

Self-evaluation tool guidance: Mainstream boarding schools and school hostels

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Self-evaluation tool guidance: Care homes for children and young people and school care accommodation (special residential schools)

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Introduction

“Self-evaluation is where a service ‘systematically examines itself, achievements, and processes to assess whether it is meeting its stated objectives and outcomes efficiently and effectively’.” ([Audit Scotland, 2012](#))

The purpose of our self-evaluation tools is to support services to assess how well they are doing against the key questions from our quality framework and highlight areas where they need to support improved outcomes for children and young people. This guide aims to help you to do that.

Self-evaluation can be a powerful tool to identify what’s working well and to identify and support improvement. We want all services to undertake self-evaluation. Self-evaluation is best done by those who know services and this includes people who use them, their relatives and staff.

This guidance and the tools follow on from the work we have already undertaken in relation to self-evaluation and should be used along with the quality framework for your service type as well as our guide to [self-evaluation](#).

The guide to self-evaluation gives a suggested step-by-step guide and information on:

- what self-evaluation is
- how to use self-evaluation
- carrying out your self-evaluation
- involving people who experience care and their carers.

The [quality frameworks](#) are designed to support services with self-evaluation. We worked with the services we regulate to build capacity for self-evaluation based on the frameworks.

As part of our commitment to keeping [The Promise](#), we developed key question 7 for the following service types.

- Children and young people and school care accommodation (special residential schools)
- Secure accommodation services
- Mainstream boarding schools and school hostels

While key question 7 can be used as a self-evaluation tool, services should continue to use the quality framework, particularly if you are looking at issues in more detail.

You don’t do self-evaluation for the benefit of the Care Inspectorate. It is a process that your service leads on, so you should determine the frequency and focus of your self-evaluation. Well led services know where they are performing well and where they need to improve. You should use self-evaluation to inform where you need to target your efforts to support improvement. It is an ongoing process that supports continuous improvement, rather than being a one-off activity.

Some services already have well-established and effective processes for evaluating their performance, and they should continue to use them. There is no requirement for services to use this tool, however we do want all services to recognise the value that self-evaluation has in supporting improvement and better outcomes for children and young people.

While our tools are linked to the quality framework for your service type and the Health and Social Care Standards, we understand that many services will also be engaged in other formal self-evaluation activities. This might include using your own tools or tools provided by other organisations, which may be focused on education or another area of children and young people's lives. Our toolkits are designed to help you look at the quality of children and young people's care, experiences and outcomes as this is also the focus of our frameworks. This kind of self-evaluation activity should be considered complimentary to any other activities you are engaged in and we would not expect services to unnecessarily duplicate any of this work.

This guide describes a process that can complement what you already do and gives advice and ideas about how existing processes can be used effectively. It embeds self-evaluation in the quality frameworks and will support you to evaluate your service.

We recognise that services are under significant pressure and have needed to adapt and do things differently.

In Section 3 of this guidance, we have suggested some 'quick win options' to identify more immediate areas for improvement through self-evaluation that offer some alternative, short term solutions and consider barriers that may be in place. This makes it easier to get started with self-evaluation and make improvements, even if you can only carry out elements of the process.

Section one

Core assurances

Experience has taught us that when things go wrong in care services, they often relate to key areas. Theory and inquiries into when care goes wrong have highlighted the areas that are important to monitor because these can be identified as early indicators of concern to people using services ([Scottish Government 2014](#), [Hull University 2012](#), [Francis Report 2013](#)).

These are the key areas considered during the registration process, and policies and procedures relating to them must be in place before a service is registered. Because we know, and research tells us, that these key areas are essential to a service being safe, we have called them 'core assurances.'

This list of core assurances highlights what inspectors must look at on inspection. They help guide providers on the areas that are important to people's safety and wellbeing as well as identifying any potential risks to outcomes for children and young people. Our focus is on the effectiveness of these in delivering good outcomes and minimising the risk of poor outcomes. This is because children and young people's rights to be safe and have good outcomes must be consistent, planned and embedded. We know that quality inputs and processes are a key driver for this, which is why we examine these core assurances at every inspection.

The list of core assurances can be found in the core assurance template [here](#).

Section two

The process

This self-evaluation tool is based around the key areas from our quality frameworks. The key areas sit under each quality indicator as shown below.

| Key question 1: How well do we support children and young people's wellbeing? | |
|---|---|
| Quality indicator | 1.1 Children and young people experience compassion, dignity and respect |
| Key areas include the extent to which children and young people: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• feel nurtured, valued and secure and have positive relationships• have their rights respected and experience dignity and a life free from discrimination• have their views and wishes taken into account. |

We want you to ask three self-evaluation questions for each key area.

- How are we doing?
- How do we know?
- What are we going to do now?

Each key area has several quality illustrations which can provide a benchmark and guide to what you should look at when evaluating how well your service is performing.

Quality indicator

Quality indicator 1.1: Children and young people experience compassion, dignity and respect

Key areas

Key areas include the extent to which children and people:

- feel nurtured, valued and secure and have positive relationships
- have their rights respected, and experience dignity and a life free from discrimination
- have their views and wishes taken into account.

Quality illustrations

| Very good | Weak |
|---|---|
| Children and young people develop meaningful, secure relationships with those caring for them. These are based on empathy, compassion and fun. They know they always have someone they trust to turn to when troubled or to celebrate with. They benefit from affection and physical contact where appropriate. They know who will be caring for them throughout the day and night. | Children and young people do not feel that the people looking after them like, know or value them as individuals. Their relationships with staff do not provide continuity, perhaps as a result of changes or shortages, and may be superficial or mistrustful. They may feel alone and unsupported. |
| Children and young people experience a high level of respect from everyone involved in their care. This principle is at the heart of the service's culture and frameworks of practice. The service is pro-active in safeguarding their privacy and confidentiality and demonstrates genuine regard for their dignity. | Children and young people experience unnecessary or insensitive intrusions on their privacy. Their personal records may contain inaccurate information or be shared inappropriately with others. Children and young people receive limited support or information to understand their rights. Care and support |

Quality Illustrations

After each quality indicator, there will be links to related best practice guidance documents under the key improvement resources section.

At the end of this guidance, you will find links to worked examples showing how you could examine these key areas through identifying, connecting and evaluating your evidence. By the end of this process, you will have evaluated your service and will be able to develop an improvement plan.

The three self-evaluation questions

When carrying out your self-evaluation you should ask these three questions about each key area.

1. How are we doing?
2. How do we know?
3. What are we going to do now?

Example of a self-evaluation tool:

| Self-evaluation tool | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|------|----------|------|-----------|-----------|
| Name of service: | | | | | |
| Date of self-evaluation: | | | | | |
| Key question: | | | | | |
| Quality indicator: | | | | | |
| Key area: | | | | | |
| How are we doing? | | | | | |
| Unsatisfactory | Weak | Adequate | Good | Very Good | Excellent |
| | | | | | |

Consider which key question, quality indicator and key area you want to look at

Question 1 - How are we doing?

This is the key to knowing whether you are doing the right things in the right way and whether, as a result, children and young people are experiencing high-quality, safe and compassionate care that meets their needs, rights and choices. You can use good practice guides and the quality illustrations to make sure you are asking the right questions.

| Unsatisfactory | Weak | Adequate | Good | Very good | Excellent |
|----------------|------|----------|------|-----------|-----------|
| | | | | | |

These evaluations are based on our six-point scale. You can find further information about each of these evaluations within the quality frameworks and on our website [here](#).

Your evaluation should be written to be easily understood by those who use your service, staff and relatives. Evaluate how your service is performing for each of the key areas in each of the key questions, using the above scale. Your evidence should include:

- feedback from staff, children and young people using the service, relatives/carers and other stakeholders
- observations of staff practice
- quality assurance activities
- benchmarking against good practice and the quality illustrations.

There is more detailed guidance including examples in Section 3: Evidence gathering.

Question 2 - How do we know?

How have you arrived at your answer to Question 1 'How are we doing?' Answer this question using evaluative statements, based on the evidence you have gathered.

You should use the quality illustrations within the framework, the Health and Social Care Standards and good practice documents as benchmarks, which may also help you think about where improvements need to be made.

Look at the scrutiny actions and improvement resources in the quality framework to see some examples of where you may find other sources of evidence or good practice.

Question 3 - What are we going to do now?

Understanding how well your service is performing should help you see what is working well and what needs to be improved. From that, you should be able to develop and prioritise plans for improvement based on effective practice, guidance, research, testing and available improvement support. The ability to identify what is not working well, where improvements need to be made and developing a plan to address these is a strength. It demonstrates good leadership and management and is characteristic of an organisation that is committed to learning and developing in order to support the best outcomes for children and young people.

By the end of the questions, you should be able to write your improvement plan. By answering each of the three questions, you will have identified where your service is doing well and where you need to improve to support better outcomes for children and young people using your service.

The improvement plan should include:

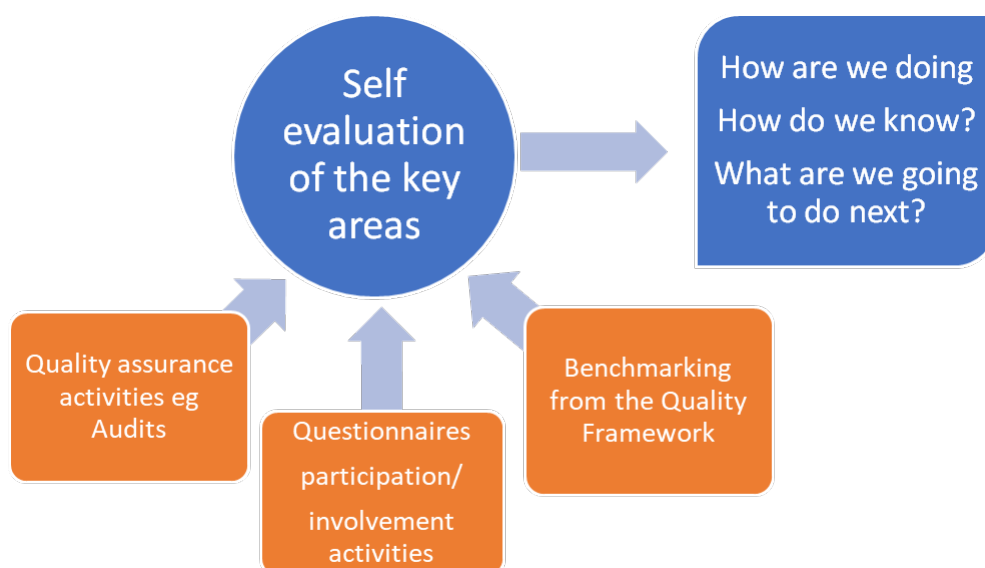
- the actions
- who will carry them out
- a timetable
- a review of what was achieved or where further action is required.

This tool should be used as part of your service's normal participation and quality assurance work. Remember, you are not undertaking this for the Care Inspectorate. You are doing this to help improve experiences and outcomes for children and young people using your service. Where our scrutiny activities show us that a service has used self-evaluation to identify and plan to address areas for improvement, we would usually regard this as a management strength. Where we identify areas for improvement that you are not aware of, or for which there is no improvement plan in place, this is likely to affect the evaluations we make.

Section three

Evidence gathering for self-evaluation

Aim: to enable people to give their view on how the service is performing in a range of different areas in a measured way.



When gathering evidence as part of your self-evaluation, you will need to involve staff and the children and young people using the service, as well as people who are important to them. Some of this evidence could include questionnaires, but there are other means of consulting with children and young people that you might also want to consider. This could include focus groups or simply taking the time to talk to people to get their views on specific issues. You should take different communication needs into account and use any appropriate communication tools when consulting with people using the service. There is some helpful advice on different communication aids available [here](#).

You can also find a helpful document on supporting participation [here](#).

By asking people to evaluate an area using a scale, you can measure how you are doing in a more systematic way. By repeating these questions, and the process at a later date, you will be able to measure your progress. Breaking down the key areas for self-evaluation into smaller, more specific questions will help you build a picture of how you are performing across the whole key area.

Example

If your quality assurance processes have enabled you to discover and identify examples of good practice, have you considered if this sustainable and whether it can be replicated to support other parts of the organisation to ensure high-quality care?

For example, you may have already reviewed the training recently undertaken by staff during your usual appraisal process. Did this identify any trends that might

indicate where further training or support was needed? Have you considered the current training provided for staff and whether this helps meets children and young people's care and wellbeing needs? Considering these kinds of things can help inform your improvement plan.

At the end of this guidance, there are links to templates for questionnaires, with examples of questions that may be useful to elicit feedback under each of the key areas. The questionnaires are based on the illustrations in the framework. We would suggest getting feedback from children and young people who use the service, relatives and carers, staff and other stakeholders, such as visiting professionals or those with regular input to the service. Children and young people should have the option to remain anonymous or give their details if they would like a response to any comments or issues they have raised. You should also set a clear deadline for responses and offer alternative ways for people to respond or receive information, for example through email, post or in person. You should tailor these questions to suit your service.

There is no expectation that you would use all of these questions in one questionnaire as they are suggestions to help you focus on the areas you have decided on. This includes making adjustments to how the questions are presented to support communication, for example using talking mats, pictures or symbols.



Image: <https://goboardmaker.com/>

These questionnaires are only one way of gaining feedback. You could consider things such as focus groups, team meetings or service events as opportunities to gather feedback. We recognise that you may already be using approaches to support children's participation that are less formal than questionnaires you might use with adults.

Quality assurance activities

Aim: To check quality and provide more robust evidence about performance across key areas of the service.

There are several quality assurance activities that can contribute to your self-evaluation. You should have in place different processes and systems to ensure good care and support for children and young people, and these can be used to inform your self-evaluation.

Key question 2: How good is our leadership? in the quality framework talks more about quality assurance, with examples of what very good (and weak) practice may look like and where you can find more information. Ways of assuring quality include using audits and observations of staff practice.

Your quality assurance processes should help you identify areas for improvement, as well as areas that are working well. This information can then feed into the self-evaluation as evidence for your assessments of where you are at.

Practice point

If you are looking at how well you are performing in relation to the induction of new staff, you could look at some of the resources linked to in the framework. This might include resources from the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC).

You may have already reviewed staff performance during a set period after inductions. Did this identify any trends that might indicate where the induction process could be improved? Have you considered whether leaders need further training to support inductions or how children and young people can contribute to the induction process? Considering these kinds of things can help inform your improvement plan.

Quick win options

For the self-evaluation process to be meaningful and useful, the same general process should be followed. We appreciate that services may have good reasons for being reluctant to introduce a whole new process at a particular time. With that in mind, we have suggested a summary version of the process that will support those who have extremely limited capacity but will still offer some of the benefits of undertaking the process.

This is a temporary option as a way of engaging with the process and beginning an improvement journey, with the expectation that this is a starting point only.

Barriers

- I don't have time to send out questionnaires to external professionals or other people involved in supporting children and young people. They are also busy professionals who don't always have time to respond.
- I don't have the resources to support children and young people using the service to complete questionnaires or hold focus groups.
- I don't have time to send out and collate all that information because this is a large service, and we are already short staffed.
- We haven't been carrying out our usual quality assurance processes due to being short staffed.
- Children and young people using the service or their families and people important to them are unhappy with aspects of the service that are out of our control, for instance access to other services or government restrictions.
- The self-evaluation is too much work; I don't have time to do this.

Alternatives

- Prioritise completion of the core assurances as this will help highlight any key issues and areas for concern.
- Focus on one key area at a time; they don't have to all be completed together.
- Use your existing governance and quality assurance systems to monitor the standards of care.
- If there is an issue you already know about within the service, try using the format of the self-evaluation to address it. For example, answering the second and third questions: 'How do we know?' (how did the issue come to your attention), and 'What are we going to do now?' (how are you going to address the problem) You can start an improvement plan from here just filling in the boxes with the information you already have.
- Use information you already have. You may have recently completed involvement activities, received feedback from relatives, stakeholders or children and young people using the service. There may have been recent audits or incidents where key information has come to light that needs addressing, for instance the use of restrictive practices or the need for key information in personal plans to be updated.
- Leave a pile of questionnaires and a feedback box out for staff over the course of a week or two weeks.
- Email all staff a questionnaire and set up a shared file where completed questionnaires can be saved. Set a deadline.
- Set up an electronic survey using a software platform such as Survey Monkey or Microsoft Forms, which can also collate responses for you.
- During the normal course of your day, take time to ask children and young people using the service some simple questions relevant to the key area you are looking at. Just remember to ask people the same thing and make a note of what you asked them for future reference. You can also do this if you have visitors to the service, including visiting professionals or external stakeholders.

Improvement planning



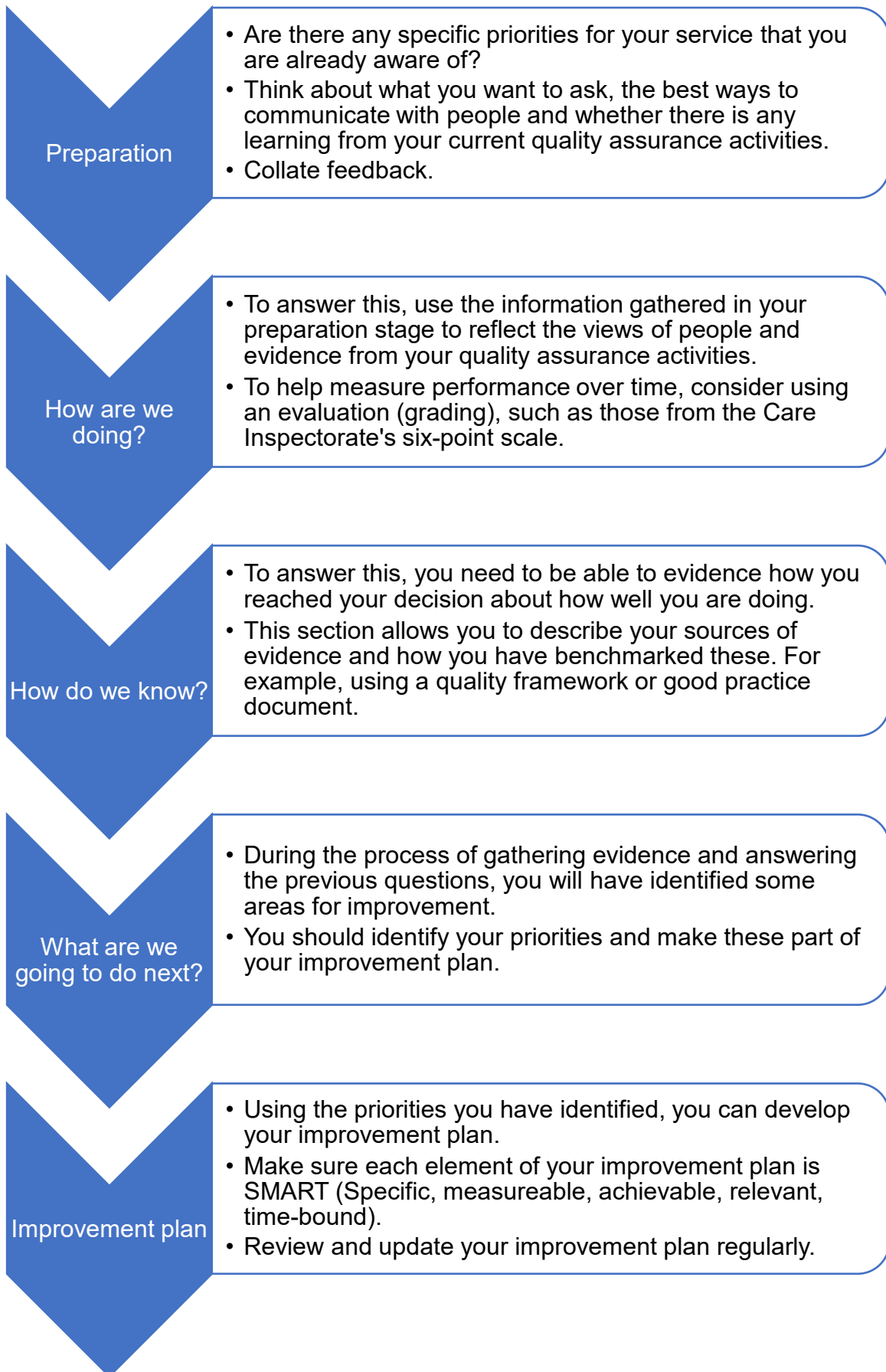
Improvement planning is part of the wider self-evaluation and quality assurance cycle. These are not one-off activities and in order to identify what improvements are required and what improvement actions are working, there needs to be ongoing self-evaluation and review. The timescales for this are up to your individual service and depend on where you are in your improvement journey. For services needing to make a number of improvements that are essential to improving outcomes for children and young people, more regular reviews would be needed to ensure the service continues to move forward, and changes can be made where things are not working.

All our quality frameworks include a key question that evaluates How good is our leadership? This key question recognises the importance of good quality assurance and improvement activities, including:

- quality assurance, including self-evaluation and improvement plans, drive change and improvement where necessary
- leaders are responsive to feedback and use learning to improve
- leaders have the skills and capacity to oversee improvement.

Our guide to self-evaluation directs you to other resources, such as our Model for Improvement, and gives more information on the process of planning improvements. You can find more resources to support improvement on our knowledge and improvement website, The Hub [here](#).

Summary process



Links to templates and examples

[Core assurances tool with worked example](#)

Example questionnaires for:

- [Relatives](#)
- [Staff](#)

[Improvement plan template - blank](#)

[Self-evaluation tool template - blank](#)

[Worked example of a self-evaluation tool](#)

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