

SESLIP Quality Assurance (QA) Management Oversight

Period: April 2026 – March 2028

1 Executive Summary

This business case sets out a two-year programme to strengthen management oversight across SESLIP authorities by embedding the QA Self-Assessment Tool within live practice rather than treating it as a one-off diagnostic. The approach is relational, implementation-centred and designed to ensure reflective oversight becomes routine. It moves the region from creating tools to working alongside QA leads and senior managers during real delivery, with site visits, reflective sessions and cross-authority learning that support adoption. Evidence is gathered continuously across the period, anchored in a baseline of pre-pilot findings from 2024 to 2026 and building towards midline and endline analysis.

The case recognises that meaningful improvement depends on trust, iteration and contextual adaptation. Authorities engage more openly when support is continuous and practice is shaped with them. A two-year window allows the tool and associated guidance to evolve in step with what is happening on the ground. The result will be a tested, usable and region-ready QA package by March 2028, supported by clear implementation notes and cross-LA learning products.

2 Strategic Rationale

2.1 Existing Evidence

Evidence gathered between 2024 and 2026 shows inconsistent oversight, fragile feedback loops and limited use of lived experience in QA processes. Variation in local systems means that a single static product cannot address the full range of conditions across SESLIP authorities. Strengthening QA therefore requires practice change supported over time. The emphasis is on relational engagement, interpretation support, cross-authority learning, and real-time troubleshooting so that the tool is not used only for compliance checks. This is a shift from diagnosing issues to building reflective management habits within existing structures. This requires:

- Relational engagement, including site visits, reflective sessions and repeated dialogue.
- Iterative adaptation, where the QA tool evolves in response to real-world use, rather than being fixed at the point of publication.
- Cross-authority learning, where local authorities can see how oversight functions in different contexts and adapt accordingly.
- Real-time troubleshooting, to prevent the tool defaulting into compliance-driven use.

These findings make it clear that strengthening QA is a practice change programme, not a diagnostic exercise.

The region's scale and diversity make a shared, long-cycle programme particularly valuable. It creates the conditions to test what works, understand why it works and adapt it for different settings. It also provides a credible basis for regional sharing at the end of the period, so authorities can adopt with confidence rather than restart the learning process locally.

2.2 Why a Two-Year Delivery Window Is Essential

- Trust cannot be built quickly, especially where QA has been experienced as inspection-driven rather than learning-driven.
- Embedding oversight routines requires iteration with live feedback loops rather than one-off guidance.
- A staged evidence arc from baseline to midline to endline enables timely course correction and credible endline findings.
- Contextual variation across 19 authorities suggests a need for adaptation, testing and retesting over time.
- Sustained implementation support prevents reversion to transactional, compliance-only use.

3 Research, Piloting and Evaluation Approach

This is a research-led implementation that further develops and refines the QA tool through implementation, embeds it in live oversight, and pilots it across selected sites. Evaluation is integrated from the outset and culminates in a summative assessment at endline. Evidence is drawn from routine QA sources and the QA Toolkit indicators: action-closure rate, oversight quality index, variance before and after moderation, and the proportion of cases with clear oversight at decision checkpoints. A light, consistent sampling frame and periodic cross-site calibration protect reliability.

3.1 Baseline learning (pre-pilot, 2024–2026)

We begin from the evidence already collected in 2024–2026 to avoid duplicating diagnostics. It also reduces the risk of disengagement by not repeating processes that provided limited value in the past. For each pilot site we will extract an opening position against the QA indicators using existing audits, moderation records, supervision evidence and monthly QA reporting. Outputs are a short site profile, a completed indicator sheet, and a site measurement plan setting sources, cadence and responsibilities. This anchors the pilots in authentic starting conditions and reduces burden on services.

3.2 Midline learning and formative evaluation (late 2026 to mid-2027)

Midline is a formative evaluation phase inside delivery. It checks feasibility and early effect while guiding adaptations.

- i. Cadence: monthly reflective sessions per site; quarterly cross-site learning sets; quarterly indicator snapshots.
- ii. What we track: movements in action-closure; changes in oversight quality; moderation variance; and documentation of decision-point oversight, alongside reported enablers and obstacles for adoption.
- iii. Quality checks: brief inter-rater calibration every two to three months using a shared sample; light checks on moderation notes.
- iv. Adaptation rules: where indicators stall or reverse, the site agrees a specific change in practice or facilitation, records it in an adaptation log, and reviews expected effects at the next learning set.

This keeps evaluation live and practical, so the tool and guidance improve during the pilots rather than only at the end.

3.3 Endline summative evaluation (January to March 2028)

Endline provides the summative evaluation. We compare before-and-after positions on the indicator set and synthesise field notes and site observations to explain how context shaped results and what it took to embed reflective oversight. Quantitative results will be presented as simple run charts and cross-site comparisons; qualitative themes will describe conditions for sustainability. Findings are interpreted alongside baseline and midline, not in isolation.

3.4 Continuous monitoring across the pilots

Between learning waves, monitoring maintains a high-resolution picture of implementation:

- i. Implementation fidelity notes on intended versus actual use and reasons for deviations.
- ii. Site visit observations that add context beyond audit returns.
- iii. Communication logs showing support intensity, capacity pressures and emerging risks.
- iv. Oversight adoption notes on how leads and managers interpret and integrate the tool.
- v. Monthly reflections to surface concerns, learning and good practice.
- vi. Calibration records from periodic auditor or moderator alignment.
- vii. Quarterly indicator sheets covering action-closure, oversight quality, moderation variance and decision-point oversight.

Together these create a narrative of how change unfolds in each authority and why. This is crucial for understanding feasibility, sustainability and local adaptation.

3.5 Evaluation and adoption criteria (EFTI)

Findings are synthesised against four criteria: Effectiveness, Feasibility, Transferability and Impact. This provides a balanced judgement on whether the tool works, whether it can be implemented, whether it travels across contexts and what difference it makes. At the end of Year 2, baseline → midline → endline evidence and continuous monitoring are synthesised into a final evaluation structured around four criteria:

1. Effectiveness – Did oversight quality improve?
Evidence: sustained improvement in action-closure; higher oversight quality; reduced unwarranted moderation variance; clearer documentation of decision-point oversight.
2. Feasibility – Can services run this within normal workload?
Evidence: reported fit with capacity; supervisor confidence; stability of the delivery cadence; minimal extra data burden beyond routine QA.
3. Transferability – Will it travel across different contexts?
Evidence: indicator gains replicated across contrasting sites; adaptation logs showing how effect was maintained while fitting local structures; acceptable cross-site calibration alignment.
4. Impact – What substantive difference is visible in oversight?
Evidence: more confident, proportionate and well-reasoned oversight at key decision points; stronger links between audit learning and supervision decisions; improved consistency across teams.

4 QA Workstream Timeline

The sequence below sets out how the tool will be finalised and piloted using the approach above, with formative evaluation during delivery and a summative evaluation at endline to support a region-ready adoption decision.

Phase	Period	Delivery Focus	Outputs and Value
Site Selection and Onboarding	March to April 2026	Identify 3 to 4 sites, agree expectations and data-sharing, build readiness	Stable foundations and early trust for safe implementation
Implementation Cycle	April 2026 to September 2027	Embed the QA tool in live oversight; provide interpretation support; run site visits and cross-site reflective learning; collect baseline to midline to endline evidence with continuous monitoring	Deep, context-aware testing and live refinement with clear learning notes

Integrated Evaluation (EFTI)	July 2027 to March 2028	Evaluate using the four criteria drawing on the full evidence stream	Robust multi-authority findings and readiness for wider adoption
Final Products and Regional Sharing	January to March 2028	Final QA toolkit, implementation guidance, cross-authority insights and a “you-said/we-did” session	A tested, region-ready QA package that is usable and transferrable

5 Continuous Refinement and Knowledge Production

Throughout delivery the programme produces short learning notes, practical examples, targeted guidance, troubleshooting advice, cross-LA insights, evidence summaries and draft tool refinements. These are updated as data emerges and will inform the final package.

6 Staffing and Infrastructure Requirements

The QA workstream draws on shared programme capacity required to deliver both workstreams in parallel. This consists of a Senior Analyst role (1.0 FTE across the programme) leading delivery, continuous monitoring and knowledge products; additional oversight at 0.1 FTE to manage risks and maintain senior relationships; and 0.05 FTE technical support to strengthen data processes, dashboards and integrity across authorities.

6.1 Resource profile and two-year funding (QA-only allocation)

The resource profile below reflects the QA allocation within a shared delivery model. Approximately half of total programme capacity is attributed to this workstream, with the remainder supporting parallel programme priorities.

Activity	Grade	2026-27 cost to KCC	2027-28 with 3% uplift	2026-27 FTE required	2026-27 cost	2027-28 FTE required	2027-28 cost	Total two-year funding
Core research and evaluation deliverables	KSI entry	£63,317	£65,217	0.45	£28,493	0.5	£32,608	£61,101
Technical support	KSI mid	£66,959	£68,968	0.025	£1,674	0.025	£1,724	£3,398
Oversight	KSK mid	£88,284	£90,933	0.05	£4,414	0.05	£4,547	£8,961
Total				0.525	£34,581	0.575	£38,879	£73,460

**Assuming mid-point of grade and in the Pension Scheme.*

7 Benefits to SESLIP and Local Authorities

The programme produces a consistent, reflective oversight approach, tools refined in practice rather than theory, and cross-LA learning structures that support sustained improvement. It strengthens decision-making confidence and reduces variation in oversight, providing a clear route to regional adoption.

8 Conclusion

A two-year QA programme, built on continuous learning and relational support, will deliver a usable and transferable oversight package for SESLIP by March 2028. With evaluation embedded throughout and the right capacity in place, the region can move from diagnosis to durable practice change.