

Self-evaluation for improvement – summary guide

Daycare of children services



Contents

About this summary guide.....	2
What is self-evaluation?	2
The self-evaluation for improvement cycle	3
Identify your focus.....	3
Gather your information / evidence.....	4
Make your assessment (evaluation)	4
Evidence your assessment.....	5
Identify your areas for development.....	5
Plan your changes	5
Assess your impact.....	6
Useful resources	7

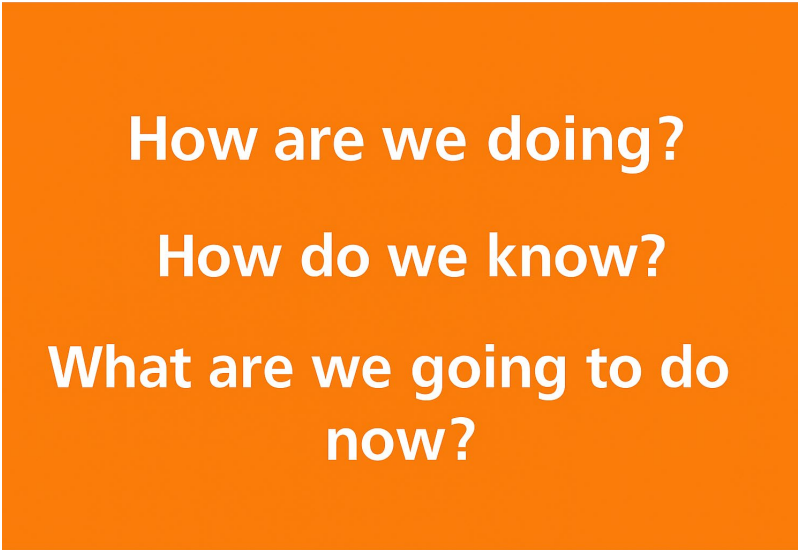
About this summary guide

This guide sets out the main structure for self-evaluation. It gives a clear overview of the key steps and ideas so you can see how the process fits together. When you want more detail or examples at any stage, you can use the [Self-evaluation for improvement – step by step guide](#) alongside this one.

What is self-evaluation?

Self-evaluation is a reflective process that helps you understand how well your service is working and where improvement is needed. It involves looking at achievements, systems and day-to-day practice to see what is going well, what needs to change, and how your actions are making a difference for children and families.

This guide follows the **self-evaluation for improvement cycle**, which includes these **three self-evaluation questions**.



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

Using the cycle will help you to:

- understand how well your service is performing
- recognise strengths and areas for improvement
- plan and monitor your improvement work.

The self-evaluation for improvement cycle



Identify your focus

Start by deciding what you want to look at more closely. This might come from feedback, or areas highlighted through your own quality assurance activities. It's about choosing something meaningful to explore that will help you to improve outcomes for children and families. It works best when children, young people, families, carers, and staff participate in the process.

Things to consider:

- **What are you going to focus on?** Will you evaluate a full quality indicator, a key area, or a specific aspect of practice?
 - Are you starting with a wide area or beginning small with a specific aspect of service delivery and its impact on children and families' experiences?
 - **Who will you involve and how?** Which voices need to be included, and what methods will you use to gather their views?
-

Gather your information / evidence

Bring together what you know. This could include observations, feedback, quality assurance, or anything else that helps build a fuller picture of what is happening.

Things to consider:

- What types of evidence do you currently have available in your setting? What could you use, adapt, or build on to support your self-evaluation activities?
 - Which standards, good practice guidance, or quality illustrations could you use to benchmark your findings?
 - Are you drawing on a balanced range of evidence - such as feedback, observations, and records - to triangulate your findings and build an accurate, well-rounded picture of your setting?
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Make your assessment (evaluation)

Reflect on how things are going. Use the '**So what?**' question to help you understand - What's working well? What could be better? What impact is it having on outcomes for children and families? This is your chance to pause and consider the strengths and areas for development in your chosen area. Use this information to answer the '**How are we doing?**' question.

Things to consider:

- What does your analysis of the evidence tell you about how well your setting is performing?
 - Which key strengths and areas for development are emerging from your assessment of the evidence?
 - How consistently have you used the six-point scale and relevant benchmarks to support your evaluation?
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Evidence your assessment

Think about what has informed your evaluation – answer the ‘**How do we know?**’ question. What evidence helped shape your view? This step makes your reasoning clear and helps everyone develop a shared understanding of your evaluation. You should also write down your key findings and the evidence that supports them, so others can see how you reached your conclusions and how this links to the six-point scale.

Things to consider:

- What does your evidence really show?
 - Have you used clear evaluative statements to show how well your setting is performing?
 - Is it clear which evidence has informed your evaluation using the six-point scale, and are you identifying both strengths and areas for improvement?
 - Have you used the ‘**So what?**’ question to understand what your evidence reveals about children and families lived experiences and outcomes?
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Identify your areas for development

Now that you have reflected, does anything need to change? Are there things that could be improved? This is where you start to shape your next steps by answering the ‘**What are we going to do now?**’ question.

Things to consider:

- **What needs to improve?** Based on your evaluation, which areas clearly need change, including any quick wins you can act on now?
 - **How can you build on what’s working?** Are there existing strengths or skills that can support positive change, and which areas may require a more structured, longer-term approach?
 - **Are your priorities realistic and impactful?** Focus on what matters most for children and families’ experiences, rights, choices, and wellbeing, and consider whether your resources (time, staffing, budget, and support) make your planned actions achievable and sustainable.
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Plan your changes

Use what you have learned to create a clear and achievable improvement plan. Think about the outcomes you want to achieve and the actions you will take. Consider what good practice guidance can support your planning, who needs to be

involved, and when each action will happen. You should also think about how children and families can help shape the plan, ensuring their views influence the changes you make. You might find it helpful to use the [Model for Improvement](#) at this stage.

Things to consider:

- Who needs to be part of shaping the changes to build shared ownership and support?
 - How will you involve children and families in developing and refining the plan?
 - How will you keep sight of progress and stay informed about actions being taken by others?
 - What measures will you use to check whether your planned changes are having the desired impact on children and families' experiences and outcomes?
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Assess your impact

After making changes, take time to review them. What difference did they make? Use the '**So what?**' question to help you understand the impact of your changes and decide what to do next - adapt, adopt, or abandon?

Things to consider:

- What positive changes are you beginning to see, even if they feel small? What can you celebrate?
 - Are you giving yourself the time and space you need to pause, reflect, and understand your progress?
 - Who could you involve in helping you gain a fuller picture of how things are going?
 - Do you need to adjust your approach as you move forward? Are there any aspects of the cycle you want to revisit?
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Useful resources

These are only some of the resources available to support your self-evaluation. You can find the full list in the **Self-evaluation for improvement – step by step guide**.

Care Inspectorate	Self-evaluation step by step guide Quality frameworks Self-evaluation toolkit - daycare of children Self-evaluation toolkit - school-aged childcare Quality framework - six-point scale for evaluation Quality improvement tools and resources ELC improvement programme
The Scottish Government	Health and Social Care Standards Realising the Ambition: Being Me
Healthcare Improvement Scotland	Participation toolkit
TURAS Learn	Model for Improvement

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