

Leadership Capability Framework

Pathway 2: Middle Leaders



The Leadership Capability Framework is intended to outline the skills and attributes that effective Middle Leaders demonstrate that leads to improved outcomes for children and families. Drawing from [Seven Features of Practice and Seven Outcomes](#), PQS for Practice Supervisors & KSS for Practice Leaders and Frontline research and experience, this framework is intended to be used by leaders to understand their leadership direction and journey for Pathway 2.

Next to each effective attribute is an indication of the curriculum area it links to:

Leadership Essentials	Listening to Children & Families	Diversity and inclusion	High quality supervision	Making Decisions	Research & Best Practice	Influencing & Inspiring	Leading Change	Working with Partners



Maintaining Curiosity

Maintain a curious approach to understanding yourself, others and the context in which you work in order to remain aligned to your values, build effective relationships and advocate for children and families' best interests.

Sub-capability	Effective attribute
<p>Curiosity of values & moral purpose Maintain curiosity around your personal motivation, values and moral purpose to ensure actions and decisions centre around the best interests of children and families.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role models curiosity around personal motivation and moral purpose. 🧠 • Is easily able to identify values and articulate how it impacts upon decision making. 🧠 • Can identify situations where conflict arises between own values and service context. 🧠
<p>Curiosity of self Demonstrate self-reflexivity by rigorously and forensically assessing personal strengths, potential and areas for growth, understanding how language and behaviour can impact on others.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear on own strengths and development areas. 🧠 • Assesses how language and behaviour can impact on others and strives to continue developing own communication. 🗣️
<p>Curiosity of biases and prejudices Pay attention to emotional triggers, biases and prejudices, identifying ways to manage these effectively; have an awareness of aspects of your own identity, how these impact on how you are seen and interacted with to empower yourself and ensure a non-discriminatory approach.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Displays self-reflexivity; is aware of emotional triggers and interrogates own biases and prejudice in order to model and encourage anti-oppressive practice within team. 🧠
<p>Curiosity of workforce Be visible and accessible to those you work with. Extend curiosity to your team; know the business, have familiarity with them – their strengths and areas for development - as well as their work, seeking and welcoming frank feedback on your relationships.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates a relationship-based approach to working with supervisees; identifying strengths and development areas and tailoring support and challenge accordingly. 🗣️ • Asks for feedback on how supervisees experience the relationship in order to strengthen the ability to effectively work together. 🗣️
<p>Curiosity of leadership and governance Identify and maintain stable, focused leadership at all levels to foster effective, professional governance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding what effective and stable leadership looks like and is a role model to team members. 🧠
<p>Curiosity of partners Engage with the local and national context, senior partners and multi-agency audits to review wider practice and support the improvement of social care services promoting up to date knowledge and practice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands the priorities and contexts of other service areas, corporate colleagues, multi-agency partners and their home agencies and shares this with the team to promote positive, collaborative working. 🗣️ • Demonstrates confidence in challenging others to promote the best for children and young people. 🗣️
<p>Curiosity of the service Remain outward facing, engaging with direct practice with children and families, encouraging open and inquisitive curiosity of what is happening for individuals within their service, including systemic or structural factors such as experiences of discrimination and the impact of poverty. Notice whose voices are less heard from in the community and sector and question why this might be: seek to rebalance this with a drive to inclusive feedback loops and fostering representation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engages with the direct practice of the team through regular, structured observations and reflections. 🧠 • Stays curious to the experiences of children and families, ensuring familiarity by taking opportunities to speak with them directly for a more rounded understanding of their experiences of the service. 🧠

Providing Clarity



Sustain an unwavering vision of what good outcomes look like for children and families; know what is needed to achieve this both within and beyond your service, providing clarity on the role you and others play in this.

Sub-capability	Effective attribute
<p>Clarity of vision, expectations, and goals Communicate a clear vision that keeps children at the heart of decision making; articulating high expectations and ambitious goals, ensuring these are achieved by holding others accountable to perform in line with expectations. Good practice is commended, shared and modelled.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides clear guidance on what effective practice looks like and how to work with others to achieve this; holding staff and themselves accountable to these expectations. 🗣️ Cares personally and challenges directly to have candid conversations. 🗣️ Has an awareness of organisational priorities and can begin to translate these into a vision and goals for the team. 🏢
<p>Clarity of leading workforce Inspire staff and unite them around the goal to work directly with families to improve their life experience, holding high ambitions for children and their futures.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inspires staff to improve the life experiences of children and families through clear communication and by keeping children at the centre of every conversation and working towards ambitious outcomes for their future. 🗣️
<p>Clarity of anti-oppressive practice Establish a safe and inclusive environment. Inspire teams to take ownership of the responsibility for dismantling racism and other forms of discrimination within the organisation and community and promote the importance of taking clear action supported by the principles of anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory direct practice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is clear on the impact that racism and other forms of oppression and enables an awareness that underpins anti-oppressive practice. 🗣️ Creates space for meaningful ongoing dialogue around aspects of difference and how to work more inclusively. 🗣️
<p>Clarity of empowerment Empowers practitioners to see themselves as active change agents, working with families with high intensity and consistency, rooted in a strengths-based framework. In turn, practitioners will empower families to take ownership of their own solutions and create sustainable change, whilst keeping children safe and managing risk.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empowers practitioners to draw on their own expertise to work alongside families to find solutions. 🗣️ Maintains a safe context for risk management supporting families to create sustainable change using a strengths-based approach. 🗣️
<p>Clarity of family focus Work across the professional network to formulate a shared understanding of family histories and functioning informed by, and in collaboration with the family</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishes effective communication with other agencies and draws on persuasive techniques in order to influence positive outcomes for children in complex scenarios. 🗣️
<p>Clarity of relationships and influence Leverage power and professional authority responsibly to influence others at all levels and across agencies. Build relationships and engender confidence by understanding others and using excellent interpersonal skills to bring others round to your perspective. Balance this with an openness to the priorities of others where this will have best impact on outcomes for children.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has a nuanced understanding of interpersonal skills and uses these effectively to lead teams. 🗣️ Aware of different stakeholder groups and builds relationships and influence. 🗣️
<p>Clarity of strategy and implementation Dedicate time to focus on long term priorities, continually developing a vision and strategic plan that is right for the organisation. Utilise robust financial planning, engaging partners to align thresholds and maintain a secure front door, sustaining shared goals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has a strategy for the team, and communicates clear goals, working in partnership with others to achieve this. 🏢

Managing Complexity



Critically engage with the systems you inhabit, applying creative, evidence-informed approaches and harnessing these to prioritise activities which are meaningful, proactive and centred around the needs of children and families.

Sub-capability	Effective attribute
<p>Complexity of knowledge & skills Demonstrate extensive knowledge and skill in the profession of child and family social work, leading by example to promote and govern excellent practice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Combines own knowledge and experience, and that of the team, with relevant research and theory to lead decision making, applying this to work with families. 🧠
<p>Complexity of operations Recognise where developing routines to track progress, process and judicious use of resources can enable staff to do skilled direct work. Capture rationale for decisions in a comprehensive and well-expressed way. Be attentive to where unnecessary or excessive bureaucracy could hinder this.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses professional judgement and initiative to make informed decisions around where process is necessary and where staff are helped and hindered to do effective work. 🧠 Empowers staff to draw on their own experience to use their own initiative to remove obstacles to great work, where appropriate. 🛠️
<p>Complexity of decision making Critically evaluate data and evidence to analyse complex scenarios and spot patterns between potentially unrelated concepts, effectively managing risk to make informed decisions at pace. Support teams to sit in safe uncertainty throughout casework.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can critically analyse complex scenarios, working with a variety of sources. 🧠 Jointly owns outcomes on cases held by direct reports, supporting the team to sit in safe uncertainty and make decisions that manage risk. 🛠️ Ensures that thresholds for risk are applied consistently. 🧠
<p>Complexity of case discussion and supervision Engage and support the workforce to manage complex cases and their responses to these by undertaking effective group case discussion and individual supervision, enabling open and reflexive discussion around diversity and inclusion as it relates to relationships and practice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holds reflective supervision, creating a space which has many purposes, supporting staff to make case decisions and considers the use of self in this. 🛠️ Draws on a variety of tools, mirroring great practice with families. 🛠️ Enables open discussions around diversity and inclusion to strengthen anti-oppressive practice. ❤️
<p>Complexity of quality assurance Lead quality assurance activities to review the performance of the service and individuals, including facilitating practice observations to enable feedback.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continually reviews staff performance and areas for development and can build this into actions which drive growth in practice and strengthens team outcomes. 🛠️
<p>Complexity of reflective practice Champion and create the conditions for practitioners to take a whole family focus and utilise a systemic practice approach to tackle the root causes of problems and create long term solutions working alongside other professionals and families themselves.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotes and holds group case discussion, drawing on systemic principles. 🛠️ Creates the conditions for systemic practice, where staff can tackle the root causes of problems and create long term solutions, working alongside other professionals and families themselves. 🛠️
<p>Complexity of evaluation Evaluate rigorously ensuring the flow of cases reflects a child's journey.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has an awareness of their team and services place within the system, and considers this when evaluating the experiences of children. 🧠



Through learning and innovation, expand what can be achieved by influencing others – improve systems, maximise relationships and create greater capacity for change that impacts positively on the lives of children and families.

Sub-capability	Effective attribute
<p>Capacity for resilience & wellbeing Embed a culture of resilience at all system levels which acknowledges staff wellbeing in challenging circumstances, allows focus on work with children and families and enables the ability to bounce back even in the most trying situations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognises the impact on staff wellbeing social work might have and is proactive in managing the associated risks with this, embedding a culture of resilience to support team. 🧠 • Is able to recognise own need for self-care, using a range of tools to tend to own levels of stress or emotional difficulty. 🌱
<p>Capacity for resourcefulness & impact Invest and allocate time and resources where it is needed, measuring priorities by the highest expected impact, and integrating solutions appropriately until improvement is embedded.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocates resources and balances work across the team to enable best outcomes. 🧠 • Identifies gaps in resourcing and uses knowledge of the service to advocate for what the team needs to do an effective job, taking a solutions-based approach where possible. 🗣️
<p>Capacity for impacting organisational culture Proactively embrace the opportunities created by new experiences, creating a learning culture where mistakes can be learned from. This is modelled for teams, empowering them to develop practice and make real, significant professional growth, taking advantage of coaching techniques to develop staff from within. Hear and learn from others who have diverse perspectives, identities and lived experience - seek to expand your understanding and use this to inform work which culturally competent.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates a learning culture where success is celebrated and modelled, and where mistakes can be made with learning taken from new experiences. 🧠 • Acknowledges gaps in team’s skills and knowledge and address these with training and tailored support to ensure staff are fully equipped to meet the demands of their role. 🗣️
<p>Capacity for innovation Involve staff in service development, enabling the use of initiative and creativity to discover different ways of doing things. Foster innovation, piloting new ideas carefully and influencing partner agencies and external bodies to secure buy-in for innovations at a systems level. This will facilitate multi-disciplinary skill sets to work together effectively.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draws on staff to form solutions to problems and integrate these until improvement is evident. 🗣️ • Looks to innovate to enable staff to work more effectively and spend more time with families. 🗣️
<p>Capacity for leading change Lead others through change and critical periods for the organisation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is able to support team through change and uncertainty, and advocate for own area of work through this process, identifying interdependencies that might adversely affect children and families. 🗣️
<p>Capacity for positive interactions Raise the status of the social work profession, demonstrated through positive community and multi-agency interactions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celebrate successes in interactions with services, outside agencies and the community. 🗣️ • Role model the skills and values social work professionals bring, aligning others around the drivers and importance of social work. 🌱
<p>Capacity for advocacy Incorporate the experiences of children and families into service improvement and innovation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeks to incorporate feedback and experiences of children and families into practice improvement, taking a position of cultural humility to inform this. 🧠