

Transformation and Innovation Exchange Self-Assessment – Overview and Guidance Document

1. Executive Summary

Councils continue to face the ongoing challenge of austerity, funding, cost and demand pressures but the challenges and drivers for change present councils with a unique opportunity to redefine their role in communities. By embracing innovation, strategic resource management and community engagement, councils can transform services to reflect the evolving needs and aspirations of the communities they serve.

Councils are urged to consider bigger and bolder transformation opportunities that build a sustainable operating model for the 21st century, post COVID-19 whilst also delivering a range of financial and non-financial benefits.

At the heart of successful transformation strategies and projects must be a focus on councils' own priorities, their customers and their communities, with a desire to put people and outcomes at the forefront of transformational change.

2. Background

Whilst improvement is the goal for the majority, it is recognised that for some services, local authorities may have made a conscious decision to be where they are i.e., focusing on better services, but not reinvention. Alternatively, they may have decided to scale back on capacity due to changes in demand through other initiatives, political priorities or local demographics. Nearly all local authorities are working with reduced resources and at the same time, coping with greater demand – for example from the additional social care demands of an ageing population.

The self-assessment tool therefore provides an opportunity to record the reasons why key decisions have been taken and to provide local context to the results.

The improvement model and self-assessment tool is about understanding where the user is on their improvement journey and taking the next steps towards new ways of operating, whether through a series of incremental changes to services, innovative approaches to demand or the invention of new solutions.

The improvement model describes the journey towards understanding the meaning behind service needs rather than designing systems to simply deal with the resulting demand.

3. Areas of Focus

The self-assessment has three layers of focus:

1. Service Focus

Faster, improved quality, reduced cost. These drive better outputs and reduces waste. It is the starting point for improved efficiency.

2. Customer Focus

What they really demand from the service, what is important to them, taking into account the impact on them when the service fails to deliver. A customer can be a multitude of things a resident, citizen, business, tourist, investor, developer and the community. In fact, anyone who is a stakeholder of the local authority. Some stakeholders (citizens for example) do not have a choice of which authority they deal with. However, it is still incumbent to endeavour to serve them well.

3. Community Focus

Takes a broader perspective of customer demand, which may be across a number of services and different public sector organisations such as Health, Police or Fire and Rescue Services. It drives innovation and encourages a joined-up approach to customer experience.

This requires an analysis of the root cause of needs, taking a holistic view of the resources that may be available to fulfil those needs. This includes the whole ecosystem that the organisation exists within as well as focussing on communities, what they need and what they can provide.

This approach involves thinking new thoughts and identifying new solutions - successful implementation produces better outcomes for customers, which usually delivers inherent efficiency through reduced demand.

It is important to recognise that there are linkages between these areas of focus - for example, an organisation mainly focussing on a community led approach, may also be working at the demand level as well as improving service delivery. The levels or 'modes' of operation are not mutually exclusive.

Sitting behind the layers are a set of characteristics. By assessing against these using a series of statements, the user will be able to see their own self-assessment.

4. Characteristics

Characteristics are the distinguishing qualities, attributes or traits of the tool, which can be used for self-assessment via a series of statements that are posed for each characteristic.

The following set of characteristics form the basis of the self-assessment:

1. Role of the authority

- Understanding the needs of customers, the role that partners play and that of communities.

2. Managing income

- Understanding the range of income generation opportunities, including in conjunction with partner organisations.

3. Managing expenditure

- Understanding demand and resources, unit costs and plans to deliver services in new ways, including through other organisations.

4. Use of data and intelligence

- Use of data, use of integrated systems and how joining up data can support making intelligent decisions.

5. Use of digital and technology

- Understanding the opportunities for the use of digital and technology, relevant customer journeys and services which can be digital where appropriate.

6. Procurement and commissioning

- Understanding spend of residents and businesses, buying power to reduce costs of suppliers, reduced cost of living procurements.

5. Statements

There is a total of four statements covering each characteristic and change mode. In order to help make an informed judgement and to provide a consistent framework. It follows the standard format of identify, plan, deliver, monitor and control which users are invited to agree or disagree upon.

Statement 1: Identify

- The council identifies the need for and how to review the performance of services, incorporating customer feedback.

Statement 2: Plan

- There are clear, signed off plans, for monitoring service performance and customer feedback

Statement 3: Deliver

- Reviews of services and feedback have been conducted and acted upon.

Statement 4: Monitor and control

- Planned improvements been monitored and realised.

The statements that the user is asked to judge their organisation against vary across each change mode. For example, a statement which relates to *service focus* change will be different to one that relates to *community focus* change.

It is recognised that in certain circumstances, self-assessors will want to record an explanation for their responses. This may be because a positive response cannot be given due to a (legal) impediment, or there may be a rationale for the response e.g., not applicable. There may also be examples of best practice that self-assessors wish to note and/or share. Therefore, there are three tabs that may be used to record this information:

Impediments: If there are any impediments to improvement (for example legislation or cooperation from partners) please describe them here.

Notable practice: Record here notable practice or documentation that they have found useful.

Rationale: Record here the rationale for their answers.

6. Critical success factors

Critical success factors (CSF) are part of the self-assessment tool and are included in the results page.

These are the factors which self-assessors can use to evaluate their readiness to improve. Critical success factors do not form part of the improvement model but are essential to consider as an authority's success would be hampered without them. Factors critical to success tend to deal with the 'capability' to make change happen.

The self-assessment tool critical success factors are:

- Leadership and Management
- Approach to Change
- Getting the Best from Staff

7. Results and reporting

The results provide the user with an understanding of where they are on their transformation journey – visually representing their strengths as well as areas potentially they may wish to improve.

Upon submission of a completed self-assessment the user will receive their results in a navigable dashboard. The results set out the response in relation to others who may also have completed the self-assessment in their authority and are categorised as: needing improvement, competent and strong.

The results take the user through each of the critical success factors and the characteristics in each of the three focus areas, shows how the council is performing and what 'good' looks like for councils to aspire to. It also includes the tailored list of

resources under each of the categories so it can easily be shared around teams with the weblinks for resources included.

Users can also download the report which includes all this information in Word (CSV file) format for ease of including the findings in internal reporting, presentations and cabinet papers.

8. Creating an action plan

To supplement the downloadable report users can tailor make their own action plans, as well as team or council-wide action plans.

An action plan ensures that the insights gained from the report translate into tangible actions that lead to meaningful improvement and change. It can provide focus and clarify what steps need to be taken based on the findings of the report.

By assigning specific actions to individuals or teams this can ensure accountability that areas the user has identified that they wish to focus on are delivered within the timescales agreed.

An action plan can help streamline the process by breaking down tasks into manageable steps, ensuring a more efficient response to priority areas.

It can also allow the user to track the progress and significantly help with the allocation and prioritisation of resources.

As users complete the self-assessment it allows them to select areas they want to include in their action plan and once they have made their submission and received their report they can re-assess what they want included in the plan by selecting categories retrospectively. Users can also order them to suit their council's priorities and areas they wish to focus on. The interactive function sits on the dashboard but is also downloadable and/or be used to export directly into reports and documents.

9. Joining a network and requesting LGA support

The self-assessment tool now allows the user to 'opt in' to be connected to other users wishing to form an informal network to support one another, share ideas, overcome similar issues and challenges that they are likely to be facing in that particular area of transformation. The LGA will facilitate this by periodically introducing those wishing to be contacted and creating a network.

A similar approach has been adopted for those wishing to receive tailored LGA support. The 'request for help from the LGA' function will notify the user to all the latest news, events, webinars, workshops and LGA support relevant to that particular category.

Information gathered here will also help shape the LGA's Transformation support offer on an annual basis.

10. Benchmarking

An invaluable part of a self-assessment tool is measuring performance with others, especially with those with similar council characteristics.

The LGA will undertake periodic benchmarking exercises, which will be publicised in advance, to existing users as well as to encourage uptake from others. Users will be able to compare their results with the anonymised results of other local authorities based on region and council type – this has been extended to include a whole range of other comparators including budget size, demographic characteristics as well as geo-characteristics e.g., seaside, urban, rural to help councils on their transformation journeys.

During benchmarking periods councils with multiple submissions will be contacted to provide a council-wide overall picture and to ‘finalise’ their submission for comparative purposes. All other submissions will be viewable to those within the council, but the finalised submission will act as the council’s official position, for the purposes of the benchmarking exercise.

For those councils with only one submission this will be taken as the ‘official’ (*finalised*) council position for the purposes of benchmarking, but that user will be contacted prior to the period closing. More information will be provided to all users during these periods for additional clarity and this is not intended to discourage use of the self-assessment tool.

11. Resources

The Transformation and Innovation Exchange hub contains an ever-growing range of resources including guidance, tools, case studies, research, reports and training with users are encouraged to upload their own cases of notable practice, helpful checklists, business cases, tender documents or project plans.

The hub is dynamic and is updated on a periodic basis. Users can access the resources on the [standalone resources K-hub](#) which does not require a sign in. Users will also be signposted to the most relevant resources upon completion of their submissions, with useful resources identified under each of the characteristics and critical success factors to assist them with their post-assessment actions.

12. Security

All responses will be treated confidentially. The user’s name will be displayed in results visible to other users from their authority, but only if they have agreed to this. If they have not agreed, their response will be anonymised. Their name will never be visible to any user from a different authority.

Results for an authority will not be visible to users from other authorities. The LGA will see all of the results but won't publish or share these results with any other organisation or government department.

Identifiable information will only be held and processed in accordance with the LG Inform Plus [privacy policy](#). Contact information will only be used for those 'opting in' for further LGA support or for those wishing to be connected to other transformation officers. The LGA will only be collecting data within this tool to aid the legitimate interests of the LGA in supporting and representing authorities.

13. Help and feedback

For help using the self-assessment tool email support@esd.org.uk.

To comment on the content and how results are used, or to give any feedback email transformation@local.gov.uk.

Glossary of terms

Term	Definition
Customer	Anyone who has a stake or interest in the organisation e.g., a resident, business, investor, visitor, developer, partner.
Characteristic	Distinguishing qualities, attributes, or traits of the tool, which can be used for self-assessment via a series of statements.
Critical Success Factor	The factors which self-assessors can use to evaluate their readiness to improve.
Unit Cost	This comprises the people, processes and technology that make up the unit cost of a service.
Community Capacity	This is the capacity of the whole ecosystem that the organisation exists within - its business, 3rd sector organisations and partners, what they can provide to meet the needs of the community.
Capability	This is about the ability the organisation has, in particular, the ability to effect successful change. This is distinct from understanding need and envisioning change.
Resilience	This is the ability of the organisation to return to its original state after being disturbed – by changes in demand, or resources available or other external pressures.
Improvement	The goal for the majority of organisations, through change.
Improvement or Change Mode	This is the form that an improvement initiative may take, from Service Led change to Community focussed change. Adopting one mode or approach to change does not preclude others.
Efficiency	The ratio of output over effort. 'Functioning or producing something effectively and with the least waste or effort';

	competent'. Efficiency led change programmes are often characterised by process or LEAN based change techniques, improving services by reducing waste.
Intelligence	This is about combining data, intelligence and lateral thinking to deliver change, often taking the form of engaging the community and partners to come up with inventive, new solutions to problems, rather than new approaches to existing solutions. The focus is on better outcomes, which can overstate the need for service demand.