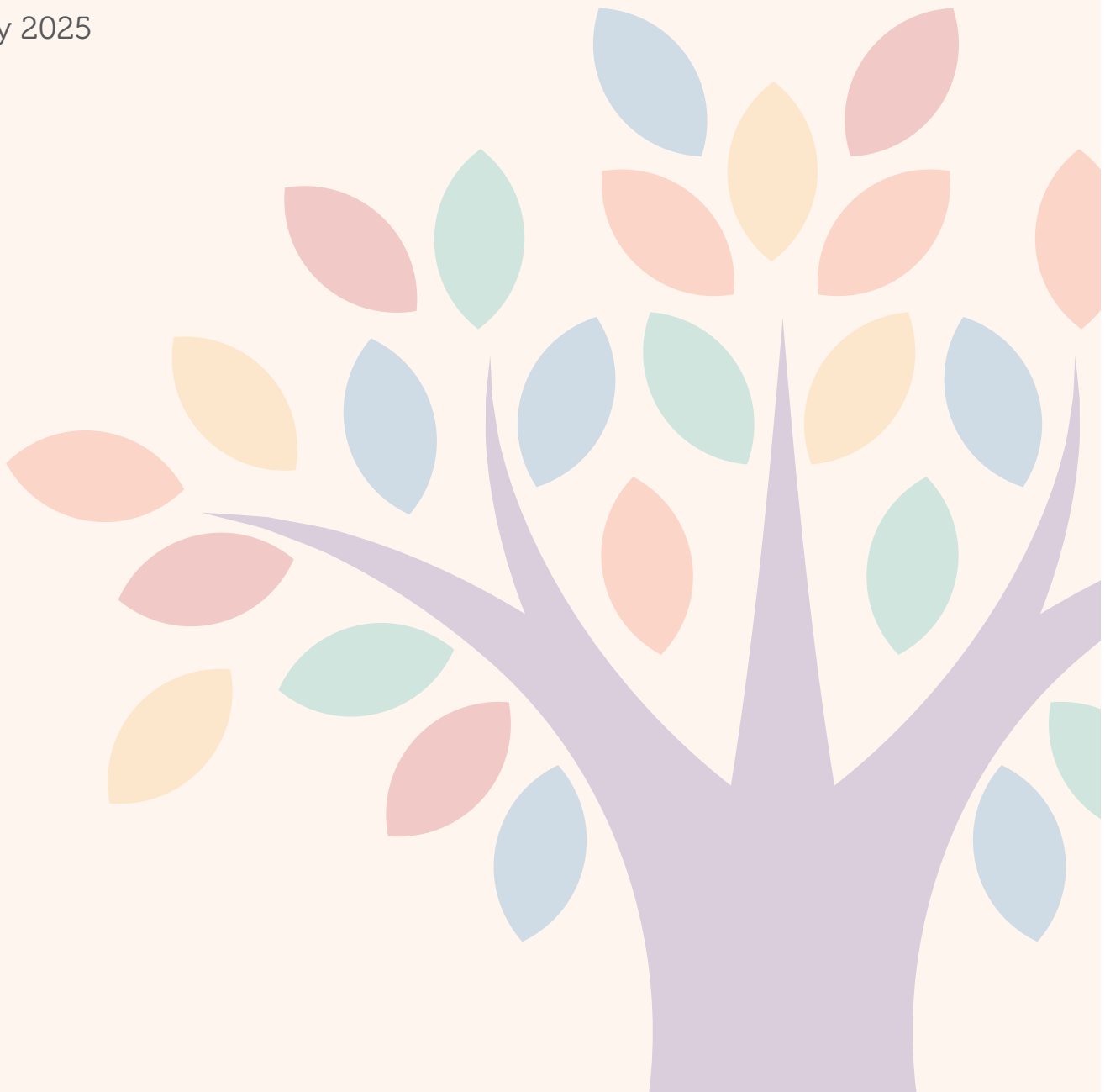# A quality improvement framework for the early learning and childcare sectors:
school-aged childcare

February 2025

Contents

Introduction

This self-evaluation framework supports quality improvement in early learning and childcare (ELC) settings. It can be used by all early learning and childcare (ELC) services. This includes childminders and school-aged childcare providers. The Care Inspectorate and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) will use the framework for the inspection of settings.

This rights-based framework provides a holistic approach to assessing care, play and education. It contains quality indicators (QIs), which support reflection. These can help you identify practices that work and areas that need improvement.

At the heart of the Care Inspectorate and HMIE's work is ensuring that children are:

- safe and protected from harm

- cared for and able to thrive

- offered high-quality learning and development opportunities

The Care Inspectorate and HMIE will use the framework to work with ELC services and sector-wide bodies to build the capacity for self-evaluation.

Framework quality indicators

Quality indicators (QIs) will help you to evaluate performance at every level. You should use evaluations from all areas to consider opportunities for improvement. Quality indicators will help you to understand the difference you are making, what you need to do next, and how to make positive changes.

The QIs are grouped under four important headings:

- leadership

- children thrive and develop in quality spaces

- children play and learn

- children are supported to achieve

The framework offers QIs for the following sectors:

Early learning and childcare

The QIs for ELC should be used for all provision types, except for childminding and school-aged childcare services.

Childminding

Education Scotland and the Care Inspectorate agree that childminders who deliver funded or non-funded care should self-evaluate against the quality indicators found within the childminding-specific content. This means that childminders providing funded care do not need to self-evaluate against any additional quality indicators from elsewhere in the wider framework or other sector specific content.

Childminders delivering school aged childcare can also self-evaluate their service using the quality indicators within the childminding sector specific content.

School-aged childcare

The QIs for school-aged childcare should be used by services providing out-of-school care.

Principles of this framework

The framework is underpinned by the principles of the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)](#). We are committed to ensuring that children grow up loved, safe and respected.

Children's rights are central to every aspect of their care, play, learning and education. Every child should be loved, safe, respected, and supported to achieve their potential.

UNCRC principles

This framework considers four general principles of children's rights:

Non-discrimination: children are protected from discrimination and treated fairly.

Best interests of the child: when making any decision, adults must do what is best for children rather than themselves. This includes governments and businesses.

Survival and development: children must be supported to grow up into what they want to be without harmful interference.

Respect for children's views: children have opinions that must be taken into account in all the things they care about.

National standards

Every setting is required to meet The Health and Social Care Standards. We are also dedicated to keeping The Promise and The Pinky Promise made to care-experienced people and their families.

The self-evaluation process

The framework contains quality indicators that focus on specific areas of practice. They will help you identify strengths in the ways you are currently working. They will also highlight ways to improve outcomes for children and their families.

Self-evaluation will help you explore your progress, development, and practice. The self-evaluation process uses evidence to reflect on achievements. It will also help you develop action plans for improvement.

The process of self-evaluation is part of a wider quality assurance approach. It requires a cycle of reflection based on the following three questions:

1. How are we doing?

2. How do we know?

3. What are we going to do now?

It is important for self-evaluation to be manageable. You should consider which areas you wish to assess and why. Use evidence to support your analysis.

Self-evaluation can also be a forward-looking assessment. Consider any factors that might affect your ability to improve. Such factors might include staff changes, restructuring, or funding cuts.

Roles and responsibilities of inspectors

The Care Inspectorate has statutory obligations under section 53 of the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 to carry out inspections of all ELC and school-aged childcare settings that are registered with them.

The Care Inspectorate will inspect all children's services whether or not the setting delivers the funded entitlement for ELC. The aim of inspection is ensuring all children, whatever their age or setting type, have the highest quality care, play and learning experiences.

HM Inspectors of Education have powers to inspect schools and educational establishments under section 66 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980. This includes powers to inspect 'nursery schools' and other settings that are providing funded ELC to children, which may be nursery or childminding settings. HMIE support improvement and provide public accountability and assurance on the quality of education to children, their parents/carers and Scottish Ministers.

Inspections of education are carried out by His Majesty's Inspectors. Excellence, equity and steps to close the poverty-related attainment gap remain important priorities of their work. The work of HM Inspectors is underpinned by the drive to ensure that every child experiences high-quality education.

As well as providing assurance, HM Inspectors share evidence and innovative practice about education to support services to improve and inform the development of educational policy and practice.

Both inspectorates will retain their current roles and responsibilities. The Care Inspectorate will continue to inspect all ELC settings, including childminders and school-aged childcare settings, whether or not they provide funded ELC. Education Scotland will inspect settings providing funded ELC (other than childminders).

Inspection

Both the Care Inspectorate and HMIE will use the framework for the inspection of ELC. This includes inspections they undertake independently of each other and when they work together as part of a shared inspection of ELC.

Having a shared framework will enable both organisations to work more closely together, using their professional expertise to evaluate the quality of the care and education.

The Care Inspectorate will apply this framework within their inspection and regulatory role to ensure all elements of funded or unfunded ELC, childminding and school aged childcare receive the highest standards of care and learning.

HMIE inspections will continue to evaluate the quality of children's educational experiences and major changes in the education system. The framework has distinct quality indicators for the inspection of education. HMIE will use these quality indicators to inspect settings providing funded ELC (other than childminders).

The Care Inspectorate has core assurances that they inspect against at every inspection. An element of the core assurances is safeguarding. HMIE will continue with their safeguarding arrangements as part of their inspections.

Both organisations will continue to promote a culture of self-evaluation and quality improvement.

Grading criteria

The six-point scale is a tool for evaluating the quality indicators. It is used by His Majesty's Inspectorate, and the Care Inspectorate for reporting on the outcomes of inspections. Local authorities and other governing bodies may choose to use it for the purpose of national and/or local benchmarking across a number of settings.

It is not necessary for individual settings to measure themselves against the six-point scale although they may choose to do so to help assess and understand their performance.

The Care Inspectorate will retain the term 'adequate' for the time being, in order to align with the National Standard and Education Scotland will retain the term 'satisfactory'. Where an adequate evaluation has been made, the Care Inspectorate will revisit the service in the following inspection year.

Level 6 'excellent': outstanding or sector leading

An excellent grading means that this aspect of the setting's work is outstanding and sector leading. The experiences and achievements of all children are of a very high quality.

This represents an outstanding standard of provision which exemplifies very best practice. It is based on achieving equity and inclusion.

Settings show a deep professional understanding which is worth sharing to support system-wide improvement. It implies that very high levels of performance are sustainable and will be maintained.

Level 5 'very good': major strengths

'Very good' means that there are major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work. There are very few areas for improvement and any that do exist do not significantly diminish children's experiences.

An evaluation of very good represents a high standard of provision for all children and is a standard that should be achievable by all.

There is an expectation that the setting will make continued use of self-evaluation to plan further improvements and will work towards improving provision and strive to raise performance to excellent.

Level 4 'good': important strengths with areas for improvement

An evaluation of good means that there are important strengths within the setting's work yet there remain some aspects which require improvement.

The strengths have a significantly positive impact on almost all children. The quality of experiences is diminished in some way by aspects in which improvement is required.

The setting should seek to improve further the areas of important strength, and also take action to address the areas for improvement.

Level 3 'satisfactory/ adequate': strengths just outweigh weaknesses

An evaluation of satisfactory means that strengths in this aspect of the work outweigh the weaknesses. It indicates that children have access to a basic level of provision.

Strengths have a positive impact on children's experiences. Weaknesses are not important enough to have an adverse impact. They do constrain the quality of children's experiences.

Satisfactory or adequate performance may be tolerable in particular circumstances. For example, where a service or partnership is not yet established, or are in the midst of major transition. Continued performance at satisfactory/adequate level is not acceptable.

Improvements build on strengths. They should address elements that do not contribute to positive experiences and outcomes for children.

Level 2 'weak': important weaknesses

An evaluation of weak means that there are some strengths but there are important weaknesses within this aspect of the setting's work.

These weaknesses, either individually or collectively, are sufficient to diminish children's experiences. Improvements should be made as a matter of priority. Without improvement the welfare or safety of children may be compromised, or their critical needs not met.

Weak performance requires action. Structured and planned improvement must be made by the provider or partnership. This should demonstrate clearly that sustainable improvements have been made.

Level 1 'unsatisfactory': major weaknesses

An evaluation of unsatisfactory will apply when there are major weaknesses in critical aspects of performance which require immediate remedial action to improve experiences and outcomes for children. It is likely that children's welfare or safety will be compromised by risks which cannot be tolerated.

Those accountable for carrying out the necessary actions for improvement must do so, as a matter of urgency, to ensure that children are protected, and their wellbeing improves without delay.

In almost all cases, this will require support from senior managers in planning and carrying out the necessary actions to effect improvement. This will usually involve working alongside other staff in other settings or agencies.

Using this self-evaluation framework

Education Scotland and the Care Inspectorate will begin to use the new framework for inspection from September 2025. This will allow settings to become familiar with its content and structure.

The final version of the framework will be formally launched in autumn 2025.

The structure of the framework

The quality indicators for early learning and childcare (ELC) are grouped under four important headings:

Leadership

The quality indicators for leadership are:

- leadership and management of staff and resources

- staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment

Children thrive and develop in quality spaces

The quality indicator for children thrive and develop in quality spaces is children experience high quality spaces.

Children play and learn

The quality indicators for children play and learn is play learning and development.

Children are supported to achieve

The quality indicators for supporting children to achieve are:

- nurturing care and support

- safeguarding and child protection

Illustrations of practice

All quality indicators have themes to support your self-evaluation. There are illustrations of practice for each theme. These describe what we might see in a setting where the quality of provision is 'very good'.

There will be a 'weak' illustration for some quality indicators, where appropriate.

Leadership and management of staff and resources

Leadership and management of staff and resources is a 'leadership' quality indicator (QI).

There are illustrations of practice and challenge questions below. These can help you to assess your current practice and identify areas for growth. Illustrations of leadership and management of staff and resources are also available for early learning and childcare and childminding settings.

Themes for management of staff and resources

The themes for this QI are:

- vision, values and aims

- self-evaluation, quality assurance and implementing change

- recruitment and induction

About this quality indicator

This indicator highlights the need for leaders to ensure an ambitious, shared vision that focuses on improvements and positive outcomes for all. There is a strong ethos of continuous improvement which enhances the delivery of high-quality practice. It focuses on accountability, responsibility and shared values as important features of building and sustaining a highly professional team.

The importance of partnership approaches to self-evaluation and continuous improvement are highlighted. There is an emphasis on the need for strong leadership and a shared understanding of strengths and areas for development. The impact of self-evaluation and quality assurance leads to improved and sustained positive outcomes for children and families.

It focuses on the management of staffing decisions and the importance of this on the quality of children's overall experiences and outcomes. It supports values-based, safe recruitment procedures that ensure trained, competent and skilled staff are employed to promote positive outcomes for children. This includes a comprehensive induction programme to support and guide staff in their roles and responsibilities.

There is a focus on how policy, guidance, legislation, the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)](...) and the [Health and Social Care Standards](...) are used to ensure that each child is protected, safe and receives the right support and care from staff.

Illustrations for vision, values and aims

'Very good' vision, values and aims

We promote, sustain and are highly committed to a shared vision that reflects the highest possible standards for children, families, partners and the wider community. Children and families are actively included in the design and review of our vision, values and aims. These reflect the high aspirations of our children and families. This ensures that any planned developments or improvements take due account of children's rights, interests, curiosities, needs and preferences.

Our leaders create conditions where all people feel confident to initiate well-informed change and share responsibility for the process. This helps us know what is important when meeting the needs of children and families. Effective communication ensures a clear view of our vision, values and aims so that the wider staff team, children and families are included in achieving them.

Our values are embedded in the everyday life of the service and inform our practice. Leadership is clearly founded on principles of high-quality childcare, play and supporting children.

'Weak' vision, values and aims

Our vision, values and aims are unclear or are not effectively created with or communicated to children, families, partners and the wider community. We have a limited focus on the importance of improvement.

Children and families do not experience a service which reflects their shared aspirations. Not everyone involved in the service is aware of our vision, values and aims, or their role in promoting these. Our staff are not supported to reflect on the vision, values and aims in a meaningful way, and therefore these are not reflected in their practice.

Changes made to our practice, and the service, have little impact on children and families. There is a resistance to change which negatively impacts our ability to deliver improved

outcomes. Opportunities to reflect and bring about positive change for children, families, and each other are missed.

Illustrations for self-evaluation, quality assurance and implementing change

'Very good' self evaluation, quality assurance and implementing change

Well considered, purposeful self-evaluation enables us to deliver high-quality care and play experiences tailored to children's and families' needs and choices. We ensure the views of children, families and partners inform improvement and are central to our self-evaluation process. Our leaders evidence where these views inform change, secure improvement and more positive outcomes for all children and families. We reflect well together and use these reflections to bring about positive change.

Our quality assurance processes have agreed standards and expectations that are understood by all staff. Processes, which include well-timed monitoring and data gathering, enable us to consistently identify areas for improvement. Sustainable change is achieved because there is an appropriate pace of change. Highly effective practice is identified and shared within and beyond our service to promote improvements which have led to positive outcomes for children. Leaders ensure children experience high-quality care and that enriching play experiences are at the heart of improvement planning.

'Weak' self evaluation, quality assurance and implementing change

Our self-evaluation for improvement is at an early stage of development, and as a result our improvements or changes to practice are rarely sustained. Children and families are not meaningfully involved in our self-evaluation process. As a result, they do not feel well informed about changes or why they are happening.

Our children and families do not experience safe and quality care due to the inconsistent and ineffective use of our improvement planning. Insufficient skills and capacity within our team hinder our ability to effectively support and drive improvements. We do not effectively enable staff or families to confidently highlight complaints or suggest improvements. Leaders fail to respond promptly to feedback, and therefore positive change is too slow to make improvements.

Opportunities to engage a range of partners have not been taken or used to inform our improvement planning. Our experience may be isolated and may be out of touch with national perspectives as a result. There are significant gaps in the areas covered by our quality assurance systems. Children's experiences and outcomes are poor, as

inconsistencies in practice are not fully identified and do not highlight areas for improvement.

Illustrations for recruitment and induction

'Very good' recruitment and induction

The importance of recruiting and retaining a stable and skilled workforce is recognised by our leaders as essential to the wellbeing of children and staff in the service.

Our staff are recruited in a way that has been informed by all aspects of safer recruitment practices. Our leaders understand their responsibility to ensure any temporary staff are safely recruited and that they understand their responsibilities within the staff group.

There is a strong emphasis on values-based recruitment, ensuring successful candidates' values reflect those of the service. Children and families have opportunities to be involved in the process in a meaningful way. Families and children are kept informed and introduced to any new or temporary staff in the team who may be caring for children.

We have induction programmes that are thorough and personalised to meet the different roles in the service. Our staff feel confident to meet the needs of individual children.

We have clear process for mentoring and supporting staff, with time allocated to take this forward. Mentors are clear about their roles and responsibilities, and they have written information they can refer to. Together these approaches support high-quality outcomes for all children in our service.

'Weak' recruitment and induction

The recruitment procedures may compromise the welfare or safety of children. Important elements of the process may be ignored. For example, exploring gaps in employment history, disciplinary records or staff start working before all the required checks have been undertaken or received.

Our induction process is not planned to take account of staff who are new to their role and their ongoing learning and development. Induction may be limited to a one-off event focusing on policies and procedures, with little consideration of the care, play and learning needs of children. Our staff are unclear of what is expected of them and may lack

knowledge of how the UNCRC, and the Health and Social Care Standards underpin our provision.

Mentoring arrangements, where these exist, are not well considered and do not support our staff to better understand their role. Staff undertaking mentoring roles have insufficient time allocated to do this well.

Challenge questions for management of staff and resources

The following challenge questions can support your self-evaluation:

- How effectively do we collaborate with children, families and other stakeholder's in developing a shared vision and purpose?

- To what extent is our vision aspirational and challenging?

- How well does our vision, values and aims inform our daily practice?

- What impact does this have on improving the quality of the school-aged childcare we provide?

- How do we know our quality assurance processes improve outcomes for children and families?

- How well do all practitioners understand their responsibility in improvement through self-evaluation?

- To what extent are all staff empowered to make changes?

- How has the use of best practice documents and guidance led to improvement in children's experiences and outcomes?

- How have we used children's voice to evaluate and inform our practice and provision?

- How do we engage our families and children to ensure they have a role in our improvement journey?

- How do we ensure staff recruitment processes reflect current best practice and national guidance?

- In what ways do we ensure our recruitment process attracts people with the right values, skills and knowledge for the role?

- How do we ensure that our induction processes are tailored to meet the needs of different staff roles and responsibilities?

Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment

Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment is a 'leadership' quality indicator (QI).

There are illustrations of practice and challenge questions below. These can help you to assess your current practices and identify areas for growth. Illustrations of staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment are also available for [early learning and childcare](#) and [childminding settings](#).

Themes for staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment

The themes for this QI are:

- staff skills, knowledge and values

- staff deployment

About this quality indicator

This indicator focuses on the importance of skilled interactions to promote children's confidence and to have a positive influence on their lives as they develop and learn. It highlights the importance of staff continuous development being promoted through highly effective use of reflective practice, feedback and support. Professional learning is well planned and informed by local, national and international evidence and research. It is reviewed and matched to identified needs of individual staff members.

There is an awareness that staff should have appropriate professional registration and should understand and adhere to the relevant codes of practice. Recognition is given to the need for a positive, compassionate and responsive culture, where children thrive and flourish.

This indicator focuses on ensuring that staffing levels and deployment take account of the range of staff skills, as well as the routines and activities of the session. It recognises the need for responsive staff deployment and the importance of ensuring that the service is appropriately staffed throughout the session, to provide a safe, high-quality service and ensure the best outcomes for children.

Illustrations for staff skills, knowledge and values

'Very good' staff skills, knowledge and values

We have a clear understanding of how children play and develop, having high aspirations for children's achievements. We have opportunities to draw on our own skills and knowledge to facilitate a wide variety of experiences and play opportunities. Our staff make very good use of professional development opportunities that link directly to enhanced outcomes for children and the setting's improvement plan. Research, best practice, national and local policy, underpinning legislation, UNCRC and the Health and Social Care Standards are used in this process.

A wide range of opportunities is available for staff to hold professional discussions, and use these to inform practice. We are highly reflective and engage in these work-based discussions to build individual and team knowledge and effectiveness. We maintain meaningful records of the impact of our learning and development and have a clear learning action plan.

Highly effective supervision enables us to be clear about our responsibilities. Celebrating success and learning from mistakes is an integral part of the ethos in the service. This leads to a culture of openness, where we feel proud to work in the service and safe to discuss practice when errors do occur. Where required, staff maintain registration with a professional body and follow the codes of practice.

'Weak' staff skills, knowledge and values

We are not enabled or supported to engage in professional learning to improve our practice. We are not enabled to use our own skills and knowledge to enhance play experiences for children.

Staff learning needs are not identified and we have limited access to suitable training. This results in gaps in professional knowledge and skills, which impacts negatively on the quality of children's experiences.

We are not empowered to share appropriate knowledge across the team. There is an absence of professional discussion to support each other's development and learning.

Our staff do not fully understand their responsibility to maintain professional registration. Where registration with professional bodies is required, this is incomplete or may have lapsed. Staff may not take sufficient account of the codes of practice in their work.

Illustrations for staff deployment

'Very good' staff deployment

Our leaders are open and honest about decisions on staffing. They make highly effective use of the differing experience, knowledge and skills of the staff group to ensure children experience safe and responsive care.

Arrangements are in place to promote continuity of care across each session and ensure positive transitions and communication with families. To ensure this is consistent, staff breaks are planned to minimise impact on children while enabling staff to rest and be refreshed. Staff communicate well, are flexible and support each other. We work as a team to ensure deployment is effective in ensuring high-quality experiences and outcomes for children.

Our approach to staff deployment also ensures our staff have the appropriate level of support from experienced colleagues to support their developing skills and knowledge. Arrangements for absence, both planned and unplanned, support minimum disruption to children's routines. If children have a key worker, they are prepared in advance for their key worker's absence, wherever possible.

'Weak' staff deployment

We do not feel able to raise issues or concerns about the safety and wellbeing of children as a result of decisions about staff deployment. We do not take responsibility for any gaps in staffing, and opportunities to improve are missed.

Communication and team working between us is limited, leading to gaps in interactions and the supervision of children across the session. Our lack of flexibility and support across the staff team significantly compromises the quality of experiences and outcomes for children. We lack confidence to talk about mistakes, which has the potential to lead to harm to children.

Arrangements for busier times of the session are ineffective in ensuring that we can fully meet children's needs. Activities become task orientated rather than an opportunity for high-quality engagement and interaction. We do not always receive sufficient breaks, or take breaks at a time when higher levels of supervision are required.

Children's routines and experiences are disrupted as arrangements for planned absence are poorly managed. Children and families are not always advised when staff will be absent and are not prepared for, or introduced to, temporary staff.

Challenge questions for skills, knowledge, values and deployment

The following challenge questions can support your self-evaluation:

- What evidence do we have that our professional learning is increasing our knowledge and understanding and as a result improving outcomes for children and families?

- How confident are we at building on individual skills and interests which lead to improvements for children?

- How do we engage and encourage leadership at all levels when promoting play in our setting?

- How do we know that staff have the appropriate knowledge and skills to support children to be the best that they can be?

- In what ways are we maximising opportunities for staff to work and learn together?

- What approaches do we take to tasks in the service to ensure children are supported across the session?

- How does staff deployment meet the individual care and support needs of all children throughout the session?

- How do we promote a positive staff ethos and support staff wellbeing in our service?

- How do we know staff enjoy working here and feel involved and part of an effective team?

- How do we consider staff wellbeing to ensure we provide safe and high-quality care and the best outcomes for children?

Children experience high quality spaces

Children experience high quality spaces is the 'children thrive and develop in quality spaces' quality indicator (QI).

There are illustrations of practice and challenge questions below. These can help you to assess your current practices and identify areas for growth. Illustrations of children experience high quality spaces are also available for early learning and childcare and childminding settings.

Themes for children experience high quality spaces

The themes for this QI are:

- quality, safety and maintenance of spaces

- children influence and affect change

- information management

About this quality indicator

This indicator highlights the importance of having a safe, secure and inspiring physical environment, whether delivered indoors, outdoors or a blend of both. It demonstrates the need for physical spaces that reflect children's needs, interests and their differing engagement with play and learning. These inclusive spaces recognise and celebrate diversity. Staff consider and build upon current research and best practices, such as 'Space to grow and thrive: Design guidance for early learning and school-aged childcare settings' and 'Realising the ambition: Being me' when designing and evaluating spaces for children.

The right to daily outdoor play is recognised, valued and provided. Staff understand the impact outdoor play can have on children's overall development, as well as the opportunities it provides for learning about the wider world.

This indicator recognises the importance of a well-maintained physical environment for children, highlighting the need for regular maintenance of the building, resources and equipment used in the service. It supports an appropriate level of risk assessment to minimise potential risks and to keep children safe from harm, including the need for rigorous infection prevention and control.

Children and staff are fully involved in taking a benefit-risk approach to play and learning experiences. All aspects of security are considered, including the security of buildings and the storage of confidential records and information.

Illustrations for quality, safety and maintenance of spaces

'Very good' quality, safety and maintenance of spaces

Our physical environment, whether offered indoors or outdoors, is welcoming, fully meets children's needs, and is well equipped. It gives a strong message to children that they matter.

We make best use of available resources to create, sustain and enhance a motivating physical environment for play experiences. As a result, our service has been designed to empower children to actively experience play and learning challenges, centred on their needs and interests.

We understand and uphold the rights of all children to play. This includes recognising the importance of daily outdoor play and the benefits of this for enhancing wellbeing. Children are supported to actively explore and learn about the wider world.

We embrace a benefit-risk approach with children where appropriate. This enables children to engage in a broad range of interesting play opportunities to challenge and extend their development, as well as building self-confidence to develop skills for life.

We work well together to minimise risks to children, both indoors and outdoors. Prompt action is taken by all staff to ensure the safety and security of children, visitors and each other. All staff understand and share appropriate risk assessments. Children are accounted for as our staff are vigilant whether indoors, outdoors or in the wider community. As a result, children are safe and their opportunities to enjoy challenging and fun play experiences are not compromised (Keeping children safe: Practice notes).

We have received robust training on infection prevention and control measures. This means they have a clear understanding and confidence to provide and promote a high-quality, clean, safe environment. This includes understanding of the arrangements for cleaning as well as in practicing food safety.

Where children require personal care, arrangements are effectively planned and staff maintain high levels of infection prevention and control. Children's privacy, dignity and preferences are fully respected and there are appropriate changing facilities.

Arrangements for monitoring, maintenance and repair of the setting, equipment, and any vehicles, function well and are consistently implemented. Damaged items are promptly replaced.

'Weak' quality, safety and maintenance of spaces

The physical environment may look or feel neglected rather than warm and welcoming for children. There is limited attention to detail such as homely touches, decoration, and the quality of furniture and resources is poor. There may be unpleasant smells or intrusive noise levels. The physical environment, furniture and fittings are generally inadequate, with limited opportunities to display interesting materials and children's work.

The layout of the physical environment does not enable children to lead their own play and learning. The resources provided by staff do not support children's engagement. Staff demonstrate limited understanding of the benefits of the outdoors to children's play and learning.

Children are not sufficiently supported to access the outdoor environment. Current best practice or research is not used effectively to inform our knowledge in this area. We do not always recognise when children need more energetic experiences. Potential barriers to play and engagement have not been recognised or given adequate consideration. This means that the physical environment does not meet children's needs.

We do not always work well together to promote a safe environment for children. We may have limited understanding of children's development and may not recognise when everyday items can pose risk. As a result, children may be at risk from avoidable harm. We may unnecessarily limit children's experiences and as such children's confidence may be affected. Excessive restrictions may be placed on their play and learning opportunities, compromising the quality of children's experiences. Our procedures for infection prevention and control are not robust and heighten the risk of infection.

Arrangements for security within the setting, outdoors and in the wider community may not be well considered and there is the potential for children to exit the setting or be unaccounted for, exposing them to risk of harm.

Illustrations for children influence and affect change

'Very good' illustrations for children influence and affect change

Children have high levels of involvement in influencing the physical environment, such as the spaces and resources and how these are used. We actively engage children to enable them to direct their play and experiences in the way they choose. Children are listened to and know that their views matter.

Our physical environment provides very good opportunities for children to be independent and make choices. Children are engrossed and motivated in their play and are progressing well in all aspects of their development.

Staff understand the positive impact that rich, multi-sensory play has on children's resilience, health and wellbeing. Appropriate resources and materials support children's play, learning and interests. Children have control over what they do and how they play. We provide opportunities for children to learn about sustainability and caring for their natural environment.

Resources are adaptive and responsive to children's differing emotions and interests. They promote interesting opportunities across a broad range of outcomes.

We understand and promote diversity, equity and inclusion in the provision of high-quality resources and spaces. Children, their families and communities are positively reflected in the resources, spaces and experiences available, promoting a sense of inclusion and wellbeing. This means all children feel included and are developing their knowledge, respect and understanding of difference.

'Weak' illustrations for children influence and affect change

Children's needs and views are not consistently sought or taken into consideration when designing the physical environment or when planning experiences and daily routines. Children's independence is not supported, and they are unable to direct their own play and activities in the way they choose. Children are not engaged and motivated enough in their play, compromising their progress and development.

Our practice in the service related to caring for resources, including the natural environment, does not take account of sustainability. We provide very few, if any, opportunities for children to learn about sustainability and caring for their natural environment, encouraging poor habits in respect of reducing waste and the impact of our use of natural resources.

Our provision of play resources and equipment is limited and, in some cases, outdated and inappropriate. Children may lack motivation and interest due to the lack of stimulating resources and activity. The resources available lack breadth and balance and do not sufficiently meet children's development needs.

In some cases, children and their families may experience discrimination as a result of outdated or inappropriate resources being used. This has the potential to negatively influence children's self-esteem and children's knowledge and understanding of difference.

We may demonstrate an approach to risk that is either risk averse or not well considered. This is evident in the layout of spaces indoors and outdoors. This may result in the potential for harm. We may not engage effectively with parents and carers to deepen their understanding of the benefits of riskier outdoor play and learning experiences.

Illustrations for information management

'Very good' information management

Our physical environment provides a secure and safe setting for children while respecting their rights and reflecting our overarching aims and objectives. Any use of CCTV is lawful, fair and proportionate and protects their dignity. It is only used for purposes that support the delivery of safe, effective and compassionate care for children.

Protection of children's personal information is paramount and complies with relevant best practice and legal requirements. Our leaders and staff are well informed about their responsibilities and have the skills to carry these out robustly. Efficient and effective record keeping systems are in place. This includes the management of electronic information which is in line with general data protection requirements and advice on cyber threats. Our staff fully understand and implement their roles and responsibilities in relation to information management.

'Weak' information management

The use of CCTV is not well understood by staff. Our leaders and staff are not well informed about their responsibilities and infringements of rights of children, families and staff may occur as a result. Families may not have been consulted about any CCTV or informed of their rights. The arrangements for CCTV do not meet the requirements of current legislation.

Arrangements for the storage of and processing of children's personal information are poorly managed and do not comply with relevant legislation and best practice. Our staff do not have an awareness or understanding of their role in using information appropriately or storing it securely. Where electronic systems are in place they are not secure or suitable.

Challenge questions for children experience high quality spaces

The following challenge questions can support your self-evaluation:

- How can we be confident that our setting maximises opportunities for children to be challenged, creative and engaged in their play, and to be able to explore their ideas?

- To what extent does our environment support different types of play?

- How can we be confident that our physical environment is maintained to the highest standards ensuring a safe and healthy environment for children?

- How do we know our service is secure and that children cannot leave unsupervised?

- How do we ensure children's privacy, dignity and preferences are fully respected?

- How well are children enabled to select and make use of high-quality resources appropriate to their needs, wishes and development?

- How inclusive is our setting for all children and families? Does it accommodate and promote emotional safety?

- Does it facilitate and support an understanding of difference and diversity for all children? How do we know?

- How do we know our setting provides a wide range of challenging outdoor play and learning experiences that support health and wellbeing across all spaces for children?

- How are children's files and information stored to ensure they are secure?

- Do we demonstrate an understanding of how data protection laws operate?

Play, learning and development

Play, learning and development is a 'children play and learn' quality indicator (QI).

There are illustrations of practice and challenge questions below. These can help you to assess your current practices and identify areas for growth. Illustrations of play and learning are also available for early learning and childcare and childminding settings.

Themes for play, learning and development

The themes for this QI are:

- children's engagement

- quality of interactions

- child-centred planning

About this quality indicator

This indicator focuses on children's right to play. They have fun, experience joy and have high-quality experiences indoors and outdoors. Children are meaningfully and actively involved in leading their own play and development.

Staff recognise the value of play as an opportunity for developing skills for life and learning. Interactions, experiences and spaces successfully enrich play and learning, taking into account the needs, interests and development of each child. Children make sustained progress in playful environments and benefit from responsive planning approaches.

The indicator highlights the importance of staff who skilfully support and extend children's curiosities and current interests, which expands their knowledge, understanding, skills and achievements. These experiences inform next steps in planning to support children's development and enhance their wellbeing. Staff skilfully interact and play with children to encourage and extend their thinking. Children are supported to recognise, enjoy and celebrate their successes.

Illustrations for children's engagement

'Very good' children's engagement

Children are successful, responsible and confident in their play as a result of high-quality experiences. Children are highly motivated and fully engaged by the range of rich, challenging, planned and spontaneous experiences both indoors and outdoors. Well-considered innovations and creative approaches successfully engage children's imagination and enrich their play experiences. Skills for life are developed and enhanced through a playful, engaging environment.

We work effectively with families to support their understanding of the benefits to children of play and learning experiences which challenge and delight them. This collaborative approach fosters the development of trust and cooperation, which supports children's wellbeing and development and gives them opportunities to flourish.

Children make informed choices about leading their play within an enabling, challenging and creative environment. Their interests are extended and sustained through the use of high-quality interactions, experiences and spaces. This includes developing strong connections to their own and wider communities. Children have time, space and support to make decisions to develop their creativity, resilience and independence.

'Weak' children's engagement

Children have limited opportunities to follow their own ideas and interests, in their own way for their own reasons. Our play environment overall lacks inspiration. There is little to challenge or ignite children's imagination and curiosity, or to encourage them to explore their ideas.

Children's individual development needs and their interests are not reflected within the interactions, experiences and spaces with staff. As a result, children are not engaged. They miss opportunities to learn, build confidence and make choices. Children therefore lack interest and motivation and may experience boredom, distress or frustration.

Children have few opportunities to access their own or wider communities. This limits access to a wide range of resources and experiences to enhance children's play and development opportunities.

Illustrations for quality of interactions

'Very good' quality of interactions

Our understanding of child development is informed by relevant theory and practice. This enables us to skilfully support children and young people in extending their play. We support the emotional resilience of children and families through holistic and nurturing approaches to secure children's wellbeing, including the right to play.

Careful observation allows us to see children as having thoughts, feelings and plans that we need to respond to and respect. This, alongside our high quality interactions, supports them to actively explore the world around them and builds their confidence across a broad range of outcomes.

We support and facilitate the play process to develop children's confidence, creativity and curiosity. High-quality observations and interactions respect, support, and challenge children's play and learning. Children believe in their own potential and have fun in freely chosen and extended play experiences.

We have a strong understanding of when to engage and when to stand back and observe. We encourage children's interactions with each other. Children have frequent, appropriate opportunities to develop their thinking and problem-solving skills through imaginative play and storytelling.

'Weak' quality of interactions

Conversations and interactions with children lack structure and challenge and miss opportunities to build on their interests. We lack understanding around children's communication and language needs or their preferred ways of communicating. This results in missed opportunities for children to make progress and can mean children become passive, distressed or frustrated.

Our staff are not child focused in their interactions and fail to recognise and value children's thoughts, interests and processes during play. Children's play is often interrupted by adult led routines and interactions that are task oriented. As a result, children lack opportunities to become absorbed in their play, solve problems and follow their own interests.

Illustrations for child-centred planning

'Very good' child-centred planning

Children are at the centre of all planning. We are skilled in recognising and responding to the different interests of children, as well as their stages in play and learning. We use observations of individual children's patterns of play to plan, support, challenge and extend children's development.

Children are highly motivated and fully engaged by the range of rich, challenging play opportunities, offered through a balance of intentional and spontaneous planning. Experiences reflect children's ideas, aspirations, curiosities and meaningful next steps in their development.

Careful observations of play recognise and promote children's interests, helping them to progress and achieve. Any additional supports are identified, planned for and implemented. Our highly responsive approach ensures children are developing a broad range of skills for life and learning.

We work together with children, families and partners to support children to enjoy their successes and share their achievements.

'Weak' child-centred planning

Opportunities to observe and extend children's play are missed, leading to gaps in understanding around their interests and overall development. We either do not have, or do not use, information needed to effectively respond and plan to meet children's individual needs and interests, including additional supports where required. As a result, some children are not experiencing appropriate opportunities to support and consolidate their own learning through play and are not sufficiently challenged at an appropriate level.

There are limited or inconsistent approaches in place to evaluate children's progress and achievements. Information gathered is not individualised or used effectively to plan the spaces, experiences and interactions each child needs to thrive. We do not reflect together to respond to individual children's interests or their stages of play and development. This results in a lack of meaningful, progressive planning over time.

Families are not involved or given high quality information on their children's experiences, which results in a lack of consistency and continuity for children.

Challenge questions for play, learning and development

The following challenge questions can support your self-evaluation:

- How well do we support and encourage children's natural curiosity, creativity and problem solving in our service?

- What approaches are we using to promote children's developing skills over a broad range of areas, such as emotional, social, and physical development?

- How can children be supported to have confidence in leading their own play?

- How do we ensure we keep up to date with relevant theory, and demonstrate how our understanding of child development supports high-quality experiences?

- How do we ensure our approach to children's needs recognises the independent thoughts and feelings of children as individuals?

- How does our service approach support for children to develop their thinking and problem-solving skills?

- How well do we support staff in undertaking their role in planning for and evaluating children's progress?

- How effective are our processes to evaluate children's development and achievements?

- How well does this information gathered about children's progress inform our planning?

- How do we maximise opportunities for children to be challenged, creative and engaged in their play and experiences?

Nurturing care and support

Nurturing care and support is a quality indicator (QI) for 'supporting children to achieve'.

There are illustrations of practice and challenge questions below. These can help you to assess your current practices and identify areas for growth. Illustrations of nurturing care and support are also available for [early learning and childcare](#) and [childminding settings](#).

Themes for nurturing care and support

The themes for this QI are:

- nurturing care

- personal planning

- connections with families

About this quality indicator

This indicator focuses on how well children are nurtured, cared for and supported. Children's care and support routines are individualised to meet their needs and should be delivered with kindness and compassion.

There is a focus on [personal planning](#) that reflects the holistic needs of each child, promotes their wellbeing and supports positive outcomes. The indicator highlights the need to involve children and their families in making decisions about their care and support. Children transitioning between different spaces and settings require thoughtful consideration to ensure safe and supportive care.

This indicator highlights the importance of connecting with children and their families. Staff should create a welcoming environment and consider each child's unique circumstances to ensure smooth transitions and positive experiences. Fostering strong connections with children's families can have a significantly positive impact on a child's wellbeing.

Illustrations for nurturing care

'Very good' nurturing care

The children in our service feel safe, secure and supported. Our practice is built on the understanding that nurturing relationships, including supporting the development of children's friendships, are essential for healthy growth and development.

Our children experience warm, consistent and responsive care that fosters their wellbeing. They are safe, sensitively cared for and skilfully helped to express their needs.

We recognise the importance of supportive transitions and understand that their significance can vary for each child. We regularly assess each child's individual needs and evaluate the effectiveness of our transition strategies. We ensure consistent relationships to support smooth transitions and minimise disruptions to children's care and learning experiences. Guided by best practice, we evaluate our approaches and continually strive to improve our practice. The varied age groups in the setting positively impact transitions because older children are encouraged to welcome, support and guide younger or newer children.

Children's privacy and dignity are respected. We balance promoting children's independence with providing support where it is needed. We continually reflect on our practice to ensure it adapts to children's evolving needs and development. We create diverse spaces that support children to socialise, play in small groups or alone if they wish. This positively impacts our children's ability to regulate their emotions and build social skills.

Our children's food choices are nutritious, culturally appropriate and aligned with current dietary guidelines. For example, Setting the table and Food matters. Fresh water is readily available throughout the day. We consider daily routines, such as mealtimes, as valuable opportunities to promote children's involvement, independence and enhance their experiences.

We ensure consistency in who provides a child's care and support and how it is provided. Consistent care and routines provide our children with a sense of safety and security. We recognise daily routines, such as snack time, provide rich opportunities to connect with children and support their growth and development.

Where medication is needed, we work closely with families, and where appropriate children, to administer it safely. We are committed to the safety of all children and ensure our care and support approaches align with current best practice, guidance and policy.

'Weak' nurturing care

We do not respond appropriately to children's verbal and nonverbal communication. The rushed nature of interactions can lead to a tone and manner that conflicts with children's needs. This often results in children not seeking comfort or support from our staff, compromising their wellbeing.

Our rigid approach to daily routines limits children's opportunities to build confidence and grow through their own experiences. They are not actively involved in planning routines or the experiences we offer, and their preferences and needs are often overlooked.

Continual changes to staffing arrangements disrupt children's routines and create a sense of instability. The frequent changes are challenging for some children, and we do not have the time or resources to support them. This often results in children being unsettled or distressed for long periods of time.

Food choices are not healthy. We do not plan meals and snacks in line with current nutritional guidance. We have limited understanding of children's individual cultural and dietary needs, making it challenging to keep them safe and respected. When meals or snacks are provided, there is little involvement of children in the planning or preparation. Staff are busy during mealtimes and do not have time to sit with children to supervise them or enhance the experience.

We limit children's access to water. We regularly fail to recognise signs indicating a child might need a drink of water. Staff do not understand the importance of supporting children to stay hydrated.

Illustrations for personal planning

'Very good' personal planning

Children's wellbeing is supported through effective personal planning. All children, regardless of their personal characteristics, are recognised as capable individuals who are listened to, valued and respected. Personal plans promote children's rights and value the individuality of each child and their family.

Personal plans are tailored to each child's individual strengths, needs and interests. We create meaningful plans with children and regularly review these to ensure plans are suitable and supportive.

We work proactively with children, families and other professionals to identify support needs and have clear strategies in place to ensure that children's wellbeing is sustained. When a child requires support from multiple agencies, other professionals contribute to children's personal plans. Each child's personal plan is achievable, adaptable and includes strategies for care, support and protection, as necessary.

Our approach to personal planning considers best practice guidelines and is grounded in the Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) framework, utilising wellbeing indicators to assess and plan for children's overall wellbeing. The indicators provide us with a common language for assessing and discussing children's strengths, needs and progress with families and other professionals.

A child-centred approach guides our strategies for transitions. We place children and families at the heart of any decision-making process. This includes when a child starts in our service or moves between services. Key information to support continuity and progression in a child's care and support is shared appropriately, securely, and in good time. Our staff use well-planned and flexible approaches to enable children to feel safe and secure with any changes.

'Weak' personal planning

Personal plans are not individualised or meaningful and do not effectively support us to meet the needs of each child. Children requiring additional support, whether short or long term, are not receiving adequate care. This has the potential to adversely impact children's development.

We place an overemphasis on what children cannot do and have limited consideration of their strengths and interests, leading to unrealistic and ineffective goals and strategies of support.

Opportunities to work collaboratively with other professionals to achieve positive outcomes for children are missed. When we do collaborate, we do not effectively share information, update children's written plans or improve their care. This adversely impacts on the consistency and quality of care and support provided.

Personal plans do not comply with national guidance or legislation. We do not have opportunities to reflect on personal plans to help develop interactions, experiences and spaces to meet children's needs. This means opportunities to make children feel comfortable, safe and appropriately challenged are missed.

Approaches to transition do not consider the needs and views of individual children and families. This means we miss key information to help planning for any changes to care, support or experiences, resulting in distress and/or a sense of insecurity for some children.

We do not include the voices of children and families. This means their views have not been valued or used to plan for children. This contributes to a lack of continuity and consistency in children's care and support.

Serious inconsistencies in information sharing and record-keeping have put our children's safety at risk. Staff do not always have the information or knowledge needed to keep children safe, nurtured and supported. This has resulted in oversights, such as frequent errors in the timing or dosage of medication administration, jeopardising our children's wellbeing.

Illustrations of connections with families

'Very good' connections with families

We know our children and families very well. We strive to create a warm and welcoming environment where children and families feel valued and supported. The care we provide children is deeply influenced by the insights gained from their family. This supports us to create spaces which are culturally sensitive, accessible and inclusive for all.

Our connections with families increase their engagement in our service, positively impacting the quality of children's experiences. We recognise, learn from, and build upon the strengths that families bring, while sensitively responding to individual needs and circumstances. This collaborative approach enables us to learn from families, support children's growing sense of self, and ensure our setting remains responsive to their unique needs.

Families have regular opportunities to discuss their child's care and development, both informally and formally. We have systems in place to support communication with families, both verbally and in writing. We recognise and address many of the potential barriers that can make it difficult for families to be involved in our setting.

We understand that each child's development is shaped by their family, friends, community and experiences. We warmly welcome families into our setting to share in their child's experiences and encourage updates about children's hobbies and interests outside of our setting. This impacts positively on the quality of children's care and support, both at home and in the setting.

'Weak' connections with families

Engagement with our families is not planned or purposeful. As a result, there is little evidence of the impact on, or benefits to, children's care or development.

Our consultations with families fail to gather their views on what matters to them or their children. We rarely provide follow up responses to requests for further information. As a result, many families feel unheard.

We place little value on building trusting relationships with families to improve children's wellbeing. Early opportunities to respond effectively to the needs of children and families are missed. This means that families are not always understood and treated with dignity and respect. Families tell us they do not feel welcome in our service.

We have limited understanding of the strengths and knowledge that families bring to our setting. We do not use the information they share with us to inform our care and support of children. This contributes to children feeling unsettled and can restrict their experiences.

Staff avoid informal interactions with our families during key times such as, drop-off and pick-up of children. Opportunities for regular information exchanges with families are limited. By not actively seeking to build strong relationships with children's families, they miss opportunities to keep children safe and to enrich their experiences.

Challenge questions for nurturing care and support

The following challenge questions can support your self-evaluation:

- What best practices, theories and guidance underpin our care and support of children?

- How do our observations and knowledge of a child influence the routine of the day?

- Does our approach to transitions help children to feel safe and secure? How do we know our approach is effective?

- What systems, processes and approaches do we have in place to keep children safe? How do we know they are effective?

- What do we need to do to ensure that the voices of all children, both verbal and nonverbal are heard and responded to?

- How do we know that all staff fully understand and implement our approaches to inclusion, diversity and equity?

- How well do staff understand and champion the rights of care experienced children and families?

- What do we do to promote sociable and healthy eating experiences?

- In what ways do we communicate with children, families and/or other professionals to jointly plan children's care and support?

- When children and their families arrive at our setting, how do we know they feel welcomed?

Safeguarding and child protection

Safeguarding and child protection is a quality indicator (QI) for 'supporting children to achieve'.

There are illustrations of practice and challenge questions below. These can help you to assess your current practices and identify areas for growth. Illustrations of safeguarding and child protection are also available for early learning and childcare and childminding settings.

Themes for safeguarding and child protection

The themes for this QI are:

- arrangements for safeguarding, including child protection

- children are safe, secure and protected from harm

- national guidance and legislation

About this quality indicator

This indicator highlights the responsibilities of staff and partners to ensure that all children are safe, well cared for and protected from harm. This includes how the setting takes account of statutory requirements as well as local and national policies to promote the safety of children.

Safeguarding children requires strong partnerships and communication between the setting and its local community. It is important that staff are skilled in recognising and responding to wellbeing, child protection and safeguarding concerns. The QI also recognises the importance in promoting children's ability to keep themselves safe.

Illustrations for safeguarding, including child protection

'Very good' arrangements for safeguarding, including child protection

Clear, accessible, up-to-date policies and procedures in ensure the safeguarding of children, including child protection. Policies and procedures take account of the unique context of our setting and the needs of all children and their families.

Staff have strong lines of communication and effective partnerships with other agencies that are involved in helping to keep children safe and healthy. Arrangements for making a safeguarding or child protection concern are well-publicised and understood by all staff, partners and families.

All staff take part in regular professional learning and have a very good understanding of the setting's policies and procedures. As a result, staff are highly skilled and confident in identifying and responding to any child protection or safeguarding issue.

Leaders have been trained in safeguarding matters to a high level, resulting in sound knowledge and understanding. They demonstrate strong leadership in ensuring arrangements for safeguarding and child protection are integral to the work of the setting.

'Weak' arrangements for safeguarding, including child protection

Policies and procedures for safeguarding children, including child protection are unclear and not well understood by staff. There is limited consideration given to the unique context of our service.

Leaders have not sufficiently developed and implemented effective child protection policies and procedures. This means lines of communication regarding protection and health concerns for children are not robust or clear. As a result, there is an increased risk of harm to children.

Leaders have failed to address and identify staff training needs in relation to safeguarding or child protection. This means staff are not confident to recognise or respond to child protection or safeguarding concerns. Safeguarding or protection concerns might be missed, compromising children's safety.

Record keeping is inconsistent and does not always show a clear understanding of risks to children. Opportunities to ensure appropriate supports are missed. Partner agencies are not

kept informed to support children and families. This shows links with other organisations, which could assist in the protection of children, are not fully effective.

Illustrations for children are safe, secure and protected from harm
'Very good' children are safe, secure and protected from harm

Children feel safe and cared for. Our ethos and vision strongly promote children's rights and equality. All children experience positive, trusting relationships with adults. Children are actively encouraged to give their views and voice any concerns.

Staff and partners know children and their families very well. Positive and supportive relationships between children, families and staff result in high levels of trust and effective communication. As a result, staff are skilled in identifying children who may be at risk of harm.

The needs and concerns of children and their families are dealt with timeously, sensitively and effectively. Well-planned experiences and interactions ensure the safety and resilience of children. This is an important feature of learning and play. There is a strong focus on promoting children's ability to keep themselves safe.

'Weak' children are safe, secure and protected from harm

Our vision and values fail to effectively promote children's rights. Opportunities to develop trusting relationships and listen to children are missed. Children's views are not always taken into consideration or respected.

Staff do not know children and families well enough to build meaningful relationships. Information needed to keep children safe and protected from harm is not available to relevant staff and/or partner agencies. As a result, children's safety and care are potentially compromised.

Children and families do not feel heard. Concerns that arise are not taken seriously by staff or dealt with sensitively and in a timely manner. We have not taken the necessary steps to uphold the rights of children to be safe and protected from harm.

Illustrations for national guidance and legislation

'Very good' national guidance and legislation

We have a very good understanding of legislation, as well as national and local guidance that impacts on the care and safety of children in our setting. Our leaders ensure that they comply with their child protection duties under legislation.

Approaches to reporting, responding to and recording concerns are robust and in line with national guidance. We are proactive in ensuring that practices and approaches take appropriate account of new guidance and emerging issues.

'Weak' use of national guidance and legislation

Staff have a limited understanding of legislation or national and local guidance. Therefore reporting, responding to and recording of concerns are inconsistent and not always effective. This has the potential to compromise children's safety and care.

Our leaders have a limited understanding of their roles and responsibilities, therefore there is a potential increased risk of harm to children. Our understanding and implementation of national guidance is not effective and could impact on care and safety of children and families.

Challenge questions for safeguarding and child protection

The following challenge questions can support your self-evaluation:

- Is there an appropriate designated person in place for child protection?

- Do all families and stakeholders know who this is and how to raise a concern if necessary?

- To what extent are approaches to safeguarding reviewed as part of our self-evaluation arrangements?

- How often do we review and update our arrangements to support and keep children safe?

- How do we ensure effective partnerships with all parties, including staff, families and external agencies, to ensure children's safety and wellbeing?

- How well do we support children and their families to ensure children are safe, secure and protected from harm?

- How effectively are children who are on or were previously on the child protection register and/or care experienced being supported?

- How do we ensure information is shared appropriately and sensitively to ensure effective support for children and families and to protect dignity whilst maintaining safety and wellbeing?

- How do we ensure that all staff, including visiting staff, understand our arrangements to keep children safe and are kept up-to-date with effective safeguarding practice and current national guidance and legislation?

Headquarters

Care Inspectorate

Compass House

11 Riverside Drive

Dundee

DD1 4NY

Tel: 01382 207100

Fax: 01382 207289

Website: www.careinspectorate.com

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