Northumberland County Council

Job Description

Senior Quality Assurance Lead (Practice Development)

Reference: C043
Date: October 2026

Job Family:	Care/Quality Assurance and Oversight
Level:	3
Band:	10
Career Track:	Professional/Technical/Managerial

Job Purpose

Drive high-quality, consistent practice across children's social care by supporting the implementation of the practice framework and expectations handbook. Provide expert advice to practitioners, contribute to policy development, and uphold practice standards. Collaborate with colleagues and partners to promote continuous improvement through innovation, feedback, and quality assurance. Key responsibilities include coordinating audits, analysing findings, delivering action plans, supporting staff induction and training, and maintaining effective communication to ensure we are working within legislation and best practice.

Duties and Responsibilities

Quality Assurance and Service Improvement

- Work with services to develop and monitor service improvement plans, ensuring we are working to regulatory standards.
- Identify practice themes early, providing support and implementing corrective actions to maintain service quality and safety.
- Develop and implement the quality assurance framework, toolkits and improvement plans, embedding learning from quality assurance activity and leading forums to promote best practice, continuous improvement, and professional development.

Practice Development and Learning

- Embed Children's Social Care practice standards, frameworks and guidance across services, supporting staff through training, coaching, reflective supervision and practice development activity.

- Contribute to the development and review of policies, procedures and learning resources, ensuring practice reflects legislation, research, quality assurance findings and emerging best practice.

Partnerships and Co-Production

- Build and maintain effective relationships with statutory, independent, voluntary, and multi-agency partners to support collaborative working, and a coordinated approach to practice development, quality assurance and service improvement.
- Promote the voice of children, young people, and families through approaches that inform service development and improvement.

Operational Support and Leadership

- Provide operational and managerial support, offering leadership, coaching, and mentoring to staff.
- Lead and support a dispersed children's social care workforce operating across different locations and in different settings, through effective communication, coaching, reflective supervision, promoting staff wellbeing, consistency of practice, professional development and service delivery.

Strategic Planning, Reporting and Financial Oversight

- Produce reports, presentations, and business cases to support strategic decision-making, service improvement, and resource planning.
- Responsible for managing significant budgets and monitoring expenditure against these budgets as well as ensuring forecasts are updated and result in a net-nil position at the end of the financial year.

Policy, Regulation and Compliance

- Ensure services align with statutory requirements, Council strategic plans, and relevant legislation, promoting best practice and safeguarding compliance.

Performance Monitoring and Workforce Development

- Deliver key performance indicators and coordinate data to monitor progress against service targets.
- Support staff development through training, appraisal, and continuous professional development activities, to address identified practice needs.

Person Specification

Professional and Technical Requirements

Qualifications

- Social Work qualification (Degree level or equivalent) and current registration with Social Work England.
- Post Qualifying Social Work and or Practice Educator Awards.

Skills, Knowledge and Experience

- Strong understanding of statutory responsibilities, legislation, and national guidance relevant to children's social care, including an awareness of social care policy developments and their implications for practice.
- In-depth knowledge of social care theory, practice, procedures, and contemporary issues affecting children and families, including inspection regimes.
- Proven experience in senior roles within social care, including managing staff, budgets, resources, and leading services through regulatory inspections and continuous quality improvements.
- Demonstrated success in developing and implementing service plans, policies, and social care strategies that improve outcomes and secure best value.
- Strong track record of building productive relationships with service users, partners, and senior stakeholders to deliver collaborative solutions.
- Strong analytical skills with a methodical approach to problem solving, strategic planning, and decision-making in complex environments.
- Negotiation and influencing skills.
- Demonstrable success in the management of change and of securing the support of others, including senior managers, in the process.

- Experience leading change initiatives, managing performance, identifying training needs, and driving continuous improvement.
- Act as a visible role model for innovation and continuous improvement.
- Lead on identifying and implementing innovative approaches that enhance and maintain consistent, high-quality practice.
- Proven track record in quality assurance activities, improvement planning and workforce development.
- Familiarity with quality assurance processes and continuous improvement methodologies.
- Mentor and develop a skilled and resilient workforce.
- Demonstrable experience of managing and developing teams, including providing supervision and performance management, and driving continuous improvement.

Core Competency Requirements

- **Communication**: Communicates across services to influence outcomes. Adapts style across organisational contexts and manages sensitive communications.
- **Collaboration**: Facilitates collaboration across teams, services, and external partners to deliver joined-up solutions.
- **Service Delivery**: Aligns delivery with strategic priorities and maintains high performance. Improves services using innovation and effective use of resources to deliver value for money.
- **Decision-Making**: Balances risk and impact in decision-making across teams or projects.
- **Digital and Data Literacy**: Uses digital systems to manage performance and inform decisions. Applies ethical judgement and explores new data sources. Analyses complex data to improve service outcomes.
- **Adaptability**: Leads teams through change using structured approaches that support clarity and resilience. Builds team cohesion and sustains service culture during transitions.
- **Problem-Solving**: Enables collaborative problem-solving and challenges existing practices to address cross-service challenges.
- **Community and Customer Focus**: Applies community insight and customer feedback to shape responsive and inclusive services.
- **Leadership**: Aligns team capability and resources to deliver meaningful outcomes. Leads projects and services within areas of expertise and across disciplines. Provides supervision, one to one support and training.

Strengths

- **Analytical:** You seek and analyse information to inform your decisions, based on the best available evidence.
- **Disciplined:** You follow processes, operating well within set standards, rules and guidelines.
- **Efficient:** You convert resources into results in the most efficient and cost-effective way.
- **Improver:** You look for better ways of doing things and enjoy coming up with new and original ideas.
- **Preventer:** You think ahead to anticipate, identify and address risks or problems before they happen.

Desirable

- Formal qualification in project management.
- Knowledge of local government corporate management systems.