

SEND Leadership Reflection Tool



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About this tool

The strengthening of leadership capacity in the SEND sector has been identified as a priority from a number of sources – including the Ofsted/CQC inspection process where weak leadership has regularly been identified as a causal factor behind the need for Written Statements of Action.

To help address this concern, an ‘Accelerated Working Group’ (AWG) convened to consider what could be done, locally and nationally, to improve leadership capability and capacity in the SEND ‘sector’. This work was undertaken by NDTi as part of the Joint Working strand in the Delivering Better Outcomes Together contract (commissioned by the Department for Education). The group consisted of a wide range of key stakeholders working in the SEND sector, from across England.

The AWG shares the concern that the lack of leadership capacity and leadership development is a significant obstacle to delivering the national SEND reforms. It is evident that area SEND inspections are identifying a leadership deficiency, which raises the question, what would we expect good leadership to be doing? The AWG could not identify a simple leadership framework for SEND that currently describes this. It therefore drew on leadership literature generally, and its own knowledge of SEND, to develop this Leadership Reflection Tool.

How to use it

The tool describes a set of four themes where effective leadership could and should be having an identifiable impact. Within each theme, it describes the questions that people could/should ask themselves about leadership impact – with illustrations of the types of things that people might be able to see or identify as evidence that effective leadership is in place.

Our hope is that this will be used in two ways:

- **By leaders across all organisations** to reflect on their own leadership capabilities, capacities and behaviours as well as reflecting about the effectiveness of leadership across the wider 0-25 SEND 'sector' within their local area.
- **By those who are charged with reviewing progress of the SEND reforms** (from Ofsted and CQC through to elected Members in local authorities) as a framework for asking and evidencing whether effective leadership is in place and driving positive change for children, young people and families.

The tool has been designed to support critical self-reflection about one's own leadership capabilities, capacities and behaviours (reflection theme four) as well as reflecting on the effectiveness of leadership across the wider local SEND 0-25 partnership and sector (reflection themes one to three). It is envisaged therefore that leaders may find it a helpful to work through the tool both individually and with their peers.

 SEND Leadership Reflection: Theme 1 <i>Reflecting against 4 leadership functions.¹</i>		Establishing direction Aligning people Motivating and inspiring Producing positive change			
Leadership and governance	Visible evidence of effective leadership might include:				
1a) Is there a shared co-produced vision and credible strategy for SEND in the local area?	People from different organisations and stakeholder groups describe the same agenda for change and outcomes they are working towards.				
1b) Does your team, service, organisation and the wider partnership understand the vision and strategy and the role they play in making it a reality?	Co-production is everybody's business and there are local quality indicators for co-production which all adhere to – i.e. Four Principles of Co-production*.	*	*	*	*
2) How effective are the SEND governance and accountability arrangements across the partnership?	There is evidence that delivery and non-delivery of desired changes is reported and then acted on by leaders on a cross-organisational basis. There are mechanisms in place to invite challenge and critical friends. Leaders effectively manage and financial plan, including the use of high needs funding	*	*	*	*
3a) How do you know your team, service, or organisation is having a positive impact and effectively contributing to improving 0-25 SEND outcomes in the local area?	Leaders are actively seeking, and then using, evidence-based outcome information about people's lives and the impact of their services upon these lives to inform their decision making.	*			*
3b) Has the local area developed a whole system SEND outcome framework / data dashboard? E.g. a Preparing for Adulthood data dashboard?	There are local arrangements for data capture along with comparative data from local stakeholders i.e. PCF/CYPF				



SEND Leadership Reflection: Theme 2

Reflecting against 4 leadership functions.¹

Establishing direction

Aligning people

Motivating and inspiring

Producing positive change

Partnership capability and capacity	Visible evidence of effective leadership might include:	
<p>4a) How effective is SEND leadership development and talent management in your organisation?</p> <p>4b) How is the local area building family leadership and enabling children, young people, parents and carers to effectively challenge, support and influence?</p>	<p>Leaders can identify people (across all hierarchies, agencies and stakeholder groups) who are positive agents for change and can articulate a strategy for developing those people and empowering them to make a difference.</p> <p>SEND Leaders model and promote Co-production and local partners are committed to a culture of meaningful family engagement.</p>	<p>* * *</p>
<p>5) How well are you supporting and developing frontline person-centred practice?</p>	<p>The actions and language of leaders is demonstrably supporting the use of person-centred practice to inform strategic and resource decision-making.</p> <p>Terminology is inclusive and family friendly; jargon is kept to a minimum.</p>	<p>* *</p>



SEND Leadership Reflection: Theme 3

Reflecting against 4 leadership functions ¹

Establishing direction

Aligning people

Motivating and inspiring

Producing positive change

Leadership and partnership working

Visible evidence of effective leadership might include:

6) How effectively are your teams and the wider partnership working together to identify, assess and meet the needs of children and young people 0-25 with SEND.

Leaders are investing time in developing, nurturing and maintaining relationships with providers and creating the conditions for collaboration.

Leaders are placing emphasis in actions that lead to quality and timely referrals, multi-agency assessments and well-coordinated plans.

Evidence is gathered on what good looks like, and what this feels like for families.

7) Is the workforce sufficiently well equipped to work in partnership and effectively engage with children, young people and families?

There are adequate workforce development opportunities

Leaders are investing in family and young people's leadership

There are joint learning opportunities for the workforce and family leaders

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SEND Leadership Reflection: Theme 4

Reflecting against 4 leadership functions¹

Establishing direction

Aligning people

Motivating and inspiring

Producing positive change

Leadership and Personal Effectiveness

Visible evidence of effective leadership might include:

<p>8) Is there a shared co-produced vision and credible strategy for SEND in the local area?</p> <p>Does your team, service, organisation and the wider partnership understand the vision and strategy and the role they play in making it a reality?</p> <p>9a) As a leader do you actively engage with your leadership peers across the 0-25 SEND system locally?</p> <p>9b) How do you ensure yourself and your staff have enough time to actively engage in leadership activities?</p> <p>10) Do you know what's working, what's not working, and do you have robust and co-produced plans in place that are monitored to make improvements? How well are these plans having an impact?</p>	<p>People from different organisations and stakeholder groups describe the same agenda for change and outcomes they are working towards.</p> <p>Co-production is everybody's business and there are local quality indicators for co-production which all adhere to – i.e. Four Principles of Co-production².</p> <p>Leaders are clearly investing their time and energy in building relationships across different organisations and stakeholder groups.</p> <p>Development time is built into roles.</p> <p>Leaders are able to articulate success and outstanding challenges and utilise sources of local evidence (PCF, CYP's forum and wider groups), anecdotes and stories to describe what is working well, and where improvements are required. Leaders also keep abreast of research and wider issues relating to the field (e.g. legal judgments, engaging in regional SEND and PfA networks)</p>	<p>*</p> <p>*</p> <p>*</p> <p>*</p> <p>*</p>			
<p>11a) Do you champion inclusion; have high expectations of and for all children and young people (with SEND) and their families to help to raise aspirations across the local area?</p> <p>11b) How do you seek out and promote effective practice and examples of where things are working well and celebrate them?</p>	<p>Key decisions and actions can be evidenced as being likely to promote inclusion and positive life outcomes and leaders are developing relationships with those partners and stakeholders, including families, best placed to promote inclusive lives.</p>	<p>*</p>	<p>*</p>	<p>*</p>	<p>*</p>



SEND Leadership Reflection: Theme 4

Reflecting against 4 leadership functions¹

Establishing direction

Aligning people

Motivating and inspiring

Producing positive change

<p>12) Do you trust and enable your frontline staff to be innovative and empowered to act with autonomy when responding to the diverse needs of children and young people with SEND?</p>	<p>Leaders visibly delegate decision-making, and support and champion innovative and co-productive practice that delivers results.</p>	<p>*</p>	<p>*</p>
<p>13a) How well do you know your strengths and weaknesses as a leader? 13b) Do you have the right support in place to enable you to be the best and most effective and resilient leader you can be? 13c) How do ensure you stay true to yourself, your principles and values during challenging times? 13d) How well do you role model effective collaborative leadership?</p> <p>Leaders can be seen to invest in looking after themselves and their own personal development; can be seen to seek advice from outside sources and can articulate thoughtful self-reflection.</p>	<p>Leaders can be seen to invest in looking after themselves and their own personal development; can be seen to seek advice from outside sources and can articulate thoughtful self-reflection.</p> <p>Leaders are principled, lead by example and instil an open and transparent culture that leads to trusting and positive reciprocal relationships even in times of challenge.</p>	<p>*</p>	<p>*</p>

References:

¹As identified on a diagram by Buchanan and Huczynski in Organizational Behaviour: An Introductory Text 2004.

²Four Principles of Co-Production developed by Genuine Partnerships, Rotherham <https://genuinepartnerships.co.uk/>

Glossary

PCF – Parent Carer Forum

CYPF – Children and Young People’s Forum