

Children's Improvement Board

Performance Management Diagnostic Tool for Children's Services

**Assessing the effectiveness of performance
management, use of data and quality assurance**

July 2013

Children's Improvement Board

The Children's Improvement Board (CIB) leads sector-led improvement in children's services. It is a partnership between the Local Government Association (LGA), the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE). All partners on the Board are committed to supporting local government to take charge of its own performance and improvement in the interests of children and young people. Its work supports local government's overall approach to sector led improvement

Following the unexpected withdrawal of Department for Education (DfE) funding for 2013-14, CIB is developing plans for an orderly closure of the current programme, ensuring continuation of a core legacy programme supported by LGA, ADCS and SOLACE.

Supporting the effective use of data

CIB recognises the importance of councils and local area partnerships having good data and the capacity to use it effectively. Effective performance management is an essential component in answering the question "Are we doing the right things?" and "Are we making a difference?" to evidence that:

- We have kept children safe;
- We have improved outcomes for children and their families;
- We have done so in a cost effective and consistent manner.

Through its work on data and information it aims to provide support to councils and Local Safeguarding Children's Boards (LSCBs) to maximise their skills and capacity in using data, capitalising on the good practice already out there.

CIB, working with the Centre for Excellence and Outcomes (C4EO) have been engaging with regional data networks to identify and develop tools, guidance and good practice to support the effective use of data and information for children's services. This is one of a number of products designed to help councils and LSCBs in using data and information effectively, to support their improvement. Support is aimed at senior managers and members, as well as data specialists, to provide practical support that strengthens local skills and capacity in the effective use of data, and enhances their self-assessment and peer challenge through

- Providing accessible, timely and relevant intelligence about children's services;
- Equipping operational staff, managers and members to assess and build their capacity and confidence, and that of their authority, in making effective use of data and intelligence;
- Providing tools and guidance that demonstrate appropriate use of intelligence and other evidence to commission, monitor, evaluate and improve services.

How effective is your performance management, use of data and quality assurance?

About the Performance Management Diagnostic Tool for Children's Services

This tool is designed to assist children's services organisations at any level to review and challenge the effectiveness of their performance management, and the extent to which it is embedded in the culture of their organisation and adding value to the management of the service. It highlights ways in which organisations can improve their performance management and be more demanding about the information they seek and use when making decisions.

For ease of reference, 'performance management' is used throughout as a collective description which includes quality assurance, audit, and the collection and intelligent use of data and evidence.

This tool is based on an approach developed as part of the Eastern Region Sector Led Improvement Programme. CIB acknowledges and values their work in developing the original material and their willingness to share it with CIB and others.

Using this tool

This is a practical tool designed to stimulate an open and honest appraisal and conversation about where you are as an organisation, and where you want to be.

Through highlighting good practice this tool suggests ways in which organisations can improve their performance management, encouraging organisations to be more demanding about the information they seek and use when making decisions. It is designed to help you review your strengths, challenges and areas for improvement.

We hope that you can use this framework to carry out a thorough and honest assessment of where your organisation is now, identifying

- What you are doing well
- What you need to do to improve, and
- Tips to help you work out how to improve.

To get the most from this process, it is important to involve a range of people with an active interest in ensuring improvement in children's services. Build in time to review and share the responses to questions posed, and investigate any differences in perceptions.

This tool is not designed to provide a comparative judgement on the effectiveness of your organisation's performance management arrangements. Interpretation of limited, developing and effective will vary across individuals and across organisations. The value of this tool will be gained from carrying out this assessment, bringing on board the views and concerns of the range of people with an active role in ensuring improvement in children's services, particularly those with a role in informing or making decisions about the services.

The aim of this assessment is not to determine a one-word assessment of the effectiveness, but to gain

- A shared recognition and acceptance of where you are at, representing the views of all players, identifying what works well and areas for improvement.

- A shared view of where you want to get to, with clarity about what you want to achieve; and
- An agreed actionable plan of what is to be done, by whom and by when.

The framework does not stipulate exact descriptions of each level of performance. Councils should self-assess in terms of where they want their organisation to be, rather than measure themselves against a prescriptive, one-size-fits-all framework.

This diagnostic tool contains the following guides and templates:

- **Features of effective and sustainable performance management**
Detailing five key features of effective and sustainable performance management, this provides a view of characteristics expected of authorities where performance management arrangements are well developed and effective in supporting improvement.
- **What does good look like?**
Expanding on the features above, these tables identify the characteristics of organisations at different stages of the journey towards effective performance management. These are grouped as:
 - Limited – little or no evidence in support of the challenge;
 - Developing – some evidence in support of the challenge; or
 - Effective – good evidence in support of the challenge.
- **Templates and guidance**
 - Self-assessment templates
 - Summary of the review
 - Developing an action plan for improvement.

Features of effective and sustainable performance management

- **The organisation has a culture that values and exploits the power of information, with evidence of strong governance and leadership support for effective performance management.**
Members and senior officers commit to and expect an evidence based culture. Information is used by members and senior officers to drive better services and efficiencies. There is a collaborative, challenging and demanding approach to creating and using better information.
- **There is evidence of and a commitment to good information standards.**
Information is drawn from a range of sources, including the voice of the child. There is evidence of high standards of data quality, with standards maintained through a common competency framework. There are established data sharing protocols within the organisation and with partners. Information produced is relevant, timely and presented in an intelligible and informative way. Business processes and systems are able to provide good quality timely data, including qualitative and other intelligence.
- **There is clarity and shared understanding about the role and scope of the performance management and quality assurance framework.**
The framework, performance and targets are visible, understood and meaningful to all. The performance management framework and reporting provides a balanced view, including service quality, voice of the child, and finance and resource allocation.
- **Staff, senior officers and members know what is required of them in requesting and interrogating information, and have the skills and capacity to use information effectively.**
Expert, professional, well trained people working in effective ways. Good interpretation skills and willingness to challenge and dig into the story behind the data. Analytical resources focused on supporting decision making. Recruitment, retention and development of skilled staff. Investment in the necessary training and communication to build capacity and to keep it going
- **The organisation has the capacity to challenge performance and generate improvement.**
There is an ethos of learning rather than blame culture, incorporating challenge and continuous improvement. The organisation is willing and able to undertake robust self-assessment and show evidence of appropriate use of intelligence and other evidence to commission, monitor, evaluate and improve services.

Below are descriptions of the stages in developing the performance management capability of an organisation.

Limited	Developing	Effective
<p>Performance management requirements are unclear and do not support understanding or improvement of the organisation.</p>	<p>Staff use some data and elements of performance management, and understand how it works for the organisation</p>	<p>The performance management system is embedded in the culture and underpins the way the organisation is run</p>
<p>The organisation has a culture that values and exploits the power of information, with evidence of strong governance and leadership support for effective performance management.</p>		
<p>Strategic approach is weak, with limited or no governance or leadership and no coherent performance management, reporting or quality assurance (QA) frameworks.</p> <p>Leaders and staff are unaware of their performance and reviewing performance to understand needs and outcomes for children and young people does not take place or is largely informal and basic.</p>	<p>There is a strategic approach to performance management with a commitment to the intelligent use of information. A culture of continuous improvement is evident, but has not yet fully impacted on practice.</p> <p>Leaders and staff are able to reach the right conclusions and challenge performance to help them identify, plan and implement improvements.</p>	<p>Performance management and quality assurance are led as the basis on which the organisation is run with effective self-assessment and leadership. Improvement is made and evidenced.</p> <p>Through analysis and challenge, leaders and staff have a good understanding of their local community, its needs, and the strengths and weaknesses of their service. They are able to plan effectively.</p>
<p>There is evidence of and a commitment to good information standards.</p>		
<p>There is limited interest and engagement by decision makers in the content and format of information presented</p>	<p>Some interest and engagement shown in specifying the content and format of information presented, and what additional information and analysis might be helpful in supporting senior staff and members in their roles.</p>	<p>There is a collaborative, challenging and demanding approach to creating better information. Information providers and decision makers jointly ensure information is specified well with constructive two way dialogue.</p>

Limited	Developing	Effective
There is clarity and shared understanding about the role and scope of the performance management and quality assurance framework.		
<p>Limited senior and front line engagement, with links between the operation of the service, standards required and performance management not yet made.</p> <p>Finance, resource and qualitative information discussions are separate from discussions about performance.</p>	<p>Most staff can see their service objectives and targets as part of the performance management system, what standards are expected and how their work contributes to this.</p> <p>Financial and resource allocation and other information are being introduced into performance discussions.</p>	<p>Leaders and staff are clear what standards are required, understand the performance management system, and know how to use evidence. They talk about it easily and how it fits with their work.</p> <p>A full range of evidence, including finance, workforce and other resource information is an integral part of evidenced discussions about performance.</p>
Staff, senior officers and members know what is required of them in requesting and interrogating information, and have the skills and capacity to use information effectively.		
<p>There is little collection, analysis or use of the potential range of information available such as qualitative intelligence, voice of the child/family/community. Audits are not regular or embedded.</p>	<p>Members and staff can access and use a range of robust national and local information. Audits are embedded with a regular focus on the right things to form a more complete picture.</p>	<p>Members and staff access a range of timely robust information including learning from audits and other QA activity on a planned basis, which includes 'the story behind the data'.</p>
The organisation has the capacity to challenge performance and generate improvement.		
<p>Horizon scanning, commissioning, risk management and data quality are separate from performance management.</p>	<p>Forward planning and commissioning is being introduced into reporting and risks (including data quality) are reviewed alongside performance.</p>	<p>Forward planning, commissioning and management of risk are an integral element of performance management and are effective.</p>

Performance Management Diagnostic Tool for Children's Services

Self-assessment framework and templates

The following templates are designed to help steer you through the self-assessment process and understand how effective your performance management is, drawing on the views of several people in a structured and consistent format.

How to approach the assessment is up to each organisation. For example you may ask a number of people to review and complete the self-assessment templates independently and compare, or through group discussions. Or they could form the basis of interviews with individuals or groups.

The following tables expand on each of the five features of effective and sustainable performance management detailed on page 7. To help those completing the assessment to form a view we have listed a number of aspects underpinning the feature followed by L (limited), D (developing), E (effective). These are provided to help structure the assessment and identify specific areas of strength or weakness. They are intended to assist as a prompt, but do not provide a 'formula' to determine the overall view recorded for that feature.

A self-assessment template is provided for each of the key features asking those carrying out the assessment to rate the organisation's current position as Limited, Developing or Effective, along with a reflection on the current position and how improvements can be made. It is expected that templates will be completed by a number of people, and then reviewed and summarised to provide an overall assessment for the organisation.

Once an agreed view on the current position has been reached, the key to improvement is to agree what actions are needed. An outline template for developing your action plan is provided on page 23. The purpose of this is to stimulate and summarise actions required following the review. Depending on the actions agreed it is expected that a more detailed action plan will be needed.

<p>1 The organisation has a culture that values and exploits the power of information, with evidence of strong governance and leadership support for effective performance management.</p>			
<p><i>Please indicate the appropriate level for each (Limited, Developing or Effective)</i></p>	<p>L</p>	<p>D</p>	<p>E</p>
<p>1.1 Performance management is supported by a clear and effective vision and performance management framework, which includes golden threads from national, local area and corporate priorities to individual performance appraisals.</p>			
<p>1.2 Performance management, quality assurance, audit and service or business planning are incorporated together, with clear links showing how the learning from one impacts and contributes to the other.</p>			
<p>1.3 The potential for capturing, sharing and using information to improve services is promoted and proactively supported within each strategic area. Key staff own the information – understanding what is held, how it is used and adds value, who has access and why.</p>			
<p>1.4 Information risks are managed effectively as an integral part of performance management (e.g. business continuity, data security, data protection). There is senior management responsibility for knowledge risk and oversight of how effectively the risks are managed.</p>			
<p>1.5 There is a strategic approach to ensure the information available to services supports delivery of business objectives. Regular reviews are undertaken to determine the extent to which the information available remains appropriate to business objectives.</p>			
<p>1.6 There is clear leadership and ownership of information, performance management and quality assurance at appropriate levels to maximise effectiveness and accountability.</p>			
<p>1.7 Data quality is assured through a strategic and systematic approach. Data quality issues are dealt with quickly and effectively.</p>			
<p>1.8 Managers are assured that systems operate effectively and consistently and remedial action is undertaken where appropriate.</p>			
<p>1.9 Leaders and staff have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of their organisation or service through effective performance management.</p>			

The organisation has a culture that values and exploits the power of information, with evidence of strong governance and leadership support for effective performance management.

Circle one of the options below to best represent your perception of where you are on the journey

LIMITED

DEVELOPING

EFFECTIVE

How well are we doing?

A review of our current position, and strengths and challenges.

How can we improve?

2 There is evidence of and a commitment to good information standards.			
<i>Please indicate the appropriate level for each (Limited, Developing or Effective)</i>	L	D	E
2.1 The potential for capturing, sharing and using information to improve services is promoted and proactively supported within each strategic area. Key staff own information contained within each system and on paper – understanding what is held, how it is used and transferred, who has access and why.			
2.2 Data collection is undertaken in accordance with agreed protocols that reflect agreed standards and meet service and strategic requirements – both local and national. Common data quality standards are in place across all services.			
2.3 Availability of high quality data and analysis is enabled through effective use of technology, providing access to timely information for those who need it.			
2.4 Robustness of data is maintained through regular reviews and prompt remedial action at appropriate levels within the organisation.			
2.5 Performance reports and analysis are prepared in a consistent and readable manner and adhere to data reporting standards, clearly identifying the source, version, and the basis of any analysis or adjustments carried out.			
2.6 Agreed information sharing guidelines are in place to support local intelligence about children and families within the local area. Sharing information is actively promoted within and between services and with partners at an individual case and aggregated basis.			
2.7 Data reported and collected has a clear purpose. Requirements are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that the focus is on collecting and reporting what is important, and to stop measuring what is no longer relevant.			

There is evidence of and a commitment to good information standards.

Circle one of the options below to best represent your perception of where you are on the journey

LIMITED

DEVELOPING

EFFECTIVE

How well are we doing?

A review of our current position, and strengths and challenges.

How can we improve?

3 There is clarity and shared understanding about the role and scope of the performance management and quality assurance framework.			
<i>Please indicate the appropriate level for each (Limited, Developing or Effective)</i>	L	D	E
3.1 There are clear links between priority setting and business planning, use of information (service data, voice of the child, research, etc.), quality assurance and audit, needs assessment and future changes in your organisation and the local area.			
3.2 Local knowledge is shared and utilised to ensure priorities and services are relevant to the local communities, drawing on accessible and joined up demographic information and needs assessments. For example child poverty needs assessment, joint strategic needs assessment, and crime and disorder partnership needs assessments.			
3.3 Arrangements for capturing and reviewing customer feedback (children, parents/carers, other professionals), including complaints, is effective and routinely incorporated into performance management.			
3.4 Finance and workforce data form an integral part of performance reporting and performance management.			
3.5 Intelligence from front line workers and professionals is captured and reviewed as a data source, contributing to horizon scanning and providing softer intelligence.			
3.6 Intelligence is service/organisation focussed. Data is accompanied by 'the story behind the data' provided by the service so that the data supports and informs service provision.			
3.7 Appropriate and achievable performance standards are set, and all staff are aware of them. Quality is assured through performance management, audit and other quality assurance activities.			
3.8 Equality assessment and analysis of performance information by vulnerable or hard to reach groups is routinely undertaken. Performance management informs and contributes to understanding provision for the differing needs of the child and family.			
3.9 Risk management, project management and contract monitoring form part of the performance framework.			
3.10 Business continuity and organisational memory ensure that experience and local knowledge is captured and maintained.			
3.11 National, regional (and international) knowledge and research and examples of best practice inform practice and decision making.			
3.12 Forecasting and horizon scanning of changes which may affect the organisation are routinely undertaken and feed into setting priorities, targets, resource allocation and risk management .			

There is clarity and shared understanding about the role and scope of the performance management and quality assurance framework.

Circle one of the options below to best represent your perception of where you are on the journey

LIMITED

DEVELOPING

EFFECTIVE

How well are we doing?

A review of our current position, and strengths and challenges.

How can we improve?

<p>4 Staff, senior officers and members know what is required of them in requesting and interrogating information, and have the skills and capacity to use information effectively.</p>			
<p><i>Please indicate the appropriate level for each (Limited, Developing or Effective)</i></p>	<p>L</p>	<p>D</p>	<p>E</p>
<p>4.1 All staff (practitioners, managers and information officers) have the necessary skills to produce, analyse and interpret data appropriately according to their role. They have the skills to form and test hypotheses, understand current performance, trajectories and targets, and can challenge performance.</p> <p>4.2 Staff show an understanding of the cause and effect of inputs and outcomes, and are able to be outcomes focussed to ask “so what difference are we making?”</p> <p>4.3 Members and staff understand the performance management system and how to use evidence, compare performance (benchmarking), talk about these easily and know how it fits into their work.</p> <p>4.4 Supervision and appraisals include a review of relevant information, and there is meaningful discussion about the priorities, performance and targets at organisation and individual level.</p> <p>4.5 Members and staff are comfortable in challenging and interrogating the data presented, and there is willingness to explore and dig into the story behind the data.</p>			

Staff, senior officers and members know what is required of them in requesting and interrogating information, and have the skills and capacity to use information effectively.

Circle one of the options below to best represent your perception of where you are on the journey

LIMITED

DEVELOPING

EFFECTIVE

How well are we doing?

A review of our current position, and strengths and challenges.

How can we improve?

5 The organisation has the capacity to challenge performance and generate improvement.			
<i>Please indicate the appropriate level for each (Limited, Developing or Effective)</i>	L	D	E
<p>5.1 Leaders are open to external challenge and robust self-assessment. Swift action is taken to address inspection and peer review findings.</p> <p>5.2 Improvement, where needed, is generated through corrective actions which are identified, prioritised and implemented with due consideration to resource and other implications.</p> <p>5.3 Relevant stakeholders are involved in identifying solutions to improve and in undertaking these, taking ownership of the improvement required.</p> <p>5.4 Performance monitoring drives the audit programme and areas for audit and re-audit and vice versa.</p> <p>5.5 Learning from performance issues, audit and other quality assurance activity feed systematically into workforce development and is effective in generating improvement.</p> <p>5.6 Lessons and non-compliance from audits, Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) and performance management, together with recommendations from inspection and evaluation, feeds into the staff and IT development programme where appropriate.</p> <p>5.7 Commissioners and providers are able to use performance management effectively to manage and monitor contracts and ensure appropriate outcomes for children and young people. Any issues are evidenced and addressed.</p> <p>5.8 Improvements are sustainable and there is evidence of a shared vision for continuous improvement.</p>			

The organisation has the capacity to challenge performance and generate improvement.

Circle one of the options below to best represent your perception of where you are on the journey

LIMITED

DEVELOPING

EFFECTIVE

How well are we doing?

A review of our current position, and strengths and challenges.

How can we improve?

Summary of the review

Where are we on our journey?			
	L	D	E
The organisation has a culture that values and exploits the power of information, with evidence of strong governance and leadership support for effective performance management.			
There is evidence of and a commitment to good information standards.			
There is clarity and shared understanding about the role and scope of the performance management and quality assurance framework.			
Staff, senior officers and members know what is required of them in requesting and interrogating information, and have the skills and capacity to use information effectively.			
The organisation has the capacity to challenge performance and generate improvement.			

The summary should pull together views on the following key areas. However responses to the assessment should also provide more detailed information to underpin the improvement plan. For example any common concerns arising, issues around resourcing and skills, confidence and expectations from information provided.

Overall, how well do we think we are doing?

What are we currently doing well?

Where can we improve?

Developing an action plan for improvement

Your action plan for improvement will be specific to the needs of your authority, informed by the findings of the review. The steps below are designed to support you in taking forward the findings of the review, and developing an agreed, resourced and timetabled plan of action to achieve the performance management arrangements that your authority aspires to.

Who will we share the results of the diagnostic with and who do we need to include in developing the improvement activity?

What resources do we need to take forward the development of improvement activity?

Who will agree the plan for improvement, and by when?

Organisation/service Area:

Date completed:

Person with lead responsibility for the self-assessment:

Names and roles of those who have contributed to the self- assessment: