

Culture and Sport Improvement Toolkit

1. Introduction to the Culture and Sport Improvement Toolkit



1. Background

The Culture and Sport Improvement Toolkit (CSIT) has been developed from earlier toolkits that focused on improving individual culture and sport services. It is a response to local government's desire to see a single improvement tool for the sector.

CSIT amalgamates the purpose, function and content of 'Towards an excellent service' (TAES), 'Arts at the Strategic Centre' and 'Library peer review'. It is supported by a range of organisations serving culture and sport and has been developed involving them in the planning, piloting and drafting phases.

CSIT is designed to underpin continuous improvement and support councils that want to identify their strengths and weaknesses in culture and sport. It is a self-improvement tool and requires only time, commitment, and honesty.

2. The improvement toolkit: a journey, not a scheme

CSIT represents an improvement journey covering all aspects of how an organisation operates to improve its services to local people and enhance their quality of life. There is no end to this journey: it is an ongoing process of improvement because:

- the needs of communities continually change
- customers' expectations evolve and change
- there are always ways in which the effectiveness and efficiency of an organisation or partnership can improve, and
- standards and expectations change and evolve and organisations can learn from best practice and each other.

A pursuit of excellence underpins success in all organisations and individuals. This is essential for publicly funded organisations because:

- it creates the capacity for an organisation to achieve its stated outcomes and make a difference to people's lives, and
- it improves customer and staff satisfaction and helps ensure that people and organisations improve.

Using CSIT should not be seen as a burden, an effort or a drain on time and resources. Instead, it should be seen as an investment and valuable aid that will help organisations improve the culture and sport they offer and demonstrate to onlookers that the service is serious about improvement – not as a one-off, but as a way of working.

The current external environment in which culture and sport services operate demands continuous improvement. Self-assessment helps organisations to undertake this. The self-assessment is built around a robust and reliable benchmark and an improvement planning process that defines what it takes to achieve progress in the culture and sport sector.

It is not about 'perfuming the pig' – trying to make services appear cosmetically better – or satisfying external pressure or collecting trophies. It is clear that many organisations choose the easiest route available to obtain a plaque for the wall, a high assessment score or a pass mark, and the variety of external assessments often provides a jigsaw of overall quality. Although the need to meet statutory requirements and perform well in mandatory and voluntary assessments is completely understandable, it should not be confused with the pursuit of excellence.

In addition to assessing performance and positioning, an organisation needs to assess the effectiveness of its work in achieving its desired outcomes. This toolkit should be used alongside impact measurement tools where they are available. CSIT is not designed to measure the delivery of outcomes, but to ensure an organisation has the capability and capacity to do so. Once the national performance framework is confirmed, we expect that further developing tools such as Inspiring learning for all will help improve the way outcomes are measured and evidence is collated.

3. The toolkit

CSIT contains:

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Guidance on how the tool works**
- 3. The benchmark**
- 4. Guidance on evidencing and probing your assessment**
- 5. The benchmark for 360-degree feedback on your organisation**
- 6. Guidance on evidencing and probing the 360-degree feedback**
- 7. Guidance on scoring and scoring record sheets**
- 8. Guidance on improvement planning**
- 9. An introduction to validation**