



Quality and Impact Assurance Model Guidance – September 2017

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Key summary:

- The model grades the quality of work based on the impact and outcomes for the child
- The process includes identifying learning and actions within all aspects of the case
- A grade of 'outstanding' is applied to cases where the impact and outcomes domains are assessed as good.

Model aims and objectives

The Quality and Impact Assurance Model aims to focus the assessment of quality on outcomes for children. Outstanding practice is evidenced through value added intervention, demonstrating impact and achieving best outcomes for children, alongside high standards of professional competence and casework.

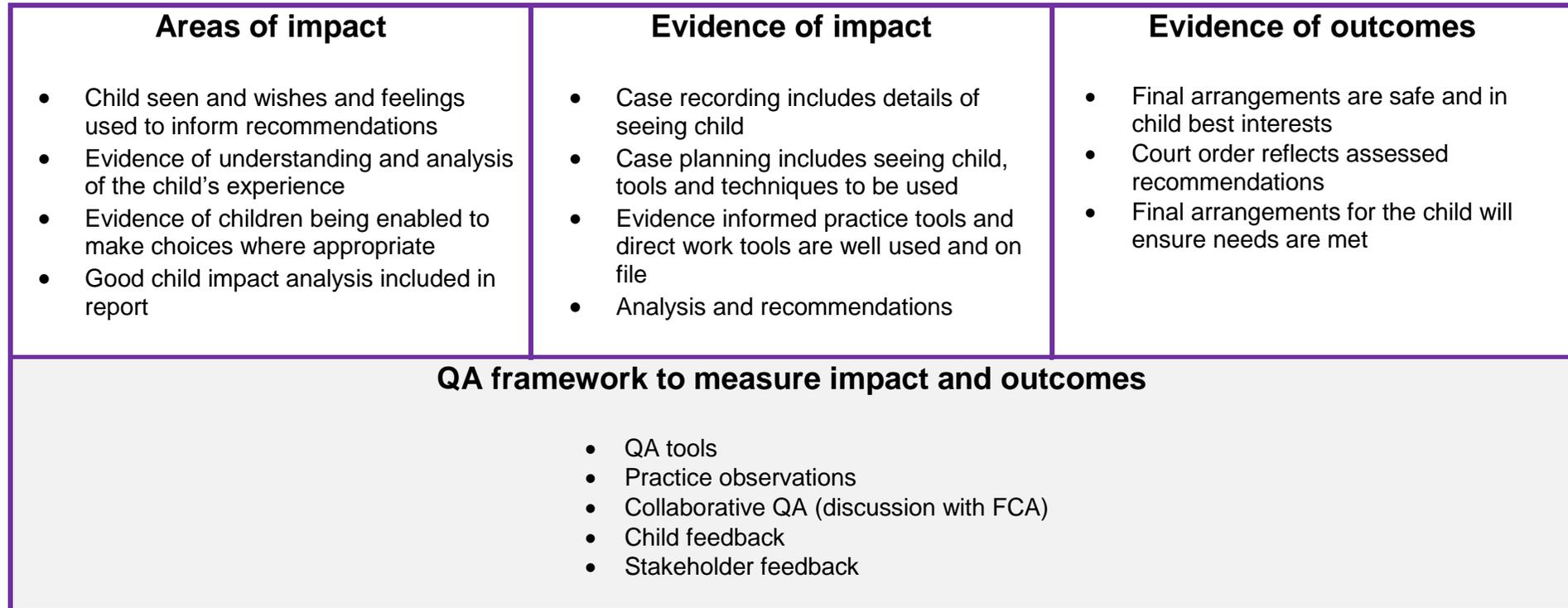
Fig. 1 (below) breaks down the key impact and outcome domains and what these domains mean in terms of the child's voice, how the child remains at the centre of our work and the measures in place to assess and monitor impact.

Fig. 2 (below) outlines the key domains that will be assessed in applying a grade to the work. It also outlines compliance indicators that will be considered for any identified learning to be logged. The two circles of impact and compliance overlap if the impact domains are assessed as good, which indicates an outstanding grade of quality.

This is a strengths based model, assessing elements of good practice and evidenced impact and value added through Cafcass involvement in the case, in parallel to identifying key areas where improvements could be made to ensure better outcomes next time if the learning identified is applied.

Thresholds of practice standards have been developed to underpin the assessment of work with guidance offered below to consider how this should be applied. Descriptors are outlined for each of the outcomes and compliance domains, contained in appendix one, along with a brief threshold document (appendix two) that underpins the assessment of casework and quality assurance. A QA tool (appendix three) has been developed to act as a summary of the key assessment indicators to identify elements of evidenced good practice and impact, and to record a log of learning actions where better outcomes and compliance could have been achieved.

Measuring the child's voice (fig. 1)



Child is heard

Quality and impact assurance model (fig.2)



Guidance: assessing quality

The quality of the casework should be measured by the 'value added' impact of the work and outcomes achieved for the child. The compliance and adherence to policy is also considered and any learning areas identified are recorded. Outstanding outcomes are achieved when the impact domains are assessed as good. Grades used in the model are **outstanding, good, met, requires improvement**. The aim is for work to reach a good/outstanding standard.

An **outstanding** grade reflects that all aspects of both the impact and compliance domains are assessed to be a good standard (fig 2. illustrates the two domain circles joining together). The impact is achieved through a combination of [key components](#) of practice that ensure the child's lived experience is understood and analysed, to achieve the best possible outcome for the child. Cases graded as outstanding may still have minor learning points identified, that do not affect the best possible outcome being achieved for the child. Examples of '[key components of practice](#)' are provided in Appendix 1.

Work graded as **good** will have evidence of good practice and impact as evidenced through case planning, direct work with children, professional decision making recorded and succinct clear reporting to court. Any learning identified in compliance domains is minimal and will be logged as learning actions and improvements evidenced within the PLR process, to enable outstanding practice to develop and best outcomes for children.

The **met** descriptor recognises work that meets our safeguarding responsibilities but where practice is identified in either the compliance and/or impact domains that needs to improve in order to achieve a grade of good. Examples of areas that may lead to a met grade are addressed below. **Requires improvement** indicates where significant improvement is required to ensure immediate arrangements for the child are safe (impact) or that there is insufficient evidence on the file that outcomes are safe (compliance).

Diversity is captured in all areas of the Impact domains. The child being seen and their voices heard remain at the centre of the work done by the FCA. Enabled and advised deals directly with intervention and impact whilst the former are around the child's experience within the family and during the court proceedings. Capturing all elements of diversity in this way aims to highlight the significance of child centred practice and the impact it has on the outcome for the child.

Recording Learning points and Actions

Any identified learning needs to be focussed and succinct in order to be useful to practitioners to take forward and apply to future practice. As a guide, consider and identify up to **three critical points** which would improve practice and achieve the best outcome. The learning actions will populate the individual FCA's learning log to ensure that learning themes are identified and to target any improvement work required. This will also enable practitioners and managers to review their learning outcomes and measure improvement over a period of time.

Child Outcomes

Safe

- Children are safe and feel safe
- The significance of harm is assessed accurately
- Child welfare is paramount throughout the life of the case
- Risk is identified, analysed and managed effectively throughout the proceedings
- Relevant research, case law and assessment tools are incorporated into practice and professional judgement to inform the recommendations for the child
- Advice to the court supports an evidenced recommendation/proposal for an outcome that is the best that can be achieved at this stage in the child's life
- Secure attachments with consistent, loving and reliable carers, at as young an age as possible

Better represented

(including advice to court, avoiding delay or drift)

- Analysis and intervention is timely and unnecessary delay is avoided
- Uncertainty for children and young people is resolved quickly
- In public law cases evidence of feedback to the child including the child's view and understanding of the outcome.
- In public law cases evidence of engagement with IRO in line with Cafcass policy
- Documents are child centred, accurate, analytical, evidence informed and use respectful language

Heard

(child's voice)

- Evidence that children have been seen and seen alone
- The voice of the child is evident throughout the case
- The likely impact for the child is considered in WTFH cases based on evidence available
- The child remains the centre of safeguarding assessments in WTFH cases

Enabled/advised to choose

(support)

- Evidence of clear advice to service users about Cafcass role and our function
- Evidence that contact with children and young people helps them to understand their family situation
- Appropriate advice, signposting for support or alternative ways of dealing with issues
- Given their age and understanding, children and young people are enabled by Cafcass to influence what happens to them

Appendix one: Threshold document for assessment

In making decisions about grading, consideration is required of the areas as detailed in the impact descriptors. These are summarised as relating to the following:

Safe – achieved a safe outcome

Better represented – including advice to court, avoiding delay or drift

Heard (child’s voice) – impact and value added of the Cafcass service in respect of decision making

Enabled and advised to choose

‘Work’ to be graded includes reports, case plans, recording and professional practice, including performance at court, direct observations and feedback.

Outstanding – evidence that both areas of impact and areas of compliance are good and that the combination of key components of practice come together to ensure the child’s lived experience is understood and analysed, to achieve the best possible outcome for the child. The following are examples of components of practice that, combined, add value that takes the impact beyond a ‘good case’, for the case to be considered outstanding:

- ✓ The work starts early (in line with the needs of the case)
- ✓ The service users, including the children and young people have been engaged in the assessment and kept informed
- ✓ Child seen and wishes and feelings used to inform recommendations (there are exceptional situations where not seeing the child is not achievable or desirable: professional decision making should be recorded in these cases)
- ✓ Clear communication with the child is evident (for example, letter directly written to the child, or later in life letter)
- ✓ The child’s experience is understood and analysed effectively e.g. Diversity Top Tips are adhered to
- ✓ The child’s voice in terms of their own words or their direct work are evident in the report the report contains a strong child impact analysis, that is credible, succinct, analytical and impactful
- ✓ Case planning results in timely, proportionate, complete and child centred reporting
- ✓ The FCA intervention adds value to the court’s decision making.
- ✓ The Evidence Informed Practice Tools are used expertly and confidently
- ✓ Risk analysis is clear and evidence based and informed by all necessary sources
- ✓ Report is succinct, legible and understandable to parents and child (dependent on age and ability)
- ✓ Professional presentation of written correspondence reports, case records and planning, including spelling and grammar
- ✓ Recommendations are evidence based and realistic
- ✓ Professional approach and engagement in face to face meetings and presentation to the court (observation of practice/feedback from service users)
- ✓ Evidence of professional decision making and appropriate management oversight is evident on the child’s file
- ✓ Evidence of children being enabled to make choices where appropriate
- ✓ Professional relationships have been collaborative and effective

<p>Outstanding Impact domains & compliance domains are both good; the combination of key components of practice come together to ensure the child's lived experience is understood and analysed, to achieve the best possible outcome for the child.</p>	<p>Good Impact domains are good (learning identified in compliance domains)</p>
<p>Met Work that meets our safeguarding responsibilities but where practice is identified in either the compliance and/or impact domains that needs to improve in order to achieve a grade of good</p>	<p>Requires improvement Significant improvement is required to ensure immediate arrangements for the child are safe (impact); or that there is insufficient evidence on the file that outcomes are safe (compliance); or elements of practice are significantly deficient</p>

Appendix two: Impact and compliance descriptors

In accordance with the threshold document, a grade of **outstanding** should be given where all areas of assessment for both impact and compliance can be evidenced as good. The tables below therefore outline the areas of assessment that should be considered for each professional standard which sit within the outcome four domains, and how the grade descriptors should be balanced.

Impact outcomes

Professional standards	Consideration for assessment	Good/met practice	Requires improvement
Child seen and wishes and feelings used to inform recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where was child seen (alone or with others) The child was enabled to gain an understanding of proceedings and possible outcomes The child was included in decisions on whether, where and how to meet Venue – appropriateness Method of engagement, such as tools used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good: all elements are present, clearly recorded and child appropriately engaged Met: recording may not be clear, or methods of intervention may not be outlined. Tools may not have been used effectively. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child not seen/engaged and no defensible decision recorded Work does not include the child and no evidence of consideration or effective use of tools to aid assessment
Evidence of understanding the child's experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversity (how is each child unique) Evidence of understanding and analysis of the child's lived experience in relation to aspects of their identity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good: All elements are present, and recordings outline a clear overview of the child, their experiences and needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The diverse needs of the child are not considered, and key aspects that would ensure that

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of cultural-competence • Additional needs • Child development • Position in family/community • Sibling and other relationships • Health and education • Any other issues relevant to the application 	<p>Evidence of how our analysis of diversity has informed our intervention.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Met: Aspects of the child are included, but their uniqueness or needs are not fully explored 	<p>the child is safe are not addressed.</p>
<p>Evidence of children being enabled to make choices where appropriate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement with FCA • The FCA understood child's capacity (for example, age and ability, diversity needs) • Empowered and supported to engage with the court, i.e letter to the judge; supporting and preparing to see judges • Engagement with solicitors • Information communicated to and from the child • Professional analysis and dialogue with carers and young people • Defensible decision making should assessment be not to enable the choice of the child or to uphold a choice • Feedback throughout in relation to service received • The individuality of the child was considered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good: All elements are present, with engagement with the child clearly recorded in line with the child's age and level of understanding. • Met: Child has not been fully engaged in the process, or defensible decisions around not engaging is not clear. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child has not been engaged with no defensible decision making to outline the basis for this. Child has been omitted from the process
<p>Good child impact analysis included in report</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report includes relevant information on the above • What has the child said ('child lifts off the page') • Weight given to the views and reasoning for supporting the choice of the child or not • Child-centred reports • Child would be able to understand the report should they wish to read it (dependant on age and ability) • Attachments – for example, letter to judge and other material from the child to evidence direct work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good: All aspects are present with the report providing a clear account of intervention and ensures the best outcome is achieved. • Met: Report addresses relevant issues but may be detailed and lack analysis. Outcome is safe though the basis of the assessment and intervention is not clear and logical. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report recommendations are not safe, or do not follow as a logical consequence of assessment. The report is adult-focused rather than child-centred, and does not address key issues for the child. Grammatical and spelling errors significantly impact on the

			quality and understanding of the report. The long-term arrangements for the child may not be sustainable.
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Added Value

Professional Standards	Consideration for assessment
Evidencing Added value and Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguarding – e.g. alerting court to unsafe contact arrangements • Enable change – e.g. FCA enabled the parents to understand the effect of dispute on their children – parents changed behaviour • Confirm/validate evidence – e.g. clear recommendation confirmed LA assessment & gave court confidence to make the order • Resolve dispute – e.g. dispute resolved by FCA intervention & consent order made • Complete proceedings - e.g. timely intervention and assessment enabled the court to conclude proceedings in child's timescale • Child voice raised & heard – e.g. the child has been made more audible/ visible in the proceedings • Other – add any type of added value as relevant • No impact – e.g. case simply repeated information from other agencies & our AV/impact was not apparent and it would have been possible to do less with no detriment to the outcome

Compliance outcomes

Professional standard	Consideration for assessment	Good practice (to enable an overall outstanding grade)	Example learning
Case recording includes details of seeing child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact log recordings, clear and up to date • Venue and people seen are recorded • Summary of discussions outlined • Tools used are saved to file • Diversity information is recorded • There is accuracy in capturing key details such as child needs, case factors etc. 	Good: All elements are present and recordings act as a clear summary of intervention	Recording may not be clear, or up to date. Tools incorrectly saved recordings are absent, out of timescale, or inaccurate. Recordings may have significant errors that impact on the meaning or understanding of information or actions
Case planning records plans in child-centred way. Includes how, when and why to see the child. Tools and techniques to be used identified.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case plan is completed within 10 days of allocation • Work is commenced early and results in timely completion • Diversity needs of the child are recorded • Methods of intervention are considered, including tools to be used • Case plans are updated/reviewed • Case plans account for engaging with service users, i.e. parents, carers, and also other professionals to ensure that engagement with the child is planned in a way that will best meet their needs, and ensure engagement with the process • The child is aware of how their views will be communicated to the court and how they will be informed of the outcomes 	Good: All elements are present and the case plan is an effective tool to outline key activity, tasks and planned intervention to achieve the best outcome for the child.	The case plan has elements of effective planning, but is not reviewed, updated, or information is not clear. Tools are referred to but no indication of implementation or use. The engagement of the child within the planning process is not outlined. There is no evidence of either a case plan, or effective case planning within the case plan/contact log.
Tools and direct work uploaded.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tools saved on ECMS • Use of evidence Informed Practice tools result in analytical reporting 	Good: All elements are present with tools effectively administered.	Tools are referenced but saved in the wrong place, or not used/summarised with a lack of clarity around the reasoning

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summaries of outcomes of tools and direct work is recorded on contact log • Where different tools are used, these are accounted for within plans and recording • Use of children's apps where appropriate 		behind this. Use of tools to assist planning and intervention, especially in engaging with the child is not addressed on the file (log of case plan). Lack of evidence based assessment.
Report is succinct, legible and understandable to child (dependant on age and ability) and adds value to court's decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report provides relevant and accurate background information relating to the application • Key safeguarding information is summarised with a clear assessment of risk relevant to the child • Engagement and direct work with the child is summarised with their wishes and feelings clearly outlined • Direct quotes from the child are used where relevant, or tools used are detailed/attached, i.e. letter to the judge • The report is child centred, and in language that would be understood by the child if they were to read it, dependent on age and level of understanding 	Good: All aspects are present with the report providing a clear account of intervention and ensures the best outcome is achieved.	Report addresses relevant issues but may be detailed and lack analysis. Outcome is safe though the basis of the assessment and intervention is not clear and logical. Report recommendations are not safe, or do not follow as a logical consequence of assessment. The report is adult focused rather than child centred, and does not address key issues for the child. Grammatical and spelling errors significantly impact on the quality and understanding of the report

Appendix three

Quality Assurance and Impact Tool (July 2017)

Area of work being reviewed		Area	
Practitioner name		Reviewer	
ECMS number		Date of review	
Law type			

Quality and Impact Assessment

Taking into account the domain descriptors and professional standards in the Quality and Impact Assurance Model Guidance, a summary of evidence of good practice achieved the following:

Domain	What did we do? How well did we do it? What difference did we make?
Safe	<input type="checkbox"/> Safe recommendations <input type="checkbox"/> Effective use of tools <input type="checkbox"/> Analysis of risk and impact assessment <input type="checkbox"/> Evidenced based analysis <input type="checkbox"/> Child centred assessment <input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate liaison with key agencies Comment:
Better represented (including advice to court, avoiding delay or drift)	<input type="checkbox"/> Clear, evidence based recommendations <input type="checkbox"/> Timely, proportionate and responsive service <input type="checkbox"/> Effective case planning <input type="checkbox"/> Child's uniqueness is well reported/represented <input type="checkbox"/> Effective engagement with stakeholders and professionals Comment:
Heard (child's voice)	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective child engagement <input type="checkbox"/> Diversity factors identified/analysed <input type="checkbox"/> Child centred <input type="checkbox"/> Communication of outcomes to the child Comment:
Enabled and advised	<input type="checkbox"/> Information gathered and analysed effectively <input type="checkbox"/> Diversity factors identified/analysed <input type="checkbox"/> Effective intervention to promote change Comment:

What more could have been evidenced to achieve the best outcome for the child?

Area for assessments	Summary of learning actions (to populate individual log)
Safeguarding	<input type="checkbox"/> Insufficient risk analysis <input type="checkbox"/> Unsafe recommendations <input type="checkbox"/> Quality of analysis limited <input type="checkbox"/> Insufficient use of tools Comment:
Child engagement and achieving best outcomes	<input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective child engagement <input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective diversity analysis <input type="checkbox"/> Insufficient use of tools <input type="checkbox"/> Quality of recommendations <input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective engagement with IROs and other agencies Comment:
Compliance with policy	<input type="checkbox"/> Case recording <input type="checkbox"/> Case planning <input type="checkbox"/> Missing evidence/incorrect information <input type="checkbox"/> Not followed (other) policy <input type="checkbox"/> Manager oversight Comment:
Service user/stakeholder feedback	<input type="checkbox"/> Identifies learning <input type="checkbox"/> Limited evidence of engaging service users in the process Comment:

Immediate safeguarding actions required
(List any immediate actions required in order to ensure the child is safeguarded)

Yes
 No

Comment:

Added value <i>(Specify the added value or impact of Cafcass in this case)</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Safeguard <input type="checkbox"/> Enable change <input type="checkbox"/> Confirm/validate evidence <input type="checkbox"/> Resolve dispute <input type="checkbox"/> Complete proceedings <input type="checkbox"/> Child voice raised and heard <input type="checkbox"/> No impact <input type="checkbox"/> Other	<p>Comment:</p>

Overall grade	<input type="checkbox"/> Outstanding <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Met <input type="checkbox"/> Requires Improvement
Rationale for grading decision	