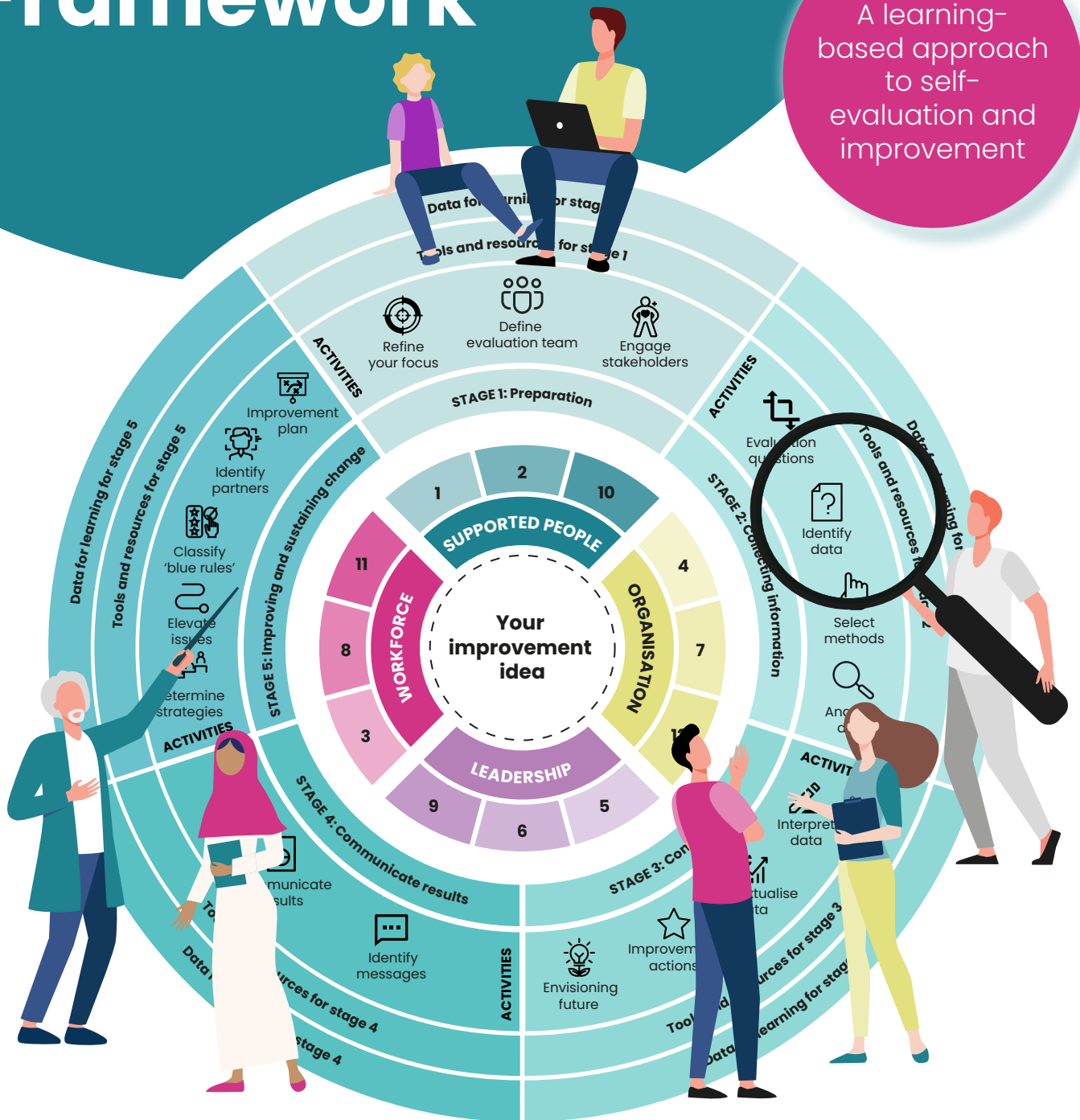# Self-directed Support Learning and Improvement Framework

A learning-based approach to self-evaluation and improvement

STAGE 1: Preparation

ACTIVITIES
- Refine your focus
- Define evaluation team
- Engage stakeholders

Data for learning for stage 1
Tools and resources for stage 1

STAGE 2: Collecting information

ACTIVITIES
- Evaluation questions
- Identify data
- Select methods
- Analyse data

Tools and resources for stage 2

STAGE 3: Con...

ACTIVITIES
- Envisioning future
- Improvement actions
- Contextualise data
- Interpret data

Tools and resources for stage 3
Data for learning for stage 3

STAGE 4: Communicate results

ACTIVITIES
- Communicate results
- Identify messages

Tools and resources for stage 4
Data for learning for stage 4

STAGE 5: Improving and sustaining change

ACTIVITIES
- Improvement plan
- Identify partners
- Classify 'blue rules'
- Elevate issues
- Determine strategies

Data for learning for stage 5
Tools and resources for stage 5

Your improvement idea

- SUPPORTED PEOPLE
- ORGANISATION
- LEADERSHIP
- WORKFORCE

1, 2, 10, 4, 7, 5, 6, 9, 3, 8, 11

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Table of Contents

Introduction to the pack

This pack provides a comprehensive overview of the Self-directed Support Learning and Improvement Framework (the Framework), offering practical guidance, tools and resources to facilitate continuous improvement and sustainable change.

1. Getting started and mindset needed

To engage effectively with the Framework, adopting the right mindset is crucial. This section outlines the initial steps and conditions required for successful implementation.

1.1 Adopting a learning approach

This section will support you to step into a learning mindset, which is vital to engaging effectively with the Framework.

1.2 Deciding on your key principles

This section will help you consider the key principles guiding you in your self-evaluation and improvement process.

1.3 Creating conditions: seven conditions facilitating a learning approach

Explore the seven essential conditions that foster a learning-oriented approach within the Framework, and how these might support your practice.

2. Guidance

2.1 What the Framework is and what it is not

Understand the nature of the Framework as an iterative assessment tool. Clarify its purpose and scope to effectively manage expectations and outcomes.

2.2 Who should use the Framework and why

Identify key stakeholders who can benefit from using the Framework.

2.3 Benefits and ways of using the Framework

Explore the advantages of adopting the Framework and various approaches to its application.

2.4 How and when should the Framework be used

Gain insights into the practical application of the Framework.

3. The toolkit

3.1 The Self-directed Support Learning and Improvement Framework

Detailed guidance on using the Framework, including stage wise processes and recommended activities and tools to ensure success.

3.2 Who are you impacting? Using an impact tool

A quick assessment technique to document and evaluate impact on the people groups and geographical communities with whom you are engaging.

3.3 Implementation drivers evaluation matrix to gather data for learning

A structured approach to developing and utilising an evaluation matrix. Learn how to collect relevant data to facilitate continuous learning and improvement.

3.4 Following a journey map

A way of using the standards to think about the supported person's journey through the social work and social care system.

4. Resources

Access valuable resources and links aligned with each stage of the Framework's process. These resources support effective application and provide additional insights for stakeholders.

5. Getting support

Learn along with others, join a dedicated community of practice, and read case-studies and exemplary practices demonstrating the use of the Framework.

5.1 Community of practice

5.2 Case studies

5.3 Improving the Framework

1. Getting started and mindset needed

1.1 Adopting a learning mindset

To engage effectively with the Framework, adopting a learning mindset is crucial. Learning as Management Strategy comes from one simple truth – that real outcomes in people's lives aren't 'delivered' by organisations (or by projects, partnerships or programmes, etc). Outcomes are created by the hundreds of different factors in the unique complex system that is each person's life.

Self-directed Support is focused on helping people achieve the best outcomes they can in their lives. It is essential therefore to understand that this requires a different approach to planning and organisation. It requires continuous exploration, experimentation and learning. It is this mindset of process of continuous exploration that will help you make the best use of this self-evaluation process.

This learning and improvement framework has used a Human Learning Systems (HLS) approach to help underpin the use of learning as a management strategy and these are the core principles of Human Learning Systems:

Human

The purpose of public service is to support human freedom and flourishing. To respond to each person's unique and inter-dependent life context, public service is bespoke by design: built on strong relationships and trust.

Learning

Public service should be a process of ongoing exploration and learning: workers and people who use services, exploring and learning together, responding to people's unique lives and the ever-changing world. Learning is the management strategy - the primary task of managers and leaders is to create effective learning environments which enable this adaptation. Self-directed Support (like all social policies) is far too complex for performance management!

Systems

Outcomes cannot be 'delivered' by public services - they are created by whole systems: all the relationships and factors in someone's life. Positive outcomes are made by healthy systems - systems in which all the people involved can collaborate and learn together.

1.2 Deciding on your guiding principles

You may want to decide on some key principles to guide you in your learning and improvement process that align with your own organisation's values. Here are some suggestions that we have adopted in the Social Work Scotland Self-directed Support project:

- Our local approach to learning and improvement will support co-production and relationship-based practice. Supported people, carers, social work practitioners, implementers, leaders, independent advocacy, support and brokerage – all have a crucial role to play in the learning and improvement process. We aim to combine everyone's strengths, skills and experience through relationships that enable people to work together on an equal basis to achieve the shared aims of our work.

- In our work, we will adopt methods and tools to support Self-directed Support best practice that are practical and can be implemented locally.

- We will consider how we make best use of digital technologies to support our approach to improving practice and to support the implementation of Self-directed Support.

- Our aspiration is to implement Self-directed Support equally for all. We will strive to build understanding and collaborations that help us to recognise the potential breadth of application of Self-directed Support. This will include consideration across the whole age spectrum and of groups who are underrepresented and marginalised.

- Our progressive implementation approach means that we are committed to working towards full implementation of the Self-directed Support standards. The standards encompass the values and principles of Self-directed Support, but we accept that there are complex challenges to delivering Self-directed Support in our local area that we need to understand and work with in a flexible way.

- We support the principles of UNCRPD article 19[1] to uphold people's rights to independent living:

  a) Persons with disabilities have the opportunity to choose their place of residence and where and with whom they live on an equal basis with others and are not obliged to live in a particular living arrangement;

  b) Persons with disabilities have access to a range of in-home, residential and other community support services, including personal assistance necessary to support living and inclusion in the community, and to prevent isolation or segregation from the community;

  c) Community services and facilities for the general population are available on an equal basis to persons with disabilities and are responsive to their needs.

1.3 Creating conditions: seven conditions facilitating a learning approach

There are seven essential conditions that foster a learning oriented approach.

Seven themes emerged from early exploratory testing of the Framework. They relate to the wider conditions which help develop a learning approach within organisations.

- **Condition 1: Lived experience co-production:** genuine co-production involves those with lived experience in a meaningful way at all stages of the local design and implementation of self-evaluation and improvement, in a way that values supported people and carers as leaders in the work. This includes paying expenses and compensating people for the time they spend involved in participatory activity (see tools and resources section).

- **Condition 2: Agency of workers in improvement:** the agency of workers in the improvement journey emerged as central to understanding how Self-directed Support is working in practice. The Self-directed Support workforce should be involved from the outset in the learning and improvement process, allowing all workers to contribute to discovering or recognising what might need to be different in practice, without seeking solutions too quickly. This can take time, but it is important as it helps to focus the self-evaluation activity on the issues relevant to practice and to create ownership across the workforce groups.

- **Condition 3: Confidence of self-evaluators:** the confidence of those leading the self-evaluation process locally is important. Our approach requires a shift from a focus on performance to a focus on learning and everyone involved has to shift their perspective. Our approach is different to inspection and audit and, at times, can feel messy. It is important that those taking forward the self-evaluation are confident in the process and can hold space during the messy period before a clear focus emerges from your work.

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[1] https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-19-living-independently-and-being-included-in-the-community.html

Condition 4: Leadership: leaders are key to developing a learning approach. The trust of leaders in the workers involved and support for all partners is important, as is permission for the workforce to be curious. Leaders are critical in providing permission, support and governance for the development of a learning approach.

Condition 5: Pace and nature of learning and improvement activity: you need to take account of organisational and resource factors, and the pacing of the learning and improvement process when using the Framework. Adopting new approaches to learning takes time and can be impacted by who is available to do the work and how much time they have to devote to it. The good news is that you can make small and incremental but important change through adopting a learning approach.

Condition 6: Role of critical friends: working with partners or with external support helps to enable a process of co-production. It helps to create the space for fuller discussions and reflections before starting to design solutions.

Condition 7: Importance of peer support: everyone benefits from coming together with others on the learning and improvement journey to share experiences and learn from colleagues.

2. Guidance

2.1 What the Framework is and what it is not

The Framework is to be viewed and used as a scaffolding for you to develop your local approach to self-evaluation and improvement. Your local area will already have an in-house way of doing things, so we are not giving you a must-do prescription.

As well as providing a set of suggestions, the Framework should be understood as an iterative tool. You start where YOU are, with what makes sense for your area, go at the pace you need to go, pause when you need to, review, revise and learn together.

The Framework is not exhaustive. It is informed by implementation science and by Human Learning Systems, but above all by the local areas that tested it out and by learning from stakeholders – notably those involved in Social Work Scotland Self-directed Support project workstreams, the National Self-directed Support Collaboration and the Self-directed Support Community of Practice. We have included lots of goodies, but we are still learning and we always will be.

2.2 Who should use the Framework and why

We have designed the Framework for use mainly by implementers and leaders in local partnerships, but we hope that it will be useful and interesting to stakeholders much more widely, including independent support organisations and support providers.

2.3 Benefits and ways of using the Framework

The Framework, in its earlier iteration, was used by three local partnerships and by Self Directed Support Scotland in collaboration with independent support organisations. Each area used the Framework differently and their experiences and insights have informed the current version of the Framework.

2.4 How and when should the Framework be used

We think the Framework can be used at any time and at any scope – whether you are looking to make small incremental improvements or undertake an authority-wide programme of change. Any local area that is planning to use the Framework will be invited to join a dedicated Learning and Improvement Community of Practice, hosted by Social Work Scotland.

3. The toolkit

3.1 The Self-directed Support Learning and Improvement Framework

This section gives detailed guidance on using the Framework, including five stage wise processes and recommended activities and tools to ensure success. The process begins with the improvement idea and works round and outwards. The approach is progressive but enables you to revisit any aspect of the process to reflect on and revise your direction of travel.

Click on to each process ring to go to the relevant place in this guidance document.
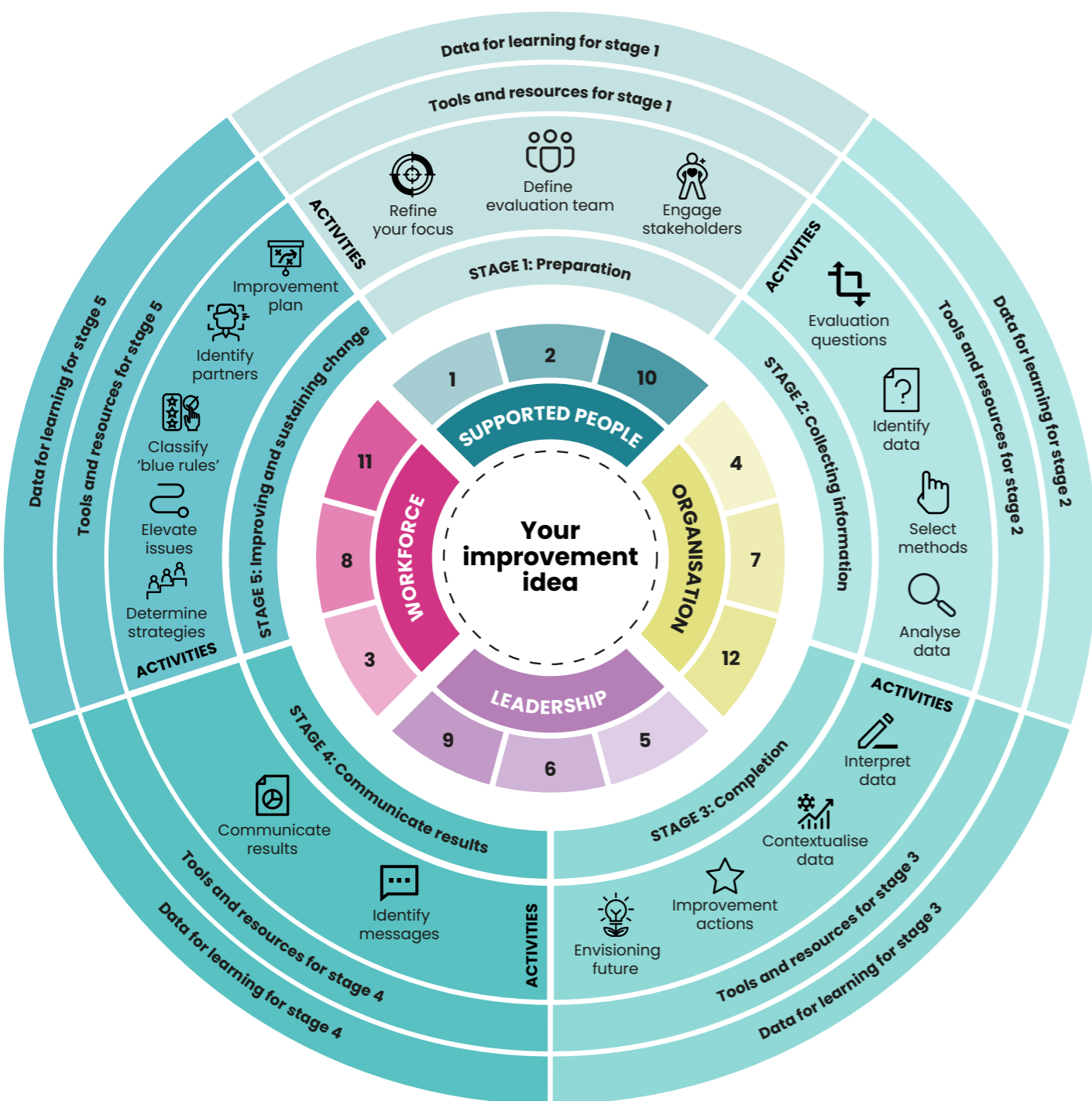
Process 1 – Your improvement idea

Start where you are! You are on an iterative journey.

Process 1 sets out the purpose and objectives of the evaluation, identifies and engages stakeholders and funders, decides about whether the evaluation is externally commissioned, conducted in-house or through a partnership, and identifies what resources are needed.

It is important to collaboratively define the overall focus of the evaluation and improvement journey (what the system wants more of). The Self-directed Support standards can be used to help inform thinking as can discussions with staff groups, partners or those who use services. This can also help to identify which areas of practice it would be helpful to understand better. Below are suggested steps:

Identify and engage with key stakeholders, specifying roles clearly.

Map the various people, teams, services and organisations to involve, and identify who to include in the evaluation and how to include them e.g. to be kept informed, part of review team, participant.

Identify which team leaders, senior managers and strategic leaders are not part of the evaluation, but who need to be engaged.

Set clear expectations from the start. Identify expectations of team leaders, senior management and leaders from the outset.

Take time to explore your focus. Use local data, speak to supported people, workers and managers.

- **Example from Highland:** Highland adopted an appreciative inquiry approach to self-evaluation in terms of the steps of design, discover, dream, design and deliver. Highland worked in partnership with an external organisation, In Control Scotland, and brought staff together from the NHS, Council and partner organisations to start a co-production process of self-evaluation and improvement in Self-directed Support. The session was facilitated by In Control Scotland and focused on the first two stages of the self-evaluation process: define and discover. It was important at the start of the process and throughout to highlight the importance of 'noticing' without judgement, and without immediately jumping to solutions. The first task Highland set was to define the question it wished to answer and to support this all participants had been asked to complete a survey prior to the workshops to help inform discussions.

Keep it manageable. Your scope will be dependent on organisational readiness, improvement capability, and local policy priorities.

- **Example from Moray:** The framework had helped to keep the team focused and to keep the self-evaluation manageable. Moray reflected that they often problem-solve and automatically look ahead. Using the framework helped the team think about the purpose of the evaluation and to keep the task manageable:

> **Made us really think about what it was that we wanted to look at. Framework made us stop and think, and made us backtrack. It stopped us running too far ahead and made us reflect... The framework did initially feel like going backwards, but actually it really helped in our understanding.**

You can revisit if the initial focus needs revised or refined.

- **Example from Moray:** The team reflected that at times when an area of practice has been 'noticed' as needing to be addressed or considered, people often have solutions or change identified. Using the draft Framework had helped the team to pause and reconsider the focus of the self-evaluation. Moray realised that it had to start in one place with a clear focus and then allow the evaluation to develop. The self-evaluation framework had helped colleagues in Moray

to reflect that solutions cannot be assumed just because problems can be identified and that it was about conversations. The Framework asked the questions which helped colleagues identify who was needed around the table, including auditors, Finance, CSWO, and unpaid carers, who should be an integral focal point of decisions made.

You can use the impact tool to scan the people groups and geographical communities from an equalities impact perspective (see tools and resources).

You can use the drivers evaluation matrix to look at your organisation's strengths, and areas to develop in relation to the drivers of good Self-directed Support. You can use the matrix for a quick scan at the beginning of the learning and improvement journey, and again in more depth as you develop evidence through the learning process (see tools and resources).

These are the questions to consider:

- What is the purpose of the evaluation?
- Which Self-directed Support standards are a priority, and why?
- Engage leaders in the process – who is leading from the front?
- How is this evaluation linked to wider learning and development?
- Who are our partners and stakeholders?
- Who should be involved?
- Who should be part of the evaluation team and who should lead?

Process 2 – Using the Self-directed Support standards

Throughout each learning and improvement stage, you can use the Self-directed Support standards to:

- help you to reflect on and refine the scope of your self-evaluation (stage 1)
- decide on your evaluation questions and the data you want to collect (stage 2)
- use as evidence criteria for what good Self-directed Support looks like (stage 3)
- explain the evaluation findings to stakeholders and governance groups (stage 4)
- set the goals for improvement (stage 5)

Hopefully, you will already be familiar with the Self-directed Support Framework of Standards (the Self-directed Support standards). As a reminder, they contain twelve foundational standards and accompanying practice statements and core components, and were designed to align with the Self-directed Support statutory guidance to support system change, implementation, practice and consistency of outcomes experienced by supported people (children and adults) and unpaid carers across Scotland. The standards are not in themselves statutory, but they aim to support best practice and demonstrate what good Self-directed Support implementation looks like.
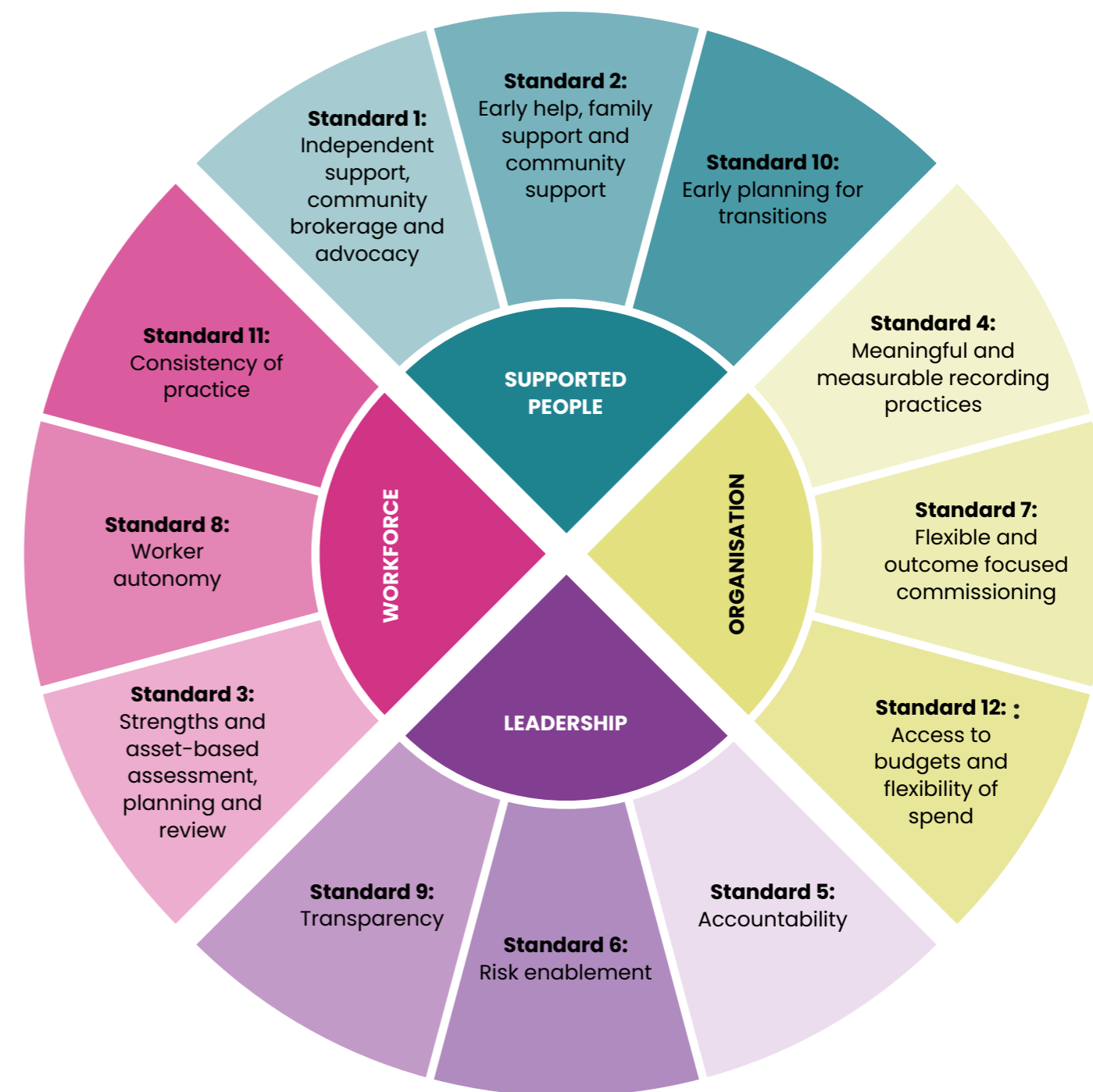
The approach to implementing the standards is one of progressive implementation that accepts that there are complex challenges to delivering Self-directed Support, especially in the current time of crisis. The concept of progressive implementation fits well with implementation science[2], which shifts the question from: *"What can we do with what we have?"* to: *"What will it take to do what needs to be done?"*

Have a copy of the standards document to hand for reference. If you have an electronic version of the standards document, you will be able to navigate it by clicking on the standards wheel on page 3 of the standards document.

You will need to consider which of the standards and core components are a priority for your area to self-evaluate against and to improve impact. For stage 5 – improving and sustaining change - you will need to think about what resources you will need to implement the relevant standards and core components across the people groups you want to focus on, and how you will plan to do this.

Self-directed Support Standards wheel (page 3 of Self-directed Support Framework of Standards)

Self-directed Support Standards wheel with segments:

- SUPPORTED PEOPLE
  - Standard 1: Independent support, community brokerage and advocacy
  - Standard 2: Early help, family support and community support
- ORGANISATION
  - Standard 10: Early planning for transitions
  - Standard 4: Meaningful and measurable recording practices
  - Standard 7: Flexible and outcome focused commissioning
  - Standard 12: Access to budgets and flexibility of spend
  - Standard 5: Accountability
- LEADERSHIP
  - Standard 6: Risk enablement
  - Standard 9: Transparency
- WORKFORCE
  - Standard 3: Strengths and asset-based assessment, planning and review
  - Standard 8: Worker autonomy
  - Standard 11: Consistency of practice

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[2] https://www.activeimplementation.org/

How to use the SDS standards

Each standard can be considered individually, but the standards can be grouped in relation to their relevance to different parts of the overall system of implementation drivers. The implementation drivers are explained in detail on pages 8 and 9 of the SDS Framework of Standards document.

Supported people's experience

Standard 1 Independent Support, Community Brokerage and Advocacy

Standard 2 Early Help, Family Support and Community Support

Standard 10 Early Planning for Transitions

Workforce competency

Standard 3 Strengths- and Asset-based Assessment, Planning and Review

Standard 8 Worker Autonomy

Standard 11 Consistency of Practice

Organisational systems

Standard 4 Meaningful and measurable recording practices

Standard 7 Flexible and Outcome Focused Commissioning

Standard 12 Access to Budgets and Flexibility of Spend

Leadership

Standard 5 Accountability

Standard 6 Risk Enablement

Standard 9 Transparency

Each Standard contains:

Standard Descriptor

Describes the intention of the standard from the perspective of people.

Practice Statement

States what the authority needs to do to in practice, in relation to each standard.

Core Components

The essential associated elements that are necessary to produce the desired outcome of the standard.

And a new element has been introduced:

'How to' statements

Set out the issues or factors to take account of while working towards achievement of the core components.

The new approach is designed to help with the implementation of the standards in practice. The revised standards have been designed as an interactive pdf and are summarised in an easy-read format, and can be found on the standards page of the Self-directed Support Library - Self-directed Support Framework of Standards.

The Self-directed Support implementation drivers model is a way of looking at the local social work system that empowers supported people and social work practitioners by focusing on putting relationship-based practice at the heart of system improvement.
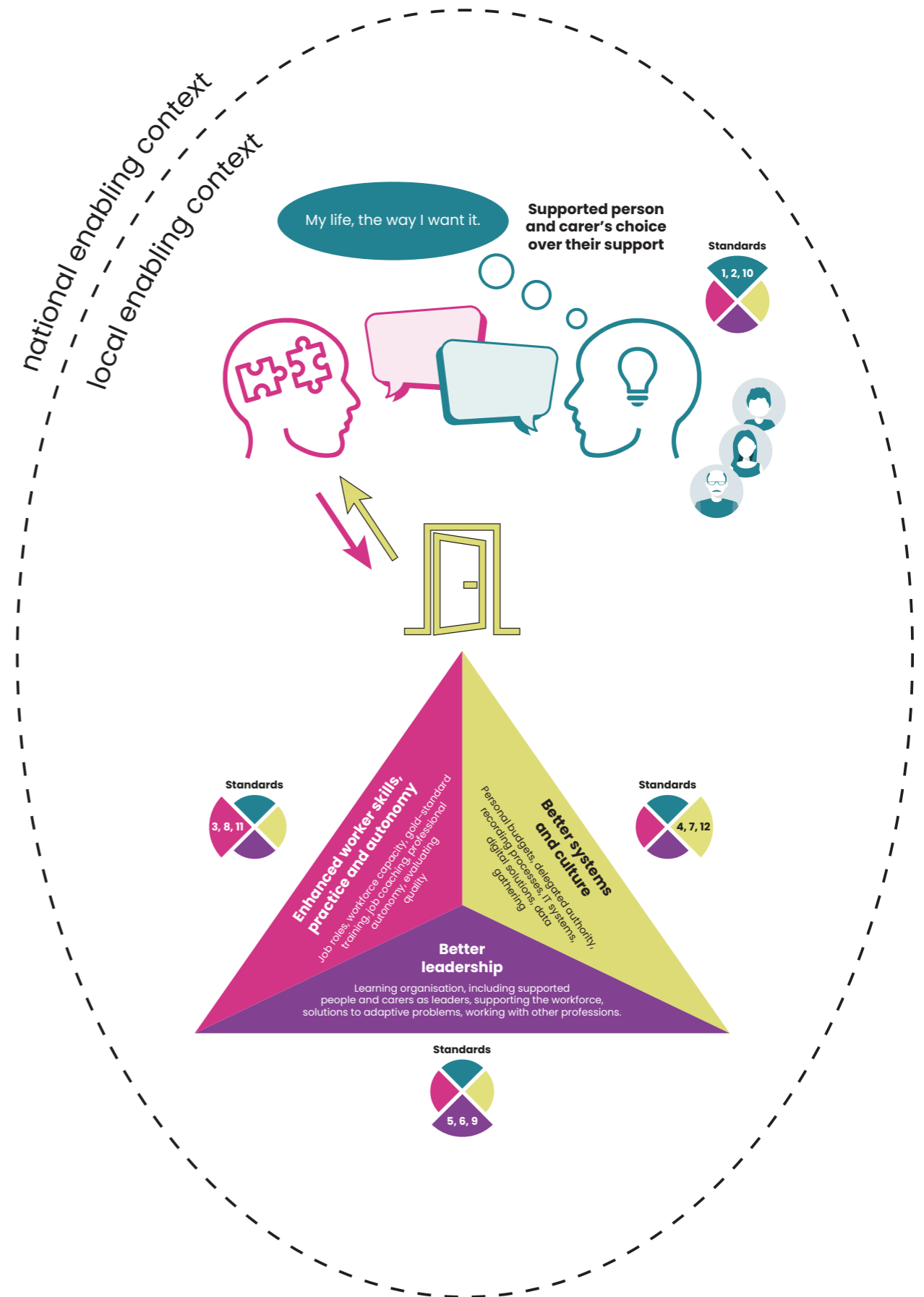
Process 3 – Stages

Process 3 consists of five stages, that can be followed in sequence but also revisited and repeated as necessary to meet the aims and scope of your learning and improvement exercise. The first four stages are drawn from the evaluation literature[3] with a fifth stage added to segue into improvement activity. The five stages have been designed to support a learning-based approach.

Stage 1: Preparation

Stage 1 includes developing a plan or model describing the process and activities for the evaluation. This establishes the type of evaluation, the approach to adopt and methods to use.

Questions to consider:

- What is the scope of the evaluation?
- What is your approach to the evaluation?
- What does a learning approach look like in our organisation and for our partners?
- How will the information be gathered and what types of information are needed?
- Will the plan and approach gather all the information needed to answer the evaluation questions?
- Develop the evaluation plan including what needs to be in place once the evaluation is completed.

Implementation drivers:

Competency drivers
Do members of the evaluation team have the right skills and experience to undertake the evaluation?

Organisation drivers
Is the available data helpful to the evaluation process?

Are leaders and managers prioritising this work and committed to seeking feedback from staff and stakeholders?

Leadership drivers
Are leaders informed and supportive of this evaluation and prepared to embed learning?

Embedding learning[4]:

Person
Are supported people and carers involved? Are social work practitioners involved? Who needs to be kept informed?

Team
Which of the wider workforce needs to be involved and/or informed?

Organisation
Is this evaluation linked into wider reviewing mechanisms and governance structures? Where does it report to?

Place
Do other local partners need to be included or informed?

Country
Are there potential national issues that need to be reported onward?

Stage 2: Collecting information

Stage 2 should be a practical, systematic, ongoing, accurate and ethical approach to collecting data to inform the evaluation. It is likely that data collection will combine gathering data which is routinely available and easily accessed with other data specific to the evaluation question(s), which is not collected routinely.

Questions to consider:

- What does a learning approach look like in our organisation and for our partners?
- How will we gather the information and what types of information are needed?
- What tools need to be developed to gather the data? This will be shaped by the purpose of the evaluation and the approach taken.

You could consider using artificial intelligence tools (e.g. Copilot) to analyse recorded transcripts of discussions (this is easy to do if you are using MS Teams or Zoom). It elevates rich discussions from anecdote to evidence. It is a quick and easy way to use qualitative data to inform the evaluation, and helps to shift away from overreliance on quantitative (numerical) performance data.

- What support is or might be needed for the different groups involved with the evaluation?

- What approach is needed to be confident that the data gathered is credible e.g. do you need inter-rater reliability for case file audit?

Implementation drivers:

Competency drivers
Do staff in the service areas in focus have the right skills and experiences to gather the data needed in the evaluation?

Organisation drivers
Are all parts of the organisation supportive of the evaluation activity?

Leadership drivers
Are leaders continuing to support the evaluation and to embed learning? Are leaders making it easy to gather the data needed for the evaluation?

Embedding learning:

Person
How will supported people and carers be kept up-to-date with progress?

Team
How will workforce and managers be kept up-to-date with progress?

Organisation
Are sessions needed to keep leaders informed of progress?

Place
Do other local partners need to be kept up-to-date with progress?

Country
Is there learning that will be useful for others across the country, and are there potential national issues that need to be reported onward?

Stage 3: Completing the work (identify findings, analyse data and extract learning)

Stage 3 identifies the key patterns, themes and issues by analysing and aggregating data. Evidence could be discussed within the evaluation team as part of the evaluation process, to identify findings and also what worked and did not work, as well as why/why not, and what the circumstances were.

Questions to consider:

- Who is involved in analysing the data?

- What is the information telling us? Use the relevant Self-directed Support standards to reflect on the findings.
- Identify patterns and trends emerging: do they make sense? Any deviations to these patterns and what might explain this?
- How do you reflect the contribution of the organisation or service?
- How do you avoid over- or under-inflation of the findings?
- How do you reflect what is not working?

Implementation drivers:

Competency drivers
Do evaluators have the skills to analyse findings and extract data?

Organisation drivers
Is the data and information that the organisation routinely collects helpful in decision-making? Should it be reviewed? Do staff receive regular data that supports their tasks?

Leadership drivers
Do leaders need to assess contextual issues (e.g. political, demographic, funding, values and philosophical issues)?

Are there challenges related to implementation (e.g. adaptive challenges that do not have clear or agreed solutions)?

Embedding learning:

Person
Will early findings be shared with supported people and carers to sense-check?

Team
Will early findings be shared with the relevant workers and managers for feedback and sense-checking?

Organisation
What discussion is needed with leaders?

Place
What discussion is needed with local partners?

Country
Have red rules[5] been identified which need to be raised nationally with leaders, policymakers and politicians?

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[3] Jane Scott, Social Work Scotland: SDS evaluation subgroup: Discussion paper, November 2022

[4] Human Learning Systems - Systems scales see p16
https://www.centreforpublicimpact.org/assets/pdfs/hls-practical-guide.pdf

[5] The terms 'red rules' and 'blue rules' are used to refer to rules that are either set in stone (red) or those that can be changed under certain circumstances (blue).

Stage 4: Communicate results

Stage 4 is how you communicate the findings of the evaluation meaningfully and effectively. Reports should factor in the interests of the audience e.g. funders, partners, staff and managers, leaders and those who use the service.

Questions to consider:

- Who needs to know what information locally?
- With which partners and stakeholders should information be shared?
- Are there national issues to be reported onward?

Implementation drivers:

Competency drivers
Are there people with communication expertise in the evaluation team, or do you need to draw on this from outside?

Organisation drivers
Does the organisation have effective methods to communicate with people who use services, the wider public and with workforce groups? What communication methods do you need to communicate the findings of the evaluation process effectively?

Leadership drivers
Where and how should leaders lead on communicating the findings of the evaluation? Which governance groups will the findings be reported to? Who agrees next steps?

Embedding learning:

Person
Are there messages or changes in services or practice that need to be communicated to supported people and carers?

Team
How will the workforce and managers be informed about findings? Is there an opportunity for discussion and reflection of practice?

Organisation
What discussion is needed with leaders? Which parts of the organisation are key in implementing change?

Place
What communication is needed with local partners? Have you involved or informed your area's Care Inspectorate link inspector?

Country
Which national bodies might have an interest in your evaluation findings? Have the routes for raising red rules nationally with leaders, policymakers and politicians been identified?

Stage 5: Improving and sustaining change

The fifth stage considers how to move from evaluation to improvement, how your improvement plan is designed and implemented, and how it's embedded across people groups, communities and organisations.

Questions to consider:

- How is this evaluation linked to ongoing improvement activity? Will you develop a local Self-directed Support improvement plan, or revise your existing plan in light of the new findings?
- What does 'sustaining' look like for the organisation and partners, and what is needed for it to happen?
- What are the key priority findings to embed into practice?
- How will change be sustained?
- Have you established a local implementation team, and does it include all the right representatives?

Implementation drivers:

Use the full extent of the Self-directed Support standards and implementation drivers to inform your improvement plan. Remember, the Self-directed Support standards say what good Self-directed Support looks like, and the implementation drivers tell you what good implementation looks like.

Competency drivers
Do practitioners have the right skills? Is further training needed for the workforce? Is coaching needed or does supervision need to be reviewed? Do job roles or descriptions need to be changed in light of findings?

Organisation drivers
Are there systems or processes which will be stopped? Are there processes for ongoing review and learning with feedback from staff, partners and those who use services? How can the organisation sustain a more supportive environment for practice? Do changes need to be made in organisation roles, functions, and structures, or in policies and procedures? How will leaders and managers seek feedback from staff and stakeholders? Are systemic changes needed to the larger system to create a more supportive environment for practice?

Leadership drivers
Do leaders continue to assess contextual issues (e.g. political, demographic, funding, values and philosophical issues)? Are there ongoing adaptive challenges related to implementation (i.e. challenges that do not have clear or agreed solutions)? How will leaders ensure that local systems and culture support their social work workforce? How will leaders create an enabling local context for the progressive implementation of Self-directed Support, and build capacity for supported people and carers to become leaders within the process?

Embedding learning:

Person
How will changes in services or practice that impact on supported people and carers be sustained?

Teams
How will the workforce and managers be included in discussions about changing and sustaining practice?

Organisation
What is needed from leaders in changing and sustaining practice?

Place
What are the expectations of local partners in changing and sustaining practice?

Country
How will the momentum be maintained in raising issues nationally?

Process 4 – Activities

Activity in relation to stage 1: Preparation

Use the Self-directed Support standards to refine your focus

In processes 1 (your improvement idea) and 2 (using the Self-directed Support standards) you will have given some thought as to which of the Self-directed Support standards are most relevant to what you want to explore. Use the Self-directed Support standards and core components most relevant to your improvement ideas, and think about how the 'how to's might help you to develop your approach.

Define evaluation team and approach

Use the seven learning conditions to identify who should be in your evaluation team and what approach you will take. Involve the full range of key partners across your local area including your local independent support organisation. Have the meaningful involvement of supported people and carers and social work practitioners at the heart of your approach. Remember, the impact starts with the relationship between the supported person and the social work practitioner, so they will be your reference for what good looks like.

Engage stakeholders to identify strengths and areas for improvement

Ask supported people, carers and social work practitioners to say what works in the current system, where the strengths lie, and what else might need 'discovered' through self-evaluation. For Self-directed Support to have the potential to work well across the local system, we need to consider wider partners like community planning and housing, as well as health, education, legal, finance, audit, commissioning and procurement.

Activity in relation to stage 2: Collecting information

Use the Self-directed Support standards to shape evaluation questions

Consider how the practice statements of the Self-directed Support standards that you have identified are most relevant to your improvement ideas and how they can help shape the questions and detail of the evaluation. Consider how the core components could translate into the questions for the evaluation.

Questions could include:

- To what extent do you feel trusted, confident and able to exercise professional judgement?
- To what extent do you feel safe and confident when taking managed risks?
- Do your agency's policy and procedures support you?
- Do you have delegated authority to access budgets up to agreed amounts?
- To what extent can you use your knowledge, skills and abilities to exercise choice, creativity and flexibility in achieving an individual's personal outcomes?
- Are you limited to matching people with existing commissioned services on framework?
- Describe your experience of supervision
- Are caseloads manageable and allow the development of relationships between workers and people?

Identify existing data that tells you about your area of focus

This could include numerical (quantitative) data, recent Care Inspectorate reports, annual staff feedback, supported people feedback and complaints etc.

Select effective methods for answering your evaluation questions

Think about the best way of collecting new information to answer your evaluation questions.

Data gathering could be through:

- Individual interviews
- Focus groups
- Survey
- Audit of case files

Use AI (artificial intelligence) tools to analyse qualitative data

AI tools such as MS Copilot are a game changer in how we can use qualitative data such as rich evaluative discussions. Record discussions using high quality recording equipment or using MS Teams if meeting online, check the transcript for accuracy and put the transcript through Copilot using a predetermined set of questions. Make sure you sense-check the analysis!

Activity in relation to stage 3: Completion

Interpret the data

- Identify what is significant and for whom.
- Identify additional questions or information needed.
- Recommend learning and improvement actions.
- Understand what supports or hinders good practice.
- Identify what is necessary for wider implementation.

Contextualise the data

Consider how the data can be interpreted in the context of the Self-directed Support standards and the implementation framework of competency and leadership drivers, and practice.

Identify local, regional and national issues.

Consider how the findings can contribute to a learning approach to improvement

Refer to approaches like Human Learning Systems and others in the tools and resources section.

Engage workers, partners, and supported people to use past successes for envisioning the future

Consider the contribution of relevant staff groups, partners and supported people in how the past achievements and successes identified in the evaluation can help imagine new possibilities and envisage a preferred future. It allows people to identify their dreams for a community or organisation; having discovered 'what is best'.

Activity in relation to stage 4: Communicate results

Identify messages

Identify what messages you want to give to the workforce, managers, strategic leaders, partners and stakeholders. Shape your messages so that they are meaningful, appropriate and relevant to each group.

Discuss how to communicate results effectively

- Discuss with workforce groups, partners and supported people how to communicate results effectively.
- Consider what forums and networks to communicate results through locally.
- Consider what needs to be reported to your local governance groups.
- If national issues have emerged, consider how to communicate with leaders and national partners.

Activity in relation to stage 5: Improving and sustaining change

Create a learning-based improvement plan

Develop an improvement plan to take forward learning and set out steps for developing practice and embedding learning. The plan should allow for a learning-based approach to project management with enough structure to get things done, and enough space for learning. If you want to learn more about the Social Work Scotland Self-directed Support Project team's approach to learning-based project management, get in touch directly or join in with the community of practice.

Detail the steps you will take towards practice improvement and implementation of system change.

Identify key improvement partners

Identify key partners to be on your implementation team.

Classify 'blue rules'

The terms 'red rules' and 'blue rules' are used to refer to rules that are either set in stone (red) or those that can be changed under certain circumstances (blue)[6].

When making practice improvement, identify which 'blue rules' do not need authorisation or approval, those that do need approval from a manager, and those that require further review.

Determine pathways to elevate red rules to national level

Identify which routes you can take to elevate those 'red rules' that hinder the implementation of Self-directed Support to a national level, and how your leadership can promote debate and discussion nationally.

Determine strategies for sustaining change

Discuss with relevant workforce groups, partners and supported people how the changes can be sustained.

Keep developing the improvement plan and re-visit the SDS standards practice statements and core components to check if the changes you have made are contributing to better practice.

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[6] For more on using a Red Rules vs Blue Rules framework

Process 5 – Tools and resources

In process 5, we point you to some tools and resources that local areas tried out when testing an earlier version of the Self-directed Support Learning and Improvement Framework. This is far from an exhaustive selection, and we are keen to include more tried and tested tools and resources in future editions. You can find a longer list in section 4. Resources on page 28 that might be helpful to you, as well as the links to the tools and resources below.

Tools for stage 1: Preparation

- Use the Define stage of the 5 Ds: Define, Discover, Dream, Design, Deliver.
- Noticing framework, please see Human Learning Systems – a practical guide for the curious.
- Self-directed Support framework of standards.
- Use 3.2 Who are you impacting?, 3.3 Implementation drivers evaluation matrix and 3.4 Journey map to think about your improvement focus.

Tools for stage 2: Collecting information

- Use the Discover stage of the 5 Ds: Define, Discover, Dream, Design, Deliver.
- Appreciative enquiry, please see Human Learning Systems – a practical guide for the curious.
- Use 3.2 Who are you impacting?, 3.3 Implementation drivers evaluation matrix and 3.4 Journey map to think about what Self-directed Support looks and feels like in your area across all the people groups, geographical communities, system levels and journey stages.
- You can refer to the Self-directed Support Practitioner toolkit for best practice in Self-directed Support – can your social work practitioners practise in this way?

Tools for stage 3: Completion

- Use the Dream and Design stages of the 5 Ds: Define, Discover, Dream, Design, Deliver.
- OutNav - Understand, map and evidence how your organisation or initiative improves outcomes for people and communities. (NB OutNav has a cost attached.)

Tools for stage 4: Communicate results

- Use the Deliver stage of the 5 Ds: Define, Discover, Dream, Design, Deliver.

Think about using the following to disseminate your findings: Podcasts, webinars, briefings.

It's good practice to have an Easy read version ready to go at the same time as the original report.

Use 3.2 Who are you impacting?, 3.3 Implementation drivers evaluation matrix and 3.4 Journey map for ideas about how to communicate results about and to specific people groups, about specific parts of the system and to people with lived experience and practitioners about the journey.

Tools for stage 5: Improving and sustaining change

- Use the Deliver stage of the 5 Ds: Define, Discover, Dream, Design, Deliver; and loop back to the Define (or Redefine) based on new/emerging learning.
- Feedback loops.

Process 6 – Data for learning

What information do you have already that can help you to understand your improvement idea, and what does it tell you? What else do you need to know, and how might you gather that information?

Use 3.2 Who are you impacting?, 3.3 Implementation drivers evaluation matrix, and 3.4 Journey map to gather data for learning.

Data for learning can include:

- Numerical (quantitative) data – things you count.
- Narrative data – rich descriptions and stories about people's experiences of Self-directed Support, and practitioners' experiences of navigating the system.

What you might want to explore:

- The experience of relationships between people with lived experience and their workers.
- Relationships within different parts of the system e.g. workers and their managers; social work and finance.
- Personal outcomes – do workers know about personal outcomes, how are they developed and reviewed, and how do they inform support plans?
- Learning gained from taking calculated risks. What has worked and what hasn't? What can you learn from the experience? How can you inform your improvements based on what you have learned?

3.2 Who are you impacting?

This impact tool is for you to evaluate and reflect on impact for people groups and geographical communities. We have used the most current terminology, but we do not intend to override how people describe or define themselves, or to simplify the intersections and complexities of people's lives. The tool is intended for use by organisations, to reflect on and to challenge how they include and exclude people based on how services are configured or where people live.

People Groups	Direct Impact	Indirect Impact	Don't know - more learning needed
Children and young families			
Young people			
Older people			
Carers			
People with physical impairment			
People with long-term conditions			
People with sensory loss			
People with learning difficulties			
People who are neurodivergent			
People who have mental health difficulties			
People who have substance use issues			
People who are experiencing homelessness			
People who have experienced the justice system			
Other people groups			
Geographical communities	**Direct Impact**	**Indirect Impact**	**Don't know - more learning needed**
Island communities			
Remote-rural communities			
Rural communities			
Urban communities			
City communities			
Localities			
Setting specific (e.g. care home, prison etc)			

3.3 Implementation drivers evaluation matrix to gather data for learning

The implementation drivers evaluation matrix helps local areas to assess how well they support and implement the Self-directed Support standards through four levels of maturity. It is not a scoring matrix, it's a self-evaluation tool designed to facilitate meaningful conversations with the right people.

Partnerships can use it to evaluate the extent of their implementation of the drivers of improvement and to identify the capabilities and conditions for successful implementation. The matrix facilitates team reflection on evaluation and implementation, provides a common language to check progress, enables focused discussions, and helps identify areas needing more attention with a targeted plan.

This tool is not about competing or comparing progress in implementation work. Instead, it fosters honesty and trust in evaluating and documenting your current position and planning next steps. It helps create a shared vision for the future from different perspectives, focusing on where you want to be and how to get there.

Please see pages 8 and 9 of the SDS Framework of Standards.

Implementation Drivers	What good looks like	Not Evident	Limited	Growing	Strengthening
Supported people Supported people and carers have choice over their support. Standards 1, 2, 10	What do good outcomes look like? e.g. supported people living their life the way they want to; existing arrangements and natural support networks are protected; actively engaged in purposeful and meaningful relationship-based practice; routinely offered independent support, community brokerage and advocacy.	Supported people are constrained by service led arrangements. e.g. a majority of supported people and carers report that they are not able to exercise their choice and control in their support plans. Independent support, community brokerage and advocacy is not routinely offered or available to everyone at the start of the SDS journey. Additional support arrangements are inflexible and may alter existing / natural support arrangements. Early help is not routinely available.			Supported people live their lives the way they want to, with their natural supports at the heart of support planning. e.g. supported people and carers routinely report that they are able to exercise their choice and control in ways that support them to live their lives the way that they want to. Independent support, community brokerage and advocacy is routinely offered to everyone who wants it throughout the SDS journey. Additional support arrangements are flexible and protect existing / natural support arrangements. Early help is routinely available.
Workforce Enhanced worker skills, practice and autonomy. Covering job roles, workforce capacity, skills-based training, job coaching, professional autonomy, evaluating quality of practice. Standards 3, 8, 11	What does enhanced practice look like? e.g. clear job role expectations; professional autonomy within the local systems and processes; relationship-based practice; skills-based training; effective professional support and peer learning; time for self-reflection and feedback on practice.	Social work practitioners are ill-equipped to work to the values and principles of Self-directed Support. e.g. the assessment approach is driven by eligibility for services. Assessment and support planning does not allow for choice and flexibility. There is little or no ongoing skills-based training in SDS, or training is wholly process-based. There are no or very limited opportunities for peer learning. Supervision is wholly case-led. The practitioner has little or no professional autonomy (must seek permission for all social care supports).			Social work practitioners are nurtured and supported to practise to the values and principles of Self-directed Support. e.g. the assessment and support planning approach is grounded in relationship-based practice. Social work practitioners have access to skills-based training in SDS, have ongoing opportunities for learning and development, and for peer support. The practitioner has regular, coaching-based supervision that supports reflective practice.

Implementation Drivers	What good looks like	Not Evident	Limited	Growing	Strengthening
Organisation Better systems and culture. Covering personal budgets, delegated authority, recording processes, IT systems, digital solutions, data gathering. Standards 4, 7, 12	What do better systems and culture look like? e.g. when systems are designed to make it easy for the practitioner to do their job efficiently and effectively and for supported people to have their rights and needs met.	Processes are system-led rather than person-led. e.g. recording systems record inputs and outputs rather than outcomes. Commissioning is based on hours and cost. People have little say in how they can use their personal budgets.			Processes are person-led. e.g. recording systems support relationship-based practice and record personal outcomes and the impact of SDS on people's lives. There is active commitment and progress towards outcome-focused commissioning across all SDS options. People are involved in decisions about their personal budgets, and are able to use them flexibly to meet their personal outcomes.

Implementation Drivers	What good looks like	Not Evident	Limited	Growing	Strengthening
Leadership Better leadership. Covering being a learning organisation, including supported people and carers as leaders, supporting the workforce, solutions to adaptive problems, working with other professions. Standards 5, 6, 9	What does better leadership look like? e.g. being a learning organisation, including supported people and carers as leaders, supporting the workforce, finding solutions to adaptive problems, working in collaboration with other professions.	The impact of leadership transformation on people, ways of working, and culture is not understood or evident. e.g. the organisation does not recognise the importance of being a learning entity. There is no inclusion of supported people and carers as leaders, minimal workforce support, no structured solutions to adaptive problems, and little to no collaboration with other professionals.			Leadership has established mature workforce planning processes, continuously fostering development and alignment with future needs. e.g. the organisation functions effectively as a learning entity. Workforce support plans are being realised with high engagement, and solutions to adaptive problems are well integrated into practice. Collaboration with other professions is embedded, resulting in integrated and effective service function.
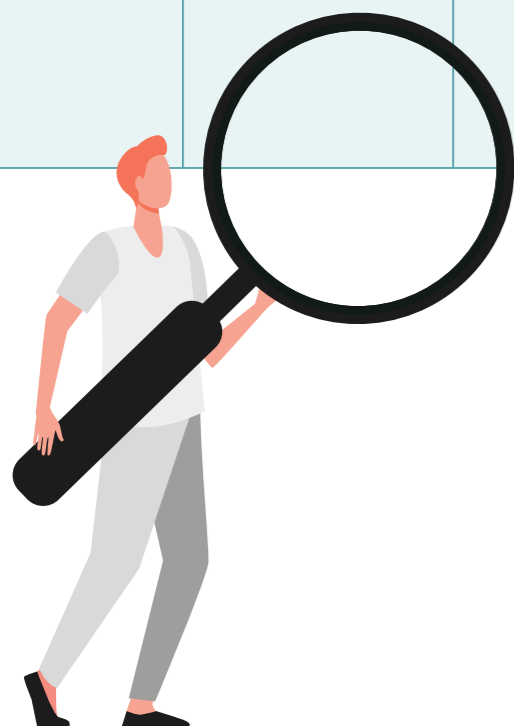
3.4 Following a journey map

A way of using the Self-directed Support standards to think about the supported person's journey through the social work and social care system.

Here we have mapped the standards against the stages of the Self-directed Support journey. To see the Self-directed Support standards in a more detailed journey map, please see the document "Journey map with SDS standards and core components", which can be found in the Self-directed Support Learning and Improvement Framework and supporting documents.

Using the prompts below, discuss your people groups in relation to what happens at each stage of the Self-directed Support journey.

Draw on your knowledge of your local authority's policies and procedures, but reflect on what happens in practice.

Reflect on why social work practitioners practice in the way they do. What helps good practice in your area and what hinders it?

What are the key issues at each stage?

Knowing what's going on
Transparency
Standard 9

What can be offered early on
Early help
Standards 2 & 10

Who can help
Independent support
Standard 1

Finding out about what matters
Assessment and review
Standards 3 & 11

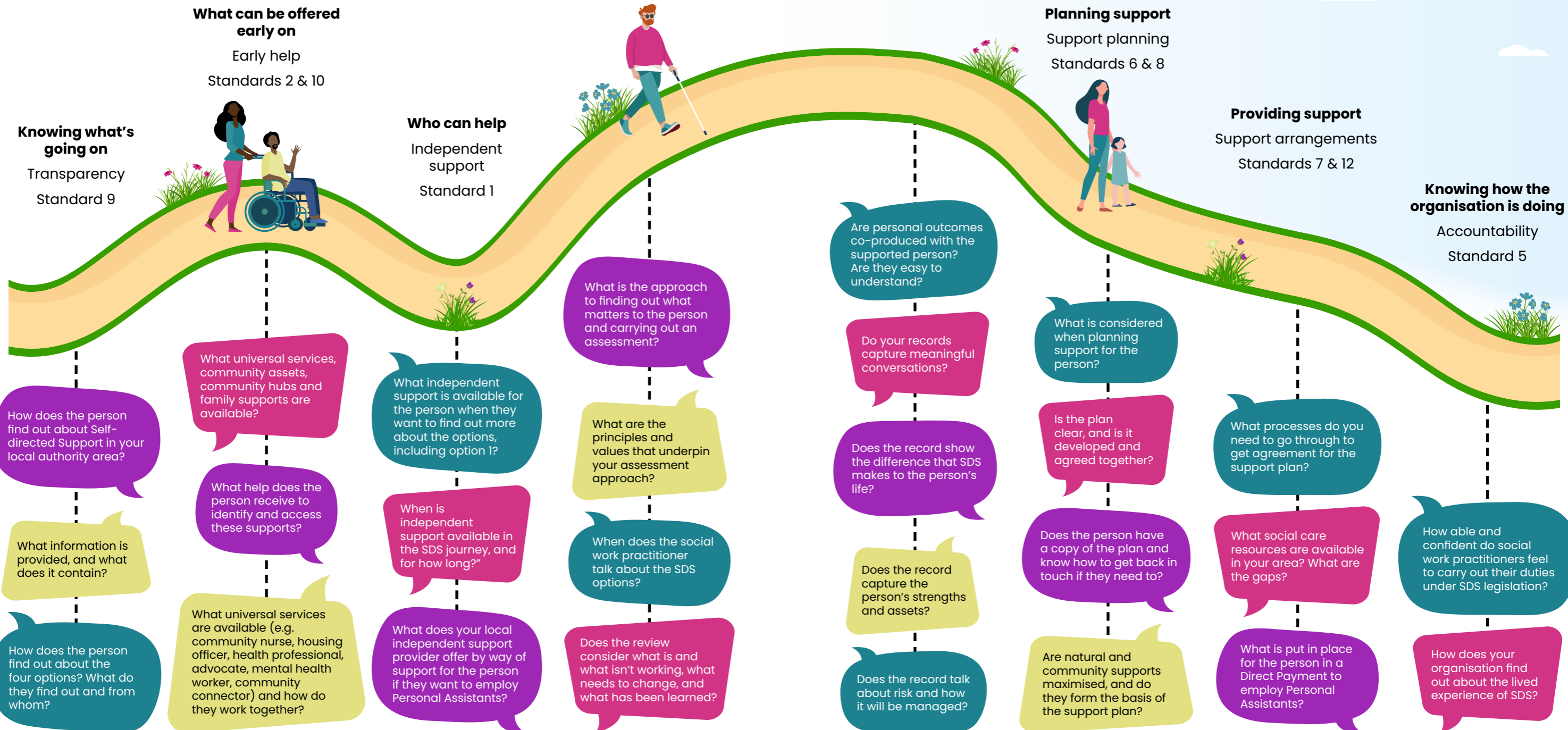**Keeping a record**
Recording
Standard 4

Planning support
Support planning
Standards 6 & 8

Providing support
Support arrangements
Standards 7 & 12

Knowing how the organisation is doing
Accountability
Standard 5

How does the person find out about Self-directed Support in your local authority area?

What information is provided, and what does it contain?

How does the person find out about the four options? What do they find out and from whom?

What universal services, community assets, community hubs and family supports are available?

What help does the person receive to identify and access these supports?

What universal services are available (e.g. community nurse, housing officer, health professional, advocate, mental health worker, community connector) and how do they work together?

What independent support is available for the person when they want to find out more about the options, including option 1?

When is independent support available in the SDS journey, and for how long?"

What does your local independent support provider offer by way of support for the person if they want to employ Personal Assistants?

What is the approach to finding out what matters to the person and carrying out an assessment?

What are the principles and values that underpin your assessment approach?

When does the social work practitioner talk about the SDS options?

Does the review consider what is and what isn't working, what needs to change, and what has been learned?

Are personal outcomes co-produced with the supported person? Are they easy to understand?

Do your records capture meaningful conversations?

Does the record show the difference that SDS makes to the person's life?

Does the record capture the person's strengths and assets?

Does the record talk about risk and how it will be managed?

What is considered when planning support for the person?

Is the plan clear, and is it developed and agreed together?

Does the person have a copy of the plan and know how to get back in touch if they need to?

Are natural and community supports maximised, and do they form the basis of the support plan?

What processes do you need to go through to get agreement for the support plan?

What social care resources are available in your area? What are the gaps?

What is put in place for the person in a Direct Payment to employ Personal Assistants?

How able and confident do social work practitioners feel to carry out their duties under SDS legislation?

How does your organisation find out about the lived experience of SDS?

4. Resources

In this section, you can access valuable resources and links aligned with each stage (see Process 5 – Tools and resources on page 20) plus additional resources recommended by Self-directed Support stakeholders that provide additional insights and support effective learning and improvement activity.

We would welcome your suggestions for tools and resources to share with local areas that are working with the Self-directed Support Learning and Improvement Framework – please contact us at sds.team@socialworkscotland.org

General

Self-directed Support Library, Care Inspectorate

Self-directed Support Framework of Standards (the standards)

Self-directed Support Learning and Improvement Framework and supporting documents

Quality Improvement Journey

Reflections on Practice – Self-directed Support Across Scotland Supporting people to live good lives across Highland, Social Work Scotland

Social Work Scotland: SDS evaluation subgroup: Discussion paper, Jane Scott – by request from sds.team@socialworkscotland.org

SDS Self-evaluation and Co-production in Highland Session on 25th July 2023 - Learning Report 1 – Define

SDS Self-evaluation and Co-production in Highland Discover and Dream: Learning Report from Stage 2 – Discover and Dream

SDS Self-evaluation and Co-production in Highland Dream and Design: Learning Report from Stage 3 – Design

SWS Self-directed Support Project seminars

Human Learning Systems

Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS) practical guide to Human Learning Systems

Human Learning Systems: Public services for the real world

Resources for self-evaluation

Adopting a learning mindset

Evaluation Scotland have a range of support guides. Here are a few examples:
- 5 principles for good evaluation
- Acting on your learning from evaluation

Matter of Focus handbook

The Care Inspectorate – Self-evaluation Tool Guidance

The Care Inspectorate - Self-evaluation for improvement - your guide

Self-directed Support Self-evaluation Tool – an earlier checklist that is still relevant

A Quality improvement framework to support self-evaluation for appropriate adult services in Scotland

OutNav - Understand, map and evidence how your organisation or initiative improves outcomes for people and communities. (NB OutNav has a cost – we include it here because it has been used by one of the pilot local areas.)

Co-production

ALLIANCE co-production toolkit

Co-production Self-assessment Framework a working reflection tool for practitioners

Scottish Co-production Network – lots of good things here!

Scottish Government Participation Handbook for good practice in participation, March 2024

Paying people with lived experience

Making events accessible

Co-production project planner

IRISS co-production blog

Inclusion Scotland co-production toolkit

Co-production with older people

Co-production with minority ethnic communities

Dementia friendly co-production

Person Centred Planning

A Guide to Co-producing Children's Services from Action for Children/NEF

Person Centred Planning from Helen Sanderson Associates

Self-directed Support as the Foundation of a New Relationship: New Relationship (in-controlscotland.org) includes graphics and discussion questions for teams to used, designed for children and families but relevant to most.

Thinking about your Support Plan: A workbook to help you think about and develop a support plan by In Control Scotland

Risking a Real Life: resource on risk/opportunity enablement

Accessible information resources

UK Association for Accessible Formats

Disability Equality Scotland hub

Plain English bookmarks

A range of accessibility resources collated by Michelle K Jacques CPACC

ALLIANCE facilitation pack for SDS focus group work

ALLIANCE consultation report to inform the implementation of the SDS improvement plan 2023-27

Budget setting

Upfront - The benefits of a Resource Allocation System and knowing your budget upfront in a system of Self-Directed Support (In Control Scotland)

Model children's RAS

5. Getting support

5.1 Community of practice

When we tested an earlier version of the framework we heard about how important peer support and critical friends are in the journey, so we have set up a dedicated community of practice where you can share learning with other local areas who are using the Self-directed Support Learning and Improvement Framework.

The Self-directed Support learning and improvement community of practice is supported by Social Work Scotland, and is open to any local authority or health and social care partnership engaged in their improvement journey. To join, contact sds.team@socialworkscotland.org

5.2 Case studies

In the SDS Library, you can read about how local areas have used the Framework, by searching for 'Reflections in Practice'. Case studies will be added to the collection as the Framework gets used.

5.3 Improving the Framework

Social Work Scotland and partners want to hear about your experience of the Framework so that we can make continuous improvement. We will ask you to contribute to a reflection on how you are using the Framework, how you are finding the community of practice and if there are other things that you need.

Acknowledgements

Self-directed Support Project Team

Social Work Scotland

October 2024

socialworkscotland.org

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