# Review of National Partners’ Facilitated Self-assessment and Step Change Development Process:

# Summary of Key Findings and Recommendations

Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit

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## Project Aims and Objectives

Between the autumn of 2021 and spring 2024, two local authority partnerships undertook a systemic self-assessment process to reflect upon and improve their approach to tackling child poverty. The purpose of the self-assessment process is to identify strengths and potential improvement in local child poverty policy and practice. This process was designed and facilitated by the Improvement Service (IS) with the support of the National Partners. This Review seeks to understand what benefit local authorities and their partners derived from the self-assessment process in relation to the resources which they and the National Partners expended. In particular, the Review aims to clarify whether the experiences of the two authorities which undertook the self-assessment process suggest that supporting it in other local authority areas is a valuable use of National Partners’ and councils’ respective resources. To this end, the project has the following objectives:

* Document the self-assessment processes undertaken in each of the two Case Study areas.
* Produce an overview of what the self-assessment process involves which could be used by other local authorities considering undertaking it.
* Record the input provided by National Partners to facilitate the self-assessment process in each case.
* Assess whether the self-assessment process led to any changes in local policy and processes.
* Gather the reflections of a sample of those involved in the process in each area and analyse their perceptions of its effectiveness and effects.

## Information Sources and Research Methods

The Review compiled existing information and combined this with analyses of public outputs and interviews with key participants. To meet the project objectives, the following research activities were undertaken:

1. Documentation:

* Summarising accounts and published guidance on the self-assessment process.
* Collating and analysing information on how the self-assessment process operated in each case, using email correspondence and minutes of meetings, etc.

1. Before / after analysis #1: comparing relevant LCPARs in Case Study #1 before and after the self-assessment process to identify any changes potentially attributable to the process.
2. Before / after analysis #2: comparing relevant LCPARs and LOIPs before and after the self-assessment process to identify any changes potentially attributable to the process.
3. Process experience and reflections: interviews with participants in both Case Study areas to gather their reflections on their respective experiences of the self-assessment process and their views on its consequences.

Research Tasks 2 and 3 sought the following information in the analysis of LCPARS and LOIPs:

(a) Any references made to the self-assessment process, ‘step change’ or similar terms.

(b) Any reference to the support received from or engagement with the Improvement Service and/or other National Partners in relation to the self-assessment process.

(c) Any evidence or examples of marked, significant or innovative changes in policy activity or processes which may be due to or associated with the self-assessment process.

As it is not possible to determine from LCPARs and/or LOIPs themselves whether any changes in content are attributable to the self-assessment process, interviews were conducted to identify potential causal effects. Interviews were sought from the following key stakeholders in each Case Study area:

* Local authority official leading the self-assessment process
* Local authority lead child poverty officer
* Principal NHS / Public Health Scotland child poverty official
* One representative of the wider Community Planning Partnership

Key stakeholders were asked the following questions in online interviews:

* What is your overall view of the self-assessment process?
* Considering the effort involved and outcomes achieved, do you think it was a worthwhile undertaking?
* What specific changes did the self-assessment process produce in terms of -

(i) Substantive policy?

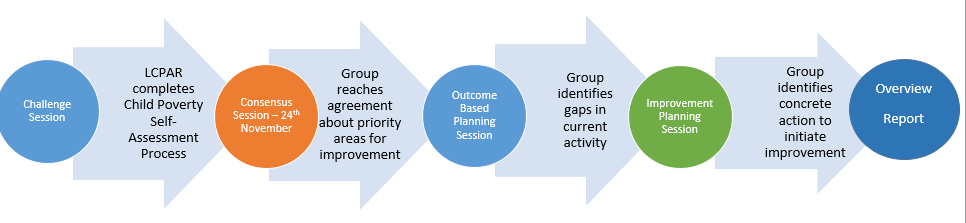
(ii) Policy-making processes and stakeholder relationships?

* Are there any factors, conditions or resources which you think need to be in place to facilitate the self-assessment process or make it effective?
* Is there anything that you would do differently if you were undertaking the self-assessment process for the first time?
* Would you recommend the self-assessment process to other local authorities and CPPs?
* Is there any particular advice you would give to such an authority (which has not already been covered)?
* Is there anything else that you would like to add, or any questions you would like to ask about this Review?

Due to staff turnover and lack of availability, interviews were conducted with five participants across both Case Study areas: two in Case Study #1 and three in Case Study #2. At the time of data gathering, the self-assessment process had not concluded in Case Study #2.

## The Self-assessment and Step Change Development Process

In a presentation to participants in Case Study #1, the Improvement Service National Co-ordinator explained that the purpose of the self-assessment process is to provide a structured, evidence based approach to identifying strengths and potential areas for improvement in addressing child poverty in their area. The self-assessment process involves several stages and collective sessions, as illustrated in this overview produced by the IS for those participating in Case Study #1.

****Figure 1: Overview of the Self-assessment Process

Stage 1 - Challenge session: the self-assessment process commences with participants completing an online self-assessment survey designed to identify key aspects of local child poverty conditions and current policies.

Stage 2 - Consensus session: survey results are analysed by the IS and fed back to participants for reflection and discussion about their implications for current practice and future policy.

Stage 3- Outcome planning session: participants identify shared actions, intended outcomes and suitable indicators to be used in future child poverty strategies and Local Outcome Improvement Plans as appropriate.

Stage 4- Improvement planning session: participants agree upon priority improvements and processes to implement these.

Stage 4 may be followed by additional work streams to implement agreed actions, some of which may be supported by the National Partners.

The self-assessment survey questionnaire distributed in Stage 1 covers four areas:

(i) Data: section one asks stakeholders what they feel they know about the level, rates and distribution of poverty in their area. This produces an impression of local understanding of the scale of the issue and the scope of response required to address it.

(ii) Impact: the second section asks respondents whether they feel they have the necessary data, information and intelligence to understand the reasons why child poverty exists and persists in their area.

(iii) Use of Policy Levers: section three asks respondents to look at the three key drivers of child poverty (i.e. income from employment, household costs, and income from social security) and consider whether all of the necessary and relevant policy areas are engaging at the right level to address these drivers.

(iv) Ways of Working: the questionnaire asks whether the right partners are involved to progress local action to address child poverty.

The self-assessment survey provides a detailed overview of respondents’ understanding of local issues, policies, partnerships and processes. The IS estimates that completing the questionnaire appropriately can take respondents up to one hour.

Responses to the self-assessment survey are analysed by the Improvement Service and presented to participants in the self-assessment process to inform a Consensus session where stakeholder discuss the findings and identify priorities areas for improvement. The full report from this Review provides a more detailed account of the self-assessment process in each Case Study area, and includes the results of the documentation analyses. This Summary reports the main findings from the interviews conducted.

## Review Findings and Recommendations

The purpose of this Review is to identify what benefit local authorities and their partners derived from the self-assessment process in relation to the time and resources which they and the National Partners expended on it. The principal results are outlined in relation to the following themes:

* General conclusions
* Participants’ estimation of the value of the self-assessment process
* Contribution to strategic and systematic thinking
* Prioritisation accorded child poverty
* Impact on partnership working
* Innovations, insights and policy improvements
* Participants to involve in the self-assessment process
* Resourcesrequired to undertake the self-assessment process
* Input provided from National Partners to the self-assessment process
* Contribution of National Partners to the self-assessment process
* Recommendations and suggested refinements to the self-assessment process
* Concluding reflections and comments

## General Conclusions

Participants in the Review agreed that the self-assessment process clarified the main issues relating to child poverty in each Case Study area. For example, in Case Study #2 the lack of clarity about the meaning and effective use of local data emerged as a result of systematic reflection and discussion. In addition to clarifying the most significant local issues and highlighting shared priority concerns, some of the other positive effects which were attributed to the self-assessment process were:

* It can identify opportunities for improved working between stakeholders.
* It provided an opportunity to think of longer term issues, strategic developments and a chance to focus on transformational opportunities.
* It can identify potential immediate reforms (quick wins)

The self-assessment process helped local authorities, Health Boards and their Community Planning Partners move beyond being preoccupied with what they were currently doing and think instead of how they could move beyond ‘business as usual’. As one participant put it: ‘You’ve got to stop and ask, did that work? Do we need to take a different direction?’ (Case Study #1, Interview B). Another interviewee highlighted the benefits of systematic and structured self-reflection:

‘I would recommend to other authorities to use the opportunity to be really, really honest and self-critical about what they’re doing and how they can improve that. And see that objectivity of a critical friend - but also a supportive external partner - who’s got the sectoral view that we might not all have in terms of what other authorities are doing, and the commitment and vision at a national level’ (Case Study #1, Interview A)

## Value of the Self-assessment Process

In response to the question, ‘Would you recommend self-assessment process to other authorities?’ Interview B in Case Study #1 responded:

‘Yes it’s definitely been valuable time spent. It helped us look at our gaps and strengths and weaknesses in our work. It helped us focus on what we needed to change rather than delivering work as usual. It also helped us look wider - who else do we need to help us make this change? Rather than just relying on the people that attend the Child Poverty Group.’

Another participant expressed the shared sentiment that the self-assessment process was demanding but worthwhile because of –

‘That time to reflect [and] that reassurance that the external facilitators were able to give us was really, really valuable to us to think about how we would evolve as a partnership. So yes, absolutely, yes I would say go for it, it’s worth the pain!’ (Case Study #1, Interview A)

Similarly, Case Study #2, Interview C also recommended the self-assessment process to others:

‘Yes. It's robust. It gives credibility. It helps facilitate change and it helps you draw on the national knowledge that the Improvement Service has in terms of what's working elsewhere and what's good practice.’

## Development of Strategic and Systematic Thinking

Participants attested that, by providing an opportunity for informed reflection, the self-assessment process helped clarify the signal from amidst the noise created by a confusing mass of local information and the demands of everyday workloads.

‘Sometimes in plans, we throw everything on the page and we just think we can deliver all of this, and often it’s far too much and we don’t have the same impact. So it’s allowed us to really focus on the things that mattered, the things that were different from business as usual, and having those few priorities’ (Case Study #1, Interview B)

The self-assessment process reinforced the message that it is not sufficient to look at the challenges that households (or communities) face as single and separate issues. The interrelationships between issues and conditions need to be considered to understand what action is needed, e.g. connections between mental health, childcare, employment barriers, and access to services in rural areas, etc. The self-assessment process also assisted local authorities and their partners to think in more strategic and integrated ways:

‘I think strategically it's helped with that strategic thinking and strategic longer term planning. And that's potentially what we didn't have before taking the time to step back to review our work and our processes - to think about what we were doing and to think about longer term aims’ (Case Study #2, Interview A)

As a result of going through the self-assessment process this authority and its partners had developed a more coherent and focused local child poverty strategy:

‘One of the things that came out of the journey was an aspiration for a Child Poverty Strategy that had that overview of where we were going rather than we just produced an annual report’ (Case Study #1, Interview A)

## Shared Prioritisation of Child Poverty

Participants in both Case Study areas agreed that the self-assessment process had reinforced the message that tackling child poverty was a shared responsibility and should be a priority commitment: ‘I think what it’s done is make people more aware that that challenge is there from people like myself in terms of expectation that they up their game’ (Case Study #1, Interview A). In this Case Study, the local authority has since articulated a child poverty commitment and created a strategic overview statement which makes child poverty more central and visible across the work of the council and CPP as a whole. A similar effect was noted in the other Case Study area, where it was reported that the self-assessment had publicised and promoted the LCPAR and associated work within the Community Planning Partnership:

‘I think it really helped to raise the profile of our Child Poverty Report as well. Because the start of the process was about reviewing the Local Child Poverty Report from the previous year… I think the audience for that report was nowhere near as wide as it is now, and people didn't pay so much attention to it before, as they do now. So I think that's really helped with partner relationships, as people feel like they actually have a role within what happens within that child poverty reporting and action planning… So I think that's been really helpful.’ (Case Study #2, Interview A)

## Improvements to Partnership Working

Interviewees reported that the self-assessment process led to more sustained and purposeful partnership collaboration, with different agents and organisations working to ‘pull a strategy together’ through regular engagement, rather than only touching base annually - ‘meeting regularly, making sure that things aren’t getting stalled and bringing solutions to the table’ (Case Study #1, Interview B).

As one interviewee noted, the self-assessment process created an opportunity to ‘bring people together’, including staff ‘who maybe didn't see them themselves as having a real focus around poverty’, so that they developed a better understanding of their potential contribution to this work. In the view of this participant, the value of the self-assessment process was -

‘Allowing people to get around the table and really get to terms with what is it we can now do together to do things better, or to increase the reach or to improve the outcomes; that’s been the big thing… The experience of being involved in the self-evaluation process and some of the workshops has built the foundations and awareness of people that it’s an expectation, that it’s an aspiration [to tackle child poverty]’ (Case Study #1, Interview A)

As a result of this process, this participant felt that partnership and collective involvement in tackling poverty had advanced considerably -

‘When I look back to before we started the process where we were at and where we are at now, I feel like we've come a long way in terms of being able to improve our ways of working and improve a lot of clarity around our ways of working, and bringing partners together’ (Case Study #2, Interview A)

Participants in the second Case Study area also felt that the self-assessment process had helped cultivate a better shared understanding of the respective capacities and contributions of different local agents:

‘It's let us see other areas where there's so much work happening. Because people are so busy and so stretched that actually trying to compile all that and look at that whole picture, it's really difficult. But I think we've now got some key people who are now linked in’ (Case Study #2, Interview A)

## Innovation, Insights and Policy Improvements

Some participants believed that the survey completed at the beginning of the self-assessment process produced a range of views from diverse contributors which generated novel information and insights beyond what would routinely be expected.

‘It was an aspiration to try and move the child poverty partners onto a different level so that we were much more innovative and creative and challenging of each other, rather than just a group of partners who came together five or six times a year and talked about what we were doing anyway’ (Case Study #1, Interview A)

Some specific improvements to policy and practice were highlighted in this Case Study area as a result of the self-assessment process. For example, ‘I think we are more tuned into using data, and I think we are starting to be more confident about using data in our work to go, “alright what does this mean? How are we going to respond to that?”’ (Case Study #1, Interview A). In addition, this Case Study area reported making better use of information gathered by local money advice services about issues raised by priority households. This has allowed the authority to drill down more effectively into local data rather than relying on national statistics for an understanding of local conditions and issues.

## Senior-level Commitment and Participation

All participants agreed that effecting the necessary changes in local policy and practice required a high level commitment from a range of partners. To be successful, it was necessary to ensure that the right people were involved, both from across different service areas, organisations, sectors and different levels of seniority.

Interviewees observed that participating in the self-assessment process tended to appeal more to those already inclined to focus on child poverty and motivated seek change and improvement. Interviewees noted that it is important (but difficult) to strike a balance between getting a wide range of service areas involved – including those which may feel that child poverty is peripheral to their interests and responsibilities – and those who are able to drive and deliver relevant improvements. Participants argued that, in order to trigger change, it was important to get decision-makers, policy makers and staff with the authority to change budgets involved in the self-assessment process, and not just those at team leader or service delivery level, i.e. Heads of Service and senior local officials. As one participant said, ‘I think in most areas, people within that [self-assessment] group are not sitting at a senior enough level to be able to drive it forward across a whole local authority area with senior buy-in’ (Case Study #1, Interview B). This view that the self-assessment process requires the involvement of people ‘a bit higher up’ than local child poverty leads - specifically at Chief Executive level - was reiterated by other participants:

‘If I did it again, I would do it with a Corporate Management Team with a Chief Executive and our Directors of all our various resources. I would do it with our Community Planning partners. I would do it with our Children’s Services Strategy Group or Heads of service.’ (Case Study #1, Interview A)

It was also important that senior officials ensured that they and their staff allocated the time required to participate fully and effectively in the self-assessment process.

Although it was agreed that senior staff should be involved in the process, participants also felt that it was important for ‘rank and file staff’ to participate, and therefore the process should be ‘multi-layered’. One participant recommended building upon existing organisational structures and established roles rather than creating a new working group for the self-assessment process: ‘I think it's helpful though, to have it situated within existing groups that are there of people who can drive it forward’ (Case Study #2, Interview A).

## Resource Commitment

All of the participants agreed that the self-assessment process was productive, strengthened intra and inter-organisational relationships, and identified opportunities for focused action. However, they also emphasised that it was a resource-intensive process: ‘For some of us it was considerable effort, but it was worthwhile’ (Case Study #1, Interview A). Interview A in Case Study #2 concurred with this sentiment, and explained that they did not realise at the outset just how involved and lengthy the self-assessment process would be; nevertheless, they agreed that it was a worthwhile activity. One of their colleagues concurred and summarised the agreed views of all participants:

‘I knew there was going to be a lot of work from it, but it ended up that there was a lot more work involved than I realized. And we didn't have specific time allocated in our work plans for that additional work. So it was very worthwhile and it was worth putting in the time. But I think the expectations need to be realistic from the start that people actually would know what they were signing up to and that the resources were there’ (Case Study #2, Interview B)

Interviewees recommended that the time commitment required for the self-assessment process was made clearer to everyone involved at the outset, and appropriate capacity allocated to it: ‘If this is going to roll out to other local authorities there probably needs to be a bit of a commitment… [to make sure that] you're going to actually give somebody that time to do that.’ (Case Study #2, Interview A). Their colleague concurred: ‘You just have to build in time; you have to if you're going to do it. You have to take it as a serious undertaking’ (Case Study #2, Interview C). The third participant in that Case Study area recommend that senior staff allocate 10 hours per week to the staff responsible for leading and organising the self-assessment process to undertake the work involved (Case Study #2, Interview B).

## National Partners’ Input

Several of the National Partners also devoted considerable time and effort to supporting the self-assessment process - by organising co-ordination meetings, planning sessions, preparing content and reviewing outputs from each session. At some points the Improvement Service - and the National Co-ordinator for Local Child Poverty Action Reports in particular – assumed responsibility for guiding and leading the process. For example, participants in Case Study # 2 acknowledged that it took some time to initiate and advance the self-assessment process and that doing so required input from the National Co-ordinator and some National Partners. On occasion, the National Co-ordinator had to pursue actions from Case Study 2 participants about inputs required for sessions, e.g. which local authority staff would contribute content or deliver presentations to sessions. Several meetings were held by National Partners between each of the main self-assessment sessions for these tasks.

The National Co-ordinator read and commented on the LCPARs of each Case Study area in advance of the first Consensus session (as did some National Partners). Also in each Case Study area, the Improvement Service took responsibility for distributing the self-assessment questionnaire, analysing responses and preparing a feedback presentation for the Consensus session. The IS National Co-ordinator prepared and distributed slides for participants in breakout discussion groups in the Consensus session. National Partners (CPAG, SPIRU and PHS) were involved in helping to facilitate discussions in each Case Study area. National Partners also supported the IS and National Co-ordinator in the subsequent Collaboration and improvement sessions.

In Case Study # 2 the self-assessment process identified the need for additional learning and development work which including support from some National Partners. In particular:

* Poverty awareness training for CPP staff – provided by the Poverty Alliance
* A Short-Life Working Group on Local Data and Intelligence – led by the local authority with support from PHS and IS staff.

Local leads in each Case Study area recognised and appreciated the input provided by the National Partners and the Improvement Service National Co-ordinator in particular:

‘I think we've really benefited from the involvement of national partners… So I think from our perspective, I really, really appreciated that because it was hugely beneficial’ (Case Study #2, Interview B)

## Role and Involvement of National Partners

One implication of this finding is that it seems that the involvement of National Partners is a valuable, and perhaps indispensable, feature of the self-assessment process. One participant summed up this view

‘Having it facilitated really helped. I think if you were left to do it on your own - so if you were just given the framework and you were to apply it yourself - I think that would be less robust. So I think because it's facilitated and they pulled in the national partners to help, that's what made the difference. I think you could be given a framework to what we did, but it wouldn't be as effective if it wasn't facilitated and it didn't have the national partners to back it up with their specialist expertise in poverty.’ (Case Study #2, Interview C)

Interviewees commented that the involvement of external facilitators created an opportunity for participants to reflect upon and consider more objectively their current work. In particular, the involvement of the Improvement Service helped retain the focus on the three child poverty drivers and services around child poverty. This ensured that breakout groups and collective discussions in different sessions of the processes remained focused rather than became diffuse and more general.

In addition to maintaining focus, interviewees highlighted the importance of external facilitators to creating conditions for effective dialogue among those involved in the self-assessment process. For example, one participant remarked that the involvement of the IS ‘provided an opportunity for partners to be really, really honest and open’ without offending other local partners. This freedom of expression enabled the local partnership to develop new proposals rather than justify existing actions (Case Study #1, Interview A). This interviewee felt also that the external delivery of the survey by the IS and the anonymity of responses ‘probably helped people to be more honest and more explicit in terms of their thoughts and ideas and their experiences’.

The involvement of the National Partners in the self-assessment also confers an additional authority to it and was thought to instil greater commitment and engagement with the process among participants which would not be secured by an internal process alone.

‘I think and it gives it stature, or more credibility, that it's not a self-evaluation... It gives it much more credibility with decision makers and getting buy-in to sign up for the action. So I think, because it's facilitated, it's much more credible and you get better buy-in going forward’ (Case Study #2, Interview C)

Related to this, it was stated by interviewees that without the involvement of the National Partners the process would not have been given the priority needed by staff with demanding workloads.

There was therefore consensus among those interviewed that it was a considerable advantage to have the National Partners involved in the self-assessment process: ‘I do think it's probably and a big ask of a local authority to do it from start to finish on all elements.’ (Case Study #2, Interview C). Another interviewee recommended that if National Partners were unable to be involved in the self-assessment process in future, then their expertise and support provision should ‘somehow be captured and useable by those authorities undertaking the process on their own’ (Case Study #2, Interview B). This is one the purpose of this Review.

## Recommendations and Suggested Refinements to the Self-assessment Process

Although all participants agreed that National Partners (and in particular the IS) should be involved in supporting the self-assessment process, some potential refinements and suggested reforms were suggested, which perhaps could reduce the demands placed upon facilitators. In particular, it was recommended that some way should be found to make the self-assessment process both quicker and less labour-intensive for National Partners and all involved. One suggestion was to consider whether National Partners could deliver an initial outline and training session after which responsibility for the remainder of the self-assessment process would be handed over to a senior local authority lead.

Some participants proposed that the self-assessment process could be faster and more focused, with shorter gaps in between each stages. One participant suggested that perhaps the whole process could be compressed into a ‘20 day sprint’, although they noted that this would need to be designed carefully and built into prior planning (Case Study #2, Interview C). One advantage of such an approach is that it could be more viable for smaller authorities which often lack the staff capacity for prolonged process, as staff may have multiple responsibilities and few resources. A compressed process also reduces the risk that political and policy contexts change over the course of a process which has taken several months to complete. In such cases, the pace of learning and policy and institutional change can be overtaken by events (such as an unexpected cost of living crisis).

Several other recommendations were offered by interviewees about the self-assessment process. It was agreed that a clear purpose and articulated valuable end point were important to ensure that local staff were committed to the process: ‘I think having a specific reason for entering into the process and knowing specific outcomes that you want to get out of it’ are essential (Case Study #2, Interview A). The process did not conclude with a clear endpoint in Case Study #2, as the key participants and partners proceeded directly to deliver actions. However, interviewees felt that declaring a clear end point at the outset of the process would have reassured those involved that it had been completed satisfactorily and produced a worthwhile outcome.

Related to this, interviewees recommended that a specific timeline should be communicated at the beginning of the self-assessment process to all those involved: ‘Actually something written down as in - this is the process. This is what it's going to look like. This is how long it will take. This is when it will be finished. These are the outcomes that we're going to get from it’ (Case Study #2, Interview B). A clear and fixed timeline would also have be reassuring to participants so that they always know what point the self-assessment process was at, as this was not always evident to those returning to it after long gaps between sessions.

To ensure that the right people were identified and involved in the self-assessment process it was recommended that child poverty leads undertake a formal stakeholder analysis before the self-assessment survey is distributed. Those identified as essential to improving local child poverty policy must also be given the time required to participate throughout the whole self-assessment process, otherwise it is ineffective

‘That’s a challenge - to get the people that I would have liked to be involved in it to commit the timing capacity to do that. Because they’ve got departments to run and councils to run, health services to run. But those are the people who make things happen at terms of change. And if we have to then influence them, that’s an extra layer, an extra process to go through before we get to the point [of changing actions]’ (Case Study #1, Interview A)

Participants agreed that among the most important facilitating conditions is ‘political buy in - a willingness, politically - a willingness from, say, the Chief Executive and your Executive Directors to facilitate change and also from your Community Planning Board that there's a willingness to facilitate change’ (Case Study #2, Interview C). All participants emphasised that senior figures from all of the main Community Planning Partners need to support and be involved in the self-assessment process in order to effect significant change. It is also important to maintain continuity of participation in the process:

‘If you start a process with the people that you agree have to be there, those people really need to see the process through to the end. And if that changes and other people come in and people drop off, it changes the dynamic and it changes the journey, and I don’t think it’s always helpful’ (Case Study #1, Interview A)

Those involved in Case Study #1 suggested that focusing on specific actions at an earlier stage in the process rather than general areas for improvement might be beneficial. However, it may not be feasible to amend the self-assessment process in this way, as the proposed actions are the result of collectively prioritised outcomes which have been developed from a shared understanding of the context and diagnosis of local issues.

Irrespective of whether this reform - or any other suggestion - is viable, one interviewee proposed that the self-assessment process should not be a one-off event, but that authorities and CPPs undertake some kind of reflection process every three or so years (Case Study #1, Interview A). In fact, they remarked that their Local Child Poverty Action Plan might become a 3 - 5 year strategy to enact this view.

## Concluding Comments

Those interviewed for this Review who had been heavily involved in the self-assessment process agreed with the sentiment expressed by Case Study #1, Interview A that it had helped ensure that stakeholders were not content to simply produce an annual Local Child Poverty Action Report, but were committed to thinking meaningfully about how to effect significant change. Undertaking the process seems to result in several positive outcomes, including improved working partnership relationships, a wider and stronger commitment to child poverty, and action on several particular local service improvements.

A further potential benefit of undertaking the self-assessment process may be that it helps nurture an innovation culture as well as specific reforms. Sustained and effective innovation cannot be anticipated in advance; novel responses to challenges arise from relationships and approaches which synthesise diverse insights and allow experimentation. In this respect, the self-assessment process may help create the possibility for step-changes to emerge and a willingness to embrace the challenge of transformational change.