Suffolk SEND Local Area Partnership Quality Framework

September 2026



NHS
Norfolk and Suffolk
Integrated Care Board

Suffolk
County Council

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Suffolk SEND Local Area Partnership

The Suffolk SEND Local Area Partnership is a multi-agency collaboration working together to improve outcomes for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and their families. Our vision, as set out in the Suffolk SEND Strategy 2024-2029, is that together we will understand and support children and young people so that they feel included, supported, and fulfilled to live their best lives.

The Suffolk SEND Local Area Partnership Quality Framework has been developed through a series of workshops with representatives from the following partners:

Suffolk County Council

NHS Norfolk and Suffolk Integrated Care Board

sendiass in Suffolk

SPCF Suffolk Parent Carer Forum – Working towards a brighter future for Suffolk's children and young people

Specialist Education Services SES

Psychology and Therapeutic Services P&TS

CYP Intelligence Hub

ASSET Education

Centre for Learning Developing People

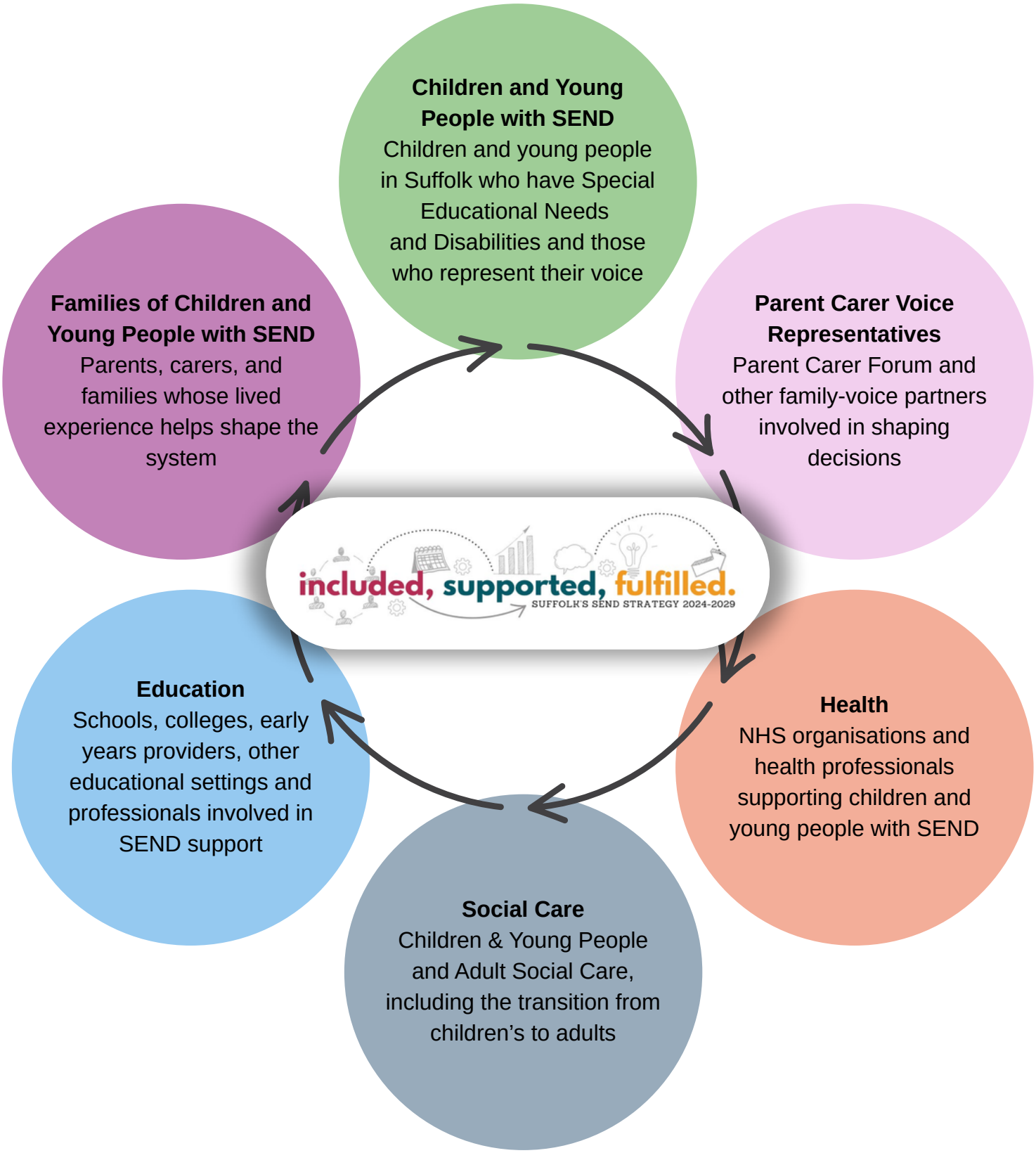
NHS East of England

NHS Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust

NHS West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust

Young Person's Network

The Suffolk SEND Local Area Partnership includes:



Suffolk SEND Quality Framework

The Suffolk SEND Quality Framework has been developed to support local area partners to not only assure but to **continually improve the quality of services** for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), based upon a **person-centred and shared definition of quality**. This shared understanding will aim to ensure that improvements across the SEND system reflect **what matters most to children, young people and their families**.



The working group who developed the framework for Suffolk felt strongly that this should move beyond quality assurance to ensure equal focus upon learning, improvement actions and review. Embedding the cycle of quality assurance and improvement is a priority for the partnership, alongside a culture of curiosity, compassion and continual improvement.

The Suffolk SEND Quality framework enables the SEND partnership to align to a set of shared quality principles, building upon the nationally developed SEND Quality Improvement (QI) Framework published by the Council for Disabled Children in the summer of 2024. Whilst this was developed for health services, work has been undertaken in Suffolk to adapt this for use across multi-agency partners. These principles have been developed and expanded upon in Suffolk through a collaboration of multi-agency partners, including those representing the voices of children and young people as well as parents and carers, and practitioners from across education, health and social care.

Developing a framework for use across the partnership with quality principles which can be applied to a range of settings and services, promotes a shared, partnership-based approach to quality assurance and improvement across the county. The framework recognises that SEND improvement requires joint action across health, education, and social care.

Alongside the quality principles, the Suffolk SEND Quality Assurance and Improvement Planning Tool has been developed. The national tool has been adapted to incorporate the Suffolk quality principles as well as highlighting the importance of the identification of opportunities for improvement, forward planning and improvement actions. Used together, the framework and the improvement and planning tool provide a **structured, evidence-based approach** to quality assurance and improvement. The intention is that these allow for settings and services to use the tool in a **consistent yet flexible** way, whether that be for self-evaluation, peer review or other contexts.

Further guidance on how to use the tool can be found in Appendix 1 and within the tool itself.

At the heart of the Suffolk SEND Local Area Partnership Quality Framework is a shared understanding of quality:

"In Suffolk, quality means building a SEND system where every child, young person and family is genuinely **heard**, treated with **kindness**, and supported through clear, **joined-up and compassionate practice**.

We are committed to delivering consistent, **inclusive and accessible services** that prioritise lived experience, strengthen outcomes, and drive continual learning and improvement across education, health and care.

Through **shared leadership**, curiosity and a whole-system approach, we will work together to ensure all children and young people with SEND receive the **right support, at the right time, in the right way.**

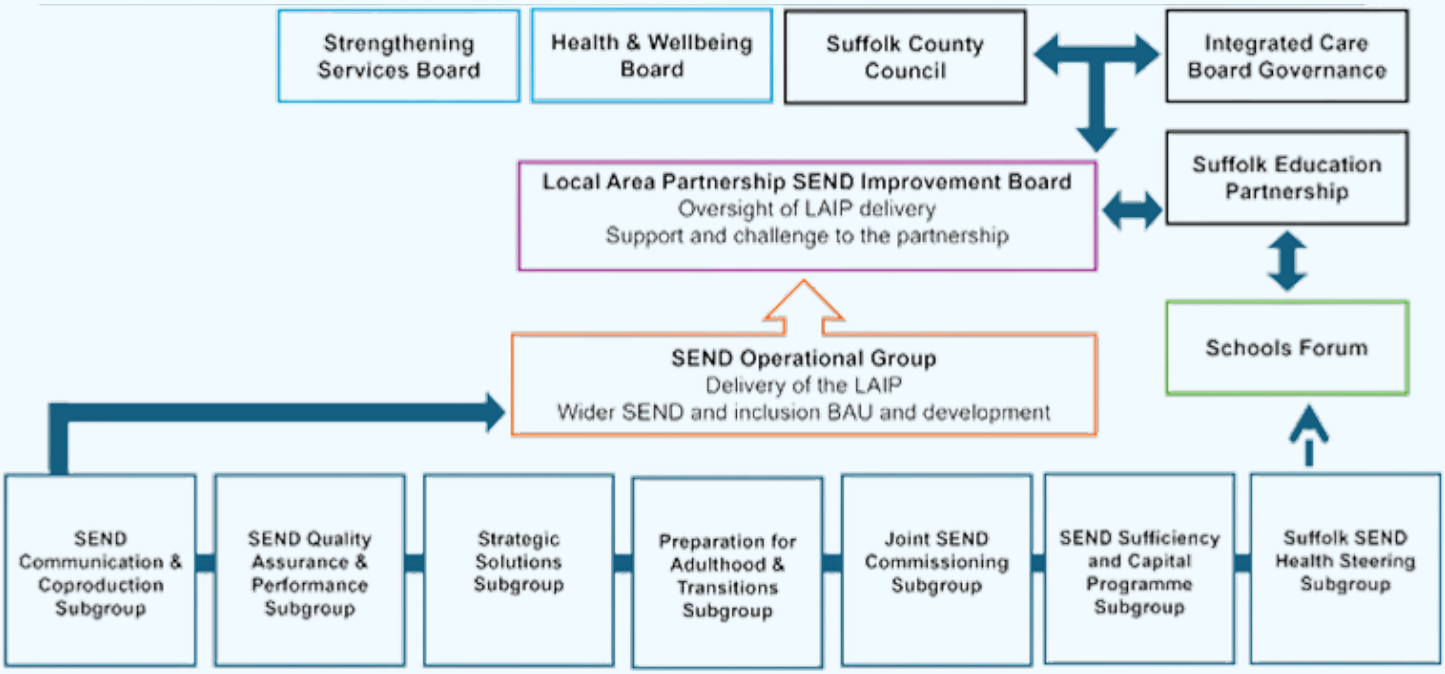
Together we will understand and support children and young people so that they feel included, supported, and fulfilled to live their best lives."

We are committed to supporting children and young people to achieve **positive long-term outcomes**, including employment, independent living, good health, community inclusion and meaningful participation in adulthood.

Governance

The current Suffolk SEND Local Area Partnership Governance structure has been in place since 2024. Output from multi-agency use of the Quality Framework and Improvement Tool will feed into the SEND Quality Assurance and Performance Subgroup, as set out below. The work of the Quality Assurance and Performance Subgroup is reflected within the SEND Operational Group, which focuses upon partnership delivery of the SEND Local Area Inclusion Plan (LAIP). Development of a Suffolk SEND Quality Framework is the first action within our LAIP, which can be accessed here.

SEND Local Area Partnership Governance Structure





Further information on the Suffolk SEND Governance and Oversight arrangements can be found on the Suffolk Local Offer website.

Suffolk SEND Quality Principles

In order to adapt the national SEND quality principles, we first needed to understand whether these matched with the experience of children, young people and families in Suffolk. To do this, the working group who developed the Suffolk SEND Quality Framework considered a range of sources of information where we had heard directly from children, young people and families, including:

- Suffolk 'I Statements', from your Young People's Network focussed upon Communication, Journey, Services, and Preparing for Adulthood (PfA)
- Suffolk Ideal Worker resource created by children and young people
- 'What makes an ideal meeting' resource created by children and young people
- Suffolk Parent Carer Forum Survey reports from the last three years
- Parent and carer responses to the Belonging & Inclusion events
- My Health Our Future 2026 report
- Themes from complaints into health services
- Early Help Strategy young person's survey
- Multi-Schools Council health-focussed feedback (which fed into the national framework)
- SEND Strategy Consultation feedback from children and young people, parents and carers, and multi-agency practitioners
- Feedback on priority areas from the Children and Young Person's Engagement Hub and SENDIASS
- Children's Outcome Framework responses
- Themes and feedback generated through the development of the Suffolk PfA Strategy



What good looks like: Suffolk SEND's 9 Quality Principles

These principles apply across a child or young person's entire SEND journey, from early identification and SEN Support through to transition into adulthood, including post-16 and post-19 education, employment, independence and community inclusion.

1 Voice, Compassion and Care

- Children, young people and their families feel heard and understood
- Aspirations and achievements of children and young people are recognised and celebrated
- Those working in settings and services are trusting, supportive and kind
- Adaptive and flexible approach evident, taking time to understand how people would like to be treated
- Tools are used effectively to support children and young people's voice, wishes and feelings

2 Clear Communication

- Communication with families is proactive, transparent and clear
- Information about the service/setting offer is available and accessible
- Signposting is effective and personalised
- Support and certainty whilst waiting is evident
- Communication allows for children, young people and families to know what will happen, when, where and how

3 Partnership & Coproduction

Individual-level

- Person-centred goals and plans are developed in partnership with children, young people and families, focussing upon strengths, skills, interests, preferences etc
- Outcomes are captured and reported
- Children, young people and families have choice and control through joint decision making

Service-level

- Children, young people's and family voice is meaningfully gathered
- Future aspirations, including education, employment, independence and community participation, are discussed and planned for at the earliest opportunity

4 Early Support

- Children, young people and families feel listened to, and their needs are identified earlier as a result
- Clear pathways in place to enable timely support
- Evidence of right support at the right time
- Routes into the setting/service enable support to be provided quickly

5 Equitable Provision

- Evidence of learning from inequity in access, with any gaps identified and plans in place to rectify at a service/setting level
- New information from children, young people and families received and acted upon at the earliest opportunity
- We are assured that children, young people and families are receiving the input and support that has been planned and agreed with them
- Support is needs-led i.e. not dependent upon diagnoses

6 Skilled Workforce

- Principles of the Suffolk Ideal Worker are reflected and clear within child, young people's and family feedback
- Connected workforce – co-working/co-training/networking with other professionals across the Suffolk SEND Local Area Partnership
- Supportive professional networks – opportunities available to staff (Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and career progression)
- Knowledge of statutory requirements for SEND (including but not limited to EHCNA/EHCP)
- Evidence-based approaches and pathways to working with children, young people and families, including neurodiversity
- Oversight and assurance of quality and safety as well as actions taken to address gaps (focussed upon improvement)
- Staff feedback and views are shared, known and acted upon

7 Joined Up

- Collaboration and shared decision making between services to meet child, young people's and family needs
- Children, young people and families are supported to understand what different services can offer
- Participation at partnership SEND events across the county
- Identifying and disseminating best practice from local/regional/national partners, with examples
- Triangulation of quality work, audit, evaluation, performance to improve service/setting offers

8 Accessible

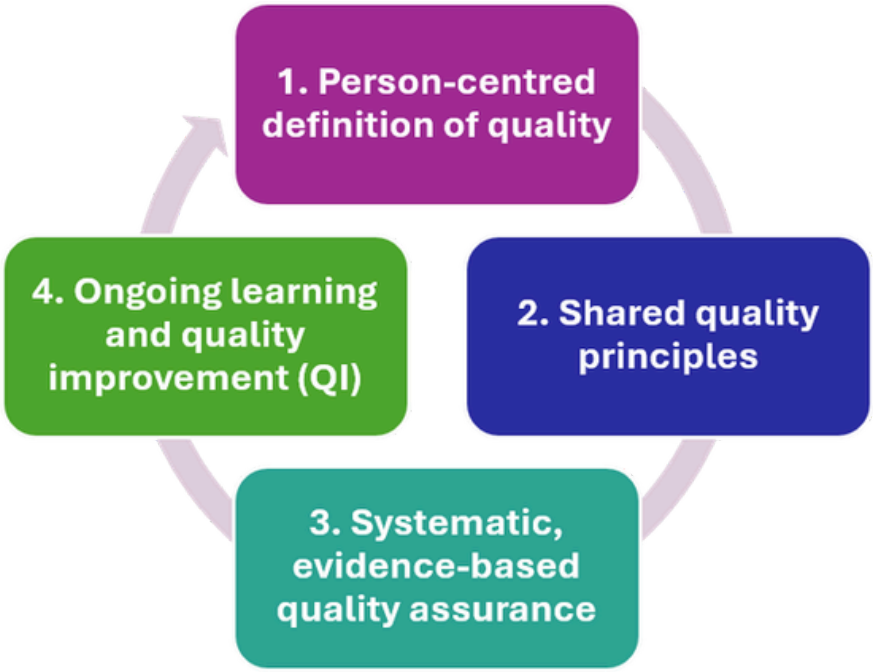
- Environments are welcoming, accessible and flexible to the needs of children, young people and families
- Parking availability
- Easy Read materials, video tours, pictures on websites etc
- Other examples might include wheelchair access, hearing loops, space, lighting, volume

9 Effective Transitions

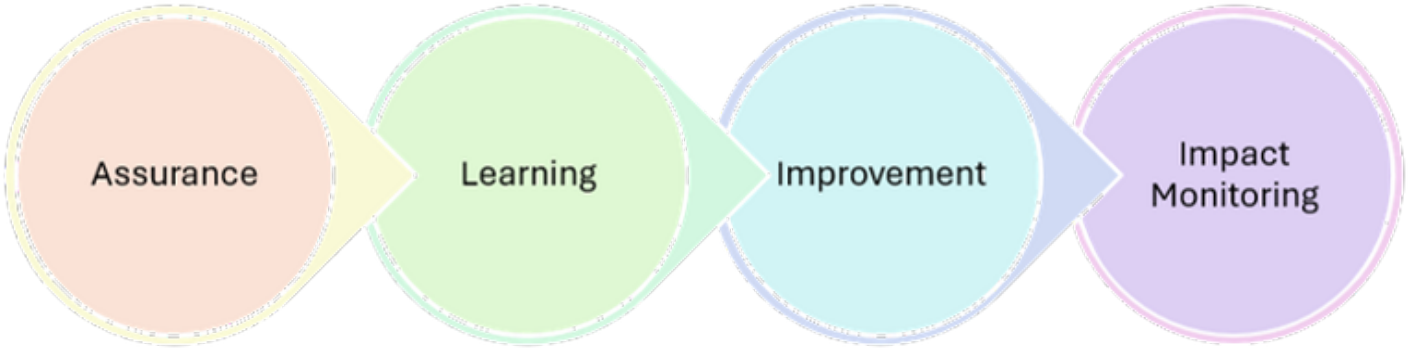
- Children, young people and families experience smooth continuation of care with effective processes for information sharing between services and settings
- Transitions are planned and phased, involving children, young people, families and multi-agency partners
- Transitions are needs-led and person-centred, ensuring the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people are heard and responded to
- Information is available to children, young people and families about what to expect regarding transitions and how to share concerns
- Children and young people are supported to develop their skills, confidence and independence needed for adult life as appropriate to their age and stage
- Policies and practices are in place to ensure no gaps in provision or support at transition

Suffolk SEND Partnership's Quality Assurance and Improvement Cycle

The Suffolk SEND Quality Framework sets out a whole-system, partnership-wide cycle for how services across education, health and care assure, improve, and learn together.



Improving the quality of SEND services in Suffolk requires a whole-system, collaborative approach that blends lived experience, professional expertise, evidence, and accountable practice. The Suffolk Local Area SEND Partnership is committed to embedding a cycle of:



Closing the Loop and Driving Improvement - The 'So What'

A core part of Suffolk's model is the expectation that **all assurance activity leads to:**



This ensures improvements are visible and measurable.

Once the initial audit has been completed, with improvement plans and actions in place, the Local Area Partnership would encourage settings and services to share their learning and improvement plans with the Suffolk SEND Quality Assurance and Performance Steering Group. This will enable partners to develop their understanding of the work taking place across the county, within different Local Area Partners, and **continue to drive the culture of quality assurance and improvement** across the county. Further guidance on this route can be found within Appendix 1.



Monitoring Impact

The final stage of the cycle focuses on:

1. Measuring whether improvements have worked
2. Understanding the effect on lived experience
3. Using this learning to inform the next cycle

There is an expectation that following on from the initial sharing of learning, services/settings would return to the Quality Assurance and Performance steering group to **share what impact the improvement actions have had** as well as any additional learning, impact for families and next steps, in order to complete the cycle of quality improvement. This shared learning will be integral to developing a culture of quality assurance and improvement across the county.

Review

This is the initial version of the Suffolk SEND Local Area Partnership Quality Framework. The Quality Assurance and Performance Steering Group has committed to reviewing the framework and quality improvement and planning tool in 12 months' time (Autumn 2027).

Moving Forward

This framework represents a shared commitment from partners across Suffolk to **continually listen, learn and improve**. By working together, placing children, young people and families at the centre of everything we do, and using quality assurance as a driver for **meaningful change**, we can strengthen the SEND system and **improve experiences and outcomes** across the county. This framework will continue to evolve as we learn from practice, feedback and collaboration, ensuring it remains relevant, responsive and focused on **what matters most**.

Appendix 1: Suffolk SEND Quality Assurance & Improvement Planning Tool Guidance

In this context we describe quality improvement as the **continual actions undertaken to improve outcomes** using systematic methods.

This tool has been **designed alongside and for use with** the Suffolk SEND Quality Framework. There are nine quality principles that have been based upon the national SEND Quality Improvement Framework, which have been adopted and further refined for Suffolk via a working group comprising of the parent carer forum, young people's engagement hub, and multi-agency representatives.

The language has been kept accessible, and this guide is designed to support you to complete the tool in a consistent way.

Each of the nine quality principles has a number of descriptors or standards. These have been informed by what children, young people, parents, carers and multi-agency professionals have told us regarding how they would like to experience settings and services across the SEND Local Area Partnership in Suffolk.

The quality principles and descriptors are aimed at a multi-agency audience across the SEND Local Area Partnership in Suffolk. For example, this tool could be used within early years, schools, further and other education settings, health teams and clinical services, social care teams, and other community provision.

The tool is **not intended to replace existing quality assurance and improvement processes** which are already working well. This tool has been developed based upon what we have heard from people in Suffolk and can be used to supplement current quality assurance and improvement processes, or in the absence of an existing model.

As the expectation is that the completed tool will feed into the Suffolk SEND quality governance, we would please ask that any narrative or supporting documentation **not contain identifiable information** regarding children, young people or families.

How do I use the tool?

- This tool has been developed to be used flexibly. This could be through a setting or service self-evaluation, a peer review, multi-agency quality visit, system discussion etc
- Reflect honestly, identify areas of good practice as well as gaps and areas for improvement. Importantly, the tool requires improvement actions to be developed with clear plans for completion and review
- To support the evidence of good practice and supporting narrative, there is space to note the location of supporting documents where this applies (e.g. links to online resources, reference to internally held evidence etc)
- Impact of current practice, including any qualitative or quantitative outcomes, is included to better demonstrate the difference that current good practice is already making
- The RAG rating does not require numerical scoring but is intended to be a judgement of current service/setting performance against the quality descriptors
- The improvement and planning columns beyond the RAG rating are where forward plans, accountability and timeframes are developed, as well as how these will be reviewed once actioned. These steps are integral to the quality assurance and improvement model

Once the initial audit has been completed, with improvement plans and actions in place, we would encourage settings and services to **share their learning and improvement plans** with the Suffolk SEND Quality Assurance and Performance (QA&P) Steering Group. This will enable partners to develop their understanding of the work taking place across the county, within different Local Area partners, and continue to **drive the culture of quality assurance and improvement** across the county. To share learning and improvement plans, and to present findings to the Suffolk SEND Quality Assurance and Performance Steering Group, please email: SENDPriorityMeetings@suffolk.gov.uk

There is an expectation that following on from the initial sharing of learning, services/settings would return to the QA&P steering group to share what impact the improvement actions have had as well as any additional learning and next steps, in order to complete the cycle of quality improvement. This shared learning will be integral to developing a culture of quality assurance and improvement across the county.



