

Practice guide

SEND and Alternative Provision

Quality Assurance 5 Tier Framework- Blackburn with Darwen

Background, purpose & rationale

To ensure standards are met, five tiers of audit have been introduced which include quantitative, qualitative and impact approaches to Blackburn with Darwen's EHCP and SEND support quality assurance process.

Tier 1 – Individual Service

It is the expectation that all partners have their own quality assurance process to assure the quality of written advice prior to sending them to the Statutory Assessment Team for inclusion. Once the draft EHCP has been produced partners are responsible for assuring that the interpretation of that advice is accurate. Please refer to Appendix A for individual service detail.

Tier 2 – Compliance

The multi-agency review panel, which include Parent Carer Forum representatives, utilises Invision 360's digital EHCP quality assurance tool which provides a systematic approach to auditing. Auditors follow a step-by-step process with built-in checklist criteria and example of 'what good looks like'. The tool has been based on national good practice documentation and the 0-25 SEND Code of Practice. It provides comparative data with other local areas and supports identification of areas for improvement and is used to support continual learning and development. Consensus meetings twice a year to ensure consistent decisions are reached on the level of quality.

Tier 3 – Impact & Experience

With the permission of the young person and/or family there will be a face to face or telephone discussion with the child and parent or carer, or young person to explore and understand their experiences of the process, whether the EHC plan or SEND support has made a difference to their lived experiences, their thoughts on what went well and what could have been better. Information shared will be incorporated into Level 4: Multi-agency assurance and will be formally analysed and included within the QA reporting framework. This will be used to improve services at both an operational and strategic level. *Compliments and complaints will be considered as part of this Level 3 audit when selecting the thematic nature of the audit and to share best practice or determine areas for development.*

Tier 4 – Multi-agency Audits

The purpose of the multi-agency assurance (Level 4 within the 5-tier framework) is to determine the level of progress and outcomes made by children and young people with EHCPs and those receiving SEND support. It monitors whether professionals involved with the child/young person are involved sufficiently and whether the continuing/changing needs of children and young people are being met. Assurance findings will be used to inform service developments and support available to the individual Multi-agency assurance revolves around four key questions:

1. What is working well?

2. What difference have we made?
3. What are we worried about?
4. What needs to happen next?

Tier 5 – Governance

An EHCP and SEND Support Quality Assurance Report will be produced termly as a minimum. This report will be routinely presented to the SEND Strategic Partnership Board and SEND Improvement Group and will be made available throughout the partnership's hierarchy as required. Highlights will also be shared with the School Effectiveness Board.

What we did to improve children's outcomes

- 2021 - well established single agency EHCP QA process in place
- 2022 – introduced multi-agency EHCP QA using Invision 360 software
- May 2023 - JTAI inspection with education who were involved in the multi-agency audits. These felt to be in line with the new SEND Inspection framework – Annex A section 7.
- July 2023 – discussions around the impact of the partnership on the lived experience and the quality of the support received.
- September 2023 - full review of QA of SEND
- October 2023 - piloted lived experienced multi-agency audits
- December 2023 - rolled our BWD's revised QA framework in line with social care to ensure a more holistic approach across the Children's Services Directorate

What was the impact?

- Range of themes for the case study focus
- External recognition of good practice from the Local Government Association (LGA)
- Recognition of the impact and full engagement by schools and social care professionals for those CYP selected for QA: *"There was a strong sense of 'partnership' with good levels of support and challenge to each other. There was clearly some 'light bulb' moments for some participants who gained an understanding and insight of some of the young people's situations in a way they would not have done if other more traditional audit approaches had been used"* LGA report, Jan 2025.
- Identified mechanisms to share learning from the case studies:
 - Social care practice forum
 - Primary and Secondary SENCO meetings
 - School Leader briefings
 - School Effectiveness Board
 - Termly reporting
 - Yearly action plan

Resources

EHCP SEND Support QA Framework

Find out more

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