

Leadership Capability Framework

Pathway 3: Heads of Service



The Leadership Capability Framework is intended to outline the skills and attributes that effective Heads of Service and service managers 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 3.

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"> • Demonstrates curiosity and interrogation of own values, motivations and moral purpose. 🧠 • Recognises the impact of these on decision making, promoting staff to do this across their service. 🧠
<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"> • Models self-reflexivity, and is aware of the impact of language and behaviour on others. 🧠❤️ • Evaluates areas of personal strength and development to enhance service provision for children and families. 🧠🗣️
<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"> • Models and promotes the interrogation of personal bias and prejudices through self-reflexivity in order to drive anti-oppressive practice throughout the service. ❤️
<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 curiosity in relation to their service, ensuring accessibility and visibility to staff. 🗣️🧠 • Champions a supportive and frank feedback culture throughout service to gain holistic insight into staff experience and the quality of direct practice. 🗣️
<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"> • Identifies and ensures that there is effective and stable leadership at all levels of service in which high quality supervision is delivered. 🗣️
<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"> • Leads effective multi-agency partnership working within changing political and corporate contexts; demonstrating a clear understanding of roles, responsibilities, and priorities for the benefit of children and families. 🗣️ • Exchanges learning with other local authorities to drive improvement and promote up to date knowledge and practice. 🗣️
<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"> • Maintains connection with the experiences of children and families supported by the service, through finding creative feedback mechanisms to gain insight. 🗣️ • Leads services to ensure that children and families' experiences are understood through a systemic lens and that their rights are actively promoted. 🗣️



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"> Ensures accountability through creating a clear, consistent direction for teams and setting expectations of excellent practice. 🎯 Offers challenge and support to improve performance and drive service development. 🚀 Ensures staff are clear and aligned to the long-term strategic vision of the service which holds children and families at the heart of decision making. 🏠 🧑🏫
<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"> Inspire staff through modelling leadership of services which aligns with the values and moral purpose of the services vision. 🧑🏫
<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"> Leads on promoting an awareness of anti-racism and setting a culture of equity, diversity, and inclusion within the service and with multi-agency partners. 🤝 Creates and leads an environment in which people feel able to raise issues of discrimination and are confident that these will be appropriately addressed. 🗣️
<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"> Establishes and promotes strengths-based practice across the service; empowering practitioners and teams to make safe decisions which create sustainable long terms outcomes for children and families. 🚀 🧑🏫 🧠
<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"> Promotes effective multi-agency working across the service which recognises the complexities of family history and functioning, and works collaboratively with families. 🧑🏫 🧠
<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"> Is able to influence at all levels and across agencies whilst building relationships. 🧑🏫 🧑🏫 Role modelling the balance of power and professional authority for all in the service. 🎯
<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"> Sets clear expectations of long-term priorities. 🏠 Ensures partners are aligned to thresholds to ensure a clear, consistent and secure approach to working with children and families. 🧑🏫



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"> • Demonstrates extensive knowledge and skill and encourages a culture of learning. 🧑🏫🧑🏻 • Shares current, evidence informed research to support service to deliver high quality effective work. 🧑🏻
<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"> • Leads the operational delivery of the service, ensuring that this is effectively coordinated with other areas of the wider service to reduce bureaucracy and promote efficiency. 🧑🏻🧠
<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"> • Effectively analyses data and information to inform strategic decision making for children and families at scale. 🧠 • Sets clear expectations of social work practice; establishing clarity and alignment around thresholds to ensure practitioners feel confident and supported in their decision making in relation to risk. 🧑🏫🧠
<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"> • Promotes reflective supervision to support effective management of complex cases. 🧑🏫 • Ensures bias and prejudice are interrogated through reflective supervision across the service to ensure 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"> • Leads on strategy for driving practice improvement and quality assurance across service areas, which creates positive outcomes for children and families in the long term. 📊🧑🏻
<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"> • Drives systemic practice and a whole family approach, encouraging reflective supervision which takes holistic view of complex situations in order to achieve meaningful change. 🧑🏫
<p>Complexity of evaluation Evaluate rigorously ensuring the flow of cases reflects a child's journey.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effectively balances operational and strategic priorities whilst holding the child at the centre of evaluating good practice. 🧠



Expanding Capacity

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"> Leads with care; creating the conditions to enhance staff wellbeing at scale in order to create a stable workforce who can provide effective support and consistency to children and families. 🧘 🌱
<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"> Confident in managing and allocating resources effectively whilst managing budget pressures. 🧠 Advocates for resources to invest in long term outcomes for children and families and committing to embedding solutions. 🧠 🌱
<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"> Models openness to learning and creates an environment in which mistakes can be learnt from without a blame culture. 🧘 🌱 Committed to continuously developing staff within the service through creating and encouraging opportunities for learning at all levels. 🧘 🌱
<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"> Drives innovation and creativity, identifying where new and better ways of working can be implemented, in order to maximise the time practitioners spend with children and families. 🏢 🧠 Effectively influences and persuades multi-agency partners to collaborate on new ideas in order to achieve systems level change. 🧠 🏢
<p>Capacity for leading change Lead others through change and critical periods for the organisation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrates confidence in managing organisational and practice change; leading projects effectively to overcome obstacles and support the workforce through uncertainty. 🏢
<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"> Champions social work by celebrating successes and good practice; promoting this to multi-agency partners and community leaders. 🌱 🧠 🏢
<p>Capacity for advocacy Incorporate the experiences of children and families into service improvement and innovation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrates cultural humility and ensures that effective mechanisms are in place to gather feedback from children and families across the service. 🧠 Ensures effective processes are in place for using feedback to improve service development. 🧠