

The Culture and Sport Improvement Toolkit

The Benchmark



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Culture and Sport Improvement Toolkit: The Benchmark

Introduction

What is the Culture & Sport Improvement Benchmark?

The Culture & Sport Improvement Benchmark lies at the heart of the Culture & Sport Improvement Toolkit (CSIT). The Benchmark assists organisations and partnerships providing culture & sport services to:

- a. **Understand what causes excellent results**
- b. **Assess how they are performing and what results they are likely to achieve in the future**
- c. **Develop plans to improve the capability of the organisation or partnership to achieve excellent results**

The Benchmark has been developed from earlier frameworks, which focus on improving individual culture and sport services, including TAES, Arts at the Strategic Centre, the Library Peer Review, Inspiring Learning for All and the Quest Management Issues. It is a response to local government's desire to see a single improvement tool for the sector, providing a great opportunity to:

- Share knowledge, best practice and resources across the services
- Reinforce the strategic synergy between the services
- Stimulate service development and improvement work across the services
- Develop a common language and shared understanding of concepts

What is the Benchmark used for?

The Benchmark can be used as the basis for:

- Self-assessment and improvement planning
- 360 degree feedback to identify external and internal perceptions of the organisation
- Peer-Led Challenge of the self-assessment
- Validation of the self-assessment (from IDeA)
- Best practice benchmarking
- Peer Review
- Tender submissions and evaluations (e.g. from potential management partners)
- Partnership agreements
- Training and development plans

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Who developed the Benchmark?

The Benchmark is based on recognised best practice and is tailored to meet the specific needs of the culture & sport sector. It has been developed by practitioners working in the culture & sport sector, the national cultural agencies and IDeA, through a comprehensive consultation, pilot and evaluation project.

Who is this Benchmark designed for?

This Benchmark is designed for organisations and partnerships providing public culture & sport services. It could be applied to:

- A range of local authority culture and sport services (these might be in various departments)
- A single service (e.g. sport, arts, museums, etc)
- A local authority culture & sport department
- A management partnership (e.g. with a Trust)
- A wider cultural partnership

What is in the Benchmark?

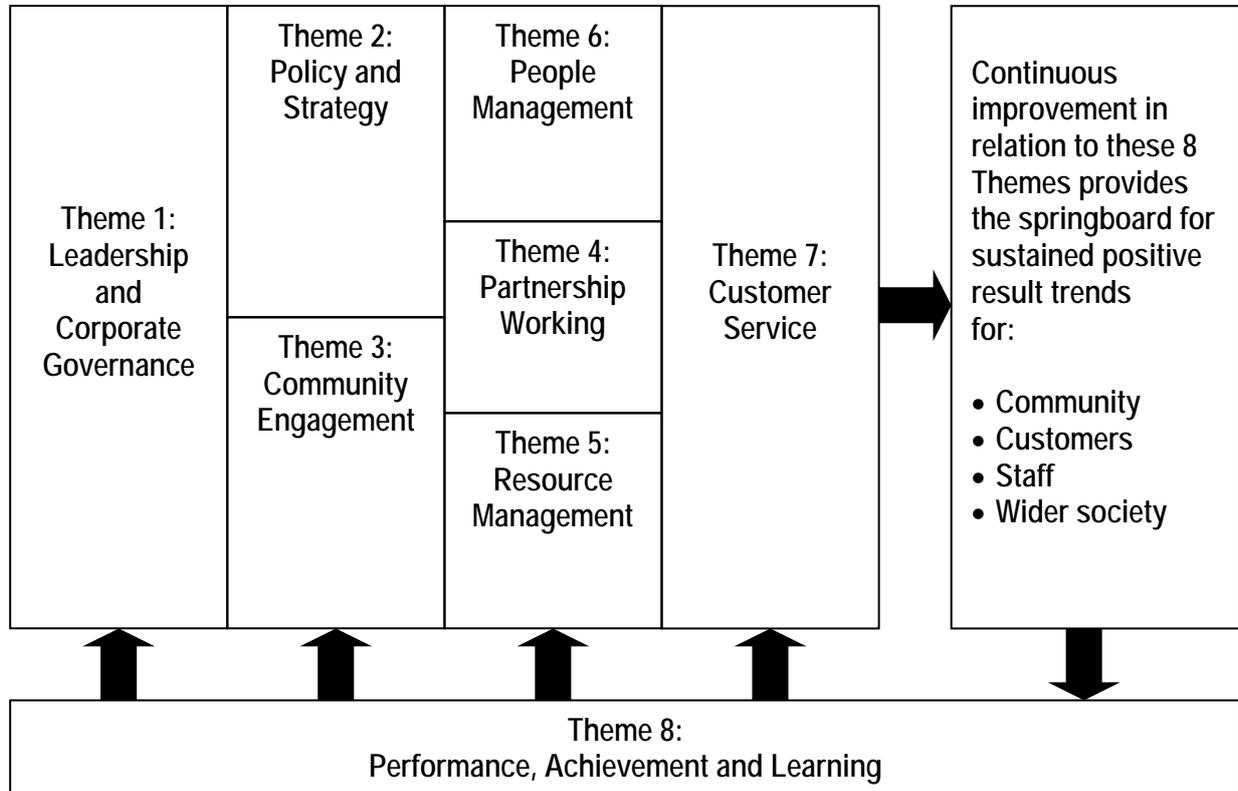
The Benchmark comprises criteria, which enables organisations or partnerships to review 'how' they are functioning and identify improvement priorities, which can be tackled annually as part of the overall service planning process. Clearly the organisation or partnership will also be measuring 'what' it has achieved using the appropriate performance data. The correlation of 'what' and 'how' will provide a rounded assessment of the performance of each organisation or partnership.

The Benchmark incorporates all relevant 'quality' and 'excellence' criteria to provide the culture & sport sector the opportunity to approach continuous improvement as 'one journey', rather than as is a collection of separate schemes, which may not be related to normal 'work'. Therefore the Benchmark is based on the EFQM Excellence Model and incorporates criteria from culture & sport and generic 'quality' and assessment initiatives.

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The 8 TAES Themes, Criteria and Key Features

From the analysis of these existing frameworks and consultation, it was clear that eight main factors influence the culture & sport services delivered to communities. Through effective management and improvement relating to these 8 Themes, organisations can continually improve the results they achieve. The following diagram demonstrates this:



These eight Themes have been sub-divided into 32 Criteria, which define key elements of Excellence in relation to each Theme. Equality and service access are integrated into all the Criteria where relevant.

Within each of the Criteria, 'Key features of excellent organisations' have been established, which help the organisation to understand the Criteria (and therefore assist Self Assessment) and provide a means of incorporating national initiatives and priorities into the Benchmark.

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Theme 1: Leadership and Corporate Governance

Criterion 1.1: Leaders have a clear vision for culture and sport, position them in corporate and local strategic partnership priorities, and can demonstrate their impact on these priorities

Key features of an excellent organisation:

- a. Leaders have a high-level awareness and understanding of culture & sport service's contribution to national, regional and local outcomes and cross-cutting agendas in the council and LSP
- b. Leaders create and promote a vision for culture & sport on behalf of the community
- c. Leaders advocate the contribution that the culture & sport service makes to the local area and motivate others to engage with the sector
- d. Leaders actively promote equality of opportunity

Criterion 1.2: Leaders consistently engage with the community and with partners, and can demonstrate the value of engaging with them in achieving agreed outcomes

Key features of an excellent organisation:

- a. Leaders regularly promote the distinctive value of the voluntary, community & private sectors
- b. Leaders encourage regular collaboration across the organisation, with the community and with partners
- c. Leaders facilitate and promote effective working arrangements with other councils in the area
- d. Leaders play an active and visible role in local strategic partnership activities, promoting the value of culture & sport

Criterion 1.3: Leaders consistently motivate and support people to improve services and recognise and champion success in culture and sport

Key features of an excellent organisation:

- a. Leaders in the organisation are visible, accessible and role models for continuous improvement
- b. Leaders stimulate and encourage empowerment, innovation and creativity by sponsoring learning and improvement opportunities
- c. Leaders develop and promote programmes and projects to celebrate success and progress

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Criterion 1.4: Leaders promote and maintain effective governance arrangements

Key features of an excellent organisation:

- a. Leaders maintain effective executive scrutiny arrangements which ensure proactive decision-making, relevant policy development and effective monitoring and review
- b. Executive and scrutiny functions are member led; elected members take full responsibility for the brief they hold on cabinet or scrutiny
- c. Leaders welcome and can demonstrate how internal scrutiny and external challenge assist continuous improvement
- d. Leaders' active participation in corporate management results in:
 - a better understanding of the value and relevance of the culture & sport across departments and cross-cutting agendas
 - an influence on corporate decision making and on the development of corporate policy
 - the strategic positioning of culture and sport in corporate priorities
- e. Leaders support and encourage cross-departmental working between culture & sport and other services on thematic and cross-service approaches
- f. Senior managers take a corporate lead on non-culture projects

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Theme 2: Policy and Strategy

Criterion 2.1: The organisation has a clear strategy that is delivering outcomes through culture and sport

Key features of an excellent organisation:

- a. The organisation has a clear strategy for the development and improvement of the culture & sport services
- b. Strategy is based on customer, community, partner and staff consultation
- c. The organisation includes under-represented and priority groups in the service planning process
- d. There is an established and clear 'golden thread' between community and corporate priorities, service objectives and individual objectives
- e. The culture & sport service is aligned with and contributes to the outcomes and plans of the council's corporate plan, the sustainable community strategy and other relevant strategies for the area
- f. The culture & sport service is recognised as part of the delivery mechanism for tackling cross-cutting issues identified in the LAAs

Criterion 2.2: The organisation is setting ambitious targets to achieve its aims and objectives

Key features of an excellent organisation:

- a. The organisation identifies improvement targets and plans to help achieve strategy
- b. The organisation uses benchmarking to set improvement targets
- c. The service maintains focus on its priorities to ensure the desired impact is achieved
- d. The organisation has achieved accreditation to the equality standard (level 3 equates to good & level 5 excellent)
- e. The organisation has clear objectives and targets for improving equality of opportunity, diversity and community cohesion
- f. The organisation fully embraces child safeguarding policies and procedures
- g. The organisation has adopted best practice standards in environmental sustainability
- h. The services are designed, developed and marketed based on strategy

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Theme 3: Community Engagement

Criterion 3.1: The organisation has maintained capacity for effective community engagement and used it to improve culture and sport opportunities

Key features of an excellent organisation:

- a. The organisation has an effective strategy to engage communities, particularly under-represented groups, which has enabled it to predict future requirements and/or issues emerging in communities
- b. The organisation demonstrates an integrated approach to community engagement with other parts of the council, local stakeholders, partners, voluntary and community sectors
- c. The organisation responds to the critical success factors and manages the risks in community engagement
- d. The organisation develops the skills and experiences to carry out effective consultation and engagement with communities and other sectors
- e. The organisation has helped to develop community and voluntary sector organisations' capacity to participate in and influence policy development and service delivery

Criterion 3.2: The organisation can demonstrate how consulting with and involving local communities, the voluntary and business sectors has improved culture and sport opportunities

Key features of an excellent organisation:

- a. The organisation has a coherent approach to consultation, which provides opportunity for people to:
 - express their needs and concerns about culture & sport
 - express their level of satisfaction
 - input views about how the services might be improved
- b. The organisation embeds equality of opportunity in its approach to consultation and engagement
- c. The organisation enables local councillors to represent the priorities of local people and these are responded to and acted upon speedily and effectively
- d. Feedback is given to those consulted, both on the results of the consultation and on the actions that were or were not taken
- e. The organisation can demonstrate the impact of consultation and community engagement on the service
- f. The organisation has built support and influence outside the council among the community, voluntary and business sectors

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Theme 4: Partnership Working

Criterion 4.1: The organisation has a mature and trusting relationship with its partnerships

Key features of an excellent organisation:

- a. People throughout the organisation have a full understanding and awareness of how partnerships help achieve the organisation's objectives
- b. People throughout the organisation are clear about the status of partnerships and the decision-making responsibilities allocated to them
- c. People who work with and in partnerships are clear and confident about their roles and responsibilities in their own organisation and partnerships
- d. The organisation works effectively in partnership and devolves decision making to them

Criterion 4.2: The organisation has maintained effective partnerships to meet its strategic objectives and support the Local Strategic Partnership and other key partnerships

Key features of an excellent organisation:

- a. The organisation is clear why it enters into and maintains partnerships
- b. The organisation maintains commitment, energy, resources and motivation to make the partnerships successful
- c. The organisation involves partners in developing policy and strategy, promoting creative thinking and imaginative solutions and raising the profile of the culture & sport service
- d. The organisation builds support for and commitment to the culture & sport service amongst key partners
- e. The organisation contributes to the priorities of key partners
- f. The organisation has good links with neighbouring authorities
- g. The organisation supports partner organisations in understanding the relevance of the service to their own priorities and its contribution to cross-cutting agenda
- h. There is regular engagement at chief executive/leader level with senior managers of regional and sub-regional cultural agencies, which enhances mutual understanding of priorities

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Criterion 4.3: The implications and impact on partnership arrangements have been at the forefront when policy and budget decisions have been taken

Key features of an excellent organisation:

- a. The implications and impact on partnership arrangements of policy and budget decisions have been taken into account in the annual budget and service planning process
- b. Partnership decisions shape and focus the organisation's policies and services

Criterion 4.4: The organisation has continuously reviewed and modified its involvement in partnership arrangements and is able to demonstrate their value

Key features of an excellent organisation:

- a. The organisation regularly monitors, reviews and evaluates the ongoing benefits of its involvement in partnerships
- b. The organisation can show how partnerships have helped it meet its aims and objectives
- c. The organisation can demonstrate how it has contributed to the aims and objectives of partners and the LSP

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Theme 5: Resource Management

Criterion 5.1: Financial resources have been consistently matched with the changing strategic priorities of the organisation

Key features of an excellent organisation:

- a. The organisation's resources have been allocated, organised and managed to reflect strategic priorities
- b. Members and senior managers take account of the value and contribution of the culture & sport service when setting priorities for the council and relevant key partnerships
- c. There is a strong focus on coordinated financial and service planning
- d. Financial management is integrated with all aspects of strategic planning and performance management

Criterion 5.2: The organisation can demonstrate how it has effectively controlled its use of financial resources

Key features of an excellent organisation:

- a. There are systems for monitoring financial performance to provide accurate and timely information
- b. There have been improvements in service and performance as a result of financial target setting and decision-making

Criterion 5.3: The organisation can demonstrate how it has continuously improved efficiency and achieved value for money in the use of resources

Key features of an excellent organisation:

- a. The organisation uses comparator financial and other data to improve its performance
- b. The redesign of processes has increased productivity and reduced time and cost while maintaining or improving quality
- c. The organisation has a good track record of strategic commissioning and procurement of goods and services to support improvement and efficiency
- d. Partnering arrangements and long-term supplier relationships have assisted improvements in efficiency and service delivery
- e. The organisation has a systematic approach to project management, which has supported service improvement
- f. The organisation has a systematic approach to risk management in place across service delivery, projects and change management
- g. The organisation can demonstrate how investing in innovation and creativity has led to the achievement of its aims and objectives
- h. The organisation can demonstrate the overall impact of improving efficiency and value for money on services

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Criterion 5.4: The organisation has continually attracted external resources that have enabled it to achieve improvement

Key features of an excellent organisation:

- a. The potential of external funding and investment in the service has been recognised and exploited
- b. External agencies and partners have invested in the organisation over a number of years
- c. The organisation can demonstrate the impact of external funding on its ability to achieve its aims and objectives

Criterion 5.5: The organisation can demonstrate the benefits of efficiently managing its physical assets (land and premises)

Key features of an excellent organisation:

- a. The organisation has used its available assets creatively to develop and improve services over time
- b. The organisation has an asset management plan which maximises the performance of assets and ensures they have a direct and significant impact on achieving corporate objectives
- c. The asset management plan sets out the level of service expected by the community and recognises the costs and risks associated with delivering against these expectations

Criterion 5.6: The organisation can demonstrate how it has used new technologies to achieve its strategic objectives and improve services

Key features of an excellent organisation:

- a. The organisation's information systems provide an integrated approach to performance management
- b. Technology has been used to improve customer services and support services (central, devolved and outsourced) and to make the best use of cross-service opportunities
- c. Good use has been made of new technologies to enhance information, accessibility, communication and delivery of the service

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Theme 6: People Management

Criterion 6.1: The organisation can demonstrate the impact of having a strategy for people management to improve its performance

Key features of an excellent organisation:

- a. Investing in people is used to improve the performance of the organisation
- b. Managers consult staff when developing strategy and plans
- c. The organisation ensures that staff can explain the objectives of their team & the organisation and how they contribute to achieving them
- d. There is a well developed approach to workforce planning, and the organisation has managed its changing workforce needs over a number of years
- e. Managers involve people in agreeing team and individual goals in line with strategy and plans

Criterion 6.2: Learning and development opportunities make a positive impact on how the organisation's objectives are achieved

Key features of an excellent organisation:

- a. Managers have put sufficient plans and resources in place to meet the organisation's present and future learning and development needs to achieve specific objectives
- b. Staff have been involved in identifying their own learning, development and improvement needs
- c. Learning and development has improved the performance of individuals, teams and the organisation
- d. The organisation is aware of its key skills / knowledge shortages and has addressed them through targeted recruitment, a planned approach to learning & development and skill / knowledge sharing with partners and neighbouring authorities
- e. Senior managers with responsibility for culture & sport develop the capacity to engage with mainstream corporate functions and cross-cutting issues at a strategic level
- f. Knowledge is disseminated across the council and its partners and is used to make changes in the culture & sport services and other services
- g. Staff have developed their understanding and knowledge about how the culture & sport service relates and contributes to the issues and priorities of other council services and partners

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Criterion 6.3: Equality of opportunity is integrated into people management strategies and organisational working practices

Key features of an excellent organisation:

- a. People are encouraged to contribute ideas to improve the organisation's performance
- b. Managers are committed to making sure everyone has appropriate and fair access to the support they need, and there is equality of opportunity for learning and development
- c. The organisation has created a diverse workforce which reflects the community it serves
- d. Imaginative approaches to flexible working have been encouraged and there is an understanding that this will improve individual and team performance and provide better experiences for the customer

Criterion 6.4: Managers have been effective in leading, managing and developing people to a degree where improvement can be evidenced

Key features of an excellent organisation:

- a. Managers have developed the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to lead, manage and develop people effectively, and plans are in place to ensure managers maintain these capabilities
- b. Managers give people regular, constructive and appropriate feedback on performance
- c. There are many opportunities for 'top-down', 'bottom-up' and 'horizontal' dialogue involving all the organisation's people

Criterion 6.5: People take ownership and responsibility by being involved in decision-making

Key features of an excellent organisation:

- a. Staff are encouraged to be involved in decision making
- b. Staff are involved in identifying, planning and implementing organisational improvements and service development
- c. The organisation encourages and supports people to improve their own performance

Criterion 6.6: The impact of people's contribution to the organisation has been recognised, celebrated and valued

Key features of an excellent organisation:

- a. Managers recognise and value people's individual contribution to delivering and improving services
- b. The organisation encourages and supports staff to achieve a balanced, healthy lifestyle

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Theme 7: Customer Service

Criterion 7.1: The organisation consistently responds to what users want and need quickly, and maintains and extends customer choice

Key features of an excellent organisation:

- a. The organisation listens to its customers, users and citizens and therefore has a clear understanding of their needs and interests
- b. There is a clear and well-established understanding of the user and non-user profile
- c. The organisation fully understands the needs and interests of the community, and uses this to improve opportunities, extend choice and personalise services where possible
- d. The organisation uses a range of methods to ensure as many people as possible can access the access services
- e. The organisation develops and implements plans to communicate and market the services with the community, based on its understanding of what will engage the different parts of the community

Criterion 7.2: The organisation has maintained high standards of service and customer satisfaction

Key features of an excellent organisation:

- a. The organisation has a customer care policy statement and all staff are aware of and committed to it
- b. Service standards have been maintained at a consistently high level
- c. The organisation involves staff in setting, reviewing and improving service standards
- d. The organisation involves customers in developing and setting the service standards and monitoring quality, satisfaction and service improvement
- e. The organisation can demonstrate the impact of embedding equal opportunities into its service standards
- f. The organisation has a planned approach to encouraging and dealing with customer feedback and using this to improve the service
- g. The organisation has published its standards, performance and customer feedback process widely
- h. Staff are trained and developed to communicate effectively with customers
- i. Customers are not passed from person to person when making an enquiry
- j. The organisation gives customers comprehensive and easy-to-understand information about the service

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Theme 8: Performance, Achievement and Learning

Criterion 8.1: The organisation has a culture of performance management running through all that it does

Key features of an excellent organisation:

- a. Senior managers champion performance management as a way to achieve continuous improvement
- b. Members drive improvements in the organisation and play an effective role in performance management
- c. Performance management is fully integrated into the management of the service, people and resources
- d. Managers and staff have developed and apply the skills and abilities to manage performance effectively
- e. All staff are aware of the links between performance information and improvement
- f. Equality, diversity & community cohesion objectives & targets are embedded in performance measurement

Criterion 8.2: The organisation maintains a well-balanced range of high-quality data and information, which it uses to demonstrate how it performs

Key features of an excellent organisation:

- a. The organisation has comprehensive, understandable and accessible indicators and data, which enable it to measure its performance in relation to its outcomes and objectives
- b. Complete and reliable data is collated on time at regular intervals and used to identify reasons for over or under-performance
- c. Equality and diversity indicators and targets are appropriate, broad-ranging and sufficient to assess the organisation's progress against its objectives
- d. Adequate and compatible systems are in place across other council services and partner organisations to generate the information needed to measure performance on shared outcomes and priorities

Criterion 8.3: The organisation can demonstrate the impact of actions taken as a response to performance information

Key features of an excellent organisation:

- a. Reporting is used to highlight and communicate progress and success, and fully describes actions to be taken to address under-performance
- b. Appropriate monitoring information is provided to stakeholders to enable members, managers, staff and partners to meet their responsibilities in performance management
- c. Action following monitoring is proportionate to the importance of targets, the extent of under-performance, timescales and resource requirements
- d. People and financial resources are reallocated to improve service performance
- e. Internal and external partners utilise performance information to improve services to deliver outcomes.
- f. The organisation systematically deals with poor performance at individual, team and service level
- g. Good performance is regularly recognised and celebrated

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Criterion 8.4: The organisation can demonstrate the impact of knowledge-based learning in its service planning

Key features of an excellent organisation:

- a. Managers and elected members have a positive attitude to learning from performance and act as role models
- b. Members, managers and staff encourage learning from monitoring, adequate time is available for reflection and review and past lessons and experiences are fed into the forward planning process
- c. There is willingness to learn from mistakes without an atmosphere of fear or blame
- d. The organisation regularly uses self-assessment as an effective tool for learning and improvement
- e. The organisation learns from good practice which has informed policy, strategy and service delivery
- f. The organisation is open to and regularly undertakes external review and challenge
- g. The organisation has an effective way of managing and making the best use of knowledge to support improvement

Criterion 8.5: The organisation promotes change and manages it well to achieve improvement

Key features of an excellent organisation:

- a. The organisation recognises the need for change and acts quickly and effectively to re-position itself to achieve its outcomes, take opportunities and respond to challenges
- b. The organisation has a structured approach to managing change, which provides mechanisms for people at all levels within the organisation, local people and partners to contribute thinking
- c. Senior managers regularly articulate the purpose and benefits of change
- d. Change has addressed organisation culture as well as structure and process issues
- e. Leaders have managed organisational change effectively to achieve continuous improvement

Criterion 8.6: The organisation has made a lasting impact on the lives of people and on where they live

Key features of an excellent organisation:

- a. The organisation can demonstrate how well it achieves agreed outcomes and contributes to corporate and partnership priorities, including the sustainable community strategy and the Local Area Agreement
- b. The organisation can provide evidence of its contribution to improving the quality of people's lives
- c. The organisation is able to show how well it has engaged local communities, particularly excluded or disadvantaged groups