Quality Standards

for Special Educational Needs (SEN) Support and Outreach Services

department for
children, schools and families

Contents

Overview

The standards which follow have been drawn up by the South East Regional Partnership (SCRIP/SERSEN), in association with the South West Regional Partnership, through a DCSF-funded project. We are grateful to the Partnerships for their work on the standards and to all those who have contributed to their development, including local authority heads of service and SEN advisory staff, head teachers, voluntary organisations, representatives from the independent and non-maintained special school sectors, regional facilitators, National Strategies SEN Adviser Team, Ofsted and others.

SEN support and outreach services take a variety of forms and the generic standards set out here are intended to be broadly applicable irrespective of the particular configuration employed. **The standards are not in any way mandatory, but are designed to be used as suggested markers against which services provided can be evaluated**. It is hoped the standards will:

- Illustrate good practice in the provision of SEN support and outreach services

- Help guide the development of local provision and support

- Assist local authorities and others in determining appropriate resources and arrangements

- Assist in the monitoring and evaluation process

Specifically, the standards are designed to lead to improved outcomes for children and young people (CYP)[1] with SEN and disabilities. They contribute directly to the achievement of the five Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes for CYP, namely:

- Being healthy

- Staying safe

- Enjoying and achieving

- Making a positive contribution

- Economic well-being

The Government's aim is for all CYP, whatever their background or their circumstances, to have the support they need to meet these outcomes. Effective SEN support and outreach services have an important and central part to play in achieving this aim.

When developing services, providers should also have regard to the core offer standards, set out as part of the Government's 'Aiming High for Disabled Children' programme. The core offer

---

1   Throughout these standards, we have used the abbreviation CYP. This is designed to cover all children and young people, including those in schools, early years settings and other provision.

sets out national expectations for how services are provided to disabled CYP under the five components of:

- Information

- Transparency

- Assessment

- Participation

- Feedback

Importantly, the standards can be used to contribute to an accurate area risk assessment for the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) which will be introduced by Ofsted once the current Joint Area Review programme ends. A core function of the CAA will be to determine how well an area serves particular CYP and their families. The outcomes achieved by support services should feed into this process.

A free downloadable copy of these standards is available on the DCSF SEN website at www.teachernet.gov.uk/sen

Should you wish to register any comments on these standards, in light of your experience of using them, we would be happy to hear from you. Any comments can be emailed to john. perryman@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk . If commenting on particular standards, please identify them by number.

Introduction

1. SEN support and outreach services play a crucial role in helping to improve outcomes for CYP with SEN and disabilities. This guidance sets out quality standards for all SEN support and outreach services working in early years settings, mainstream and special schools, and other provision. The standards can be applied across the full range of services provided.

2. CYP with SEN and disabilities have the same entitlement as all CYP to participate equitably in education, to be included alongside their peers, and to achieve their full potential across the full range of the ECM outcomes.

3. Local authorities may develop SEN services themselves or commission them from other statutory, private or voluntary sector providers, including independent and non-maintained special schools.

4. Using the standards should improve:

i.   the offer made by these services

ii. the outcomes for CYP with SEN and disabilities

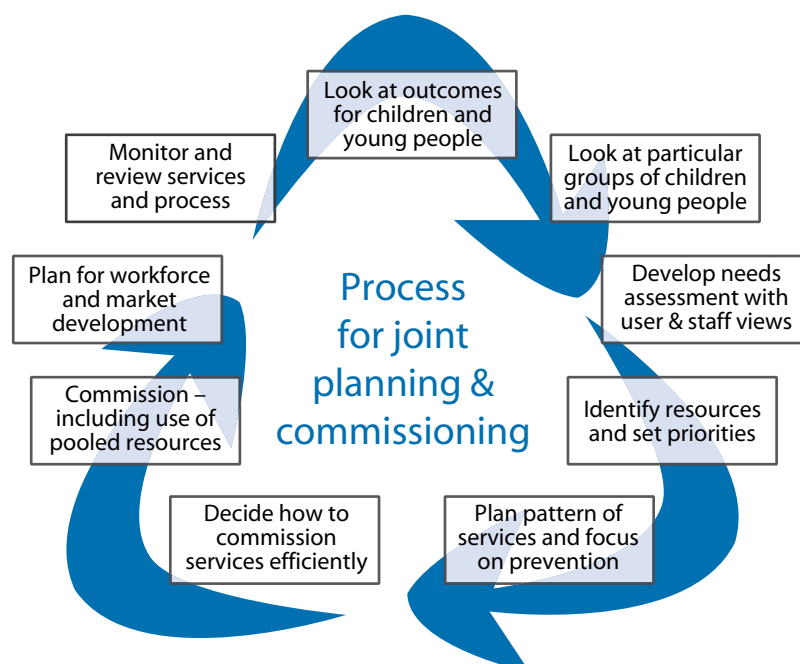iii. the efficient and effective use of resources

and should also:

iv. assist in planning, developing, and commissioning services

v.   assist in developing effective partnership working

vi. provide a framework for self-evaluation

vii. build capacity within services and settings

Planning, developing and commissioning services

5. When devising or reviewing the Children and Young People's Plan, local authorities should carry out an audit and analysis of local needs, including the needs of CYP with SEN and disabilities and their families, informed by specialist expertise and appropriate consultation.

6. The analysis should lead to integrated commissioning arrangements for all support and outreach services within the local authority, through the mechanism of the local Children's Trust or other arrangements. These arrangements should always link to local Primary Care or NHS Trusts for health provision and services and, where appropriate, to local providers within the private and voluntary sector.

7. The standards will assist local authorities, integrated teams, school clusters and federations, early years settings and other provision, in commissioning SEN support and outreach services. They could also be used to inform service level agreements and other contractual arrangements. They provide a basis on which existing services can be monitored and developed to better meet the needs of the client group. Support and outreach services also play a role in school improvement. Where services are traded, commissioning arrangements should take into account the need for impartiality, and the ability to challenge schools, early years settings, and other provision about practice, without prejudicing any contractual arrangements.

Process for joint planning & commissioning

- Look at outcomes for children and young people
- Look at particular groups of children and young people
- Develop needs assessment with user & staff views
- Identify resources and set priorities
- Plan pattern of services and focus on prevention
- Decide how to commission services efficiently
- Commission – including use of pooled resources
- Plan for workforce and market development
- Monitor and review services and process

Self-evaluation

8. Many SEN support services already have self-evaluation procedures in place, whilst outreach services will be contributing to the school self-evaluation framework. Rather than replacing these, services may choose to use the quality standards to provide a framework for comparison, which will enable gaps in the service to be identified. A comprehensive self-evaluation will cover all the areas set out in the standards, with appropriate supporting evidence being gathered on a regular basis.

9. Services will find it useful to benchmark their performance against similar services on a regional or national basis, although it is recognised that individual variation in local configuration of services may mean that direct comparisons cannot always be made.

10. Data from self-evaluation should be collected regularly, with annual data collated over a three year period, enabling trends to be identified towards targets which may be derived from benchmarking activity.

11. Many services collect data concerning activity levels and the perceptions of service users. To make use of the quality standards to promote service improvement, the information derived from collected data should be compared against these standards. Services can then rate themselves against the following criteria:

Outstanding – can consistently demonstrate high rates of progress in the majority of CYP, and provide evidence of continuous improvement in service management and delivery in most areas over a three year period.

Good – can demonstrate high rates of progress in the majority of CYP, and can provide evidence of improvement in service management and delivery in most areas.

Satisfactory – can provide consistent evidence of positive outcomes for CYP, and can show how data has been used to improve service management and delivery in some areas.

Inadequate – few examples of evidence showing positive outcomes for CYP can be provided.

Gathering evidence

12. Evidence in support of the standards may fall into one of two broad categories:

i. *Performance measures* – generally provided as numerical data which may reflect progress made by CYP in the form of targets achieved including those relating to: social, emotional, attitudinal or behavioural issues, attainment and achievement data, results of criterion and norm referenced testing, contextual value added, progress through the National Curriculum[2], or activity levels of the service.

ii. *Perception measures* – generally of the recipients of the service including CYP, their parents[3] and service staff, but also school improvement services, other partners, and local authority commissioners. This may take the form of evidence gathered from questionnaires, surveys and interviews. Anecdotal evidence may also be useful to support other evidence for illustrative purposes.

---

2   The Early Years Foundation Stage, commencing September 2008, is an integral part of the National Curriculum.
3   Here, and throughout the standards, 'parents' should be taken to include all those with parental responsibility (including corporate parents), or who have care of a child.

Identifying the contribution of the service

13. It is often difficult to separate the contribution made by a service to the progress of individual CYP from that made by the school, early years setting, or other provision, the contribution of parents, and the progress that may have been made anyway. These elements are central to any judgements about service effectiveness and include issues around value for money.

14. Whilst it is impossible to fully separate the impact of these different elements, where a support or outreach service has:

i.   intervened either directly (e.g. through regular individual 1:1 or small group contact) or indirectly (through consultation and advice to staff, or parents) and,

ii. identified and set targets and,

iii. implemented or advised on strategy to attain these targets,

evidence of progress towards these targets, which may be gathered jointly, can be attributed to the work of the service, whilst recognising that the outcome is the result of partnership working.

15. For example, a peripatetic teacher of the deaf may work directly with a young person on a regular basis on communication, or a pre-school home visitor may help parents set targets for their child and advise on home-based activities to achieve the targets. In both cases progress towards targets can be attributed to the work of the service, even though in the latter case the service may have not worked directly with the child to achieve them.

The Standards

16. These standards are presented in two sections, **outcomes** and **service management and delivery**. Whilst the effectiveness of a service will be judged by the quality of the outcomes it achieves, these will reflect how well the service is led and managed. External assessment of an SEN support or outreach service is likely to focus primarily on outcomes, but the delivery of excellence requires managers to ensure that they also focus on the means by which this can be achieved.

Section One: Outcomes

STANDARD 1 – *Progress towards outcomes is systematically recorded and monitored.*

STANDARD 2 – *The service promotes the use of interventions based on up-to-date specialist knowledge and expertise of suitably qualified professional staff.*

STANDARD 3 – *Parents should always be consulted and, where appropriate, involved in supporting the learning and development of their child as part of any intervention.*

STANDARD 4 – *Clear outcomes are agreed by the service and user, and steps taken to avoid the development of a culture of dependency.*

STANDARD 5 – *Services have a clear purpose which takes into account local authority policies, the Children and Young People's Plan, the needs of particular schools, early years settings and other provision in the area, and the range of CYP needs.*

STANDARD 6 – *The service regularly collects feedback about its interventions and uses it to improve the quality of service.*

Section Two: Service management and delivery

STANDARD 7 – *Leaders have a clear vision, develop the aims and objectives of the service and embrace diversity.*

STANDARD 8 – *Leaders motivate, support and recognise a culture of continuous improvement and excellence amongst all staff.*

STANDARD 9 – *Leaders maintain positive relationships with CYP, parents, schools, early years settings and other provision.*

STANDARD 10 – *CYP, parents, schools, early years settings, and other provision are fully involved in the development of services.*

STANDARD 11 – *There is a service development plan which is developed, reviewed and updated regularly.*

STANDARD 12 – *Key processes fully satisfy, and generate increasing value for, service users and other stakeholders.*

STANDARD 13 – *Staff resources are planned, managed and improved.*

STANDARD 14 – *Staff experience, knowledge and competencies are identified, developed, sustained, and recognised.*

STANDARD 15 – *There is collaboration with other service providers to ensure that services are complementary, simple to use, effective and joined-up to deliver a better service to the user.*

STANDARD 16 – *Finance and resources are managed effectively to support the performance and operational requirements of the service.*
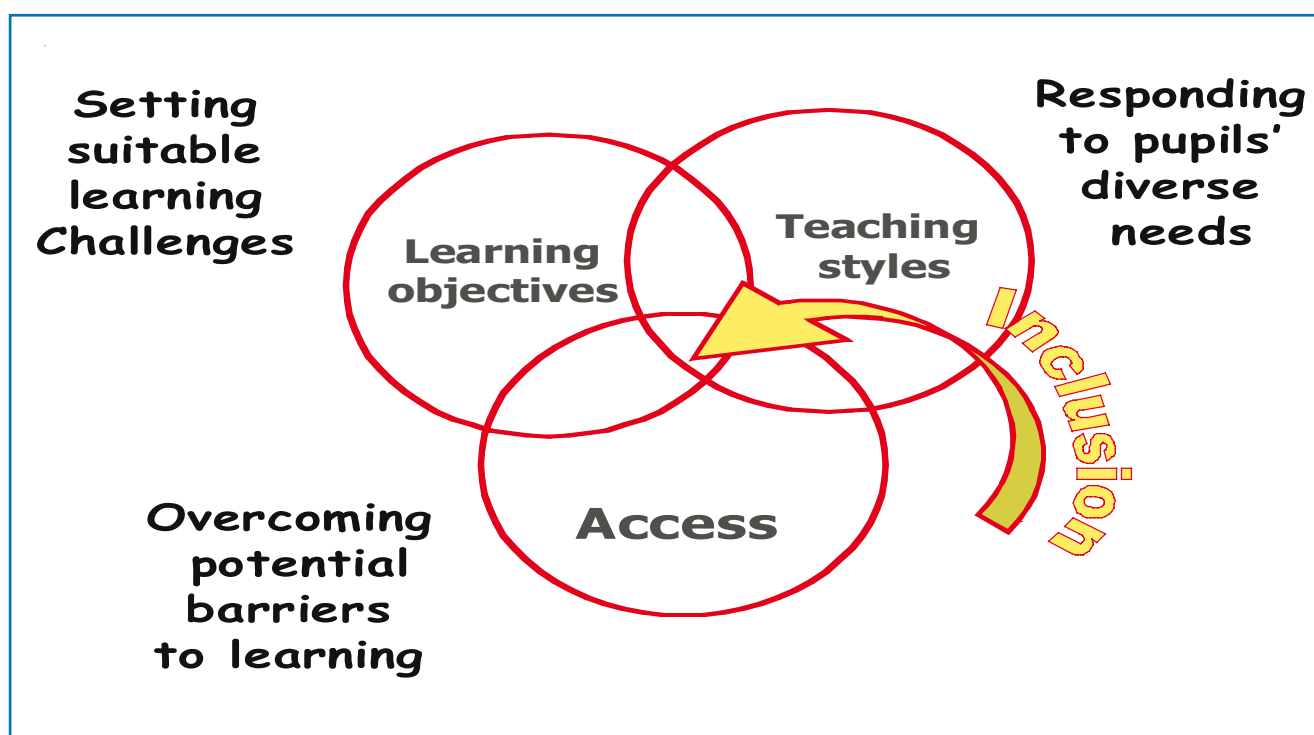
Section One: Outcomes

Introduction to the Outcomes Standards 1-6

17. The primary purpose of SEN support and outreach services is to improve outcomes for CYP with SEN and disabilities. These may be relatively broad, such as ensuring that the current placement for an individual CYP can meet his/her needs, or quite specific as in achieving functional literacy.

18. Outcomes may be derived from objectives set out in a statement of special educational needs, individual or group targets or provision plans. They should be considered, where appropriate, in the context of the ECM outcomes and the National Curriculum Inclusion Statement.

19. With regard to the ECM outcomes, services should establish, where appropriate, links with health and other services and participate in Common Assessment Framework procedures, should ensure the safety of CYP, enable them to make a positive contribution in their setting, and support transition planning.

20. In addition to outcomes for CYP this section also addresses outcomes for parents, schools, early years settings, other partners, and staff.

Setting suitable learning Challenges

Responding to pupils' diverse needs

Learning objectives

Teaching styles

Overcoming potential barriers to learning

Access

Inclusion

STANDARD 1 – *Progress towards outcomes is systematically recorded and monitored.*

Supporting evidence:

- Programmes and interventions are regularly monitored.

- Intervention strategies are modified to take account of the response of CYP, feedback is given to them and their own views are acted upon.

- Outcome data is systematically identified, collected and analysed over time to evaluate the effectiveness of intervention strategies.

- The progress of individuals or particular groups of CYP is monitored after intervention has finished, where appropriate, especially at important transition times between settings.

STANDARD 2 – *The service promotes the use of interventions based on up-to-date specialist knowledge and expertise of suitably qualified professional staff.*

Supporting evidence:

- Interventions are realistic within the setting's context and reinforce the three waves of intervention.

- Interventions and outcomes relate to one or more of the five ECM outcomes.

- Intended outcomes are agreed with CYP, their class or subject teacher and parents.

- Interventions are planned to enhance the development of self-confidence and self-esteem.

- Targets in intervention programmes are SMART.

STANDARD 3 – *Parents should always be consulted and, where appropriate, involved in supporting the learning and development of their child as part of any intervention.*

Supporting evidence:

- Interventions and intended outcomes are agreed with parents.

- Where appropriate, parents are involved in informing or supporting any intervention programme.

- Information is collected from parents/key workers/lead professionals concerning their views about the effectiveness of the service, and where appropriate, is acted upon.

- Parents are provided with information in an accessible and easy to understand manner.

STANDARD 4 – *Clear outcomes are agreed by the service and user, and steps taken to avoid the development of a culture of dependency.*

Supporting evidence:

- A contractual relationship, such as a service level agreement or partnership agreement, which clearly describes the obligations and expectations of all parties, is established with schools and other settings.

- Services are delivered in a manner designed to increase the capacity of schools, early years settings and other provision to meet user needs from within their own resources and expertise.

- Services are delivered in a manner that is consistent with target setting processes within the service.

- Planning for the use of additional adults ensures there is a balance between providing sufficient one-to-one attention to support the individual CYP's programme and ensuring that they are enabled to become more independent.

STANDARD 5 – *Services have a clear purpose which takes into account local authority policies, the Children and Young People's Plan, the needs of particular schools, early years settings and other provision in the area, and the range of CYP needs.*

Supporting evidence:

- Services are commissioned to undertake specific types of work reflecting local authority policies, the Children and Young People's Plan, and the achievement of the ECM outcomes.

- The service contributes to the achievement of local authority targets and capacity building as part of the overall range of provision.

- Written agreements are in place about the services provided to all those involved.

- There is collaboration with other services and statutory and voluntary agencies to ensure that the contribution of each is maximised for the benefit of CYP.

- Any significant proposed changes to the service comply with the SEN Improvement Test.[4]

---

4   The statutory SEN Improvement Test is explained in *Planning And Developing Special Educational Provision, DfES, 2007 at: http://www.dfes.gov.uk/ schoolorg/guidance.cfm?id=24*

STANDARD 6 – *The service regularly collects feedback about its interventions and uses it to improve the quality of service.*

Supporting evidence:

- Views about the effectiveness of the service are collected from CYP.

- Feedback is gathered regularly in relation to the contribution of the service to the progress of individual and groups of CYP, to the continuing professional development of staff, and to the fulfilment of the school, early years setting or other provision's mission and objectives.

- There are audit trails of instances where feedback from service users has been used to change practice in service delivery.

Section Two: Service management and delivery

Introduction to the SMD Standards 7-16

21. The achievement of outcomes will depend on how well the service is led and managed. Where an outreach service is provided by a school, early years setting or other provision, the standards could be addressed through existing management processes. However, there should be clarity about allocation of resources to the core business of the school, early years setting or other provision, and to the outreach service, and the impact of one upon the other.

22. Where services are traded, the principles of "full cost recovery"[5] should be followed to ensure that these criteria can be adequately met.

23. This section addresses a range of service management areas including leadership (which can be exercised at more than one level in an organisation), policy, processes, staff, partnerships and resources.

STANDARD 7 – *Leaders have a clear vision, develop the aims and objectives of the service and embrace diversity.*

Supporting evidence:

- The service has a clear purpose and values shared by all members of staff.

- The service development plan is reviewed regularly, in the context of local authorities' policies and strategy and the Children and Young People's Plan, and shared with staff.

- Managers demonstrate commitment and support for continual improvement.

- Managers articulate the values of the service and lead by example.

- The service has a process to review leadership effectiveness (e.g. 360° feedback).

---

5   "Full cost recovery" means the inclusion of all overheads and expenses in estimating the costs of service delivery.

STANDARD 8 – *Leaders motivate, support and recognise a culture of continuous improvement and excellence amongst all staff.*

Supporting evidence:

- Managers engage with and listen to staff at all levels.

- All staff members are able to give examples of supportive, effective and motivational leadership and describe how their contribution to the service is recognised by managers.

- There is evidence to show that all staff are treated equally/fairly.

- Managers empower all staff to be involved in change.

- Managers ensure appropriate resources and support are provided for change initiatives.

STANDARD 9 – *Leaders maintain positive relationships with CYP, parents, schools, early years settings, and other provision.*

Supporting evidence:

- Fully accessible information is published about what users can expect from services, their costs and how well they perform in meeting the needs of CYP.

- Managers are involved in a range of external activities that develop and support the service, including sharing effective working practice with others.

- Managers can demonstrate how their involvement has delivered improvement and growth, and/or enhanced the reputation of the service.

- Complaints procedures are clear and accessible to service users and speedy and effective action is taken in response to complaints.

- Information from complaints is used to inform service development.

STANDARD 10 – *CYP, parents, schools, early years settings, and other provision are fully involved in the development of services.*

Supporting evidence:

- The views of CYP and parents, schools, early years settings, and other provision are sought in evaluating the service and when changes are proposed.

- Ideas and suggestions from service users and stakeholders are evaluated and, where appropriate, incorporated into plans.

- Policy and strategy are based on the present and future needs and expectations of all service users and stakeholders.

- Policies are designed to give service users choice about the services provided.

- Expectations are clearly stated and include arrangements for transparent communication, access to services, response times and accountability.

STANDARD 11 – *There is a service development plan which is developed, reviewed and updated regularly.*

Supporting evidence:

- The service development plan is based on information from performance measurement, research, learning and externally related activities such as benchmarking.

- The plan is aligned to the Children and Young People's Plan and local, regional and national policies.

- Managers and all staff understand the plan and recognise their role in fulfilling its objectives.

- The plan balances the long and short-term requirements of the service, addresses the needs of stakeholders, and takes account of contingency and risk.

- There is a robust process for communicating, reviewing and updating the service development plan.

STANDARD 12 – *Key processes fully satisfy, and generate increasing value for, service users and other stakeholders.*

Supporting evidence:

- Key processes uphold principles of inclusion in its widest sense and are clearly defined and communicated.

- All staff are clear about their own responsibilities.

- Performance measures, standards and improvement targets are in place for key processes, and planning for CYP takes account of recent research and published data.

- Resource allocation to CYP is regularly reviewed to ensure equitable access to services.

- Key processes are regularly reviewed, with employers and stakeholders having an opportunity to feed back on their effectiveness.

STANDARD 13 – *Staff resources are planned, managed and improved.*

Supporting evidence:

- Managers have the knowledge and skills they need to develop their staff effectively, and ensure that appropriate training and development opportunities are provided, and are accessible to all staff.

- All staff are consistently and effectively managed from recruitment through to exit, to the mutual benefit of the individual, the service and the organisation.

- Examples to demonstrate improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness of all staff, informed by the routine collection of information on staff satisfaction, turnover, sickness and absenteeism, can be identified at all levels.

- Managers ensure that appropriate professional guidance is accessible.

- Performance appraisal of all staff is effective, the achievement of staff performance targets is monitored, and the process leads to training and development aligned to the performance requirements of the service, and the defined needs of the individual.

STANDARD 14 – *Staff experience, knowledge and competencies are identified, developed, sustained, and recognised.*

Supporting evidence:

- All staff maintain high levels of specialist knowledge/appropriate qualifications, keep up-to-date with current research and methodologies, and have the necessary personal skills for partnership working with fellow professionals and others.

- All staff understand the nature of CYP needs and the range of provision that best promotes their achievements, and are able to provide new insights to overcome barriers.

- All staff are skilled in communicating with service users and stakeholders, and can disseminate and share information effectively and appropriately, including funding arrangements for additional or special educational needs within the local authority.

- The service recognises the contribution of all staff to its success, acknowledges individual achievements, and promotes policies designed to maintain a reasonable work/life balance.

- All staff have the opportunity to take part in service development activities and projects within the organisation. Data is gathered on the impact of training and development.

STANDARD 15 – *There is collaboration with other service providers to ensure that services are complementary, simple to use, effective and joined-up to deliver a better service to the user.*
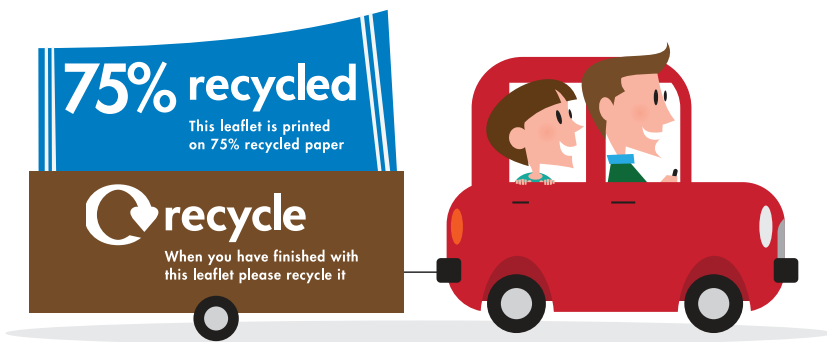
Supporting evidence:

- There are clear links between key partnerships and the overall mission, vision and goals of the service.

- Services are commissioned to undertake specific types of work within their own local context, taking account of other local services.

- Management responsibilities and lines of accountability are clear in a multi-agency context.

- There is joint working with partners to encourage innovation and continuous improvement.

- Organisational and cultural differences with partners are recognised and addressed.

STANDARD 16 – *Finance and resources are managed effectively to support the performance and operational requirements of the service.*

Supporting evidence:

- A clear medium-term funding strategy is in place, linked to the service development plan and the Children and Young People's Plan.

- Financial resources are deployed to ensure equality of access for all service users.

- The service development plan includes strategies for maintaining and sustaining the quality of any premises and specialist resources to improve accessibility and standards of education.

- There is a policy for managing technology, including the maintenance of specialist equipment and the replacement of outdated equipment where it would otherwise impact on service provision.

- Review procedures are in place to identify and evaluate new and emerging technologies which may have an impact on service delivery.