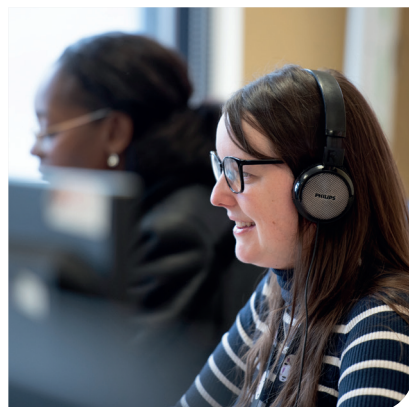




Ways of Working Framework Summary Guide

People Directorate / Prevention & Communities Directorates

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We Hear.
We Care.
We Act.
We Learn.



Foreword

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At Swindon Borough Council, we are working hard to ensure that children and young people are at the heart of everything we do. We also know that children, families and residents do not experience services in organisational charts, structures or directorates. They experience whether services feel joined up, whether people work well together and whether support is available at the right time, in the right way and around the things that matter most to them.

Over recent years, we have continued to strengthen how we work together across the Council and with partners to improve outcomes for children, families and communities across Swindon. Alongside this, we have also reflected openly and honestly on where we still need to improve, particularly around how leaders work together across services, how we share accountability and how we create a more connected system around residents.

Following changes to the Council's leadership arrangements and the Local Government Association Test of Assurance in 2025, we took the opportunity to step back and think carefully about how we strengthen collaboration, governance and collective leadership across Children's Services, Education, SEND, Prevention and Communities.

This Ways of Working Framework is the result of that work. The framework is also intended to strengthen leadership capacity across the system by creating greater clarity around roles, responsibilities and delegated authority. This enables leaders to focus their time and attention where it can add most value, supporting strategic leadership, improvement and assurance while maintaining strong accountability and oversight. This is particularly important as we continue our Children's Services improvement journey and work together to improve outcomes for children and young people across Swindon.

Importantly, this is not simply a governance document or a description of structures and reporting lines. It represents a shared commitment to working differently together. It sets out how leaders across services will work collaboratively, share responsibility for improvement, strengthen oversight and act earlier when risks or concerns emerge.

It also reflects something we feel strongly about as an organisation. Improving outcomes for children and families is not the responsibility of one service or one directorate alone. It requires collective leadership, openness, trust and a willingness to work together across traditional boundaries. It also requires leaders to have the capacity to focus on strategic priorities, improvement and assurance, while empowering others to lead through clearly delegated responsibilities.

This approach is ambitious and, in some areas, different from more traditional local authority models. We know there will be learning along the way and we do not expect to get everything perfect immediately. But we believe strongly that creating a more connected and collaborative leadership system around children, families and residents is the right thing to do for Swindon.

Ultimately, the success of this framework will not be measured by meetings, structures or governance arrangements. It will be measured by whether children, young people and families experience services working together more effectively around their needs, and whether we continue building a culture where shared accountability, collaboration and improvement are part of how we work every day.

This Summary has been developed for colleagues, Members and partners. It provides an overview of the Ways of Working Framework and the principles that sit behind it.

Why are we introducing this framework?

Over recent years, Swindon Borough Council has continued to strengthen how services work together around children, families and residents across the Borough.

The new Ways of Working Framework has been developed to strengthen how leaders work together across these areas, creating a more connected leadership system around children, families and residents. It also creates the leadership capacity, delegated authority and shared accountability needed to support the ongoing Children's Services Improvement Journey.

The framework supports:

- clearer accountability
- greater leadership capacity to support improvement and strategic leadership, including enabling the Director of Children's Services to focus leadership attention on the ongoing Children's Services Improvement Journey while maintaining statutory oversight
- stronger governance
- improved collaboration
- earlier escalation of risks and issues
- more joined-up leadership around children, families and residents
- greater focus on strategic improvement and assurance

This work follows leadership changes introduced in 2025, alongside recommendations from the Local Government Association Test of Assurance. The arrangements are also intended to create greater leadership capacity to support strategic priorities, assurance and the ongoing Children's Services improvement journey.

Although this framework is primarily focused on strengthening leadership across Children's Services, Education, SEND, Prevention and Communities, many colleagues from across the wider People Directorate and corporate services will continue to contribute to these arrangements. This is particularly important where services work together around safeguarding, prevention and the transition to adulthood, ensuring children, young people and families experience joined-up support.

Importantly, the intention is not to create additional bureaucracy or unnecessary complexity. The focus is on helping leaders and services work together more effectively, with clearer oversight, stronger relationships and more shared ownership of improvement.

What will be different?

As the framework becomes embedded you should expect to see:

This includes:

- leaders working more closely across directorates
- clearer delegated responsibilities
- greater shared ownership of priorities
- earlier escalation of issues
- stronger strategic leadership
- less silo working
- more joined-up conversations
- stronger focus on improvement and assurance

The ambition is to create a more connected system where leaders work together earlier, more consistently and with greater collective accountability around the needs of children, families and residents.

What should colleagues, partners and residents experience?

Over time, colleagues, partners and ultimately children, families and residents should increasingly experience services working together in a more joined-up, connected and consistent way.

This includes:

- more joined-up conversations and decision-making
- clearer leadership responsibilities and decision-making
- clearer accountability
- stronger collaboration across services
- more shared ownership of issues and improvement activity
- better alignment between services supporting children, families and residents

The intention is that this creates stronger relationships between services, reduces duplication and helps create a more connected experience for residents and partners.

What is staying the same?

While the framework introduces new ways of working together, a number of important things remain unchanged.

This includes:

- statutory safeguarding responsibilities
- the legal responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services
- the Council's commitment to children, families and residents
- existing day-to-day service delivery arrangements

Safeguarding and clear accountability remain central throughout.

What happens next?

The framework will continue to be embedded over time through leadership conversations, partnership working and practical examples of collaborative working across services.

This will include:

- leadership and manager conversations
- partnership working
- shared governance arrangements
- ongoing improvement activity
- continued learning and development across services

Colleagues and partners will continue to receive updates and opportunities to engage as the work develops further.



Frequently Asked Questions

Introducing new ways of working naturally raises questions.

The answers below are intended to help explain what the framework is, what it is designed to achieve and what it means in practice for colleagues and partners.

Why has the framework been introduced?

The framework has been introduced to strengthen collaboration, governance and accountability across Children's Services, Education, SEND, Prevention and Communities.

What does the framework mean for leadership responsibilities?

The framework provides greater clarity about how leaders work together, how decisions are made and how responsibilities are exercised across services. It supports effective delegation, strong oversight and shared ownership of improvement, while maintaining clear statutory accountability.

Does this apply to everyone in the People Directorate?

This framework primarily relates to Children's Services, Education, SEND, Prevention and Communities. However, colleagues from Adult Social Care and corporate services continue to play an important role where services work together around safeguarding, prevention, transition to adulthood and shared outcomes for children, young people and families.

How do delegated responsibilities work within the framework?

The framework provides greater clarity around leadership responsibilities and delegated authority across services. This helps ensure decisions are taken at the appropriate level while maintaining clear accountability, oversight and assurance arrangements.

Why are we doing this now?

The framework follows leadership changes introduced in 2025 and recommendations from the Local Government Association Test of Assurance. It provides greater clarity around how leaders work together across services and supports the Council's wider improvement journey.

How does this support the Children's Services Improvement Journey?

The framework creates clearer leadership responsibilities, stronger governance and greater leadership capacity so that the Director of Children's Services and the wider leadership team can focus on delivering sustained improvement while maintaining robust oversight and accountability.

What has changed from previous arrangements?

The framework introduces clearer delegated responsibilities, shared leadership across directorates and stronger governance arrangements. It builds on the leadership changes introduced in 2025 and recommendations from the LGA Test of Assurance.

Frequently Asked Questions

How will we know if it is working?

Success will be measured through stronger collaboration, earlier resolution of issues, improved leadership visibility and, most importantly, improved outcomes and experiences for children, young people and families.

Does this create more meetings?

No. The intention is to improve how existing leadership forums work together rather than create unnecessary governance.

Will this change how services work day to day?

Most day-to-day service delivery arrangements remain unchanged. The framework focuses primarily on how leaders work together, share oversight and support improvement across services.

How do delegated responsibilities work within the framework?

The framework provides greater clarity around leadership responsibilities and delegated authority across services. This helps ensure decisions are taken at the appropriate level while maintaining clear accountability, oversight and assurance arrangements.

Does this change statutory accountability or delegated responsibilities?

No. Statutory responsibilities remain unchanged. The Director of Children's Services retains statutory accountability while day-to-day operational leadership for Education and SEND continues through delegated authority. The framework provides greater clarity about how these responsibilities work together, allowing leaders to focus on strategic improvement while maintaining robust oversight.

What is the main aim of the framework?

To support stronger collaboration, clearer decision-making and more joined-up leadership around children, families and residents.

How will this affect partners?

Partners should experience clearer collaboration, stronger alignment and more joined-up leadership working across services.

Further information

This summary guide provides an overview of the Ways of Working Framework and the principles that sit behind it. For colleagues, Members and partners who would like to explore the detail in more depth, the full Ways of Working Framework is available separately and includes the detailed governance, accountability and leadership arrangements that support this approach.

Children and families deserve services that work together around their needs. This framework is part of how we will get there. As we continue embedding the framework, feedback, questions and reflections are welcome. Improving outcomes for children and families is a shared endeavour, and learning from experience will be an important part of the journey.

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