# SESLIP Lead Member Self-Assessment template 2024

# A reminder of the role of the lead member for children’s services

As the lead member for children’s services (LMCS) you hold political accountability for **all** council children’s services, including education, SEND and social care. The director of children’s services carries the professional accountability.

The LMCS is responsible for ensuring that the needs of all children and young people, including the most disadvantaged and vulnerable, and their families and carers, are addressed. In doing so, the LMCS will work closely with other local partners to improve the outcomes and well-being of children and young people. The LMCS should have regard to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and ensure that children and young people are involved in the development and delivery of local services.

You also have a responsibility to champion the voice of children and young people in all decision-making, including across all council services and in partnerships.[[1]](#footnote-1)

# Introduction to the self-assessment template

At the heart of successful children’s services is strong, passionate leadership. As the lead member you are an integral part of the children’s leadership team, alongside your DCS, the council chief executive and leader.

Building on the success of the annual DCS-led programme of self-assessment and triad peer challenge and support which shapes the [South East Sector-Led Improvement Programme (SESLIP) action plan](https://seslip.co.uk/home/regional-improvement-plan)[[2]](#footnote-2), we want to introduce a complementary lead member self-assessment and triad peer challenge and support process.

The purpose of the self-assessment and subsequent triad challenge is to:

identify strengths and areas for development - for individuals and as a peer group

support a culture of reflection and mutual learning

contribute to the regional improvement plan

build an effective support and learning network for lead members across the region

To this end we have devised a template that explores the unique role that lead members undertake, poses a series of questions, provides prompts and areas for consideration that we hope lead members will take the time to reflect upon and complete the template and then participate in the subsequent triad challenge and support sessions

This template explores five main areas of lead member responsibility:

1. Political accountability for all council children’s services
2. Ensuring the council’s vision addresses the needs of all children and families and to take a strategic view in setting local priorities and budgets
3. Providing challenge and support to the DCS and other senior team members
4. Support the creation and success of local strategic partnerships
5. Championing the voice of children and young people in all council decision-making

The plan is, during 2024, to invite lead members to consider their ambition and impact in relation to their areas of responsibility, using the template and questions as a prompt and guide at some ‘challenge’ sessions.

# The self-assessment questions

## Over-arching responsibility: Your role as lead member

**What is your ambition for children and young people served by your council?**

Can you quickly and accurately summarise what you are trying to achieve for children and young people across all service areas?

Is this your personal ambition, or is it embedded in the political manifesto and the corporate plan?

Can you capture what you are trying to achieve in as few as 75 words?

Word limit 75 words

In answering this question, you might also reflect on the following points:

* Does your council prioritise children’s services?
* Is this reflected in budget allocations?
* Do you know the key local challenges for children and young people, in particular for those in care and at risk of going into care?
* Do you know the main challenges for the children’s services workforce?
* What evidence do you use to understand your overall effectiveness as the lead member – where is this evidence reviewed?
* What support mechanisms do you have in place to support you in your role, and what can you offer others?

**Example evidence source:**

Links to webpages which summarise the strategic drivers, you should not have to create answers to these questions, your council should have already published something.

## Responsibility 1: Political accountability for all council children’s services

How effective are the mechanisms in place to support your political accountability for **all** council children’s services? What evidence do you have for this and where is this evidence reviewed?

Areas to consider might include:

* Cabinet and committee roles – how is accountability organised in your council?
* Whole council working relationships
* How well-defined is your working relationship with the chair of the relevant overview and scrutiny committees, including ongoing priorities and work programmes?
* Access to briefing information you receive (timeliness, accuracy, scope)?
* Communication channels (with other elected members, local groups and residents)?
* Accessibility of forums, such as formal council meetings and more local meetings?
* How do you measure the impact your authority’s action has on outcomes for children and young people?
* How do you help carry out your responsibilities as a corporate parent?

There is no word limit here, but please set out how it works in your council

**Example evidence sources:**

Council webpages which show the member responsibilities

Links to Cabinet/ Committee meeting minutes

Feedback from foster carers and frontline staff

Political buy-in for recent changes

Feedback from political and professional colleagues

## Responsibility 2: To set the council’s vision, to take a strategic view in setting local priorities and budgets for children’s services

**What evidence do you use to understand your effectiveness in setting local priorities & budgets in relation to children & young people? - where is this evidence reviewed?**

Questions to consider might include:

* What is your impact and influence on council’s activity?
* How (i.e. through what mechanisms) do you influence council priorities?
* How effectively are you able to ensure that local priorities & budgets are still relevant despite financial & service capacity challenges?
* Which trend & data benchmarking tools do you rely on?
* What do you use to triangulate evidence to inform your knowledge of your children’s services?

Again, no word limit …

**Example evidence sources:**

Where are key strategies published and reviewed? for example

- Corporate Parenting Strategy

- Local Offer for Care Leavers

- Send Local Offer

Oversight and Scrutiny reports

Regional Data Benchmarking reports

Budget trends

## Responsibility 3: To provide challenge and support to the DCS and other senior team members

**What evidence do you use to understand your effectiveness in providing challenge and support to the DCS and senior team members – where is this evidence reviewed?**

Questions to consider might include:

* How successful are your relationships with DCS/executive team?
* How successful are your relationships with the corporate team (CEx/Finance/DASS etc)?
* How do you provide oversight in LA engagement with statutory oversight bodies, such as

Ofsted?

* What mechanisms do you have in place to ensure you keep up to date with national and regional policy changes?
* Do you have clear delineation of public-facing responsibilities between yourself and the DCS, e.g. in the light of media coverage (positive and negative)

**Example evidence sources:**

Triangulation test: what is your DCS telling you? How does this match with what you have seen with your own eyes and ears (purposeful, chaperoned visits to gather first-hand experience), and does it match with independent reports from trusted third parties (consultants, peer reviews, inspection reports etc.).

You may have used the LGA document to support your evidence review: ‘[10 questions to ask if you’re scrutinising services for looked after children’](https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/10-questions-ask-if-youre-ca4.pdf)

How confident are you to engage in the production of the DCS’s draft Ofsted annual ‘Self-evaluation’?

Knowledge of and access to LGA library of toolkits, LGA advisors, regional networks, professional mentors, other sector support and guidance

## Responsibility 4: To facilitate and lead strategic partnerships

**What evidence do you use to understand your effectiveness in ensuring the success of local**

**strategic partnerships - where is this evidence reviewed?**

Questions to consider might include:

* Who are your key strategic partners?
* How do you measure the impact of your engagement with other strategic partners?
* What mechanisms do you have in place to support your ability to lead the development of appropriate strategic partnerships (new & existing) in a changing & sometimes challenging environment, often at considerable pace? This could include sufficient lines of engagement at different levels with different partners.
* How effective have these strategic partnerships been in relation to your authority’s response to the changes brought about by COVID-19, current financial & service sufficiency pressures & what would you do differently?

**Example evidence sources:**

Meaningful engagement with strategic partners

Safeguarding partnership arrangements

Health and well-being board

Education partnership

Evidence of improved outcomes from this engagement

## Responsibility 5: To champion the voice of all children and young people in all decision-making

**What evidence do you use to understand your effectiveness in championing and acting upon the voice of children and young people in all decision-making - do you have any specific examples?**

Questions to consider might include:

* What mechanisms do you have in place to ensure that the voice of children & young people is heard in all decision-making? And across all service areas?
* What new consultation measures are you using & have you maximised the learning from the experience of COVID-19 to make full use of different approaches & methods of engagement with children & young people?

**Example evidence sources:**

Active structures in place to enable the voice of the child and young person (e.g. youth parliament, children in care council)

Evidence that decision-making is influenced by the voice of the child and young person expressed in these forums and other places.

Purposeful, chaperoned visits to meet with children and young people

Evidence of children and young people participating in reviews

1. <https://www.local.gov.uk/your-first-ten-days-lead-member-childrens-services> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://seslip.co.uk/home/regional-improvement-plan> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)