Towards Excellence in Adult Social Care Programme

Making Best Use of Resources in Adult Social Care
Self Assessment Toolkit:

Guide to using the self-assessment toolkit

This self-assessment tool has been produced by Think Local Act Personal (TLAP) and Towards Excellence in Adult Social Care (TEASC) and alongside the publication, A Problem Shared: making best use of resources in Adult Social Care. It is part of an initiative to support councils, including their elected members, to make the best use of their resources, and to promote personalisation in a difficult and challenging context.

The toolkit is a work in progress. We will be doing further work in the next period to take this forward. Feedback and suggestions should be sent to oliver.mills@local.gov.uk

1) TLAP: The “Think Local Act Personal” Partnership, that promotes and supports personalised and community-based support

2) TEASC: The “Towards Excellence in Adult Social Care” Programme Board, that supports sector-led improvement in Adult Social Care
Choosing how to use the toolkit

TLAP and TEASC hope the toolkit can be used flexibly. For example:

- Some council officers might just use it for quick reference – eg to check whether they are aware of recent sources of evidence and guidance.
- Some senior management teams might decide to use it as a guide for discussion and reflection, for example at an away day.
- Some areas may choose to use the tools with a wider group of stakeholders and/or alongside Making it Real (see below).
- Many will decide that some but not all elements are useful to them, and/or adapt it for their own purposes.

We also know that many councils are carrying out wide-ranging reviews of all departments including Adult Social Care. This sometimes includes an element of external challenge, for example through peer review, or through the involvement of other people in the council who are not familiar with social care. In such instances, those not familiar with the local Adult Social Care (ASC) context will need some extra briefing about the headline story – eg about recent expenditure patterns, savings targets and performance. The last page of this guidance illustrates how this toolkit could fit in to such a review, suggesting the steps that could be followed.

Assessing cost-effectiveness in Adult Social Care

There are recognised methodological problems associated with measuring the cost-effectiveness of social care interventions. For example:

- Costs and benefits are shared with people using services and their carers.
- Interventions may have hidden costs or benefits which are hard to measure.
- Many require evaluation over the long-term, since benefits may not accrue quickly.
- Many involve multiple funding streams, with costs and benefits shared across two or more agencies.
- Where many different initiatives are taking place across agencies, with similar objectives, it may be hard to isolate the impact of one particular development.

In addition:

- Councils do not have the resources to carry out full economic evaluation (and the sector as a whole is poorly served in terms of formal research).
- The existing Adult Social Care performance indicators are not fit for this particular purpose – and are subject to ongoing review.
- Local monitoring systems – especially in relation to financial costs and benefits – are under-developed, and there are many problems with the availability and accuracy of data.

It's not just WHAT you do – it’s the WAY you do it

In 2010 the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) produced a whole system framework for making best use of reducing resources. It takes a systematic journey through social care, focussing on how to promote independence and more personalised approaches – in efficient ways. This framework remains consistent with best practice and policy, as reflected in the Caring for our Future White Paper. It is value based, in seeking to align value to the taxpayer and to the customer.
However, complex questions remain about what is cost-effective. Investments in certain areas—such as promoting health and wellbeing, information and advice, reablement and assistive technology—are critical to whole system change, but it is not yet certain how far they can help to deliver short-term savings. Similarly, self-directed support can deliver better individual outcomes at lower cost, but local delivery arrangements are variable, and sometimes inefficient. Better integration with health has clear potential to ensure improved use of resources across the whole system, but there is no one size fits all model. Overall, the evidence on cost-effectiveness suggests that much depends on how the changes are introduced; councils need to be business-like and rigorous in monitoring both the costs and benefits of their particular models.

Our pragmatic approach

TLAP and TEASC recognise that even though many interventions are not yet subject to full economic evaluation, councils must decide their spending priorities based on the available evidence. So, this toolkit is designed to help councils challenge themselves on whether their own application of the ADASS whole system approach is so far resulting in better use of resources.

What is in the toolkit and how can it be used?

The core element of the toolkit is a Self Assessment Tool. This is supported by three optional tools:

- Proposed descriptors of What good looks like (Optional Tool 1)
- Examples of relevant nationally-available metrics (Optional Tool 2)
- Recommended sources of UK guidance and evidence (Optional Tool 3).

Illustrations of how the materials can be used are set out in the following diagrams.

The links to Making it Real

Clearly there are a wealth of other diagnostic and action planning tools available, which are relevant to the broader task of delivering better outcomes for people and populations. In particular, TLAP’s markers of progress in Making it Real set out what people with care and support needs locally should see and experience when personalisation and community based support is working well. Since increasing numbers of councils have signed up to these markers, specific consideration has been given in the development of this tool to how these approaches can be complimentary. So, we have explicitly cross-referenced to Making it Real wherever possible.
SUGGESTED WAYS OF USING THE SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOLKIT

USING THE SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOLKIT ON ITS OWN

COMPLETE THE SELF-ASSESSMENT
Check your evidence. Refer to your own performance measures or check whether any of the nationally available metrics will help. Record areas where you cannot yet evidence good outcomes, especially financial outcomes.

SUM UP YOUR CONCLUSIONS AND DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN
Record your conclusions, and action plan within the questionnaire itself or in whatever format is helpful to you.

COMPLETE THE SELF-ASSESSMENT
Check your evidence. Refer to your own performance measures or check whether any of the nationally available metrics will help. Record areas where you cannot yet evidence good outcomes, especially financial outcomes.

SUM UP YOUR CONCLUSIONS AND DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN
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SUGGESTED WAYS OF USING THE SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOLKIT

USING THE SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOLKIT AS PART OF AN EXTERNAL CHALLENGE PROCESS

**STEP 1**
Decide on the process to be followed, including who will lead the exercise and who will be involved.

**STEP 2 (OPTIONAL)**
Establish the context. You may decide to skip this step if the context is already familiar to all those involved in the process.

If you do include this step, you may wish to use the *Use of Resources Information Template* as a guide; it prompts you to complete the questions *very briefly*, cross-referencing to relevant strategic documents wherever appropriate.

**STEP 3**
Benchmark trends in activity, expenditure, costs and outcomes.

You may, again, wish to use the *Use of Resources Information Template* as a guide. The template suggests the use of nationally available metrics, which can easily be benchmarked using the online tool on the National Adult Social Care Intelligence Service (NASCIS) website. However, you may choose to add or substitute your own benchmarking data, including those developed with regional/NHS colleagues.

**STEP 4**
Use the self-assessment toolkit flexibly, to assess progress in some or all of the six domains of the ADASS framework.

- A) Financial context
- B) Current priorities of ASC and partners
- C) ASC budget strategy
- D) Risk assessment
- E) SUMMING UP
- A) How are ASC budgets distributed?
- B) How many people are supported by ASC?
- C) What are the costs of services arranged or provided by ASC?
- D) What outcomes are being achieved?
- E) (OPTIONAL) Other benchmarking data?

**E) SUMMING UP:**
Draw conclusions from the benchmarking exercise. Decide whether to proceed further. Confirm the scope for the next stage.