

How good is our team?

Evaluating the performance of a social work team

Introduction

This self evaluation tool is designed to help social services staff working in operational teams to evaluate their effectiveness in improving the quality of life and outcomes for people who use services and their carers. It is based on principles of self-evaluation and continuous improvement which underpin the Performance Improvement Framework for social work services.

The approach outlined in this document is designed to help team leaders and team members to self evaluate the performance of their team in order to :

- recognise key strengths which might be shared more widely;
- identify areas where good quality needs to be maintained;
- identify areas where improvement is needed;
- determine priorities for an annual team improvement plan; and

Who should use the tool?

The tool is for use by operational teams delivering social work services in a wide range of settings in local authorities, voluntary organisations and the private sector. Teams may be made up of social services staff or integrated with staff from other professions and services. Teams may serve a geographical area or be based in a residential establishment; they may be generic, service user specific such as children and families, community care or criminal justice or deliver a more specialist service. In every case, this self evaluation tool should provide a clear focus for teams to evaluate how the services they provide are impacting on the lives of the people to whom they are delivering services.

Teams are the essential building blocks for delivering social work services. It is expected that all social services workers delivering front line services belong to a team. They may not be located with other team members but the use of technology should still enable regular contact to be made, even if this is on a virtual basis.

How to use the tool

The self-evaluation tool uses the **six key questions** which are the basis of the quality framework for Integrated Children's Services:

- ***What key outcomes have we achieved?***
- ***What impact have we made in meeting the needs of people who use services and their carers, staff and the community?***
- ***How good is our delivery of key processes?***
- ***How good is our operational management?***
- ***How good is our strategic leadership?***
- ***What is our capacity for improvement?***

The tool supports the team in providing performance improvement information to inform progress reports on service plans and integrated plans and the future planning of services.

This tool:

- Asks you to answer each of these **six key questions** to determine how effective your service team is in making a difference to people's lives;
- Helps you to answer each of the six key questions by setting out clusters of sub-questions organised under each of these six key questions;
- Gives examples of very good practice and possible sources of evidence that you could use; and
- Encourages you to weigh up the team's strengths and areas for improvement in order to come to an overall evaluation of performance and, as a result, plan for and bring about improvements.

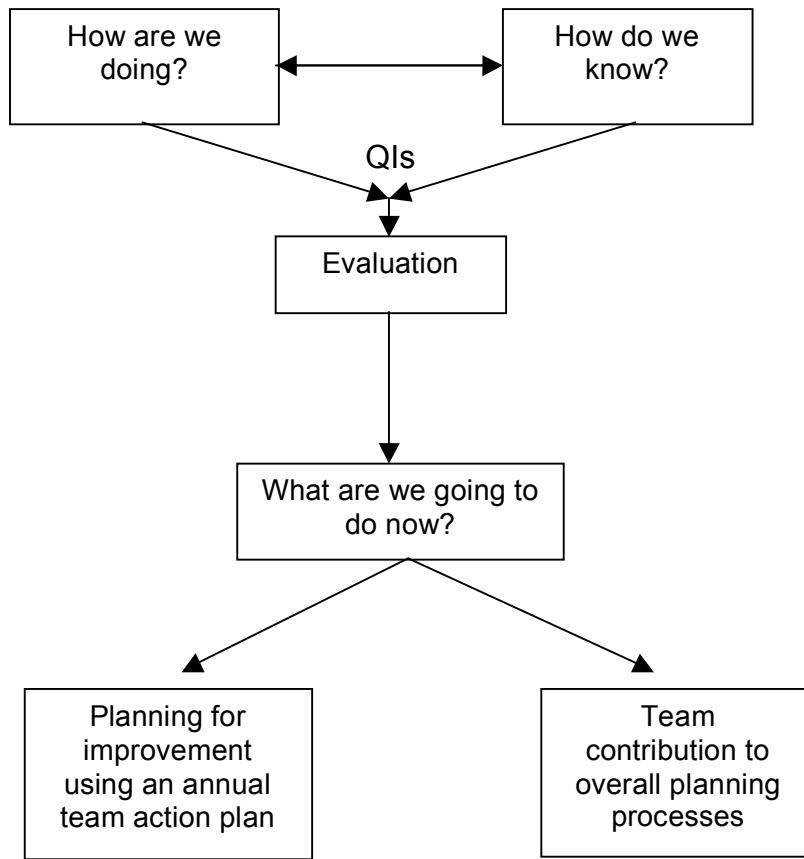
Remember that:

- Central to the whole process are the views of people who use services and their carers and you should be seeking their views on a regular basis.
- You may want to seek feedback from stakeholders with whom your team is involved on a regular basis for example, colleagues from other council services, such as education, housing, leisure and community education and from health, police, voluntary and private sector providers etc
- Discussion and professional debate leading to open and honest self-evaluation based on firm evidence is an important part of the process.
- Self-evaluation, to be fully effective, is an ongoing process used by all the team to reflect on the quality of practice and service delivery and ways to improve it. It is a well-focused means to an end not an end in itself.

How do we get started?

To manage the process, we suggest teams adopt a one year cycle of self evaluation, planning, implementation and review. Select 2 or 3 SMART (Specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timebound) priorities for improvement each year rather than attempting to tackle all of the six key areas at once. Through systematically working through these six key questions and their component parts over a 3- 5 year period, as a team you should be able to identify, celebrate and build on areas of strength and successfully address areas of underperformance. The layout of the document starts by looking at performance in relation to the team leader in terms of strategic leadership and operational management of the team. The following sections consider practice and service delivery areas for consideration by the team as a whole. It is up to you as a team, of course, to decide in practice where to start.

The self evaluation process is illustrated using a flow chart as follows:



The team should try to reach a view about the current level of provision using the six-point scale. This approach is similar to that used in the quality framework for Integrated Services to Children, the inspection of social work in authorities carried out by SWIA and the Inspection of Education Authorities to evaluate key aspects of provision. The six levels of performance are:

Level

- | | | |
|---|----------------|--------------------------------------|
| 6 | Excellent | - outstanding practice |
| 5 | very good | - major strengths |
| 4 | good | - strengths outweigh weaknesses |
| 3 | Adequate | - strengths just outweigh weaknesses |
| 2 | fair | - some important weaknesses |
| 1 | unsatisfactory | - major weaknesses |

You should note evidence of good practice and areas for improvement. These levels give a baseline against which you can measure future progress. In particular, where an area is rated as 'fair' or 'unsatisfactory', you should take action for improvement. You can use the proformas in the Appendix to help you note your sources of evidence and to create your annual team improvement plan.

How good is our strategic leadership? - This section relates to the strategic leadership of the team leader

Questions to ask	Sources of evidence	Self-evaluation	
		Strengths	Areas for improvement
1. To what extent does the team leader ensure that the vision and values, and aims and objectives set out in the service plan and integrated plans are reflected in the work of our team?	Very good practice There is an annual team improvement plan which links the team objectives to the vision and values, and aims and objectives of service plans and integrated plans. Recording of team development days and team meetings demonstrate that these plans are embedded in the work of the team.		
2. How effective is the team leader in providing our team with the context for our work in relation to new legislative requirements, policy development, strategic planning, service priorities, budgetary considerations and regulation at national, organisational and service levels ?	Systems are in place to ensure that team leaders are kept up to date with key developments at national, organisational and service levels. Minutes of team meetings and other team communication systems demonstrate that the team are kept up to date and have taken on board the implications of key developments in the external environment. The annual team improvement plan shows that account has been taken of the changing context in which the team is operating.		
3. How successfully does the team leader provide a strategic direction to our team through planning for and commitment to continuous improvement?	Team members report that they understand and follow the direction for the team set by their team leader and are committed to continuous improvement. The annual team improvement plan states the team's agreed priorities for improvement including targets that will be achieved in the next 12 months. The team minutes record quarterly reviews of the progress of the plan against interim measures. Team leaders report concerns regarding any lack of progress to their line manager and agree action to address this		

<p>4. How effective is the team leader in promoting partnership working eg. other teams, services and partner organisations?</p>	<p>Team leaders promote integrated working as evidenced in their contacts and networking with partners. The team have an eco map of their relationships with stakeholders. Named team members relate to partners and make agreed contributions to shared objectives. Partners understand and support the team's objectives and report good working relationships with their link person and the team as a whole.</p>		
<p>5. How well does the team leader represent the interests of the community/service user group/carers to whom our team deliver a service and to what extent is our team meeting their needs ?</p>	<p>The team leader bases the work of the team on a needs assessment of the community/service user group being served. Team leaders ensure that their team has an up to date directory of all resources available to them to meet identified needs. Team leaders collate data about shortfalls in services and unmet needs and this informs planning processes.</p> <p>The team leader can provide evidence of capacity building with individuals, groups and communities being served by the team and of advocacy by the team on their behalf. People who use services and their carers report positively on the performance of the team. The team leader's line manager reports on the effectiveness of the team leader and this is reflected in the team leader's annual review.</p>		

How good is our operational management?- This section relates to the management skills of the team leader

Questions to ask	Sources of evidence	Self-evaluation	
		Strengths	Areas for improvement
1. How effective is the management of systems and workload in our team ?	<p>Very good practice</p> <p>The team leader implements a monthly management monitoring schedule. This includes:</p> <p>Checking, counter signing and providing feedback to staff on a sample of case files, reports, case records and supervision files.</p> <p>Monitoring reports and care plans and reviews against specified timescales and taking action to address any delays.</p> <p>Monitoring replies to telephone and written queries against specified timescales</p> <p>Assessing and putting strategies in place to improve the data quality of the team's input to IT systems.</p> <p>Conducting and recording quality observations of practice and the performance of team members in meetings including those involving service users and carers.</p> <p>Obtaining feedback from direct contact with service users and carers. Addressing unsafe practice, mistakes made by the team and complaints against the team, analysing the learning from these and evaluating any resulting action to prevent recurrence. Noting any complaints made against the team to the social work complaints officer and their resolution.</p> <p>Checking compliance with legislative requirements, national and service standards, protocols and procedures.</p>		

	<p>Managing and monitoring throughput of work – pending lists, allocation, transfer and case closures - and workload/ caseloads of team members, numbers and types of cases etc. Tracking changes of worker and taking steps to improve continuity.</p> <p>Ensuring absence management, disciplinary and grievance procedures are being followed within timescales.</p>		
<p>2. How effective are systems and procedures for managing the performance of individual team members ?</p>	<p>Benchmarking the team's performance against other teams.</p> <p>The team leader ensures that the team's objectives are reflected in the individual objectives of team members. Team members report clarity about their individual roles and responsibilities and feedback on their performance is regularly recorded in supervision notes. Each team member has an annual review of their performance. The annual personal learning plan for each team member is implemented and team members all have a record of their accumulating skills. Poor performance and issues of conduct are addressed as soon as they arise. An external manager monitors the frequency and quality of supervision and takes any necessary action to address this.</p>		
<p>3. Do we have the characteristics of a high performing team ? To what extent does the team get open feedback on and have full discussion of performance?</p>	<p>Teams receive external coaching and have development opportunities. Teams have a team caseload approach and have effective cover arrangements in place. Teams conduct quality audits and peer reviews. Teams are rewarded for high performance in meeting the targets in their plan.</p>		

<p>4. To what extent is there a commitment to learning within our team through regular discussion of current practice and processes of service delivery, especially regarding complex cases?</p>	<p>There is evidence of adherence to the Codes of Practice. There is a record of regular practice meetings. Team members have access to the internet and a variety of other sources of material to support their learning. The team is developing evidence based practice and methods of evaluating outcomes. The team makes use of access to expert advice on complex cases. Support and challenge are features of records of supervision.</p>		
<p>5. How effective is our team at collecting, analysing and evaluating data that will help us decide whether we are delivering high quality services to people who use services and their carers which achieve desired outcomes.</p>	<p>The team know who the people/carers are on their team caseload and their needs. They have agreed the outcomes they want to achieve for them. The team evaluate these outcomes on an individual client basis using the key processes of assessment, action planning and review and aggregate the data to produce an overview of the effectiveness of their work.</p>		

How good is our delivery of key processes? (For key processes of assessment, action planning and review refer to the self evaluation tool *How good is our delivery of key processes of assessment, action planning and review*)

		Self-evaluation	
Questions to ask	Sources of evidence	Strengths	Areas for improvement
1. How accessible and responsive is our team to people who use services and carers make contact with us ?	<p>Very good practice</p> <p>All contacts with the team are logged. Complete and accurate client personal details are recorded and kept updated. Copies are held on the front of case files. Previous contacts by the client, family members and significant people in their life with social work services are checked and linked up. People who use services know where their referral is in the process and what is happening about it. Referrals are tracked to prevent unnecessary delay. Phone calls are returned promptly and appointments kept unless cancelled for a good reason which is explained to the client. Clients know who to contact when their worker is not available and have written information about this and emergency out of hours services. Professionals in the team know what decisions they can make and take responsibility for these. There is clarity about decisions that need to be taken by the team leader. Decisions are made without delay.</p>		
2. How effective is information sharing between the team, others within social work services and different partner agencies ?	<p>The team shares relevant information promptly with other staff across social work services and partner agencies and follows this up when appropriate in writing or by e-mail. Information sharing protocols are in place and any issues are reported.</p>		

<p>3. How good is our team's case recording practices ? To what extent does our team keep clear, accurate, legible and up-to-date records of contact with people using services, carers, members of the public and with other staff both within social work services and in other agencies? Are decisions about individual cases made in supervision recorded in the case file ?</p>	<p>The dates and, where appropriate, the times of contacts are recorded. Case records identify the method of contact with clients, who was present at the time, and summarise important observations, events and points of discussion. Significant incidents are recorded in more detail and any risks flagged up on the IT system. Frequency of contact including contacts to see a person at risk on their own are undertaken in adherence with the care plan. Missed appointments and phone calls and, if known, the reasons for these, are recorded. The reasoning behind important decisions affecting the client are explained and records of discussion and decision making in supervision are recorded in the case file. Records of contact with other staff in social work services and other agencies specify who the person is, what was discussed and any agreed actions. Case records are recorded contemporaneously to meet service standards and include quarterly and closure summaries. Case records are entered on IT systems and can be printed off over specified periods or by type e.g. records of when a client at risk is seen on their own, quarterly summaries etc. Emergency out of hours services have access to up to date case records and record their case records on the system. Case recording by residential staff is amalgamated with case recording by the client's worker.</p>		
<p>4. Is our team following operational procedures ?</p>	<p>There are clear operational procedures and the team members are committed to applying them. Teams review procedures and make recommendations about</p>		

	proposed changes to change control managers. The team has easy access to updated procedures.		
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What impact have we had in meeting the needs of people who use services and their carers ?

		Self-evaluation	
Questions to ask	Sources of evidence	Strengths	Areas for improvement
<p>1. What are the views of people using services delivered by our team, are they</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - treated fairly and honestly ? - satisfied with the quality of service provided and the outcomes ? - involved and engaged in decisions which affect them, their family and carers ? - supported by staff who interact professionally with them? 	<p><i>Very good practice</i></p> <p>There is evidence of partnership working with people who use services and their carers. They have written information about the team and the service they deliver which informs them what services are available, whether they are eligible and enables them to make informed choices. They have information about the complaints system and how to access their files. Administrative arrangements take account of the needs of people who use services and their carers for example, the timing, location, environment and conduct of meetings takes account of their needs. Client's views and those of their family, carers and other significant people in their life are recorded at reviews, and as part of case transfer and closure. Exit interviews are conducted by independent people, for example, children's rights officers, where a person ceases to be on an at risk register or following discharge from accommodation provided by social work services.</p>		
<p>2. How effectively does our team use national and service standards to assess the quality of the service we deliver ?</p>	<p>The team self evaluates against national and service standards and has information about year on year improvements in their performance and targets for improvement.</p>		
<p>3. How effectively does our team use the indicators in the Performance Improvement Framework to assess our performance?</p>	<p>The team self evaluates against the indicators in the Performance Improvement Framework and has identified SMART areas for improvement and set targets.</p>		

<p>4. How effectively does our team use equivalent performance improvement data from other teams to gain a wider picture of our performance?</p>	<p>The team benchmarks its performance in relation to the indicators in the Performance Improvement Framework against other comparable teams and uses this information to improve performance</p>		
<p>5. What evidence do we have that the lives of people receiving a service from our team have improved as a result of social work intervention?</p>	<p>The team can evidence aggregated data on the number of plans that were implemented and as a result met specified success criteria. This is supported by feedback from people who use services and their carers.</p>		

What impact have we had in meeting the needs of our staff?

		Self-evaluation	
Questions to ask	Sources of evidence	Strengths	Areas of weakness
<p>1. To what extent do team members feel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - empowered, challenged and supported? - very positive about the frequency, volume and quality of information they receive? - well consulted on major issues which affect their working practices? - they have good opportunities to raise concerns or constructive suggestions with senior managers and that such are considered seriously? - senior managers to be visible and accessible? - motivated, involved and satisfied? - they have good opportunities for career development? - they have good opportunities for CPD? - teamwork is effective? 	<p>Very good practice</p> <p>Team members are regularly asked their views on these issues through employee surveys. The views of team members about their team and whether team members are appropriately deployed, empowered, supported, challenged and valued are also ascertained by external team coaches as part of team development days.</p> <p>Safer recruitment and selection of staff recommendations are adhered to. All team members have up to date disclosure checks and references are checked.</p> <p>The recommendations in Improving Front Line Services - A framework for Supporting Front Line Staff are implemented.</p> <p>All staff undergo an induction period on joining the team, catering for individual learning needs, covering key policies such as the organisation's whistleblowing policy and operational procedures. As part of the induction, staff sign a letter to say that they have read, understood and will adhere to operational procedures (including IT system procedures) and good practice guidelines.</p> <p>A schedule of supervision is agreed which caters for the individual's learning and support needs. For example, newly qualified and or appointed staff receive more frequent supervision.</p> <p>Team members report that senior</p>		

	management are visible, that their experience of delivering front line services is understood and that they have professional leadership from the Chief Social Work Officer.		
2. To what extent is our team meaningfully involved in: self-evaluation? improvement and suggestion schemes? the development of the service?	<p>There is evidence of regular self evaluation of team members' individual objectives and the team objectives. The team also meets regularly to reflect on their practice and its impact on improved outcomes. The use of collaborative networks techniques within the team and across teams helps to reflect how services could be developed to improve outcomes further.</p> <p>There is clear evidence that management promote this reflection and innovation and give positive feedback.</p>		

What key outcomes have we achieved? - National and local performance data and measures

		Self-evaluation	
	Suggested evidence	Strengths	Areas of weakness
1. How well do our team's results compare with the national indicators suggested in the PIF?	<p>Very good practice</p> <p>This section deals with data and measures derived from national impact and outcome indicators in the PIF and reflected in the team plan.</p> <p>At present not all of the statistics suggested are being gathered and most service teams will not be in a position to report across all of the measures.</p>		
2. How well does our team perform against the local indicators set out in the service/improvement plan and equivalent?	<p>The evaluation of the outcomes will also focus on data and measures derived from performance against local targets and milestones included in the service/improvement plan or equivalent. These will also be reflected in the team plan.</p> <p>The team can show that they use their own and other teams data and analysis of performance to help identify and tackle improvement challenges. The views of people who use the service are an integral part of the analysis of performance.</p>		
3. To what extent is there evidence of turn-around or clear progress in specific areas of under-performance?	<p>All team members are clear about their own objectives and targets and how they contribute to the delivery of high quality outcomes to the people who use the service. The monitoring procedures used by the team allow them to identify areas of under-performance. There is also clear evidence that areas of under-performance are tackled and procedures changed to allow improvement to happen.</p>		

What is our capacity for improvement?

		Self-evaluation	
	Suggested evidence	Strengths	Areas of weakness
1. To what extent does our team's data show continuous improvement in our agreed impact measures and outcomes set out in our priorities and targets in the team action plan?	Very good practice The team collects evidence from a range of sources, especially the views of people who use the service, and can demonstrate that there is continuous improvement in the team's agreed impact measures and outcomes. Where measures are longer term, interim milestones have been set to allow improvement to be monitored.		
2. What evidence is there that our team can plan, manage, bring about and sustain continuous improvement?	The team regularly reviews the targets and milestones set in both the team improvement plan and individual objectives. Targets and interim milestones are reviewed on a quarterly basis to assure they are realistic and stretching. Equivalent information is available from other teams across the authority. Procedures are in place to reflect on possible changes to practice when targets have not been met.		

Note down the sources of evidence on which you are basing your evaluation in the boxes below.



People consulted:



Documentation and resources reviewed:



Direct observation undertaken:



Data analysed:



Fill in your record of the strengths and areas for improvement for each of the main key questions using the grids in the main body of the text.



Example of a pro forma for an annual team improvement plan

The annual team improvement plan should be short and concise e.g. no more than 4 sides of A4 paper. It should take account of impact measures and outcomes set out in the PIF and service plans or equivalent. It should allow teams to answer the questions, *How are we doing?*, *How do we know?* and *What are we going to do now?* It sets out interim milestones and team targets

Suggested headings would be:

What are the priority needs of the community/service user group/carers we serve as determined through local needs assessment and by service and integrated plans ?

What outcome(s) do we want to improve for people who use the services of our team and their carers ?

Where are we now in our performance in relation to this outcome/outcomes?

Where do we want to be in 12 month's time? What are our SMART goals and targets for improvement over the next 12 months?

How will we get there?

What resources will we need?

What quarterly interim measures will tell us we are keeping on track?

Legislation and sources of support

Children (Scotland) Act – Scottish Executive (1995)

Social Justice.... A Scotland where everyone matters (Scottish Executive, 1999)

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library2/doc07/sjmd-09.htm>

For Scotland's Children - Scottish Executive (2001)

It's everyone's job to make sure I'm alright - Scottish Executive (2002)

Getting our priorities right - Scottish Executive (2003)

The additional support for learning (Scotland) Act - Scottish Executive (2004)

Better communities in Scotland; Closing the opportunities gap - Scottish Executive (2002)

National Standards for Youth Justice Services - Scottish Executive (2002)

Special Educational Needs and Disability Act – Scottish Executive (2001)

Guidance for Integrated Children's Services Plans 2005-08, (Scottish Executive 2004).

Moving to mainstream: the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools Main report. Audit Scotland and HMIE, Auditor General/Accounts Commission 2003, website www.audit-scotland.gov.uk

Learning with Care: The education of children looked after away from home. (HM Inspectors of Schools & the Social work Services Inspectorate, March 2001)

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library3/education/lacr.pdf>

Learning with Care: Training materials for carers, social workers and teachers concerning the education of looked after children and young people. (University of Strathclyde, May 2003) These materials have been developed and produced by a partnership between the British Association for Adoption and Fostering; Save the Children; the Scottish Institute for Residential child Care; the University of Strathclyde, Professional Development Unit, Department of Educational Support and Guidance and the Quality in Education Centre; and Who Cares?(Scotland).

<http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/5679text.pdf>

National care standards: care homes for children and young people

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library3/health/ncschc-03.asp>

National care standards: foster care and family placement services

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/social/ncsfc.pdf>

HMIE, How good is our school?, revised edition, HMIE, 2002

HMIE, How good is our school?, Planning for Improvement, HMIE, 2003

HMIE, How good is our school? Inclusion and Equality: Part 1 Evaluating education and care placements for looked after children and young people, HMIE, 2003

Report on the First Round of Accessibility Strategies, Disability Rights Commission/HMIE, Scottish Executive 2003