



Supporting the
Third Sector Project

Self-evaluation tool:
*How good is our third sector
participation in Children's
Services Planning?*





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Introduction

This self-evaluation tool forms part of a developing suite of resources aimed at supporting partners across Scotland to work collectively to improve outcomes for children, young people and families, and has been informed by feedback from a pilot phase.

It was created in response to an identified need to strengthen the role of the third sector within Children's Services Planning approaches across Scotland, and aims to provide Children's Services Planning Partnerships (CSPPs) with a structured approach to local discussions which considers different aspects of third sector participation across key strategic tasks in development, delivery, and reporting on Children's Services Plans.

More information can be found in the following reports:

- **Improving outcomes for children, young people and families: review of Children's Services Plans (2020-2023) and strategic engagement activity (July 2023)**
- **STTS Project Survey 2023: Third Sector Participation in Children's Services Planning (August 2023)**
- **How good is our third sector's participation in Children's Services Planning Self-evaluation tool: report on pilot sites**



Purpose and use

Self-evaluation has been an important feature of partnership working for many years, for supporting improved standards and quality of service delivery, as well as reflecting on the effectiveness of collaborative strategic planning and decision-making. The use of quality indicators helps provide a structured approach to evaluating 'where are we now?' and 'where and how might we improve things further?'.

'How Good is Our Third Sector Participation in Children's Services Planning' aims to facilitate Children's Services Planning Partnerships to take a fresh look at local arrangements and build on opportunities to strengthen collaboration between and across public and third sector partners in development and delivery of the local Children's Services Plan.

The tool has been co-developed as a resource to help Children's Services Planning Partnerships (CSPPs) reflect on the extent of existing engagement with, and participation of, third sector partners, and seeks to enhance existing local approaches to collective leadership, strategic development, and identification of improvement activity.

The tool is not designed to be used and completed as a one-off activity, but instead CSPPs are encouraged to draw on relevant sections at different points across the three-year planning cycle in the way that makes most sense to local needs. Partners should feel free to use the tool flexibly and can adapt questions to suit the CSPP's individual circumstances and needs.

Use of the **six-point scale** provides a framework for Children's Services Planning partners to structure collective conversations, to identify and evaluate evidence of local public and third sector collaboration, and to highlight areas of good practice, as well as agree areas for further development or improvement.





Children's Services Planning context

Part 3 **Statutory Guidance** for Children's Services Planning highlights the important role of the third sector throughout the development, delivery and reporting on each area's local Children Services Plan. The role of Third Sector Interfaces is highlighted as key to wider co-ordination and engagement of local third sector organisations, to facilitate their contribution to a range of tasks across each three-year planning cycle.

Part 3 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 sets out a number of duties on each local authority and health board requiring them to work collaboratively with named 'other service providers' to improve outcomes for children, young people and families living in the local area. They must provide effective opportunity for consultation with a wide range of stakeholders in developing, delivering and reporting on the local Children's Services Plan (CSP), including members of the local community, those using services, the workforce, and organisations in the public and third sector. The CSP should consider provision of children's services, adult services provided to parents or carers, and community-based services.

Each CSPP should embed a local approach which upholds children's rights, delivers on the ambitions of Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) and principles of holistic whole family support and meets the overarching aims of Children's Services Planning to:

- Safeguard, support, and promote the wellbeing of all children, young people and families (**Wellbeing (SHANARRI)**)
- Ensure action taken to meet needs is taken at the earliest opportunity and, where appropriate, prevents needs arising (**Early Intervention & Primary Prevention**)
- Make sure services and support are experienced as integrated from the point of view of recipients (**Collaboration/Partnership**)
- Constitute best use of available resources across local partners (Assets, Budgets, Workforce) (**Best Value**)
- **Related Services** (as appropriate to delivery context) also safeguard, support and promote wellbeing of children (e.g. adult and community-based services/support).

Children's Services Planning partners may find it helpful to refer to the following sections of Part 3 statutory guidance, to support local self-evaluation discussions:

- **Appendix A:** Children's Services Plans **Statutory Review Criteria**
- **Appendix B:** Care Inspectorate's **10 Steps to Successful Children's Services Planning**.



Self-evaluation: three areas of focus

The table below helps the CSPP to identify priority area(s) for self-evaluation based on the three areas of focus. These closely link with key tasks and duties set out within Children’s Services Planning legislation (Part 3) and supporting statutory guidance.

Once partners agree the area(s) of focus to explore, challenge questions support more in-depth discussion of themes, and provide a structured way for partners to reflect on current performance, identify available evidence, highlight good practice, and agree improvement actions.

What is our CSPP’s capacity for improvement? Areas of focus		
1. Leadership	2. Children’s Services Planning: Strategic planning and delivery of services/support	3. Measuring success and demonstrating impact
How good is third sector involvement in our collective leadership and approach to improvement?	How good is third sector participation in strategic planning and delivery of services?	How good are we at ensuring effective third sector participation is contributing to improved outcomes for children, young people and families?
1.1 Self-evaluation for self-improvement 1.2 Collective leadership	2.1 Participation of the third sector 2.2 Third sector representation within local children’s services planning arrangements 2.3 Participation of the wider third sector and community	3.1 Quality assurance and effective use of data 3.2 Local and national outcomes 3.3 Transitions and equalities



Quality indicators: challenge questions

1. Leadership		
Themes	Challenge questions	Features of highly effective practice
<p>1.1 Self-evaluation for self-improvement</p> <p>Collaborative approaches to self-evaluation</p> <p>Evidence-based improvement</p>	<p>Does the third sector have effective opportunities to contribute to self-evaluation as an integral aspect of the CSPP’s approach to continuous improvement?</p> <p>To what extent is the third sector actively involved in self-evaluation exercises and development/delivery of improvement activities?</p> <p>To what extent is third sector participation evident in quality improvement and moderation activity?</p> <p>How good is the range of third sector data and information gathered to support progress monitoring of improvement activity, and in relation to the strategic priorities of our Children’s Services Plan?</p> <p>Do we analyse and use the full range of evidence and data available from third</p>	<p>There is a strong ethos of collective improvement through sharing practice, and through peer support and challenge.</p> <p>Third sector representatives provide leading roles within local strategic governance of the CSPP.</p> <p>The third sector partners are actively involved in developing and delivering strategic improvement activities.</p> <p>Good quality third sector data and information is used as part of self-evaluation.</p> <p>Third sector helps represent the views of local children, young people, parents/carers and families, and these views are effectively used by the CSPP to inform self-evaluation and decision-making.</p> <p>We actively seek feedback from and implement measures to improve third sector participation within our Children’s Services Planning arrangements.</p>

	<p>sector partners, with confidence this ensures a clear focus on those priorities which will have greatest impact on outcomes for children and families?</p> <p>What steps have we taken to develop a local approach to planning, monitoring, tracking and evaluation so this is manageable and relevant for all involved, including third sector partners?</p> <p>Do we have a collective and shared understanding of the CSPP's strengths and improvement needs which reflects third sector perspectives?</p>	
<p>1.2 Collective leadership</p> <p>Developing a shared vision, values and aims</p> <p>Developing third sector capacity in leadership of change and improvement</p>	<p>To what extent are third sector partners involved in developing and embedding a shared vision, values and culture for the CSPP?</p> <p>To what extent are third sector organisations aware of how and where they contribute to the aims and priorities of our local Children's Services Plan?</p> <p>How effectively do we communicate our vision with children, families and third sector partners?</p> <p>To what extent does the third sector and the communities it supports have a say in shaping our future direction?</p>	<p>Senior leaders in the third sector demonstrate that they are highly committed to provide strong leadership to develop and sustain the CSPP's vision, values and culture.</p> <p>Third sector senior leaders communicate and seek assurance that partners in the third sector more widely understand the local vision, values and culture, and communicate this to children and families in the local communities.</p> <p>Third sector leaders are supported to develop capacity to lead change and collective improvement.</p>

2. Children's Services Planning: Strategic planning and delivery of services

Themes	Challenge questions	Features of highly effective practice
<p>2.1 Participation of the third sector</p> <p>Third sector participation at different levels within local CSP arrangements</p> <p>Third sector participation is evident at different stages of the planning process</p> <p>Analysis and evaluation of data and intelligence</p>	<p>To what extent does the third sector participate at all levels of local children's services planning arrangements (leadership, strategic management, service delivery, frontline practice)?</p> <p>To what extent are third sector partners involved throughout key stages and tasks over the children's services planning cycle?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding local population needs of children, young people and families • Agreeing strategic priorities • Scoping services and identifying gaps • Preparing and consulting with the third sector and communities on the Children's Services Plan • Resourcing and budget decisions • Joint strategic commissioning • Service planning and design • Reviewing the Children's Services Plan • Demonstrating increased shift in resources to prevention and early intervention. 	<p>Third sector partners are fully involved in the preparation, consultation, decision-making and review of our children's services plan.</p> <p>Through co-ordination, facilitation and representation, a large variety of third sector organisations are involved in children's services planning processes and key tasks, including big and small; commissioned and non-commissioned services.</p> <p>Good quality third sector data and information is used by the CSPP to identify local needs.</p> <p>Service mapping includes third sector services (commissioned and non-commissioned) to understand and make best use of locally available resources and identify gaps in service provision.</p> <p>We have a whole-systems approach which includes third sector services and supports a joined-up approach between services, including at key points of transition.</p> <p>The third sector is involved in financial discussions and decision-making, and the CSPP explores opportunities to access additional funding via third sector partners.</p> <p>We have a robust and innovative approach to joint commissioning which enables collaboration with third sector partners.</p> <p>We share ownership of reviewing our Children's Services Plan.</p>

2.2 Third sector representation within local Children's Services Planning arrangements

Roles and
expectations

Developing capacity

Support and
resources

How well is the third sector **represented** at different levels of the partnership?

Have we developed a shared understanding and reasonable expectations of the **role of the TSI and the third sector representatives** within the CSPP?

To what extent do we have an effective **system for third sector representation** which includes the TSI and wider third sector partners?

Have we allocated sufficient **resources** to support the TSI and third sector representatives to fully participate and contribute to the work and decision-making processes of the CSPP?

How well do we help **develop leadership capacity** within the third sector?

The third sector is represented at all levels within the strategic partnership e.g. priority groups, strategic group, leadership.

There is a shared understanding of the role of the TSI and third sector representatives amongst partners within the CSPP.

Third sector representatives feel confident in undertaking the responsibilities of their role in the CSPP and are able to express clearly and fully the views of the sector.

Third sector representatives are adequately resourced to effectively represent the sector.

Third sector representatives are able to participate fully and take a leadership role within partnership meetings, raising agenda items and issues for discussion.

Third sector representatives are given sufficient time to consult and prepare in advance of decision-making in order to contribute effectively on behalf of the wider sector.

The local Third Sector Interface (TSI) is adequately resourced to co-ordinate representation by the sector and provide necessary support to representatives.

Third Sector partners are resourced to participate including access to relevant training, guidance and support.

2.3 Participation of the wider third sector and community

Support structure
and mechanism

Consultation

How well is **collaboration** with the third sector working to ensure a joined-up approach at **every level** of the CSPP (strategic, operational, frontline)?

Is the Children's Services Plan **informed by relevant local third sector data and information**?

How well do we engage the wider third sector in **consultation on development of our Children's Services Plan**?

Do **local networks enable ongoing participation** by the wider third sector in planning and decision-making?

There is good communication with the wider sector and easy access to clear information about the Children's Services Plan and local CSP arrangements e.g. CSPP/TSI website.

There is a transparent and effective system in place (e.g. a local third sector network/forum) to enable wider sector views to be properly represented within key tasks and decision-making.

Third sector organisations are clear who represents them on different groups within local CSPP arrangements, and are aware of how to contribute via their reps.

Third sector representatives are elected or nominated by the third sector.

We meaningfully engage with a wide range of third sector organisations and community groups to ensure the views, concerns and wishes of children, young people, parents/carers and families influence local decision-making?

Through co-ordination, facilitation and representation, the wider third sector is able to represent the views of children, young people and families to inform the Children's Services Plan.

We make best use of local third sector data, knowledge and expertise to inform joint strategic commissioning and service planning decisions.

3. Measuring success and demonstrating impact

Themes	Challenge questions	Features of highly effective practice
<p>3.1 Quality assurance and effective use of data</p> <p>Progress monitoring and reporting</p> <p>Use of evidence to inform service planning and decision-making</p>	<p>Do we have shared principles and approaches across public and third sector partners to local quality assurance, progress monitoring, and impact reporting that meets the statutory aims and review criteria for Children’s Services Planning?</p> <p>Do we have an agreed set of data and progress indicators which makes clear how and where third sector partners contribute to this?</p> <p>To what extent are third sector partners involved in collective analysis of local intelligence and data, including monitoring progress against agreed actions set out in the Children’s Services Plan?</p> <p>How well does CSPP decision-making reflect evidence and data from the third sector on child wellbeing and service provision?</p> <p>Do we have a robust approach to evaluating the impact of services and activity set out in our children’s services plan on outcomes for local children, young people and families which reflects third sector perspectives?</p>	<p>Third sector participation is clear throughout CSPP quality assurance activity.</p> <p>The CSPP’s approach to analysis and use of data informs improvements in service planning, as well as effective reporting on progress of actions and impact on outcomes.</p> <p>Our data and intelligence evidence base includes robust third sector information to provide a clear understanding of local needs of children, young people and families and this directly informs future service planning.</p> <p>We utilise third sector data on the impact of services, support and improvement activity on outcomes for children and families to inform future investment/disinvestment resourcing decisions.</p> <p>All partners feel valued and are empowered to offer constructive challenge where needed.</p> <p>We use third sector data and evidence to monitor impact and report against national and local outcomes.</p> <p>We have a clear communication strategy which celebrates success and recognises the role of third sector partners in achievements and progress.</p>

Do we foster a culture of transparency which encourages honest dialogue and constructive challenge by and with third sector partners?

Do we have **clear CSPP assurance processes** that ensure third sector delivery is taking place as agreed in relation to strategic priorities, service delivery and improvement activity?

How well do we celebrate and **communicate achievements with and by** third sector partners as part of our annual reporting?

3.2 Local and national outcomes

Delivering on local outcomes

Aligning activity with national outcomes

Do we have a clear approach to the use of third sector information in evaluating the extent to which we have **achieved outcomes** set out in our children's services plan?

Is there a clear third sector voice in agreeing local outcomes and priorities?

Is there a clear **connection between local delivery activity and national outcomes**?

Robust qualitative and quantitative evidence from third sector partners is used to demonstrate how the children's services plan is meeting the needs of local children, young people and families, and leading to improved wellbeing outcomes.

There is a clear alignment between local activity and achievement of national priorities and outcomes, such as Keeping the Promise, tackling poverty and inequalities, providing holistic whole family support, embedding GIRFEC, upholding the UNCRC etc.

The CSPP draws on available third sector data to demonstrate achievement of local and national outcomes.

3.3 Transitions and equalities

Collaborative
planning and delivery

Reducing
inequality gaps

To what extent are third sector partners involved in making sure **transitions between children's and adult services** are effective and streamlined for young people?

How well are third sector partners involved in local Children's Services Planning activity aimed at tackling **poverty and other inequalities?**

Do we have a clear and effective system in place which supports proportionate and lawful **communication and information-sharing** with third sector partners in relation to individual children, young people and parents/ carers?

We can demonstrate a joined-up approach which includes third sector services in supporting smooth transitions for young people as they move into adulthood.

We have a local approach which demonstrates how outcomes for disadvantaged groups of children, young people and families are being improved through improvement activity and provision of services which tackle inequalities.

We have a robust approach to collaborative planning and delivery of support to individual children, young people and families which involves third sector partners.



APPENDIX 1: Six-Point Scale

The six-point scale is a way to provide a structured approach to evaluate current performance in relation to the quality indicators and can help CSPPs objectively measure change and improvements over time. This is consistent with the approach used by public services and scrutiny bodies across Scotland and can support local as well as national benchmarking.

It is not essential to use the six-point scale unless partners find this helpful. Where CSPPs choose to use the scale, an overall score is agreed for each quality indicator as a whole, rather than for every challenge question.



Excellent

An evaluation of excellent means that this aspect of the partnership's work is outstanding and sector leading. An evaluation of excellent represents an outstanding standard of provision which exemplifies very best practice, based on achieving equity and inclusion and a deep professional understanding which is being shared beyond individual partners to support system-wide improvement. It implies that very high levels of performance are sustainable and will be maintained.

Very good

An evaluation of very good means that there are major strengths in this aspect of work. There are very few areas for improvement and any that do exist are not significant. An evaluation of very good represents a high standard of partnership working and is a standard that should be achievable by all. There is an expectation that the CSPP will make continued use of self-evaluation to plan further improvements and will work towards improving performance to excellent.

Good

An evaluation of good means that there are important strengths within this work yet there remain some aspects which require improvement. The strengths have a significantly positive impact on almost all parts of children's services. The quality of the partnership is diminished in some way by aspects in which improvement is required. It implies that the partnership should seek to improve further the areas of important strength, and also take action to address the areas for improvement.

Satisfactory

An evaluation of satisfactory means that the strengths within this aspect of work just outweigh the weaknesses. It indicates that partnership meets the basic requirement of collaborative working. It represents a standard where the strengths have a positive impact on the partnership. While the weaknesses are not important enough to have a substantially adverse impact, they do constrain the overall quality of children's services. The partnership needs to take action to address areas of weakness by building on its strengths.

Weak

An evaluation of weak means that there are important weaknesses within this aspect of the work. While there may be some strength, the important weaknesses, either individually or collectively, are sufficient to diminish children's services in substantial ways. It implies the need for prompt, structured and planned action on the part of the partnership.

Unsatisfactory

An evaluation of unsatisfactory means there are major weaknesses within this aspect of work which require immediate remedial action. The planning and delivery of children's services are at risk in significant respects. In almost all cases, this will require support from senior leaders in planning and carrying out the necessary actions to effect improvement.



APPENDIX 2: Self-evaluation template

<p>1.1 Self-evaluation for self-improvement</p>	<p>How would we evaluate this Quality Indicator using the six-point scale? Excellent Very good Good Satisfactory Weak Unsatisfactory</p> <p>See appendix 1 for reference</p>		
<p>Themes explored:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative approaches to self-evaluation • Evidence-based improvement 	<p>How are we doing? What's working well?</p> <p>What are the features of effective partnership with the third sector?</p>	<p>How do we know?</p> <p>What evidence do we have for this?</p>	<p>What are we going to do now?</p> <p>What actions will move us forward? (Improvement priorities highlighted in this area)</p>

1.2 Collective leadership	How would we evaluate this Quality Indicator using the six-point scale? Excellent Very good Good Satisfactory Weak Unsatisfactory See appendix 1 for reference		
Themes explored: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a shared vision, values and aims • Developing third sector capacity in leadership of change and improvement 	How are we doing? What's working well? What are the features of effective partnership with the third sector?	How do we know? What evidence do we have for this?	What are we going to do now? What actions will move us forward? (Improvement priorities highlighted in this area)

2.1 Participation of the third sector	How would we evaluate this Quality Indicator using the six-point scale? Excellent Very good Good Satisfactory Weak Unsatisfactory See appendix 1 for reference		
Themes explored: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third sector's participation at different levels within local CSP arrangements • Third sector's participation is evident at different stages of the planning process • Analysis and evaluation of data and intelligence 	How are we doing? What's working well? What are the features of effective partnership with the third sector?	How do we know? What evidence do we have for this?	What are we going to do now? What actions will move us forward? (Improvement priorities highlighted in this area)

<p>2.2 Third sector's representation within local Children's Services Planning arrangements</p>	<p>How would we evaluate this Quality Indicator using the six-point scale? Excellent Very good Good Satisfactory Weak Unsatisfactory</p> <p>See appendix 1 for reference</p>		
<p>Themes explored:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roles and expectations • Developing capacity • Support and resources 	<p>How are we doing? What's working well?</p> <p>What are the features of effective partnership with the third sector?</p>	<p>How do we know?</p> <p>What evidence do we have for this?</p>	<p>What are we going to do now?</p> <p>What actions will move us forward? (Improvement priorities highlighted in this area)</p>

2.3 Participation of the wider third sector and the community	How would we evaluate this Quality Indicator using the six-point scale? Excellent Very good Good Satisfactory Weak Unsatisfactory See appendix 1 for reference		
Themes explored: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support structure and mechanism • Consultation 	How are we doing? What's working well? What are the features of effective partnership with the third sector?	How do we know? What evidence do we have for this?	What are we going to do now? What actions will move us forward? (Improvement priorities highlighted in this area)

3.1 Quality assurance and effective use of data	How would we evaluate this Quality Indicator using the six-point scale? Excellent Very good Good Satisfactory Weak Unsatisfactory See appendix 1 for reference		
Themes explored: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress monitoring and reporting • Using evidence to inform service planning and decision-making 	How are we doing? What's working well? What are the features of effective partnership with the third sector?	How do we know? What evidence do we have for this?	What are we going to do now? What actions will move us forward? (Improvement priorities highlighted in this area)

3.2 Local and national outcomes	How would we evaluate this Quality Indicator using the six-point scale? Excellent Very good Good Satisfactory Weak Unsatisfactory See appendix 1 for reference		
Themes explored: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivering on local outcomes • Aligning activity with national outcomes 	How are we doing? What's working well? What are the features of effective partnership with the third sector?	How do we know? What evidence do we have for this?	What are we going to do now? What actions will move us forward? (Improvement priorities highlighted in this area)

3.3 Transitions and equalities	How would we evaluate this Quality Indicator using the six-point scale? Excellent Very good Good Satisfactory Weak Unsatisfactory See appendix 1 for reference		
Themes explored: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative planning and delivery • Reducing inequality gaps 	How are we doing? What's working well? What are the features of effective partnership with the third sector?	How do we know? What evidence do we have for this?	What are we going to do now? What actions will move us forward? (Improvement priorities highlighted in this area)

Children in Scotland: Supporting the Third Sector (STTS) Project

This tool was co-developed and piloted by the **Supporting The Third Sector (STTS) Project**, based within Children in Scotland. STTS supports third sector partners to become more demonstrably involved in policy development, local and national planning, and decision-making aimed at improving outcomes for children, young people, and families.

The project supports strengthened approaches to collaboration across public and third sector partners, through clear paths for effective engagement with the third sector, with a line of sight to enhancing the role of local Third Sector Interfaces (TSIs) and members' contribution and participation in strategic service planning and priority setting. The project aims to enable strengthened awareness, impact, and influence of the third sector, through the provision of training, information-sharing, guidance, and peer support.



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