

Towards an Excellent ServiceAn Introduction

The Challenge for Sport and Recreation

Sport and active recreation services can play an important role in the lives of many people. It is clear that these benefits include improving the physical health of people in our communities, engaging people in community activities and providing entertainment and a feel-good factor for participants and spectators. It is also argued that sport and active recreation services can have an important impact on personal development, community safety, social and economic regeneration and neighbourhood renewal.

Over the past few years, the role of the public sector in the provision of sport and active recreation services has increasingly been challenged. These challenges have been influenced by a number of national trends and initiatives, including:

- The changing customer needs and expectations in relation to services in general and public services
- The changes in our lifestyle habits
- The growth in service providers from a range of sectors, including NPDO s
- The national improvement agenda for the public sector, including CPA & Gershon efficiencies
- Obesity and the national health agenda (influenced by the Wanless reports on health)
- The Game Plan
- The Carter Review of sport

The public sector must now clearly understand and demonstrate its role in meeting the needs of communities through sport and active recreation services. There needs to be a particular emphasis on improving the physical health of the whole community, reducing health inequalities and providing the opportunity for life-long learning and development for the whole community.

Public sector organisations must intervene where this intervention is vital in meeting the needs of the community: where these functions are not provided by other sectors (for example in engaging the hard to reach people in the community in regular sport and active recreation). These services must be delivered in the most efficient, economic and effective way. There is a clear move towards public sector bodies providing strategic direction, engaging communities and creating synergistic partnerships with organisations from different sectors, rather than merely being direct deliverers of sport and recreation services.

If we are to continue to make the case for sport and recreation in terms of public policy and the allocation of public resources, we need to improve how we provide these services and the outcomes we achieve for our communities - and demonstrate both. TAES is designed to help us achieve this.

Towards an Excellent Service – What is it?

Towards an Excellence Service' (TAES) has been developed and adopted by the sport, recreation, parks, open spaces and wider cultural services industries to underpin continuous improvement. It supports organisations and partnerships to carry out cyclical Self Assessment and to plan and implement improvements as part of service planning. This helps the organisations and partnerships to improve all aspects of the way they work in a sustainable way, leading to improved results.

TAES has been developed by industry practitioners and relevant industry bodies through consultation, piloting and evaluation processes, and is supported at a high level, including the DCMS, DCLG, Sport England, CABE and the Audit Commission. It is seen as key to the success and survival of publicly funded sport, recreation, parks, open spaces and wider cultural services organisations.

Currently versions of TAES exist for:

- Local authority sport and recreation services
- County Sport Partnerships
- Sport England

Further versions are under development for National Governing Bodies of Sport and a generic version for cultural services.

At the heart of TAES lies the TAES Framework - which establishes criteria that organisations and partnerships need to work on to achieve improved results - and cyclical Self Assessment and improvement planning using this Framework. The Framework is based on the criterion parts of the EFQM Excellence Model and incorporates relevant industry-specific and generic quality schemes. Therefore all other 'quality' initiatives are part of TAES.

TAES is not a 'product', or a 'scheme' or even 'a process'; it is a 'journey' of improvement in all aspects of the way the organisation or partnership operates, in order to achieve excellent results. There is no end to this 'journey': it is an ongoing process of improvement because:

- The needs of the community change continually
 - Customers' expectations change continuously
- and because
- There are always ways in which the effectiveness and efficiency of an organisation or partnership can improve

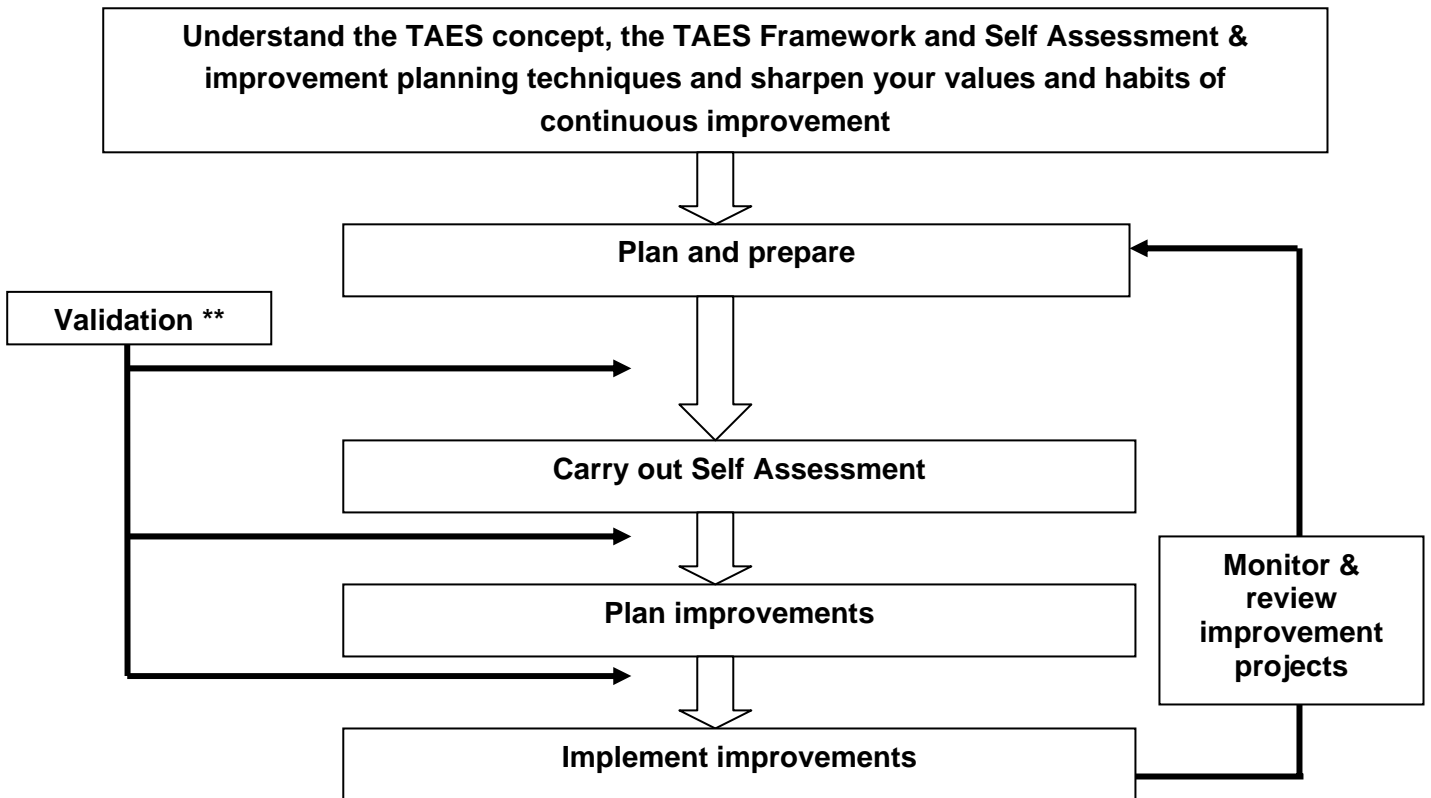
The pursuit of excellence underpins success in all organisations (and individuals). It is essential for publicly funded services because:

- It creates the capacity for the organisation or partnership to achieve its stated outcomes and 'make a difference' to people's lives
- It improves staff satisfaction and helps to ensure sustainable jobs with personal development opportunities
- The current external environment in which publicly funded cultural services operate demands 'continuous improvement'

TAES is not about perfuming the pig: - it is not an initiative designed just to prove continuous improvement or 'quality', which is only pursued because of external pressure. This approach is reflected in the desire of many organisations to badge chase or to tick the various boxes. It is clear that many organisations choose the easiest route available to gain a plaque on the wall, high assessment score or statutory pass. Whilst the need to meet statutory requirements and perform well in mandatory and voluntary assessments is completely understandable, it should not be confused with Excellence!

You cannot 'get TAES', nor 'do TAES'. You can, however, choose to adopt the concepts, values, habits, process and practices involved in working Towards an Excellent Service. This is much more challenging than merely adopting a scheme or achieving a badge; however it is significantly more valuable in achieving successful results for your communities.

The TAES Self Assessment and Improvement Planning Process



This pilot project seeks to develop.....

- Additional Self Assessment and improvement planning skills, which can be applied to your own organisation and as a challenge agent for organisations within the region
- ** A Peer Challenge system to provide an alternative option to the current IDEa Validation
- Skills to help implement the improvements and ensure the changes are made
- Best practice benchmarking and sharing of knowledge within the region