More about self-evaluation

At the heart of self-evaluation are three questions

How are we doing?
- Are we providing appropriate, accessible, high quality services/activities/ opportunities?
- Are we setting and achieving ambitious targets?
- Are we systematically improving the quality of what we offer?

How do we know?
- Are we gathering evidence to assess how we are doing?
- Are we continuously measuring and evaluating the impact of the services/activities/opportunities we provide?

What are we going to do now?
- Are we using the evidence we have gathered to support our strong outcomes and change those that need more development?
- Are we using robust evidence to plan for future developments so they best meet the needs of those we work with and other stakeholders?

The three key components of a culture of evaluation and improvement are:
- Looking Inwards – to evaluate performance at every level and use the information gathered to decide on what needs to be done to improve;
- Looking Outwards – to learn from others, research and best practice and use this to support innovation and creativity and inform planning; and
- Looking Forwards – to explore what the future might bring and use this information to anticipate what change is required to ensure we are responsive to future needs.
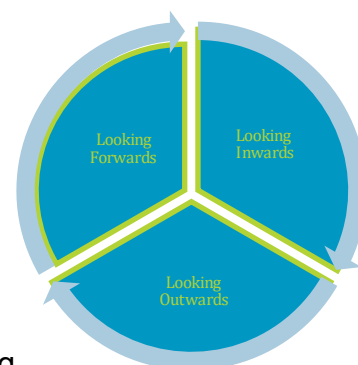
Gathering evidence

Self-evaluation includes gathering evidence which can tell us how well we are meeting the needs of those we work with and other stakeholders, and what difference we are making. There are four main sources from which evidence can be drawn to help us evaluate quality and these are:

No single source will be sufficient to provide robust evidence and hence good self-evaluation will include a mix of evidence from a range of sources.

Performance data
Examples of performance data would be statistical information relating to local and national outcomes. Local data such changes in levels of employment or reductions in anti-social behaviour. It should also include data about the provision you are delivering as levels of participation, learner hours completed, number of community organisations supported.

Relevant documentation
Consider which documents demonstrate the impacts you are having? Examples could include; statements of our vision, values and aims, improvement and business plans, performance reports, reviews of CLD plans showing progress against targets, minutes of meetings showing decision making and reporting against plans, partnership agreements and terms of reference.

Stakeholders' views
Gathering information from those we work with is an essential part of the self-evaluation process. Without it, we will find it very difficult to understand the impact of our work. It is almost impossible to have any degree of confidence in the outcomes of self-evaluation without including the views of those we work with. It can be gathered from those we work with as they start, whilst they are using and in some cases after they have finished using our services. Information should also be collected systematically from non-users and community groups.

Direct observation
Direct observation involves visiting activities and observing the inputs of staff/volunteers and the outcomes for participants/learners at first hand. This would involve looking at delivery models, methodology and resources as well as the motivation of the people we work with.