



Public Service Improvement Framework

Culture Checklist 2025

Introduction

The Cultural Checklist is designed to support local authorities to evaluate their organisational culture. The checklist was developed in partnership with Renfrewshire Council and is now an integral part of their continuous improvement framework, the Cultural Assurance Model.

We know that the culture of an organisation is crucial to its effective operation, its ability to deliver services and to improve, change and transform. A positive culture helps people feel valued, respected, and empowered to do their best work. It creates an environment where individuals feel supported — when things are going well, and also when challenges arise or when plans don't go as expected. The organisation culture sets the tone for how people behave and helps everyone understand what they should and shouldn't do within the remit of their roles and responsibilities, at all levels across the organisation.

Despite the importance of culture, local authorities and organisations that have a broad and diverse remit can find it challenging to look for and gather evidence and experiences that help them understand culture. This checklist has been created to help with that. It follows the principles of the other PSIF checklists and has been adapted to focus on culture. It can be used alongside other assessment and scrutiny tools and any sources of information available in the organisation that relate to culture.

The checklist has four themes, each one covering a different aspect of culture. There are a total of 26 statements across the four themes. While each theme is described separately, they are all interconnected. There are similarities between the statements, reflecting the connections between the themes.

Focus of the Checklist

The checklist is intended for use at an organisation-wide level, to provide insights into and a deeper understanding of the council's culture. It contains 26 statements across the following four themes:

- Leadership
- People (employees)
- Collaboration, learning and listening
- Ethics and governance

The Checklist Approach

At the outset, it is important to scope out the groups that will participate in the assessment, to ensure key stakeholders are represented and an organisation wide perspective is gathered. This would typically include corporate or senior level, middle level and also front-line employees.

Stage 1 - Issuing the Checklist

Following a brief awareness session, the checklist is issued as an electronic survey to those people taking part in the assessment.

The checklist should take no more than 30 mins to complete. Participants are asked to rate the extent to which they agree/ disagree with each statement.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know

The 'Don't Know' option should be used when you feel you do not have sufficient information about the particular statement to enable you to make a judgment.

At the end of each section there are two comments boxes – one requires you to provide details of evidence that supports your views on how well the organisation is performing in relation to the statements covered by the section [strengths] and the other requires you to provide further details of how you think the organisation can improve in relation to the statements covered by the section. You will not be able to proceed through the checklist without providing input to the comment boxes.

All checklist responses are anonymous and non-attributable.

Stage 2 – Workshop Discussion

In advance of the workshop, checklist findings are analysed and a short report is compiled summarising the responses and highlighting key points for discussion during the workshop. The purpose of the session is to discuss the strengths and issues emerging from the checklist response and identify possible areas for development or improvement actions to be taken forward. The workshop will typically take between 2 to 3 hours.

Stage 3 - Planning Session

This session will consider and prioritise any improvement actions that the council want to take forward. These may be actions that link to existing plans or policies, or new areas that need to be developed.

Any areas of improvement that are identified should be aligned with other strategic or service plans and improvement activity.

Evidence

Evidence is an important element of the self-assessment. It's recommended that evidence is gathered to support the self-assessment to identify improvement actions.

If you require any additional advice or support, please contact the PSIF team at the Improvement Service, psif@improvementservice.org.uk

The Statements

Leadership

This section considers the effectiveness of leaders in creating and developing organisational culture. It explores how leaders engage with employees and also citizens, partners and stakeholders.

Why are leaders important?

Leaders are the people who shape the organisation, who drive change and encourage learning and improvement. They are responsible for identifying a clear direction for the organisation and for supporting and inspiring all employees. They set the principles and tone for all employees and for the engagement with citizens, partners and stakeholders.

The behaviour of senior leaders is a powerful and influential factor in organisational culture.

Who are the leaders?

Leaders include the people responsible for managing people and resources. For most council employees this will be service managers, heads of service, directors, and the chief executive.

1. Leaders demonstrate the vision and values of the council and act as role models.
2. Leaders drive transformational change, are clear about transformation projects within the organisation and how they are aligned with organisational priorities and plans.
3. Leaders create a positive, supportive and inclusive culture that inspires people and encourages success.
4. Leaders promote and demonstrate openness and honesty, inspiring trust and respect.
5. Leaders promote and demonstrate innovation and improvement, valuing learning at all times, including when things go wrong.
6. Leaders are open to and welcome constructive challenge, recognising it as an organisational strength and our workforce at all levels feel encouraged to do so.
7. Leaders promote and demonstrate equal opportunities and diversity within the council.

Thinking about the statements covered in this section:

Based on the above, please outline what you think the council and your service does well in relation to leadership within the organisation (strengths).

Please provide details of how the council and your service could do better in relation to leadership within the organisation (areas for improvement).

People

This section refers entirely to the people who work in the organisation – this includes full-time, part-time, fixed term, temporary, permanent and secondees.

Why are people important?

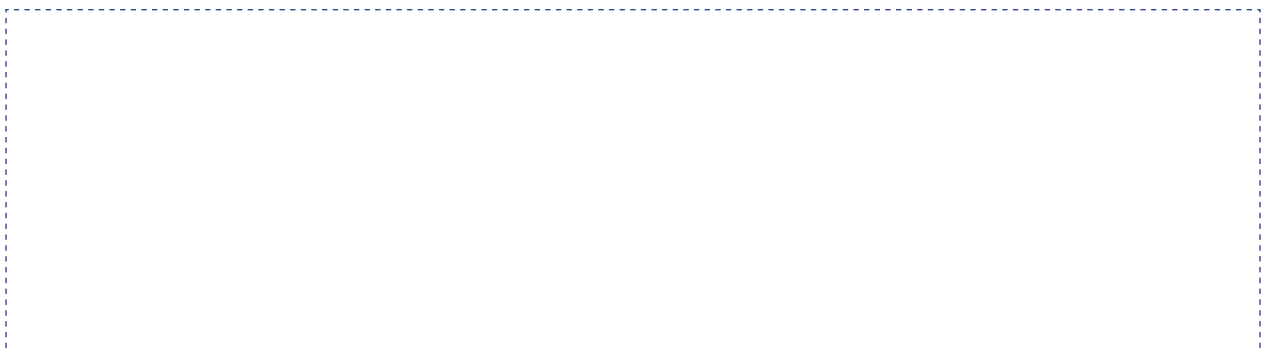
People are responsible for delivering high quality services and delivering the council's objectives. Employees who are well supported and motivated will provide a higher quality of service and can contribute more effectively to change and transformation. Employees who are well informed and encouraged will feel positive about the service and council when talking to stakeholders.

The quality of the relationships people have with each other and with the citizens they serve is critical to understanding organisational culture.

1. The council has policies, strategies and workplans that support employees to achieve the priorities and outcomes of the service.
2. Managers work with their teams to review their performance against the skills and competencies that are required to deliver outcomes and priorities, and support continued professional development.
3. Employees are involved in reviewing and improving the council and are clear that everyone has a role to play in improvement and transformation.
4. The council has a range of policies to support equality, diversity and inclusion.
5. The council supports the wellbeing of employees and encourages a positive work-life balance.
6. The council recognises and values the contribution of its employees.
7. People show respect and care for each other and the citizens and stakeholders they work with.

Thinking about the statements covered in this section:

Based on the above, please outline what you think the council and your service does well in relation to people within the organisation (strengths).



Please provide details of how the council and your service could do better in relation to people within the organisation (areas for improvement).

Collaboration, Learning and Listening

This section looks at how the council/service collaborates, listens to and engages with citizens, communities, partners and stakeholders to ensure and support the delivery of improved outcomes. When collaboration and engagement is effective and managed well, relationships with stakeholders are strong and partnerships work effectively, we can have confidence we are operating in the public interest.

Why is collaboration, learning and listening important?

When collaboration and engagement is effective and managed well, relationships with stakeholders are strong and partnerships work effectively. Stakeholders and partners can include citizens, communities, community planning partners, third sector organisations, suppliers and service providers.

How well an organisation works alongside, listens to and learns from its people, residents and stakeholders helps to give an indication of organisational culture.

1. People (employees) reflect the values of the council when engaging with communities, citizens, stakeholders and each other.
2. The council can demonstrate engagement with communities, partners and stakeholders when planning and improving services, using a range of approaches.
3. The council listens to the views and experiences of its people, stakeholders and residents and reflects meaningfully on this.
4. The council identifies patterns from complaints, comments and feedback received and uses the information to learn, and to improve services.
5. People are empowered to be innovative and apply creative approaches to problems and challenges.
6. Within the council, teams are empowered to work together effectively, sharing knowledge and expertise.

Thinking about the statements covered in this section:

Based on the above, please outline what you think the council and your service does well in relation to collaboration and engagement within the organisation (strengths).

Please provide details of how the council and your service could do better in relation to collaboration and engagement within the organisation (areas for improvement).

Ethics and Governance

This section considers the ethics and governance arrangements and practices that are in place and whether they are effective in supporting the delivery of improved outcomes and to ensure the council manages its resources in the most efficient, effective and sustainable way.

Governance arrangements and practices means the framework, rules and guidance that describe what can and can't be done as officers and as an organisation. It also includes taking important decisions in the right way, for example through boards or committees, and reporting progress and issues clearly.

Ethical behaviour means acting to high moral standards, trying to do what is right and applying these principles, usually in order to try and improve outcomes

1. Leaders promote and demonstrate a culture of best value and are held accountable for delivering services cost effectively.
2. The council has a robust performance management framework supporting effective decision making, service improvement and risk assessment with clear linkages to strategic plans.
3. All employees feel able to raise concerns they have about any aspect of their work, their service or the council.
4. People understand the level of authority and responsibility they have, and how that relates to risk, and can recognise when to refer decisions to others.
5. When things go wrong, people recognise and seek to understand and learn from the experience.
6. There is transparency in decision making processes and people are accountable for decisions they make.

Thinking about the statements covered in this section:

Based on the above, please outline what you think the council and your service does well in relation to ethics and governance within the organisation (strengths).

Please provide details of how the council and your service could do better in relation to ethics and governance within the organisation (areas for improvement).

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