Education Scotland
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A FRAMEWORK FOR EVALUATING THE QUALITY OF SERVICES AND ORGANISATIONS – THE OVERARCHING FRAMEWORK

Updated 13 November 2012

Transforming lives through learning

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A FRAMEWORK FOR EVALUATING THE QUALITY OF SERVICES AND ORGANISATIONS (OVERARCHING FRAMEWORK)

Guidance notes

Background

The *Framework for Evaluating the Quality of Services and Organisations* (known as the *Overarching Framework*) was initially launched by HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) in March 2006. This reflected the emergence of models of integrated evaluation of services across the public sector, and a sense that an agreed set of key quality elements would provide a common structure which would enhance these collaborative approaches. HMIE decided to adapt the business excellence framework used by the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) because of its international reputation for defining quality in organisations and its principles of self-evaluation based on cause and effect. The resulting framework adhered broadly to EFQM principles, though key elements were revised and headings adjusted to prioritise impact and outcomes, supported by processes and drivers.

Following the Crerar Review of 2007, there is a much clearer expectation placed on all public services to take primary responsibility for quality assurance and quality enhancement, and, where appropriate, to do this in partnership with other organisations. Other recent Scottish Government initiatives, for example, in relation to post-16 reform, emphasise the importance of quality processes which support collaboration between education providers, particularly when learners progress from one to another.

Since 2006, the framework's structure has been adapted, mainly by HMIE, for a number of public services, with a useful degree of consistency across all of them. From 2006 on, HMIE adapted the *Overarching Framework* to update existing frameworks and ensure best fit for education. This resulted, for example, in Quality *of Management in Education 2, How Good is Our School? 3*, *Child at the Centre 2* and *How Good is Our Community Learning and Development? 2*, *the external Review Quality Frameworks for public and private colleges*. Careful consideration was given to the balance in these frameworks between quality indicators (QIs) specific to education, and those which aligned more with the 'business excellence' areas of the *Overarching Framework*. Other organisations and public services have also based, or are planning to base their quality frameworks on the structure of the *Overarching Framework* but adapted it so that it fits with their corporate aims. These include local authorities, public services who now work together under the auspices of the Care Inspectorate and a small number of charitable organisations.

In July 2011 Education Scotland was established incorporating the functions of HMIE. Recently, Education Scotland has made some minor changes to this *Overarching Framework*, which reflect developments in the public sector. These changes also encompass the findings of research carried out in 2010 by a team within Education Scotland, in relation to the revision of education quality frameworks.

As part of this review the *Overarching Framework* was re-examined for fitness of purpose. It quickly became clear that major changes to this framework were not required. On balance, its structure and layout continue to provide an appropriate range of QIs, organised under six relevant questions. However, it has also become clear that rewording and re-alignment of certain QIs within the *Overarching Framework* is required to reflect changing priorities in public services. This applies particularly to those QIs focused on management processes. Although these are helpful in analysing the efficacy of an organisation, they are less useful for evaluating impact or maintaining a forward-looking focus on improvement.

The revised version of the *Overarching Framework*, along with summary details of the changes, can be seen in appendix 1. The original version is provided in appendix 2 for comparison. Other organisations or public services who currently base their quality frameworks on the *Overarching Framework* may wish to incorporate these changes into any future revisions.

Structure

The *Overarching Framework* is generic. It does not assume a particular organisational structure, type or size. It can be used in its entirety, or selected and adapted so that key QIs and sub-elements reflect the purpose of individual organisations, and meet the specific needs of their stakeholders. Adapted QIs can also be used selectively for external scrutiny or validation. The framework or its adaptations can also be used in conjunction with a number of other quality models and awards, for example, the Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF), Investors in People, Customer Service Excellence Award and ISO 9001 (British Assessment Bureau). It can be used by individual services, but will have particular value where provision across partnerships is being evaluated.

The *Overarching Framework* is organised under six high-level themes which enable systematic evaluation of the quality of services across ten inter-related key areas. Strengths or weaknesses in one key area may originate in or effect the quality of provision, practice or outcome in other areas.

The six high-level themes

The six high-level themes focus first on the demonstrable outcomes and impact of the organisation or service, and then look at the factors which contribute to these.

 What key outcomes have we achieved?
Key Area 1. Key performance outcomes

 How well do we meet the needs of our stakeholders?
Key Area 2. Impact on service users
Key Area 3. Impact on staff
Key Area 4. Impact on the community

 How good is our delivery of key processes?
Key Area 5. Delivery of key processes

 How good is our operational management?
Key Area 6. Operational leadership
Key Area 7. Staffing
Key Area 8. Partnership and resources

 How good is our strategic leadership?
Key Area 9. Leadership

 What is our capacity for improvement?
Key Area 10. Capacity for improvement

The commitment, inputs and work of the organisation or service outlined in Key Areas 5-9 contribute to the outcomes identified in Key Areas 1-4.

Key Areas 1-9 contain indicators and measures, each with themes which focus on specific aspects of the area being evaluated.

Key Area 10 outlines the aspects to be taken into account when judging the degree of confidence that the service being evaluated has the capacity to continue to improve.

Using the framework

The *Overarching Framework* provides a systematic structure for ***self-evaluation or self-assessment***. By looking first at outcomes and impact (Key Areas 1- 4), evaluators can identify key issues for further exploration, observation and analysis using the tools provided within Key Areas 5-9. In other words, the framework helps them to diagnose the drivers of the strengths and causes of the weaknesses demonstrated. Finally, those using the framework are encouraged to arrive at an evaluation of the overall capacity for improvement of the service or organisation, using the guidance in Key Area 10.

The *Overarching Framework* remains firmly based on the principle that the most effective way of improving standards of service is to use a combination of rigorous evidence-based self-evaluation alongside independent external inspection. QIs drawn or adapted from those in the *Overarching Framework* would, in most public sectors, form the core of the set of QIs used for external scrutiny. Beyond this, scrutiny activities might focus on specific key areas and indicators selected from the rest of the framework. The selection would depend on decisions taken if scoping activities highlighted specific areas which required further exploration. Scoping might consider, for example, the results of self-evaluation by the service being considered, themes suggested by the service itself, and evaluations and evidence from other recent inspections, reviews or audits, including analysis of stakeholders' views. In this way, quality frameworks developed for different services or organisations can be used as part of a proportionate, intelligence-led approach to evaluation, which builds on the outcomes of self-evaluation.

The framework has been designed to be used at more than one level within the structure of an organisation or service. For example, it can be used at the level of:

- strategic leadership across a broad/range of services or establishments;
- operational management of a coherent group of services or establishments within a broader structure; and
- an individual establishment or the delivery of a specific service.

This means that evaluations made at an operational level, and the evidence on which they are based, can contribute to evaluations at a strategic level.

The framework can also be used thematically by extracting key QIs or elements for a specific purpose. It might be, for example, that an organisation wants to take a close look at equalities through its arrangements for compliance with legislation and how this translates to its services. Another organisation might want to focus on impact on staff and the effectiveness of staff development arrangements.

Evaluation can be carried out using a **six-point scale**, though it is not always necessary to do this.

Characteristics of the six-point scale

An evaluation of ***excellent*** applies to services which are a model of their kind. An evaluation of *excellent* will be characterised by innovative, sector-leading practice that represents an outstanding standard of service worth disseminating beyond the organisation. It implies these very high levels of performance are sustainable and will be maintained.

An evaluation of ***very good*** applies to services characterised by major strengths. There will be very few areas for improvement and any that do exist will not significantly diminish the service user's experience. Whilst an evaluation of *very good* represents a high standard of service, it is a standard that should be achievable by all. It implies that it is fully appropriate to continue to deliver services without significant adjustment. However, there is an expectation that the organisation will take opportunities to improve and strive to raise performance to excellent.

An evaluation of ***good*** applies to services characterised by important strengths which, taken together, clearly outweigh any areas for improvement. An evaluation of *good* represents a standard of service in which the strengths have a significant positive impact. However, the quality of service users' experiences will be diminished in some way by aspects in which improvement is required. It implies that the organisation should seek to improve further the areas of important strength, but take action to address the areas for improvement.

An evaluation of ***satisfactory*** applies to services characterised by strengths which just outweigh weaknesses. An evaluation of *satisfactory* indicates that service users have access to a basic level of provision. It represents a standard where the strengths have a positive impact on stakeholders' experiences. However, while the weaknesses will not be important enough to have a substantially adverse impact, they will constrain the overall quality of service users' experiences. It implies that the organisation should take action to address areas of weakness while building on its strengths.

An evaluation of ***weak*** applies to services which have some strengths, but where there are important weaknesses. In general, an evaluation of *weak* may be arrived at in a number of circumstances. While there may be some strengths, the important weaknesses will, either individually or collectively, be sufficient to diminish service users' experiences in substantial ways. It implies the need for structured and planned action on the part of the organisation.

An evaluation of ***unsatisfactory*** applies when there are major weaknesses in services requiring immediate remedial action. Service users' experiences are at risk in significant respects. In almost all cases, staff responsible for provision evaluated as *unsatisfactory* will require support from senior managers, or, in some cases at corporate level, in planning and carrying out the necessary actions to effect

improvement. This may involve working alongside other staff or agencies in or beyond the organisation.

Considering the six high-level themes

Evaluations of the quality of impact in these key areas will take into account direct observation together with quantitative and qualitative data, including evidence of stakeholders' views.

What key outcomes have we achieved?

Key Area 1 focuses on the overall performance of an organisation or service in relation to its key purposes. *There are no major changes within this area of the Overarching Framework.* This area provides a structure for organisations and services to use when evaluating their success in delivering demonstrable, high-quality and improving outcomes for the users of its services. In schools or pre-school centres, for example, this would include children's and young people's attainment and achievement levels. In children and families social work, it could include reductions in the number of homeless or temporarily accommodated children and young people under 25. In public colleges, it could include trends in learner retention or successful post-college destinations.

It also helps an organisation to evaluate whether its own strategic priorities, aims and targets have been achieved, including those locally, regionally or nationally determined within its own context. Finally, it helps organisations or services to evaluate whether it is fulfilling its statutory duties, meeting legislative requirements and following appropriate codes of practice. This might include the *Equality Act 2010, Public Service Reform Act 2010, the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003* and appropriate health and safety practices. Evidence of demonstrable outcomes would include trends over time and other aggregated data which provides indications of the success of a service or organisation in maintaining or improving the quality of the service it provides both overall and in comparison with similar services/organisations.

How well do we meet the needs of our stakeholders?

Key Areas 2, 3 and 4 focus on the impact on key groups of stakeholders of the organisation's delivery of its key processes. *There are no major changes within this area of the Overarching Framework.* Stakeholders include those who are in direct receipt of the service, for example, learners within education establishments or users of social work services, together with those who support them and who also have a significant interest in the delivery of high quality services, for example, parents and families. Stakeholders also include the staff within the organisation. Their motivation, satisfaction and contribution to the development of the organisation is of considerable importance if the service is to operate effectively. Evaluations would draw upon the views of staff together with other information, such as rates of staff absence or turnover. Finally, stakeholders might include members

of the community. These stakeholders include those from the immediate local community on whose lives and experiences the service has a demonstrable impact or who make a contribution to the services provided. This would include, for example, community learning and development partners who work alongside schools to deliver activities for young people. It might include employers who work closely with education partners in the delivery of training. They also include the wider regional, national and international community. For example, staff may be actively involved in working groups, influencing national practice and sharing innovative practice with others.

How good is our delivery of key processes?

Key Area 5 focuses on the work of the organisation or service in relation to its key functions, in particular the delivery and development of the services it provides, by itself or in partnership with others. *There is one change in this area of the framework:*

- *the move of the QI for Improving the quality of services to stakeholders from this area, and its incorporation into one within Key Area 9.*

In education, delivery of services relates mainly to the quality of provision in education establishments. In social work, it could relate to assessment processes, the provision of support and the development and review of care plans. Child protection agencies and staff might focus on their processes for submitting referral reports and for assessing risks. Education and health services might together use the indicators to help them jointly evaluate their processes for working together to reduce rates of teenage pregnancy and, with social work services, for supporting young women who do become pregnant but wish to continue their education. An integral aspect of service delivery is consultation with services users and other stakeholders about their individual needs and how these are being met.

As with the other Key Areas, issues arising from Key Area 5 may originate or affect issues in the other Key Areas. For example, they may signal issues with staffing (Key Area 7) or strategic leadership (Key Area 9). Issues in Key Area 5 will also have a direct impact on the performance outcomes in Key Area 1. In short, evidence of the effectiveness of the organisation's key processes will be seen in the impact they have on stakeholders and in its overall performance.

How good is our operational management?

Key Areas 6, 7 and 8 focus on the operational management activities necessary to ensure effective service delivery and to deliver best value. *There are a number of changes to this area of the framework:*

- *the addition of the word 'operational' to the title;*
- *re-titling of QI 6 to Operational Management;*
- *re-titling of element 6.3 to Planning of key processes*
- *re-titling of QI 7 to Staffing;*

- *the reduction to two elements within this key area, now titled 7.1 Management and deployment of staff and 7.2 Career-long professional learning;*
- *re-titling of QI 8 to Partnerships and resources; and*
- *re-titling of element 8.4 to Knowledge and information management.*

Evaluative activities in this area include the organisation's arrangements for developing and updating policies, for involving its stakeholders, for operational planning, for managing and developing staff, for managing finance, information and resources and for developing productive partnerships. Strengths and areas for development in these areas will normally affect the quality of the key processes delivered (Key Area 5), their impact on stakeholders (Key Areas 2, 3 and 4) and the performance of the organisation as a whole (Key Area 1).

How good is our strategic leadership?

Key Area 9 focuses on the strategic leadership and direction of the organisation or service in relation to its key functions. *There are a few changes to this area of the Overarching Framework:*

- *change of title to Strategic leadership;*
- *change in the title of QI 9 to Strategic leadership; and*
- *the addition of element 9.5, titled Securing improvement of quality and impact of services, which looks at how the outcomes of self-evaluation are used to bring about improvement.*

This area looks at an organisation's vision and aims and the expression and delivery of its aspirations by means of strategic planning with its partners. This area considers the quality of leadership and direction at strategic level, but also at other levels, for example within teams and organisational units or for specific projects.

Strengths and areas for development in leadership will reflect the extent to which leaders make a difference to the quality of outcomes achieved by the organisation as a whole and by the impact on service users and other stakeholders. Finally, this area looks at the how an organisation secures improvement in its services, through consultation with partners and through development and innovation. This includes how organisations apply the findings of self-evaluation to bring about improvement.

What is our capacity for improvement?

Judgement of an organisation's capacity for improvement takes into account all the evaluations arrived at in Key Areas 1-9. The organisation's focus on improvement and its track record in bringing about improvement are particularly important, as is the accuracy of its self-evaluation, which is used as the basis for planned improvements. The judgement about capacity to improve also takes into account any significant aspects of the organisation's internal or external context, for example, impending retirements of senior staff, plans to restructure or significant changes in funding. The judgement is based on an evaluation of the past, but more importantly, uses this to look forward to the future.

Judgements of a service or organisation's capacity for improvement could be expressed in terms of a degree of confidence that it has the capacity to continue to improve. This allows the organisation to affirm its view that it is heading in the right direction but also acknowledge those areas which need to improve or be monitored more rigorously.

Appendix 1

Revised version of the *Framework for Evaluating the Quality of Services and Organisations, (Overarching Framework)* with changes marked up

What key outcomes have we achieved?

1. Key performance outcomes

1.1 Improvement in performance

1.2 Adherence to statutory principles and fulfilment of statutory duties

What is our capacity for improvement?

10. Capacity for improvement

Global judgement based on evidence of all key areas, in particular, outcomes, impact and leadership

How well do we meet the needs of our stakeholders?

2. Impact on service users

2.1 Impact on service users

3. Impact on staff

3.1 Impact on staff

4. Impact on the community

4.1 Impact on the local community

4.2 Impact on the wider community

How good is our delivery of key processes?

5. Delivery of key processes

5.1 Delivering services

5.2 Developing, managing and improving relationships with service users and other stakeholders

5.3 Inclusion, equality and fairness

How good is our operational management?

6. Operational management

6.1 Policy review and development

6.2 Participation of service users and other stakeholders

6.3 Planning of key processes

7. Staffing

7.1 Management and deployment of staff

7.2 Career – long professional learning

8. Partnerships and resources

8.1 Partnership working

8.2 Financial management

8.3 Resource management

8.4 Knowledge and information management

How good is our strategic leadership?

9. Strategic leadership

9.1 Vision, values and aims

9.2 Leadership and direction

9.3 Leading people and developing partnerships

9.4 Leadership of innovation, change and improvement

9.5 Securing improvement of quality and impact of services

Appendix 2

Original version of the *Framework for Evaluating the Quality of Services and Organisations* (for comparison)

What key outcomes have we achieved?

1. Key performance outcomes

1.1 Improvement in performance

1.2 Adherence to statutory principles and fulfilment of statutory duties

What is our capacity for improvement?

10. Capacity for improvement

Global judgement based on evidence of all key areas, in particular, outcomes, impact and leadership

How well do we meet the needs of our stakeholders?

2. Impact on service users

2.1 Impact on service users

3. Impact on staff

3.1 Impact on staff

4. Impact on the community

4.1 Impact on the local community

4.2 Impact on the wider community

How good is our delivery of key processes?

5. Delivery of key processes

5.1 Delivering services

5.2 Developing, managing and improving relationships with service users and other stakeholders

5.3 Inclusion, equality and fairness

5.4 Improving the quality of services to stakeholders

How good is our management?

6. Policy development and planning

6.1 Policy review and development

6.2 Participation of service users and other stakeholders

6.3 Planning

7. Management and support of staff

7.1 Sufficiency, recruitment and retention

7.2 Deployment & teamwork

7.3 Development and training

8. Resources

8.1 Partnership working

8.2 Financial management

8.3 Resource management

8.4 Information systems

How good is our leadership?

9. Leadership

9.1 Vision, values and aims

9.2 Leadership and direction

9.3 Leading people and developing partnerships

9.4 Leadership of innovation, change and improvement

HM Inspectorate of Education 13-03-06

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