

**A FRAMEWORK FOR EVALUATING THE QUALITY OF SERVICES
AND ORGANISATIONS**

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Context

This quality framework has been developed in response to the introduction of integrated approaches to evaluating and improving services, for example, the inspection of services for children. The use of the framework has the potential to streamline evaluative activities and reduce duplication and repetition.

The framework is 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. The model provides the basis for the development of performance measures and quality indicators for use in self-evaluation. The same measures and indicators can also be used selectively for inspection.

Structure

The quality framework is generic and can be used to inform the development of models for evaluating a wide range of services and organisations, ranging from a small family centre to an entire local authority, or from a neighbourhood to a community planning area. The framework does not assume a particular organisational structure. It can be applied whether a service is located within a single department or is distributed across a number of different departments. It can also apply to a single institution or to a group of institutions and/or services in a neighbourhood.

The framework has been developed in accordance with the principles of the Excellence Model of the European Foundation for Quality Management. It is also compatible with a number of other quality models and awards, for example, Investors in People, Charter Mark and ISO 9000 and can be used in conjunction with them. For example, evidence produced through the use of models such as Charter Mark can contribute to evaluations made using measures and indicators within this framework, and vice versa.

The framework is based on six high-level questions which can be answered by systematically evaluating the quality of services across ten Key Areas, for example, the quality of education services or social work services. The aspects addressed within the Key Areas are inter-related and, hence, strengths or weaknesses in one area may have an effect on the quality of provision, practice or outcome in another area.

The six high-level questions

The six high-level questions 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 management?***
Key Area 6. Policy development and planning
Key Area 7. Management and support of staff
Key Area 8. Resources
- ***How good is our 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.

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 & 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

Using the framework

The framework provides a systematic structure for **self-evaluation**. 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 framework also provides a structure for inspection activities. When used in **inspection**, the framework would be drawn on selectively. The inspection team would always seek to answer the questions:

- What key outcomes has the service achieved?
- How well does it meet the needs of its stakeholders?
- How good is the leadership of the service?

Indicators drawn from the key areas relating to these questions would form the core of the set of quality indicators used during inspection.

Beyond this, inspection activities might focus on specific key areas and indicators selected from the rest of the framework. The selection would depend on decisions taken during scoping activities. Scoping would, for example, consider evaluations and evidence from other recent inspections, reviews or audits, the results of self-evaluation by the service being inspected, stakeholders' views and information about the context within which the service operates.

In this way, the model can be used both as part of a proportionate, risk-based approach to evaluation and to provide a comprehensive view of the entire work of the organisation or service.

Evaluation can be carried out using a **six-point scale**.

Characteristics of the six-point scale

An evaluation of **excellent** applies to provision which is a model of its type. Stakeholders' experiences are of a very high quality. An evaluation of *excellent* represents an outstanding standard of provision which exemplifies very best practice and is worth disseminating beyond the service or organisation. It implies these very high levels of performance are sustainable and will be maintained.

An evaluation of **very good** applies to provision characterised by major strengths. There are very few areas for improvement and any that do exist do not significantly diminish the experiences of stakeholders. While an evaluation of *very good* represents a high standard of provision, it is a standard that should be achievable by all. It implies that it is fully appropriate to continue to make provision without

significant adjustment. However, there is an expectation that the service or organisation will take opportunities to improve and strive to raise performance to excellent.

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

An evaluation of **adequate** applies to provision characterised by strengths which just outweigh weaknesses. An evaluation of *adequate* indicates that stakeholders 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 pupils' experiences. It implies that the school should take action to address areas of weakness while building on its strengths.

An evaluation of **weak** applies to provision which has 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 stakeholders' experiences in substantial ways. It implies the need for structured and planned action on the part of the service or organisation.

An evaluation of **unsatisfactory** applies when there are major weaknesses in provision requiring immediate remedial action. Stakeholders' 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 service or organisation.

Answering the high-level questions

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. It provides a structure for organisations and services to use when evaluating their success *as organisations* in delivering demonstrable outcomes as outlined in legislation and programmes for development. For example, in education, these could include improvements in attainment in 5-14 levels or Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) results or achievement of Duke of Edinburgh, Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) or Caledonia awards. 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 health, it could include the incidence of specific health conditions, for example, dental disease or heart disease.

Also important are the improvements made in relation to an organisation's strategic priorities and distinctive vision, values, aims and targets. These targets would include those locally determined for social work, education, health and care in the context of children's services and other plans. Evidence would appear in reports on strategic and operational plans and as observable improvements. In education, examples could include achievement of targets for the provision of cultural experiences, residential experiences and outdoor education.

Evidence of demonstrable outcomes would include trends over time and other aggregated data which provide indications of the success of a service or organisation in improving the quality of the service it provides, both overall and in comparison with similar services/organisations.

Key Area 1 also focuses on the extent to which services and organisations fulfil their statutory duties, meet legislative requirements, follow appropriate codes of practice and are financially secure. Examples would include legislation such as the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003. Fulfilling these duties and following relevant codes of practice are key aspects of overall performance.

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. In other words, these areas look at the benefits which stakeholders derive from its services. Stakeholders include those who are in direct receipt of the service, for example, learners within education services or clients 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. For example, a Child Protection Committee might consider the extent to which children and families receive the help they need when they need it. Members of the review team would study case files and talk to children and young people.

Stakeholders also include the staff within the organisation who receive care, support, training and opportunities for involvement in decision-making and career development. Their motivation and satisfaction 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 absence or retention. The quality of care and support given to staff can be evaluated by considering evidence of teamworking, rates of involvement in professional development and achievement of qualifications and accreditation of the services as a whole through national schemes such as Investors in People and Scotland's Health at Work.

Finally stakeholders 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. They also include the wider national and international community. The organisation or service may make a significant contribution to thinking and practice within a particular area of work. For example, staff may be actively involved in working groups, lead national initiatives and share

innovative practice with others. Evidence of the service's impact beyond its immediate context may come from colleagues and peers, from published reports or from other media sources.

When evaluating the impact of the organisation or service on the range of stakeholders, consideration should be given to the overall balance of strengths and weaknesses. Those carrying out the evaluation need to be alert to the possibility that in order to bring about improvements in one area of impact, the quality of service delivery in another area could diminish, with an overall detrimental effect on service to stakeholders.

Evaluations of the quality of impact in these key areas will take into account direct observation and quantitative data together with evidence of stakeholders' views in order to arrive at overall judgements of the impact of the service or organisation on its key stakeholders. Where evidence from these sources is conflicting or indicates significant weaknesses, evaluators should follow audit trails to identify and address the possible causes, using indicators from other key areas in the quality framework. The focus of this key area will be on evaluating the impact on *specific* groups of service users and other stakeholders, and arriving at holistic evaluations of the *overall* impact on their experiences.

There may be apparent discrepancies between the evaluations given within Key Area 1 and those given within Key Areas 2, 3 or 4. An improving organisation may provide considerable evidence of impact on its stakeholders. Significant changes in measurable outcomes such as those included in Key Area 1, however, may take longer to become apparent. For example, young people may indicate through their views and behaviour, that they are learning more effectively. They may show increased motivation and less evidence of disaffection. It may take time, however, for improvements such as these to translate into increases in attainment levels or reductions in offending. In other words, there may be a time lag between improvements in terms of benefits for stakeholders and the overall measurable outcomes of the organisation. Evaluations of impact may therefore, in some circumstances, be more positive than evaluations of outcomes.

The opposite may also be true. An organisation such as a high performing school might deliver and maintain very good examination results. However, the experiences of young people may be evaluated less highly. They may not receive sufficient stimulation or challenge or have poor relationships with their peers or with staff. They may have few opportunities for, or little commitment to independent learning. In such circumstances, overall outcomes may be very positive but evaluations of impact on learners less so.

Some evidence of overall impact and outcomes may not be observed in the short term and are more apparent some years later. For example, targeted work with individual young people or groups may not translate into measurable outcomes within the two or three years following the intervention. It may not even be immediately apparent from changes in their behaviour and attitudes. However, several years later, as adults, success may be demonstrable in terms of their gaining employment, becoming good parents and/or contributing positively to society.

How good is our delivery of key¹ processes?

Key Area 5 focuses on the work of the organisation or service in relation to its key functions, in particular the delivery of services and the development and improvement of its relationships with services users and other stakeholders.

In education, delivery of services relates to the quality of provision for the curriculum, learning and teaching and support for learners. In social work, it could relate to assessment processes, the provision of support and the development and review of care plans. In child protection, the police, the Children's Reporter and other agencies might focus on their processes for submitting referral reports and for assessing risks. Health services could use the indicators to evaluate their processes for reducing the incidence of dental disease, or their arrangements for assessing mental health needs. Education and health might use the indicators to help them 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 the development, management and improvement of relationships with services users and other stakeholders. This is a separate issue from their involvement in policy making and planning or self-evaluation. It relates to aspects like after-care, listening to feedback and following up concerns and complaints. Also included in Key Area 5 are the approaches used to promote and ensure inclusion and equality and to take account of diversity.

Finally, Key Area 5 looks at the quality of the organisation's processes for improving its services to service users, and the effectiveness with which it works with them and with its partners and other stakeholders to achieve this. It looks at the various approaches the service uses for self-evaluation, emphasising the actual improvements made to the delivery of services as a result. Evaluation and improvement of the quality of service may take place at the level of the organisation as a whole, for example within a local authority children's services department, as well as within individual 'delivery units', such as schools, family centres, health practices, social work teams and so on. Evaluation and improvement can also take place at a level even closer to the service user. For example, they could be carried out by a subject or stage team within a school, or by the nursing team within a health centre. Many of the improvements will consist of adjustments to practice made by the relevant team as soon as possible after the need has been identified. More substantial issues, particularly those with implications for resourcing, will be fed into planning processes (Key Area 6). The indicator relating to quality improvement is part of Key Area 5 because action to improve quality should be built into the core work of the organisation, not be seen as a 'bolt on'.

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,

¹ The word 'key' may be replaced by a descriptive word identifying the organisation's business, for example, 'education or 'children and families social work'.

How good is our management?

Key Areas 6, 7 and 8 focus on the operational management activities necessary to ensure effective service delivery and to deliver best value. These activities include the organisation's arrangements for developing and updating policies, for involving its stakeholders, for operational planning, for managing staff, finance, information and resources and for developing productive partnerships. Strengths and weaknesses 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 in relation to its key functions (Key Area 1).

Most of the aspects included within Key Areas 6, 7 and 8 are generic and applicable to a wide range of services and organisations, whatever their key functions. For this reason, the quality indicators developed within these Key Areas are likely to be quite similar whatever the context, organisations or services for which they are developed.

How good is our leadership?

Key Area 9 focuses on the strategic direction of the organisation or service in relation to its key functions. It looks at its corporate purpose and the expression and delivery of its aspirations by means of strategic planning with partner agencies and the community.

This Key Area considers the quality of leadership and direction at strategic level, and within teams and organisational units. It looks at the quality of interactions with people within the organisation and with partners in other agencies. It also focuses on the role of leaders in bringing about change and improvement, including innovation and, where necessary, step-change.

Strengths and weaknesses 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 to the benefits derived by stakeholders. Evaluation will take account of the impact of leadership on the experiences of key stakeholders and the extent and quality of the outcomes demonstrated.

The indicators in Key Area 9 should be capable of being applied at more than one level within the organisation. They could, for example, be applied to the work of the chief executive and elected members but also to the work of those who lead specific departments, services or teams, including project teams and working groups.

What is our capacity for improvement?

Judgement of an organisation's capacity for improvement takes into account the evaluations arrived at in Key Areas 1-9, with particular reference to the quality of the leadership and management of the organisation or service and overall impact and outcomes. 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 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 reviews the past, and looks 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.

The judgement may be that the evaluators are ***confident that the service or organisation has the capacity to continue to improve***. This judgement would be made when highly effective leadership and management have brought about major improvements to outcomes and impact on stakeholders. Evidence at the time would indicate that these improvements were sustainable and that improvement would continue. No significant changes in the internal or external context of the organisation would be apparent or predicted at the time the judgement was made.

When there are reservations about one or more of these aspects, the use of other terminology would be more appropriate. For example, those carrying out the evaluation might have only 'limited confidence', or indeed, 'no confidence', that the service or organisation has the capacity to continue to improve. It would be important for evaluators to note the nature of their reservations, for example, by pointing to specific aspects of the organisation's work or its current or future context.

Using the framework

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

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

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

For example, at a **strategic** level, the framework can be used by councils or a group of partners to evaluate quality across the range of their services, perhaps in relation to a specific issue.

At an **operational** level, the framework can be used to evaluate the quality of related services provided by a single council department or by more than one department, for example, social work services as delivered by one or more departments.

The framework can be used to evaluate **service delivery** within a single organisational unit, for example, in education, in an early education centre or school, or within a neighbourhood, or across a cluster of schools. It could be used to evaluate the quality of psychological services, as one team within an education or children's services department. Similarly, evaluation could be carried out by a single

social work team and the results used to inform the evaluation of social work services as a whole.

The framework can be used thematically. For example, evidence of the quality of an early education centre's links with parents/carers, could be used to contribute to and inform evaluations of the quality of services for parents/carers within a council department or across the entire system. In the same way, evidence of the quality of parental links managed by the psychological services team could contribute to the same overall evaluation.

Individual council departments or public sector organisations may engage in evaluation as separate entities or jointly, using the same framework adapted, as necessary, to their individual contexts. The evaluations arrived at, and the evidence on which these are based, can contribute to evaluations of quality overall. Using an approach such as this may reduce the need for evidence to be scrutinised more than once. It also has the potential to support an integrated approach to self-evaluation and inspection. This could result in the amount of inspection activity being reduced overall.