Red Threads

In all quality / excellence initiatives, the assessment criteria are linked. These criteria are not designed to be – and should never be seen or used as - a linear checklist: organisations and partnerships just do not work in this way!

Understanding the inter-relationships between the CSIT criteria and how organisational topics run through the Benchmark is an important part of understanding what causes excellent results and carrying out effective Self-Assessment (you do not have start at Criteria 1.1 and work through to 8.6), Peer-Led Challenge (information doesn't come at you in neat chunks!) and improvement planning (the most valuable improvement projects will often relate to more than one Criteria).

The following table shows some of the critical links (or 'red threads') for the CSIT Benchmark:

Topic	Critical Links	Explanation
Setting and following a clear direction to achieve the desired outcomes	1.1, 3.1, 2.1, 2.2, 4.3, 5.1, 6.1, 6.2, 7.1, 8.2	The organisation establishes a clear vision, identifies community need and uses this to develop shared strategy, allocates financial resources to the strategy and implements it through they design of the facilities and services, targets, improvement plans and individual goals. Achievement of the strategy is measured to enable the direction to be enhanced and followed more effectively.
Continuous improvement	1.3, 2.2, 4.4, 5.3, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.5, 7.2, 8.3, 8.4, 8.5 Self Assessment and improvement planning	Leaders of the organisation develop and communicate values relating to continuous improvement, are role models of these values and engage people in improvement activity at all levels of the organisation. This is supported by systems to review and improve the way the organisation works (Self Assessment is at the heart of this), the service provided and people's performance. This leads to improvements in effectiveness, efficiency and economy.
Financial management	2,1, 2.2, 4.3, 5.1, 5.2, 5.4, 8.3	The organisation allocates financial resources and seeks funding to support strategy. These financial resources are managed to achieve value for money.
Communication within partnerships	1.1, 1.2, 4.1, 4.2, 6.3, 7.2, 8.3, 8.4	Leaders encourage collaboration between the various organisations and agencies in the community and communicate vision, values, strategy and plans amongst partners and potential partners. The role of and relationship between the partners is enhanced through regular dialogue, which helps to develop synergy and consensus. People working within the partnership work together to improve and develop the services and share learning and best practice.

Topic	Critical Links	Explanation
Staff development	1.3, 2.2, 3.2, 4.1, 6.1, 6.2, 8.4, 8.5	Leaders actively encourage and support learning and development amongst all staff and implement training and development plans which support the achievement of strategy and continuous improvement.
Providing an excellent service to customers	1.2, 2.1, 2.2, 3.2, 7.1, 7.2, 6.2	The organisation develops a clear understanding of what services it should be providing to whom. Leaders meet with these agencies and people to understand their needs and expectations of the services; this is supported by research and consultation activity. The organisation designs services to meet these needs and, through process planning and staff development, delivers them in a way which meets and sometimes exceeds expectations.