Central Bedfordshire

Practice Governance and Quality Assurance Framework

Central Bedfordshire Council, Adult Social Care

A great place to live and work.

Practice Governance and Quality Assurance Framework

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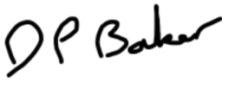
Dan Baker,	Quality Improvement Service Manager		Central Bedfordshire Council	09/06/2025

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1. Introduction

This framework defines Central Bedfordshire Council's commitment to practice governance and quality improvement in Adult Social Care. We foster a responsive culture where people's priorities shape our approach, ensuring care delivery that is outcome focussed, legally compliant, ethically sound, and continuously improving.

Practitioners operate within evidence-based frameworks, guided by national best practices and statutory responsibilities, including compliance with the Care Act 2014. Through continuous learning, we drive service excellence and enhance lives.

Personalisation is central to our quality assurance, with a strong emphasis on listening to what is important to people and strengths-based practices. We uphold the values of the Think Local Act Personal (TLAP) framework (2018), ensuring care and support align with individuals' needs and aspirations — *Making It Real, Think Local Act Personal (2018)*

2. Framework Principles

Personalisation – Embedding dignity, choice, and autonomy into all quality assurance activities to reflect individual preferences and aspirations.

Continuous Improvement – A dynamic process, shaped by people's feedback, professional learning, and evolving statutory requirements.

Transparency and Accountability – Evidence-based quality assurance mechanisms ensure fair and equitable service delivery, with clear accountability guiding decision-making.

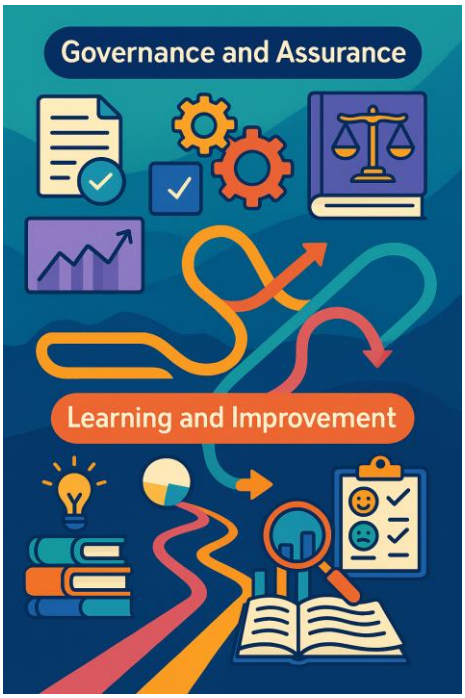
Partnership and Collaboration – Improvement is a shared responsibility, involving individuals, carers, staff, and external stakeholders such as health services, advocacy groups, and regulators.

3. Framework Objectives

Framework Objectives

- Maintain alignment with Care Act 2014 principles across all services.
- Enhance peoples lived experiences through evaluative practice improvements.
- Strengthen person-centred feedback loops, ensuring individuals actively shape service developments.
- Foster a culture of learning, integrating reflection, evidence-based practice, and shared learning.
- Support governance structures that ensure safe, effective, and legally compliant care practices.

4. Link Between Governance and Practice Improvement



Central Bedfordshire Council recognises that strong governance and continuous improvement are interdependent, forming the foundation for continuous development, accountability, and service excellence in adult social care.

Governance structures—such as leadership accountability, regulatory compliance, and performance monitoring—provide the backdrop within which quality improvement takes place. Without strong governance, quality improvement efforts could lack direction, oversight, and sustainability.

Quality improvement processes—such as audits, feedback loops, workforce development, and service evaluations—generate critical insights that inform governance decisions. These insights drive policy refinements, enhance professional standards, and ensure services remain responsive to evolving needs.

By embedding this approach, adult social care remains responsive, effective, and aligned with evolving community needs.

This approach aligns with the Care Quality Statement:

"We have clear responsibilities, roles, systems of accountability, and good governance. We use these to manage and deliver good quality, sustainable care, treatment, and support. We act on the best information about risk, performance, and outcomes, and we share this securely with others when appropriate."

5. Overview of Practice Governance Structure

Ongoing Quality Assurance Activities (Ongoing)

Decision-making and improvement are informed by:

Audits and Performance Metrics: Evaluating compliance with Care Act duties and assessing service delivery.

People's Feedback: Captured through audits, compliments, complaints and direct engagement.

Stakeholder Engagement: Including staff, leaders, voluntary sector representatives, health partners, and regulatory bodies.

Service Area Meetings (Monthly)

The Adult Social Care Management Team Meetings serve as the primary forum for discussing learning themes, but engagement also extends to other services areas* when relevant learning points are identified.

The Quality Improvement Team plays a key role in:

Presenting key themes and tracking emerging trends.

Recording agreed actions in the Learning from Tracker, ensuring accountability and enabling ongoing evaluation of impact.

Supporting implementation to maintain service effectiveness and responsiveness.

Practice Governance Board (Monthly)

Leads and oversees ethical, legal, and continuous improvement practices, setting priorities for Adult Social Care.

A strategic work plan with SMART objectives drives sustained progress, fostering transparency, shared learning, and service improvement.

Performance Management Board (Quarterly)

Provides director-level oversight of quality assurance, ensuring high standards of care. Quarterly meetings evaluate performance and key developments.

*Examples of this will include having discussions with the Customer Finance or Recruitment Team if any identified learning is more relevant for those service areas.

6. Quality Assurance Plan (including Auditing Framework)

The Quality Assurance Plan defines key activities that foster learning and engagement in adult social care. Its primary focus is gathering feedback from individuals who have received support, ensuring their experiences shape service development.

Additionally, the plan values professional insights, integrating practitioner perspectives on practice quality and effectiveness to drive continuous improvement. It embraces a collaborative approach, drawing upon both lived and learned experience to strengthen service outcomes.

7. Learning Mechanisms Overview

8. Learning Mechanisms Explained

Practice Auditing: Upholding Quality and Compliance

Practice audits play a critical role in ensuring high standards, legal compliance, and best practices within Adult Social Care. They identify strengths, areas for improvement, and support professional development, driving meaningful service enhancements.

Central Bedfordshire Council prioritises lived experience as a core quality measure, integrating Think Local Act Personal (TLAP) principles, including co-produced 'I' and 'We' statements—ensuring a transparent, person-centred approach aligned with Making It Real (2018).

Audits routinely include consultations with individuals who have received care and support, as well as those important to them. Their feedback provides valuable insights into what works well and where improvements are needed. This ensures that the voices of those receiving care and support are not only considered in the measurement of quality but also actively shape our services and drive continuous improvement.

Audit Framework:

1. Primary Audits

- Person's Journey Audit – Evaluates the full care experience from initial assessment to ongoing support, ensuring consistency, compliance, and visibility (includes consultation).
- Experiences and Outcomes Audit – Assesses personalisation, co-production, and service impact, aligned with Care Act 2014 themes (includes consultation).

2. Thematic Audits and Dip Sampling

Targeted audits focus on key areas, such as:

- Safeguarding practices
- Mental Capacity Act (MCA) assessments
- Risk management
- Financial oversight
- Transitional Safeguarding

Some thematic audits—such as adult safeguarding practice monitoring—are ongoing, while others are introduced as required to address specific needs.

To promote consistency and objectivity, the auditing processes incorporate:

- Standardised Criteria and Guidance – Benchmarked against the Care Act 2014 and CQC Assurance Framework.
- Ongoing Auditor Training – The Quality Improvement Team provides regular training and peer reflection to maintain best practices.
- Audit Moderation and Peer Review – Ensures fair grading through sampling, collaborative review, and trend analysis.
- Co-Production in Audits – Involves people receiving care, families, and staff, ensuring person-centred practice aligned with TLAP principles (2018).

9. External Audits and Peer Reviews

When appropriate, external audits provide independent and objective assessments, offering:

- Credibility and Public Trust – Transparency reassures people and the public with objectivity and independence.
- Benchmarking Best Practices – Comparative insights drive service improvement.
- Specialist Expertise – External auditors bring industry knowledge to enhance outcomes.

10. Specialist Practice Reviews

In-depth safeguarding, service quality, and compliance reviews strengthen accountability and system-wide learning, incorporating:

- Safeguarding Adults Reviews (SARs) – Conducted where neglect or abuse led to harm or death, assessing multi-agency collaboration.
- Individual Management Reviews (IMRs) – Internal reviews to examine organisational response to safeguarding concerns.
- Ombudsman Investigations – Address complaints and disputes to ensure fair treatment in social care services.
- Complaints and Appeals Reviews – Evaluations of service user concerns regarding care decisions or service quality.
- Coroner Court Investigations – Legal inquiries into deaths potentially linked to care provision, ensuring transparency and accountability.
- Care Quality Commission (CQC) Regulatory Assessments – Independent evaluations ensuring Care Act 2014 compliance and driving system improvements.

11. Compliments and Complaints Analysis

Regular analysis of compliments and complaints enables Central Bedfordshire Council to assess service quality, identify improvements, and celebrate successes. Recognising feedback—whether positive or critical—supports continuous learning and strengthens service delivery.

This evaluation highlights recurring issues, shaping policy reviews and practice enhancements. Complaints reveal systemic concerns, prompting service adjustments, while compliments provide valuable insight into effective practices and positive outcomes.

Feedback is used to:

- Showcase best practices and reinforce quality standards.
- Encourage professional development through reflective learning.
- Inform future improvements, ensuring services remain responsive and person-centred.

12. Management Oversight and Supervision

Strong management oversight is essential for maintaining high-quality adult social care services, ensuring performance monitoring, compliance, and best practices.

Formal supervision provides structured support, guiding staff development and evaluating service effectiveness. Ongoing oversight strengthens workforce management, improving care standards and service quality.

13. Insights from people with lived experience via the People Participation Team

The People Participation Team facilitates meaningful engagement with individuals who have lived experience of receiving care and support. Their insights provide valuable perspectives that can be used to guide service development and continuous improvement. Key activities include:

- Facilitated discussions – Creating safe spaces for individuals to share their experiences and recommendations.
- Feedback integration – Ensuring lived experience informs policy decisions, service adaptations, and workforce development.
- Collaborative projects – Partnering with practitioners to co-design solutions that enhance care quality and accessibility.

14. Feedback from Learning and Development Activities

Feedback from trainers and staff attending training plays a vital role in maintaining Care Act compliance and high-quality care.

- Trainer feedback refines learning programmes to align with best practices and evolving regulations.
- Participant feedback offers insights into real-world application and potential knowledge gaps.

Together, these inputs enhance training effectiveness, strengthen professional competencies, and ensure high standards across adult social care services.

15. Observations of practice ('back to the floor' shadowing) and Reflective Presentations to Senior Management

Central Bedfordshire Council promotes ‘back-to-the-floor’ governance, allowing senior managers to shadow frontline practitioners for real-time insights into daily practice.

Practitioners also participate in reflective presentations, using Gibbs’ Reflective Cycle (1988) to analyse practice experiences and foster professional learning.

Benefits include:

- Strengthened governance and service oversight.
- Direct insight into frontline practice challenges.
- Enhanced practitioner development through structured feedback.
- Improved trust and engagement between leadership and frontline teams.
- Identification of practical solutions and service enhancements.

Practitioner engagement fosters collaborative learning, ensuring insights from observations and reflective presentations drive service improvements and professional growth.

16. Performance Metrics

Key performance metrics are reported monthly and quarterly, providing indicators to assess:

- User experience ratings and service feedback.
- Compliance with statutory obligations and ethical standards.
- Efficiency metrics, including service accessibility and timeliness.

17. Open discussions and receiving feedback from Staff and Partners - e.g. Annual Health Check and Practitioner Forum

Open discussions and feedback from staff and partners are essential for continuous improvement in adult social care. Platforms such as the Annual Health Check and Practitioner Forum provide structured opportunities for professionals to share insights, highlight challenges, and contribute to service development. These forums foster collaboration, reflective practice, and shared learning, ensuring that frontline experiences shape policy decisions and quality improvements.

18. Commitment to Learning and Improvement

Central Bedfordshire Council is committed to continuous learning, innovation, and improvement across its organisation and the wider system. By embedding creative approaches, we ensure equitable experiences, positive outcomes, and high-quality care, while promoting safe and effective practice.

A Systematic Approach to Excellence

Through a structured approach to examining practice, we identify cross-cutting themes from the various Learning Mechanisms to drive strategic improvements at both operational and systemic levels. Learning is drawn from both challenges and successes, shaping a responsive culture that values the experiences of those receiving care and support and their families.

Reflection and collective problem-solving underpin informed decision-making, ensuring that risks, performance, and outcomes are assessed using reliable data. Secure information-sharing reinforces best practices and continuous growth.

19. Embedding a Culture of Learning

Improvement goes beyond addressing gaps—it is about building a culture of continuous learning, where effective practices and lessons from challenges shape a responsive and efficient system.

To achieve this, we:

- Encourage reflection and collective problem-solving at all levels.
- Make data-driven decisions that enhance care and support arrangements.
- Listen to individuals and their families, ensuring their experiences guide service improvements.
- Foster a feedback culture that enables learning from both successes and development areas.
- Share knowledge securely and transparently, embedding best practices widely.

Alignment with Care Quality Statement:

‘We focus on continuous learning, innovation and improvement across our organisation and the local system. We encourage creative ways of delivering equality of experience, outcome and quality of life for people. We actively contribute to safe, effective practice and research.’

20. Learning Cycle Approach

Central Bedfordshire Council employs a learning cycle approach to ensure practice improvements are continuously identified, actioned, and embedded:

1. Practice and Services
The foundation of care provision, where improvements are applied.

2. Analyse for Learning Themes
Gathering insights through observations, audits, and feedback to identify recurring strengths and challenges.

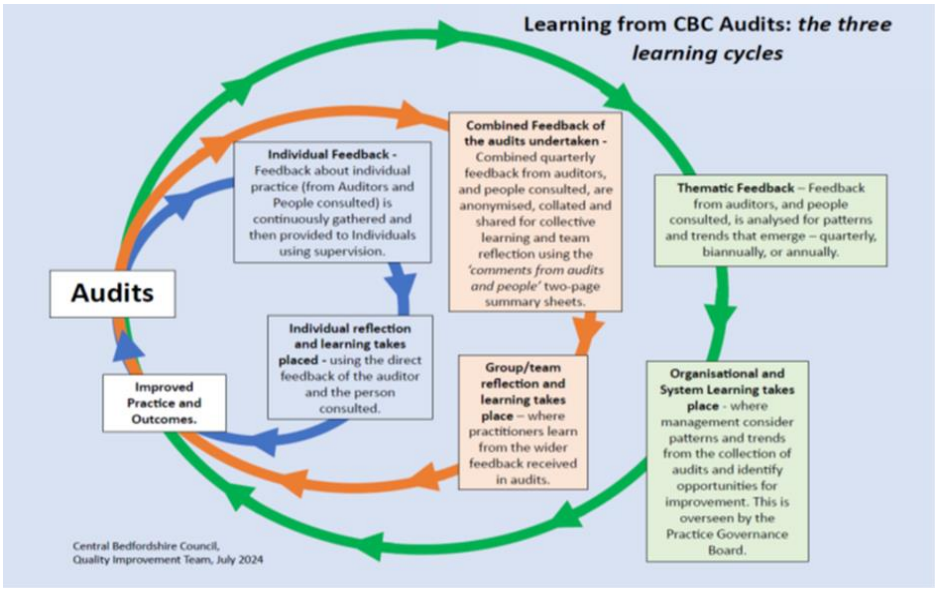
3. Define Actions
Developing targeted strategies informed by analysis.

4. Take Action
Implementing changes through practice adjustments, training, or service developments.

5. Improvements Made
Ensuring adjustments become embedded in standard practices, sustaining long-term improvements.

Audit insights and feedback inform three key learning areas:

- Individual Learning – Feedback shared directly with practitioners for personal development.
- Collective Learning – Emerging themes shared across Adult Social Care, enabling peer reflection and collaborative improvement.
- Systemic Learning – Identified themes shared with management, leading to strategic service improvements.



21. Central Bedfordshire Council's Commitment to Learning and Improvement

Central Bedfordshire Council is committed to using the 'Learning From' Tracker as a structured tool to consolidate insights from various sources, including audits, feedback from people, staff reflections, and external reviews of practice. This tool systematically records identified learning, documents agreed actions and ensures accountability in implementing improvements. By tracking the impact of these actions over time, we assess whether changes have enhanced service quality and outcomes. Regular monitoring provides evidence of progress, highlights areas for further development, and fosters a culture of responsive, data-driven learning, ensuring sustained service excellence.

Decisions on learning insights and improvement actions are agreed upon through Adult Social Care Management Team Meetings (or other relevant service areas discussion) and overseen by the Practice Governance Board. With support from the Quality Improvement Team, the relevant service areas implement targeted measures to address identified learning, including:

- **Driving Service Enhancements** – Implementing improvements based on recurring themes to refine care delivery.
- **Strengthening Workforce Development** – Enhancing training and professional development opportunities for staff.
- **Informing Policy Refinements** – Adjusting policies to better reflect lived experiences and evolving best practices.
- **Enhancing Safeguarding Measures** – Addressing risk management concerns through proactive interventions.
- **Embedding a Continuous Learning Culture** – Promoting ongoing reflection and knowledge-sharing to ensure sustained excellence in care delivery.

Through this commitment, Central Bedfordshire Council ensures that learning informs meaningful action, strengthening our adult social care services and enhancing the lived experiences of those who access support.

One of the key activities that the Quality Improvement Team support with is regular delivery of practice sessions to support practitioners develop skills, refine best practices, and adapt to evolving progressive social care practices. These sessions:

- Enhance practitioner skills and knowledge.
- Promote knowledge-sharing and collaboration.
- Encourage reflection to improve practice.
- Ensure consistency with regulatory standards.

Examples of methods that might be used within such sessions are:

- Case studies – Applying theory to real-life scenarios.
- Role-playing – Practicing interpersonal skills in care settings.
- Interactive workshops – Engaging discussions and applied learning.
- Reflective discussions – Facilitating peer learning.
- Expert-led sessions – Specialised knowledge delivery.
- E-learning modules – Flexible, self-paced training.

22. Conclusion and Ongoing Work

This framework provides a structured approach to ensuring safe, effective, and responsive services, ensuring accountability while placing lived experiences at the centre of practice improvement.

Through the implementation of a range of learning activities, transparent oversight, and evidence-based decision-making, this framework ensures that adult social care in Central Bedfordshire Council remains responsive to evolving needs. Central Bedfordshire Council's commitment to strengths-based, person-centred practice will continue driving improvements, ensuring services enhance the lived experiences of those who receive them.

A culture of learning, reflection, and collaboration not only strengthens compliance with statutory duties but also drives meaningful and lasting change across adult social care in Central Bedfordshire.

23. Embedding the Framework into Practice

To ensure this framework delivers tangible improvements, the following key actions will guide implementation:

- **Regular Review and Adaptation** – The framework will be monitored and refined based on audit findings, people's feedback, and policy developments.
- **Ongoing Staff Development** – Professional teams will have continued access to learning opportunities, including training, reflective practice, and best practice resources.
- **Strong Governance Oversight** – Leadership teams will continue to review outcomes, address emerging challenges, and apply strategic improvements to enhance service effectiveness.
- **Engaging Stakeholders and Crucially People Who Access Care and Support** – Individuals receiving care, carers, and external partners will have ongoing opportunities to shape service improvements through meaningful consultation and co-production.

24. Review and Revision

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure its relevance and effectiveness. Annual updates will draw upon audit outcomes, emerging feedback trends, and evolving legislation or guidance.

25. Appendix

A1 Care Act 2014 Principles Summary

Overview

The Care Act 2014 represented a significant reform in the care and support system in England, aiming to put individuals and their carers at the centre of care decisions. It establishes a clear legal framework for local authorities to follow in providing care and support.

Key Aspects and Principles

Wellbeing Principle - The Act emphasises the importance of promoting an individual's wellbeing in all decisions related to care and support. Wellbeing includes personal dignity, physical and mental health, emotional wellbeing, protection from abuse and neglect, control over day-to-day life, participation in work, education, and social activities, and ensuring suitable living accommodation.

Prevention - Local authorities are required to provide or arrange services that prevent or delay the development of care and support needs. This includes identifying individuals at risk and offering early intervention services.

Information and Advice - Authorities must provide comprehensive information and advice to help individuals understand the care and support system, the options available, and how to access services.

Integration and Cooperation -The Act promotes the integration of care and support services with health services to improve outcomes for individuals. Local authorities must cooperate with other public authorities, including the NHS.

Person-Centred Care - Care and support should be tailored to the individual's needs and preferences, ensuring that they have control over their care. This includes involving individuals in the assessment and planning of their care.

Eligibility and Assessment - The Act sets out a national eligibility criterion for care and support, ensuring consistency across the country. Local authorities must carry out assessments to determine an individual's needs and eligibility for support.

Safeguarding - Protecting adults from abuse and neglect is a key principle. Local authorities have a duty to investigate and take action when there are concerns about an individual's safety

Carers' Rights - For the first time, carers have a legal right to assessment and support. The Act recognizes the vital role of carers and ensures they receive the help they need.

Implementation - Local authorities must work with communities and other partners to deliver services that meet these principles. The Act encourages a collaborative approach to care and support, ensuring that services are effective, efficient, and responsive to the needs of individuals and their carers.

Further information please see: Care Act factsheets - GOV.UK

A2 Audits Templates

Person's Journey Audit - Person's Journey Audit - blank word copy.docx

Experiences and Outcomes Audit - Experiences and Outcomes Audit blank word copy.docx

A3 Reflective Presentation Template

Reflective Presentation Guidance Prep Tool.docx