Leadership Capability Framework

Pathway 4: Practice 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 4.

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
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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
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.	• Confidently articulates and regularly reflects on own values, motivations and moral purpose, promoting this among the workforce. • Interrogates and analyses the influence of these on actions, behaviours and decision making. • Can work adeptly with situations where conflict between own values and the local governance context arises.
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.	• Rigorously assesses personal strengths and areas for development. • Invites and acts on feedback, modifies behaviour as appropriate demonstrating self-reflexivity. • Understands and interrogates the impact of language and how it can shape perceptions.
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.	• Creates a climate which supports safe, inclusive practice across the organisation and with partners. • Models the interrogation of personal biases and prejudices through self-reflexivity to drive anti-oppressive practice.
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.	• Models the importance of relationship-based practice that recognises strengths and areas for development. • Sets the tone and direction for a feedback culture to strengthen relationships. • Is visible and accessible to staff and partners.
Curiosity of leadership and governance Identify and maintain stable, focused leadership at all levels to foster effective, professional governance	• Embeds and maintains focused and stable leadership at all levels to foster effective, professional governance • Effectively leads services for children and families alongside corporate and political colleagues.
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	• Navigates the complexity of professional social work accountability and local government priorities. • Astute awareness of the impact that local political, corporate and financial changes can have on services for children and families and in-depth knowledge of the unique challenges for those in the locality. • Works in close partnership with a range of agencies using and promoting the latest research to ensure a cohesive multi-agency approach to improve social care services and practice.
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.	• Connects regularly with direct practice to understand frontline work and to spot emerging opportunities and risks. • Finds creative ways to engage with staff at all levels to gain holistic insight into the service. • Ensures that children and families' experiences are heard and understood, with systemic or structural factors considered, 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
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.	• Clearly articulates and drives a vision, which centres on keeping children and families at the centre of the service. 🎙️ 👂 • Has a strategy to achieve this vision, leading a performance-focused culture to deliver high quality outcomes, holding themselves and others to account when expectations are not met and shares successes when they are. 📶 👊
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.	• Inspires staff to align with organisational aims and holds high expectations for children and families resulting in improved outcomes. 🎙️ • Utilises effective communication to set culture, implement change and speaks directly to challenging times in their service. 🎙️ 📶
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.	• Demonstrates inclusive leadership, promoting diversity and upholding a safe working environment, actively role modelling these values in all interactions with staff. 🖤 👊 • Ensures staff and children and families feel safe to raise issues and actively addresses barriers. 🖤 👂 • Upholds anti-racism and anti-oppressive practice internally and externally, ensuring compliance to diversity and inclusion policies. 🖤
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.	• Embodies strengths-based practice to empower staff to effectively manage risk and see themselves as active change agents, resulting in families identifying and owning their solutions. ♟️ 🎙️
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	• Promotes relationship-based practice, ensuring direct work with families is a collaborative endeavour leading other professionals to align their understanding of the family context. 👐 👂
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.	• Leverages position of power to effectively influence others both within the local corporate setting and external agencies. 👐 🎙️ • In-depth knowledge of local and national support offerings to children and families and promotes relationships with external organisations for positive community change. 👐 📶 • Uses excellent interpersonal skills to build strong relationships and appropriately persuades others to achieve best outcomes for children and families. 🎙️
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.	• Remains focused on and communicates long-term priorities. 📶 • Sets out clear accountability and responsibilities of partners to ensure that children and families benefit from services that meet their needs. 👐

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
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.	• Exemplifies how to deploy knowledge and skills, informed by evidence and research. 🎒 • Draws on experience and values to lead through complex situations, guiding staff to continue delivering high quality work. 🧠
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.	• Leads the operational plan for the service, seeking to translate complex policies and procedures into simple and effectively coordinated operations. 🧠🐚 • Enables others to navigate structures and processes, reducing bureaucracy in order to enable skilled direct work. 🗳️🖨️
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.	• Confident and effective in analysing data and information to inform strategic decision making for children and families at scale. 🧠 • Can identify where complexity might require a different approach to creatively solve problems. 📶 • Collaborates with service leads to ensure staff feel confident in managing risk and understanding the thresholds to make decisions. 🧠🗳️
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.	• Champions reflective supervision as a way of improving practice, managing complexity and maintaining service standards as well as giving space to reflect on the emotional impact that social work can have on staff. 🤼 • Sets a climate where staff use supervision as a tool to discuss anti-racism and anti-oppressive practice. 🧿🤼
Complexity of quality assurance Lead quality assurance activities to review the performance of the service and individuals, including facilitating practice observations to enable feedback.	• Ensures quality assurance activities accurately review the performance of the service, through quantitative and qualitative methods, to identify where improvements are needed. 🎒 • Holds service leads to account for delivering successful outcomes. 🤼🐚 • Has a measure of the quality of their service and places value on knowing if the working culture enables staff to thrive. 🤼🐚
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.	• Creates a climate for evidence-informed practice which has a whole family focus and where staff are empowered to take a holistic view of complex situations in order to achieve meaningful change 🗳️
Complexity of evaluation Evaluate rigorously ensuring the flow of cases reflects a child's journey.	• Keeps the child's journey at the forefront of all evaluation to ensure their service area enables change for children and families in a meaningful way. 👂

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
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.	• Listens to staff to understand factors that are impacting wellbeing, using this intelligence to inform a workforce strategy that inspires hope, enhances job satisfaction and improves retention. • Maintains a high level of care for self and staff and works adeptly with own levels of stress or emotional difficulty. • Draws on tools and networks to ground self and champions the same for others to sustain high expectations for working with children and families.
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.	• Empowers staff to make the most of existing knowledge and skills to increase capacity. • Prioritises the allocation of time and resources based on greatest impact for children and families. • Navigates budget pressures and advocates effectively and appropriately for further resource. • Promotes creative utilisation of resources via local community and other means to provide holistic support to children and families. • Integrates solutions appropriately until improvements are embedded long-term.
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.	• Promotes a culture of inclusive decision-making and openness to learning where mistakes can be learnt from without blame. • Has a growth mindset, using this to underpin approaches to coaching. • Celebrates successes and encourages staff at all levels to access developmental opportunities.
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.	• Empowers staff to think creatively and pilot new ideas while overseeing implementation to ensure impact is maximised. • Initiates collaboration with partner agencies centred around innovative approaches to support systems-level change.
Capacity for leading change Lead others through change and critical periods for the organisation	• Aware of contextual issues, locally and nationally, to anticipate impact on strategic goals. • Appreciates the opportunities that change brings, remaining confident and transparent when leading their workforce through critical situations and uncertainty.
Capacity for positive interactions Raise the status of the social work profession, demonstrated through positive community and multi-agency interactions.	• Plays a pivotal role in advocating for social work as a profession and for the needs of children and families at scale. • Identifies ways to influence policy and improve public perceptions of social work.
Capacity for advocacy Incorporate the experiences of children and families into service improvement and innovation.	• Listens to and advocates for children, families and the local community with cultural humility to identify and understand their priorities and translates these into effective operational delivery.