Supporting the Third Sector Project

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

Additional Resources

November 2025

Children in Scotland

What is this resource for?

This is a supplementary resource that can be used to support with the use of the *'How Good is Our Third Sector Participation in Children's Services Planning?'* Self-evaluation Tool. The document contains two step-by-step guides and links to a full suite of additional resources and templates:

1. Planning and Implementing the 'How Good is Our Third Sector Participation in Children's Services Planning' Self-evaluation Tool.
2. Using the 'How Good is Our Third Sector Participation in Children's Services Planning?' Self-Evaluation Tool Template.
3. Other Available Resources.

The first covers the planning and implementation stage of using the tool, providing an example of each stage in the process. The latter provides guidance on how to use the template that comes with the tool.

This resource contains suggestions based on the experiences of the pilot areas and can be found in the Learning Report 24-25. More information can be found below.

What is the 'How Good is Our Third Sector Participation in Children's Services Planning?' Self-evaluation Tool?

The 'How good is our third sector participation in Children's Services Planning?' self-evaluation tool was published in early 2024 alongside a report on the findings from some pilot activity in 2022-23.

This self-evaluation tool was developed 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.

This self-evaluation tool is not designed to be used as a one-off activity, but instead Children's Service Planning Partnerships or equivalent are encouraged to draw on relevant sections at different points across their 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.

Useful links:

- *'How Good is Our Third Sector Participation in Children's Services Planning?* Self-evaluation Tool (Includes Template)

- **Self-evaluation Tool Template** (Microsoft Word Version)

- **Self-Evaluation Tool: Report on Pilot Sites**

- **Learning Report on 2024-25 Intensive Locality Support**

1. Step-by-Step guide:
Planning and Implementing the 'How Good is Our Third Sector Participation in Children's Services Planning' Self-evaluation Tool

The HGIO tool is designed to be holistic and adaptable to your own approach and local area. Below is a suggested step by step guide on a potential approach to planning and implementing the HGIO Tool. These are suggestions based on the experiences of the pilot areas and can be found in Learning Report 24-25.

You can access the learning report here.

Step one:

Establish a project team involving key stakeholders including a TSI representative and key stakeholder from statutory services (Local Authority Strategic Lead, HSCP Representative, etc.). Project team to get sign off from senior leadership within children's services to take the work forward. Project team to also clearly identify roles and responsibilities to ensure clarity across the work.

Step two:

Consider the toolkit and the local context to understand whether there are specific areas you are particularly strong in or where you know you need to improve. Based on these discussions, identify your chosen 'Area of Focus'. You may want to engage local partners and colleagues such as a local Children, Young People and Families Third Sector Forum to support decisions about using the tool.

Step three:

Once an 'Area of Focus' is chosen, establish what sections will be focused on, for example:

- A specific set of challenge questions.
- Specific themes; or
- The whole 'Area of Focus' section.

Step four:

Establish a work plan for the next steps. For example, the core group could consider:

- A plan for engagement based round the tool.
- Identify key stakeholders to involve. This includes considering both third sector and statutory partners and the most appropriate roles for attendance.
- Identify how many engagement sessions will be delivered and how these will gather information.

Step five:

Creation of resources to promote and inform the third sector and statutory partners about the HGIO tool, the purpose of the work and any important information that may be needed prior to the engagement session.

Examples include:

- Creation of briefing papers including information about the HGIO tool and the current Children's Services Plan in that area.

- Video resource explaining the aims and process of the self-evaluation approach.

- Extra online sessions offered to provide people and organisations with the opportunity to ask any questions or to find out further information.

Step six:

Consider and create agenda(s)/session plan(s) for engaging with third sector and statutory partners. There should be flexibility in the format of these sessions, responding to the core groups' area of focus.
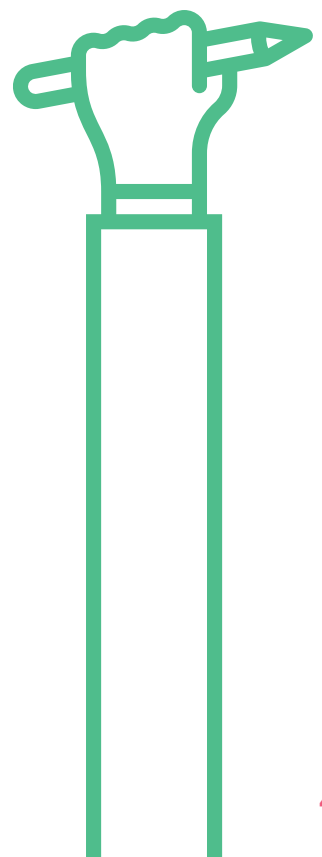
- For example, if choosing 'Area of Focus 2', you could consider splitting this across two sessions to cover all the themes. The sessions could consist of asking attendees in small groups various 'challenge questions' and 'examples of highly effective practice' from the HGIO self-evaluation tool.

- Discussions at engagement sessions should be facilitated by facilitators who understand the self-evaluation tool. Discussions should be recorded together feedback and build the evidence base.

Step seven:

After the session(s) has taken place, all notes should be written up and collated into themes to be input into the HGIO tool template.5 The core project team should come together to consider the findings. These should be considered alongside their own knowledge of the locality. From here, the group should identify areas for improvement and log this within the 'What will we do' column of the template to establish next steps and potential actions.

Step eight:

Based on the information included in the template and the actions identified under the 'What will we do' section, the core team should develop an improvement plan

2. Step-by-Step guide:
Using the 'How Good is Our Third Sector Participation in Children's Services Planning?' Self-Evaluation Tool Template

Below is a suggested step by step guide on how to use the tool's template once the engagement with partners has concluded. You can access the **HGIO Self-evaluation Tool template here** and the **Microsoft Word version here**.

Step one:

After the engagement sessions have concluded, input the data collected into the HGIO tool template in the relevant Area of Focus section. This information should be entered in the first column and if preferable under the themes of the area of focus.

Any direct evidence and examples can be input into the second column of the table.

Step two:

Read over and reflect on the recorded information in columns one and two within the template.

Step three:

Refresh your knowledge of the relevant Area of Focus' Examples of Highly Effective Practice which can be found in the HGIO tool under each area of focus.

Consider from the evidence that you have gathered and heard, the following:

1. Which examples of highly effective practice are we doing well?

2. Which examples of highly effective practice do we have capacity for improvement?

Step four:

Based on your own knowledge of the sector and the children's services planning, consider anything you may want to add from your experience, or you feel may be missing.

Step five:

After considering the above and assessing where you individually assess the current processes in your chosen area of focus, bring your findings and thoughts back to share with the core group and discuss. From this discussion, collectively and collaboratively agree areas that are working and areas that could be improved.

Step six:

In collaboration with the core group, identify actions for moving forward. Once those actions are agreed upon, identify how these findings and actions will be shared with those engaged with and the wider sectors.

3.   Other available resources

There are a variety of additional resources that have been created through the early adopters work which we have made available to assist with using the tool. These include:

Proposal template

This Proposal Template contains key information about the 'How Good is our Third Sector Participation in Children's Services Planning?' Self-evaluation Tool including some background, and the purpose and use of the tool. This can be used to support conversations with partners in the potential use of the tool.

Video resource and transcript

This is a 20-minute video resource which provides an introduction to the 'How Good is our Third Sector Participation in Children's Services Planning?' Self-evaluation Tool.

Engagement planning template

A template to assist with the long-term planning of using the 'How Good is our Third Sector Participation in Children's Services Planning?' Self-evaluation Tool and potential engagement. This should be created at the beginning of the planning process by the core group.

Briefing paper template

This Briefing Paper Template contains key information about the 'How Good is our Third Sector Participation in Children's Services Planning?' Self-evaluation Tool and provides an example in how to share information with stakeholders along with guidance and relevant links to inform future participants.

Self-evaluation template

This document contains the Self Evaluation Template which should be used in conjunction with the Self-evaluation Tool: How Good is our Third Sector Participation in Children's Service Planning?