

Best Value Reviews

A best value review focuses on how our actions improve lives in Wiltshire in line with our strategic objectives. Under best value, we must challenge, compare, consult, compete and collaborate. Further guidance is given below.

Challenge

The notion of challenge is at the heart of Best Value.

Challenge:

- Why,
 - How,
 - Where and
 - By whom
- } a service is being provided

It is not enough that the service is a statutory requirement, most requirements can be met in many different ways.

Challenge means

- Fundamentally assessing the purpose of the service and the difference it is intended to make. All questions then relate back to this purpose.
- Asking whether a service is needed at all.
- Asking whether the need can be met in an alternative way to better effect
- Asking whether the service can be better achieved from a different starting point, e.g. “prevention is better than cure”
- Looking ahead to anticipate changes
- Looking at the views of those who receive the service, is it what they want?
- Looking elsewhere; are other tackling similar problems in different ways with better results?

Challenge is about a frame of mind as much as a process, it requires an acceptance to ask difficult questions, to change and to take risks.

You should also consider how the service contributes to cross cutting themes, such as

- Sustainability
- Equity / Accountability
- Community Safety

Challenge is part of everyone’s role, but two members of the project team have a specific role in challenge.

The Internal Challenger is usually a Member, and is not closely involved in the area under review. The Internal Challenger can help the team by asking questions that probe the underlying assumptions, such as: Why? How will this improve X? Could we work with Y? If these things were connected would the result be better?

The External Challenger has good expertise in the area under review, but is not connected with the service here. The External Challenger brings useful information of other ways of doing something, and can help challenge data, conclusions and proposals.

Compare

Compare what we do with the performance of others (including the private and voluntary sectors) across a range of indicators.

- Do others do it better?
- What can we learn?
- What should we be doing?

You will need performance information on the service for Phase 1, including national indicators and some comparative data against other providers. Accurate financial and performance information on your service will be vital. An early comparison of performance information will help you to identify good practice organisations for Phase 2 of the review.

Consult

Consult with local people, service users, employees, partners and the business community.

- What do others think about the current service and
- What could be done to achieve improvement?

In Phase 1, information from consultation will help you to identify areas of good practice and key areas for improvement for Phase 2 of the review. During the Phase 2, consultation will help you to identify what improvements should be made and how these can be delivered.

Compete

Compete openly and fairly wherever practicable to secure efficient and effective services.

- Could someone else do it better?

The procurement toolkit and guidance will help with this. 'Compete' becomes particularly important during Phase 2(b) of the review, but can also help with Phase 2(a). Options can include a modified in house service, working in partnership or externalisation; each of these have variations and can be mixed into the most appropriate solution.

Collaborate

Work with others to achieve better results.

- Who else is interested in achieving the same aims?
- Are there benefits from working together?

Identify what partnership arrangements are already operating and who might be involved in the service in the future. You may find it useful to include a representative on the review team.

The best value review process at Wiltshire County Council

PHASE 1: SCOPE THE REVIEW

- Use a clear assessment of current performance and anticipate changes to identify what to concentrate on during Phase 2.
- Clearly define the service to be reviewed and concentrate on those areas that will make the biggest difference.

You should be working on this the year before the review is due to start.

PHASE 2: FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS

2(a): Service specification – what should be done in the future?

Undertake the review, using challenge, consult, compare and collaborate to determine

- Should a service be provided in the future, and if so
- What the specification should be for service delivery.

2(b): Service delivery - who should do it in the future?

Using information from the review together with an assessment of the market, Consider

- Who should provide the service in the future?

Consider a wide range of options, including

- Partnership working
- Modified in-house provision, and
- External provision

Compete and collaborate are particularly important here.

Specify and plan to deliver the improvements

- Set clear and challenging targets for service improvement, which are supported by
- An improvement plan that shows responsibilities, resources and target dates.

PHASE 3: IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation requires commitment from the County Council and from key partners.

- Manage the delivery of improvements specified in the improvement plan
- Monitor delivery and prepare regular reports.

REPORTING

Format

The Best Value Programme Board has agreed the layout for best value reports. The report formats include summaries at the beginning to highlight the main issues. Proformas can be downloaded from the Intranet.

Project teams will hold the evidence to support their findings within a project file. The board will not be expecting any appendices to be attached to the report format.

The format will be used for all reports to the Board, Advisory Panel and Overview and Scrutiny. Dates for Overview and Scrutiny meetings can be found in the Best Value Intranet site.

Reporting intervals

Best Value Programme Board and Advisory Panels

Review teams will be expected to produce reports for the Board and then the Advisory Panels after Phase 1, 2a, 2b, and during implementation. Cabinet has the overriding responsibility for best value reviews, and will receive the comments of the appropriate advisory panel.

Overview and Scrutiny

The Phase 1 report will be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which will then decide whether it wishes to be involved in later stages of the review. Overview and Scrutiny reserves the right to call in a review if there are concerns

Phase 2 Reports - The Phase 2a report summarises the findings of the review and proposes a specification for future services, if any. The Phase 2b report builds on this information, amending it as necessary, and makes recommendations for service delivery.

Phase	Programme Board	Advisory Panel	Overview and Scrutiny
1 - Scope	Yes	Yes	Yes
2a - Service Specification	Yes	Yes	Dependant on Member wishes
2b - Service Delivery	Yes (amended version of 2a)	Yes (amended version of 2a)	Dependant on Member wishes
3 - Implementation	Yes	Yes, for significant action	Dependant on Member wishes

The review may be inspected.

The Best Value Inspection Service will try to answer two questions:

1. Is it a good service?

a. Are the Council's aims clear and challenging?

Has the review challenged the need for the service and does the service support corporate aims?

b. Does the service meet the aims?

Is there effective performance management and is the Council delivering?

c. How does its performance compare?

*How does the service compare to the top 25% of authorities?
Has it demonstrated cost effectiveness?*

2. Is it going to improve?

d. Does the BV Review drive improvement?

Is the review process well managed and are the 4 'C's covered rigorously?

e. How good is the improvement plan?

Is it trying to improve the right things and will it get the Council into the top 25%?

f. Will the Council deliver the improvements?

*Are Members & others committed and is it practical?
Does the Council manage change and performance well?*