

Solace/IS Transformation Work

National Self Evaluation Framework

How good is our leadership?

Self evaluation areas:

9.1: Leadership and direction

**9.2: Leadership of innovation, change and
improvement**

Our capacity to improve



How good is our leadership?

Self-evaluation area 9.1: Leadership and direction

Explainer

Leadership and direction are at the heart of effective local government. In the context of a Scottish local authority, this includes political leadership, senior officer leadership, and service-level management — all working to provide clear vision, inspire staff, deliver improvement, and maintain public trust.

Reflective questions

Vision and Strategic Direction

- Do our leaders provide a clear, compelling, and shared vision for the council and the communities we serve?
- How well is this vision communicated and understood across services, partners, and stakeholders?
- Are strategic goals aligned with the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP), Community Plan, and national priorities?

Leadership Behaviours and Culture

- Do our leaders model the values, behaviours, and culture we want to see across the organisation?
- How do leaders promote collaboration, inclusion, innovation, and a commitment to improvement?
- Are leaders visible, approachable, and responsive to staff, partners, and the public?

Political and Officer Leadership

- Is there a strong, constructive relationship between elected members and senior officers?
- Are political leaders engaged and informed in strategic decision-making and oversight?
- Do officers provide clear, evidence-based advice to support effective political leadership?

Decision-Making and Accountability

- Are decisions taken in a transparent, evidence-informed, and timely manner?
- Do leadership teams encourage challenge, debate, and risk-aware innovation?
- Are decisions clearly linked to outcomes, resourcing, and impact?

Leading Through Change

- How effectively do leaders guide the organisation through change, challenge, and uncertainty?
- Do leaders anticipate and respond to emerging risks (e.g. budget pressures, demographic shifts, climate impact)?
- Are change processes inclusive, well-managed, and clearly communicated?

Engagement and Influence

- How do leaders engage with staff, communities, and external partners?
- Are leaders proactive in influencing regional, national, and cross-sector policy agendas?
- Do we use evidence, collaboration, and lived experience to shape our strategic approach?

Empowering and Supporting Others

- Do leaders delegate authority and empower managers and teams to take ownership of delivery?
- Are staff encouraged to take initiative and contribute to service development?
- How are emerging leaders identified and supported?

Performance Leadership

- Are leaders focused on improving outcomes, not just managing operations?
- How do they use data, evaluation, and feedback to drive performance and address underperformance?
- Are priorities regularly reviewed and adjusted based on evidence?

Learning and Self-Reflection

- Do leaders seek and act on feedback from staff, peers, and stakeholders?

- Is there a culture of self-evaluation, honesty, and learning at leadership level?
- How do leaders support their own development and maintain their effectiveness?

Succession and Continuity

- Are we planning for leadership continuity and succession across the organisation?
- Is leadership talent being developed and retained?
- How resilient are our leadership arrangements in the face of turnover, crisis, or change?

Self-evaluation area 9.2: Leadership of innovation, change and improvement

Explainer

The leadership of innovation, change, and improvement is critical for local authorities facing rising demand, financial constraints, and complex societal challenges. In the Scottish context, this includes leadership that drives transformation, supports continuous improvement, embraces digital innovation, and empowers staff and communities to shape change.

Potential sources of evidence

- Organisational transformation or modernisation plans
- Organisational business plans
- Digital transformation strategy
- Continuous improvement frameworks or models used
- Organisational values, behaviours and competency frameworks
- Examples of learning from LGBF
- Leadership training and development approaches
- Governance frameworks to support transformation
- Leadership communications, consultation and engagement
- Elected member champion roles or innovation portfolios
- Improvement plans with measurable outcomes
- Service review outcomes
- Use of dedicated improvement teams or officers or collaborations and peer working
- Pilot projects and tests of change initiatives
- Case studies of internal innovation
- External funding or innovation
- Lessons learned reports
- Staff involvement in service redesign
- Staff survey results
- Organisational data and ICT strategy
- Training on innovation and improvement methods

- Use of co-design with citizens, community groups and partners
- Cross-sector or regional collaboration on innovation
- Values or behavioural frameworks
- Recognition schemes or incentives for improvement
- Results and impact of any relevant internal self-evaluation or improvement activity e.g. PSIF and Peer Collaborative Improvement

Reflective questions

Strategic Commitment to Change

- Do leaders clearly articulate the case for change and the outcomes they aim to achieve?
- Is there visible and sustained commitment to transformation, innovation, and improvement at the top levels?
- How well is innovation embedded into our overall strategic planning and governance?

Driving a Culture of Innovation

- Do leaders actively foster a culture where creativity, experimentation, and learning are encouraged?
- Are staff at all levels empowered to suggest, test, and lead improvements?
- How do leaders recognise and celebrate innovation across the organisation?

Managing Change Effectively

- Are change initiatives well-planned, resourced, and led with clarity and purpose?
- Do leaders understand and manage the human and cultural aspects of change?
- How effectively are changes communicated to staff, partners, and service users?

Use of Evidence and Insight

- Do leaders use data, performance intelligence, service user feedback, and external evidence to drive innovation?
- Are we learning from what works elsewhere (locally, nationally, internationally)?
- How do leaders ensure that improvement efforts are outcomes-focused and evidence-informed?

Involvement and Co-Design

- Are those affected by change — staff, partners, communities — actively involved in shaping it?
- Do leaders create space for co-production with service users and front-line staff?
- How are lived experiences and equality impacts considered in designing improvements?

Innovation with Partners

- Do leaders champion collaborative innovation across services and sectors (e.g. with NHS, third sector, enterprise)?
- Are we leveraging partnerships to share risk, unlock creativity, and scale up effective change?
- How do we contribute to and learn from national improvement programmes or cross-council networks?

Agility and Responsiveness

- Are leaders able to pivot and respond quickly to emerging challenges or opportunities?
- Do they support agile working, rapid learning cycles, and iterative improvement methods (e.g. test-and-learn)?
- How do leaders balance innovation with risk and governance?

Capability and Capacity Building

- Are leaders investing in staff skills and tools needed for innovation (e.g. service design, data literacy, digital)?
- Do managers have the capacity and confidence to lead improvement at their level?
- How are leadership skills in change management developed and supported?

Monitoring Impact and Scaling Up

- Do leaders ensure that change projects are evaluated for impact and sustainability?
- Are effective innovations scaled across the organisation where appropriate?
- How do we avoid “pilot fatigue” and embed real transformation?

Learning and Reflective Practice

- Do leaders actively learn from both success and failure?
- Is reflective practice embedded into change processes and leadership culture?
- How do we adapt our approach based on learning from past improvement initiatives?

Page Title: Our Capacity to Improve

Explainer

Evaluating your local authority's overall capacity to improve is a vital part of any strategic self-evaluation. In the Scottish public sector context, this concept underpins Best Value, Inspection Frameworks, and the Public Service Improvement Agenda, where continuous improvement must be sustainable, strategic, and inclusive.

Strategic Intent and Commitment

- Is there a clear and consistent commitment to improvement across political, corporate, and service leadership?
- Are improvement goals embedded within the council's plans, strategies, and governance frameworks?
- Do we use improvement as a proactive response to challenges — not just as a reaction to scrutiny or failure?

Leadership and Vision

- Do leaders champion innovation, evidence-based change, and continuous improvement?
- Is there a shared vision and direction that motivates improvement at all levels?
- Are leaders resilient, responsive, and adaptable to changing circumstances?

Culture and Behaviours

- Do we foster a culture that values learning, accountability, and openness to change?
- Are staff empowered and encouraged to identify and lead improvements in their own areas?
- How do we handle setbacks and failures — do we learn from them or avoid them?

Evidence and Performance Intelligence

- Do we have reliable, accessible data and insights to inform improvement?
- Are performance, customer experience, and impact routinely analysed and acted upon?
- How well do we evaluate what works, and stop doing what doesn't?

Governance and Strategic Planning

- Are improvement activities aligned with long-term strategic planning, not isolated or short-term?
- Do governance structures support accountability for improvement and innovation?
- Is there effective challenge, oversight, and review from elected members and partners?

Workforce and Organisational Capacity

- Do we have the right people, with the right skills, in the right places to drive improvement?
- Are time, tools, and capacity allocated for service design, evaluation, and transformation?
- Is succession planning in place to ensure improvement continues through change?

Resources and Financial Flexibility

- Do we make effective use of our financial, digital, and physical resources to enable improvement?
- Are we able to reallocate or invest flexibly to support innovation and redesign?
- How do we manage financial pressures while still creating space for improvement?

Collaboration and Partnership

- Are we working with partners (e.g. NHS, third sector, communities) to co-design and deliver shared improvement?
- Do we access external expertise, innovation networks, or improvement agencies (e.g. Audit Scotland, Improvement Service)?
- How do we learn from others — and contribute to sector-wide improvement?

Risk, Resilience and Adaptability

- Do we assess and manage the risks associated with change and innovation?
- Are we resilient in the face of disruption (e.g. funding cuts, emergencies, policy changes)?
- How quickly and effectively can we adapt systems, services, and behaviours?

Track Record and Momentum

- What does our recent history say about our capacity to improve — have we delivered meaningful change?
- Are we building on lessons from past improvement work, or repeating old challenges?
- Do we maintain momentum, or does progress stall without external pressure?