequate resources for children's individual interests and talents, for example, for music lessons, school trips, cultural and religious activities, or learning to drive?
- ✦ How do we support those looked after young people who want to enter further and higher education or training?

Signposts to very good practice

Our leaders work closely together to make transparent evidence-based decisions and ensure that the provision and allocation of resources to services for looked after children meets their needs.

Partners have a clear strategic planning framework which balances budgets, asset management, human and other resources with the needs of looked after children, whether they are living at home, away from home or in kinship care arrangements.

We regularly review the services within our area and ensure there are sufficient resources to meet the demands on services for looked after children. Our financial regulations and procedures allow us to meet the immediate and long-term needs of looked after children.

<p><i>How good are we now?</i> <i>What evidence do we have of our strengths and areas for development?</i></p>	<p><i>How good can we be?</i> <i>What action will we take to improve current practice?</i></p>

Example of working practices which led to improved outcomes:

Managers agreed a 'Talent Fund' to support looked after children in particular areas of interest, such as music and sports activities. The fund can be accessed quickly, without cumbersome bureaucracy. This ensures that looked after children can have the same experiences as other children of similar age. Using the Fund reduces the stigma of being looked after and does much to build children's confidence, self-esteem and resilience. It helps learning, improves social skills and encourages the development of healthy peer relationships.

Quality Indicator 9.2: Leadership and direction

- ✧ Shared leadership of services
- ✧ Strategic planning and communication

Questions you should ask in relation to this QI:

- ✧ Have we developed a shared vision for the children and young people for whom we have responsibility? How well have we disseminated our vision?
- ✧ How well do leaders and senior managers across services communicate and provide clear strategic direction for the corporate parenting of looked after children?
- ✧ To what extent is the strategic approach to corporate parenting reflected in joint working and planning arrangements?
- ✧ Are we reassured that there is no discernible difference between the outcomes for children and young people who are looked after and their peers who are not?

Signposts to very good practice

As leaders in partner organisations we show strong commitment to corporate parenting of looked after children. We have a clear understanding of the national context and provide strong leadership in improving outcomes for looked after children, whether they are living at home, away from home or in kinship care arrangements. We know how many children are looked after and why they are looked after. We are confident that they are safe and we know how well they are doing. We share a determination to develop services of the highest quality for looked after children and we target resources appropriately to meet their needs. We promote a culture of robust self-evaluation, leading to agreed priorities and actions to secure further improvement to outcomes for looked after children.

We have a shared view of what we are trying to achieve for our looked after children. Together, we ensure services across community planning partnerships are scrutinised to ensure monitoring, integrated working and continuous improvement in services for looked after children. We ensure all services are able to protect, support and encourage looked after children to realise their individual potential.

We are committed to ensuring that the strategic planning of services empowers staff to realise our aspirations for services which meet the needs of looked after children. We individually champion the needs of our looked after children.

<p><i>How good are we now?</i> <i>What evidence do we have of our strengths and areas for development?</i></p>	<p><i>How good can we be?</i> <i>What action will we take to improve current practice?</i></p>

Example of working practices which led to improved outcomes:

Where Children's Champion schemes or similar have been established, senior managers or elected members take an active role in overseeing care and planning arrangements for specific looked after children. Children's Champions ensure that each looked after child receives the support they need when they need it. They are highly effective at overcoming barriers to decision-making and the provision of services. By directly involving managers from across Council services, commitment towards corporate responsibility for looked after children is embedded and shared. This leadership and direction by senior managers sends a clear message to staff and children about the high priority for looked after children and young people and the drive to improve their outcomes.

APPENDIX I: The Quality Indicators

<i>What key outcomes have we achieved?</i>	<i>How well do we meet the needs of our stakeholders?</i>	<i>How good is our delivery of services for children and young people?</i>	<i>How good is our management?</i>	<i>How good is our leadership?</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Key performance outcomes <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1 Improvements in performance 1.2 Adherence to statutory principles and fulfilment of statutory duties 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Impact on users of services for children and young people <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1 Impact on children and young people 2.2 Impact on parents/ carers and families 3. Impact on staff <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1 Impact on staff 4. Impact on the community <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4.1 Impact on the local community 4.2 Impact on the wider community 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Delivery of services for children and young people <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5.1 Knowing and communicating the needs of children and young people 5.2 Delivering services, that ensure that children and young people are safe, nurtured, healthy, achieving, active, respected, responsible and included 5.3 Improving services for children and young people 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Policy development and planning <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6.1 Policy review and development 6.2 Participation of children, young people, their families and others 6.3 Planning 7. Management and support of staff <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7.1 Sufficiency, recruitment and retention 7.2 Staff deployment 7.3 Training and development of staff 8. Resources <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8.1 Partnership working 8.2 Financial management 8.3 Resource management 8.4 Information systems 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Leadership <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9.1 Vision, values and aims 9.2 Leadership and direction 9.3 Leading people and developing partnerships 9.4 Leadership of improvement and change



APPENDIX II

THE SIX-POINT EVALUATION SCALE

Excellent

An evaluation of **excellent** applies to provision which is a model of its type. The experiences and achievements of children and young people are of a very high quality. An evaluation of excellent represents an outstanding standard of provision which exemplifies very best practice and is worth disseminating beyond the service/partnership. It implies these very high levels of performance are sustainable and will be maintained.

Very good

An evaluation of **very good** applies to provision characterised by major strengths. There are very few areas for improvement and any that do exist do not significantly diminish the experiences of children and young people. Whilst an evaluation of very good represents a high standard of provision, it is a standard that should be achievable by all. It implies that it is fully appropriate to continue to make provision without significant adjustment. However, there is an expectation that the service/establishment will take opportunities to improve and strive to raise performance to excellent.

Good

An evaluation of **good** applies to provision characterised by important strengths which, taken together, clearly outweigh any areas for improvement. An evaluation of good represents a standard of provision in which the strengths have a significant positive impact. However, the quality of outcomes and experiences of children and young people are diminished in some way by aspects in which improvement is required. It implies that the service/establishment should seek to improve further the areas of important strength, but take action to address the areas for improvement.

Satisfactory

An evaluation of **satisfactory** applies to provision characterised by strengths which just outweigh weaknesses. An evaluation of adequate indicates that children and young people have access to a basic level of provision. It represents a standard where the strengths have a positive impact on children and young people's experiences. However, while the weaknesses are not important enough to have a substantially adverse impact, they do constrain the overall quality of experiences. It implies that the service/establishment should take action to address areas of weakness while building on its strengths.

Weak

An evaluation of **weak** applies to provision which has some strengths, but where there are important weaknesses. In general, an evaluation of weak may be arrived at in a number of circumstances. While there may be some strengths, important weaknesses will, either individually or collectively, be sufficient to diminish the experiences of children and young people in substantial ways. It implies the need for structured and planned action on the part of the service/establishment.

Unsatisfactory

An evaluation of **unsatisfactory** applies when there are major weaknesses in provision requiring immediate remedial action. The outcomes and experiences of children and young people are at risk in significant respects. In almost all cases, staff 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 staff from other departments or agencies.

APPENDIX III

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