Making best use of reducing resources in adult social care

1.Guide to using the self-assessment toolkit

Introduction to the self-assessment toolkit

This self-assessment toolkit is an updated version of the toolkit produced in 2012 by the Towards Excellence in Adult Social Care (TEASC) and the Think Local Act Personal Partnership (TLAP) alongside the publication, 'A Problem Shared: making best use of resources in adult social care'. They are part of an ongoing initiative to support councils (including councillors) to make the best use of their resources, and to promote personalisation in a difficult and challenging context. Our aim is to share ideas about how to get better value for people and taxpayers – pooling evidence about what works.

The toolkit was used by around 15 councils in 2013. We will continue to refine it on the basis of feedback from councils, and as the evidence base grows.

Feedback and suggestions should be sent to:
kevin.halden@local.gov.uk

Choosing how to use the toolkit

The toolkit can be used flexibly. For example:

- Some council officers might just use it for quick reference; for example, to check whether they are aware of recent sources of evidence and guidance.

- Some senior management teams might decide to use it as a guide for discussion and reflection (for example, at an away day)

- Some areas may choose to use the tools with a wider group of stakeholders and/or alongside the 'Making it real' benchmarks (see below).

- Many will decide that some but not all elements are useful to them, and/or adapt it for their own purposes.

We also know that many councils are carrying out wide ranging reviews of all departments including adult social care; this sometimes includes an element of external challenge (eg through peer review, or through the involvement of other people in the council who are not familiar with social care). In such instances, those not familiar with the local adult social care context will need some extra briefing about the headline story; eg about recent expenditure patterns, savings targets and performance. The last page of this Guidance illustrates how this toolkit could fit in to such a review, suggesting the steps that could be followed.

Assessing 'cost-effectiveness' in adult social care

There are recognised methodological problems associated with measuring the cost-effectiveness of social care interventions. For example:

- costs and benefits are shared with people using services and their carers

- interventions may have 'hidden' costs or benefits which are hard to measure

- many require evaluation over the long-term, since benefits may not accrue quickly

- many involve multiple funding streams, with costs and benefits shared across two or more agencies

- where many different initiatives are taking place across agencies, with similar objectives, it may be hard to isolate the impact of one particular development.

In addition:

- councils do not have the resources to carry out full economic evaluation (and the sector as a whole is poorly served in terms of formal research)

- the existing adult social care performance indicators are not fit for this particular purpose – and are subject to ongoing review

- local monitoring systems (especially in relation to financial costs and benefits) are under-developed, and there are many problems with the availability and accuracy of data.

It's not just WHAT you do – it's the WAY you do it

In 2010 the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) produced a 'whole system' framework for making best use of reducing resources. It takes a systematic journey through social care, focussing on how to promote independence and more personalised approaches, in efficient ways. This framework remains consistent with best practice and national policy, as reflected in the Care Act 2014. It is value based; in seeking to align value to the taxpayer and value to the customer.

However, complex questions remain about what is cost-effective. Investments in certain areas (such as promoting health and wellbeing, and information and advice) are critical to 'whole system' change, but it is not yet certain how far they can help to deliver short-term savings. Similarly, self-directed support can deliver better individual outcomes at lower cost, but local delivery arrangements are variable, and sometimes inefficient. Better integration with health has clear potential to ensure improved use of resources across the whole system, but there is no 'one size fits all' model. Overall, the evidence on cost-effectiveness suggests that much depends on how the changes are introduced; councils need to be business-like and rigorous in monitoring both the costs and benefits of their particular models.

Our pragmatic approach

TEASC recognises that even though many interventions are not yet subject to full economic evaluation, councils must decide their spending priorities based on the available evidence. So, this toolkit is designed to help councils challenge themselves on whether their own application of the ADASS 'whole system' approach is so far resulting in better use of resources.

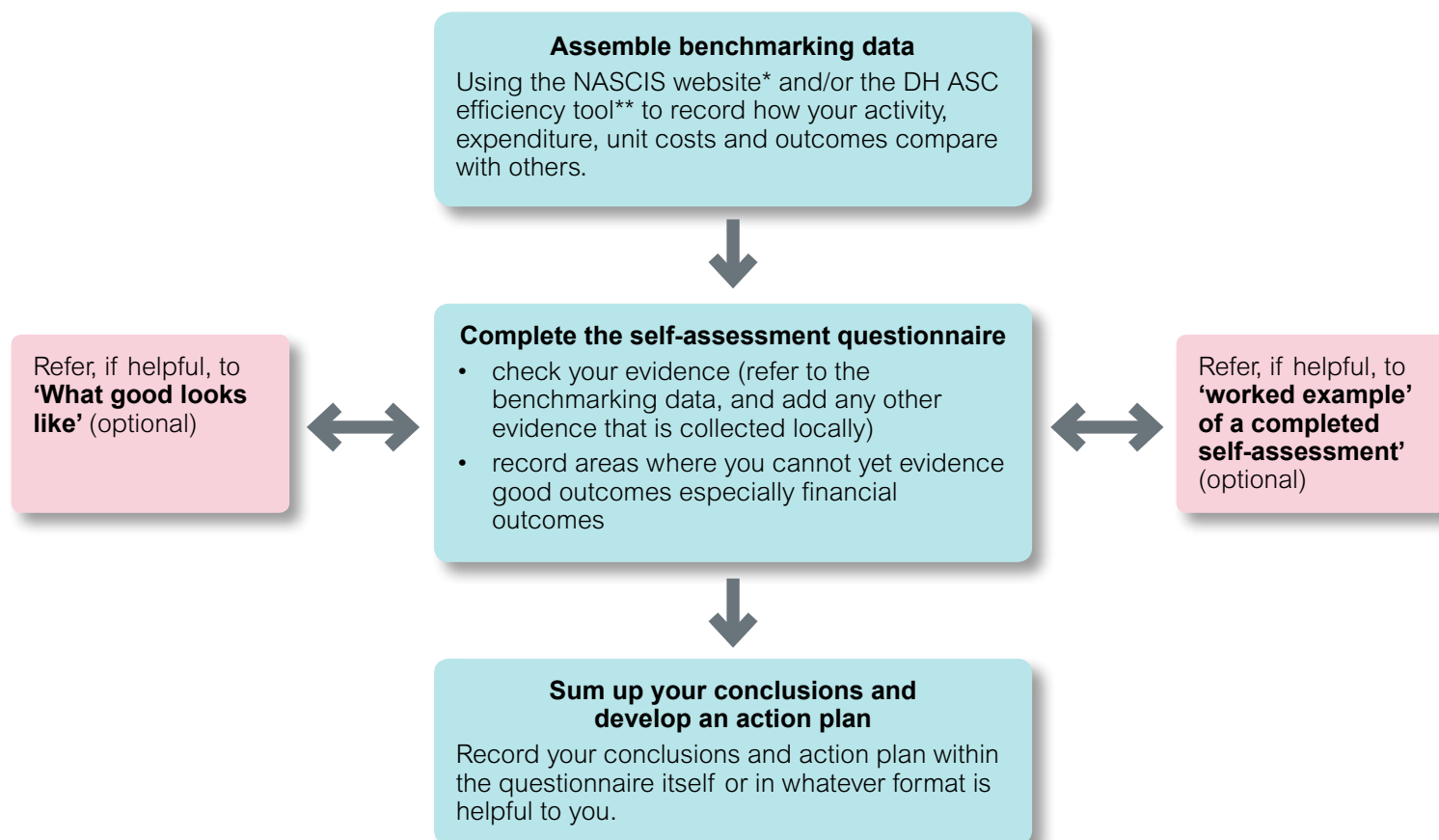## What is in the toolkit and how can it be used?

- The core element of the toolkit is a **SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL**.

- This is supported by proposed descriptors of **'what good looks like' (Optional Tool 1).** This document includes a list of recommended sources of UK guidance and evidence, and case studies from the LGA's Adult Social Care Efficiency Programme.

- A worked example of what a completed tool self-assessment might look like **(Optional Tool 2)**.

The links to 'Making it real' and 'Making Safeguarding Personal'

Clearly there are a wealth of other diagnostic and action planning tools available, which are relevant to the broader task of delivering better outcomes for people and populations. In particular, TLAP's markers of progress in 'Making it real' set out what people with care and support needs locally should see and experience when personalisation and community based support is working well. The 'Making Safeguarding Personal 'approach facilitates the development of qualitative and quantitative measures to assess the effectiveness of safeguarding practice. Councils can refer to these and other existing guidance when using this tool.

Illustrations of how the materials can be used are set out in the diagrams which follow.

Suggested ways of using the self-assessment toolkit

Assemble benchmarking data

Using the NASCIS website* and/or the DH ASC efficiency tool** to record how your activity, expenditure, unit costs and outcomes compare with others.

Refer, if helpful, to **'What good looks like'** (optional)

Complete the self-assessment questionnaire

- check your evidence (refer to the benchmarking data, and add any other evidence that is collected locally)
- record areas where you cannot yet evidence good outcomes especially financial outcomes

Refer, if helpful, to **'worked example' of a completed self-assessment'** (optional)

Sum up your conclusions and develop an action plan

Record your conclusions and action plan within the questionnaire itself or in whatever format is helpful to you.

* nascis.hscic.gov.uk/portal/tools.aspx

** www.gov.uk/government/publications/adult-social-care-efficiency-tool

Using the self-assessment toolkit as part of an external challenge process

STEP 1

Decide on the process to be followed, including who will lwad the exercise and who will be involved.

STEP 2 (OPTIONAL)

Establish the context

(YOU MAY DECIDE TO SKIP THIS STEP if the context is already familiar to all those involved in the process. If you do include this step, your external challengers will need a short contextual briefing; you can cross-reference to relevant strategic documents wherever appropriate).

A.
Financial context

B.
Current priorities of ASC and partners

C.
ASC budget strategy

D.
Risk assessment

E.
SUMMING UP

A.
How are ASC budgets distributed

B.
How many people are supported by ASC?

C.
What are the costs of services arranged or provided by ASC?

D.
What outcomes are achieved?

E. (OPTIONAL)
Other benchmarking data?

E.
SUMMING UP:
Draw coonclusions from the benchmarking exercise.

Decide whether to proceed further.

Confirm the scope for the next stage.

STEP 3
Benchmark trends in activity, expenditure, costs and outcomes

STEP 4
Use the self-assessment toolkit flexibly, to assess progress in some or all of the six areas of the ADASS framework.

STEP 5
Invite your external challengers to check your findings, suggest new ideas and approaches, and help you develop your action plan.

Local Government Association
Local Government House
Smith Square
London SW1P 3HZ

Telephone 020 7664 3000
Fax 020 7664 3030
Email info@local.gov.uk
www.local.gov.uk

For a copy in Braille, larger print or audio,
please contact us on 020 7664 3000.
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