



The CQL Client Guide to Assessment and Review

Outline

This document identifies the various stages of assessment or review against the Investors in People framework and explains briefly what you can do to help your organisation gain the most from the experience. You will probably find that sharing some of the information in this document with others in your organisation is a useful first step to a common understanding about Investors in People. The more understanding there is, the greater your chances of a successful assessment and the greater the value of feedback to help your organisation achieve its goals.

Key facts

A highly versatile framework - flexible and easy to use

Investors in People is a flexible and easy to use standard which helps organisations transform their business performance. Our frameworks are outcome focused, outlining what you need to achieve, but never prescribing how. This flexible approach allows thousands of different employers of every sector and size to use the same framework.

Meeting your needs

Investors in People's flexibility is enhanced by focusing all our advice and assessment around meeting your organisation's needs. This means the process starts with us finding out what your performance targets or key priorities are. These then become central to all our work, so we support your business plan and maximise the value you gain from working with us.

Easy to use

It's the outcome focus and non-prescriptive approach we have that makes us easy to use. You'll find your assessment is simple as it is entirely based on interviews with people from across your organisation and doesn't require any paperwork or form-filling.

Customers greatly value our independent assessment approach. We are the leading people management benchmark of business improvement and our advice to business is very competitively priced.



Benefits

Investors in People delivers proven bottom line benefits

Investors in People has grown to be the UK's leading people management business improvement standard because it delivers improved performance to thousands of organisations. Currently almost seven million employees in over 35,000 organisations have achieved Investors in People recognition. And an amazing 3,000 of these have been recognised for ten or more years!

- **Proving Investors in People works** – recent research demonstrates that Investors in People improves financial performance, increases profitability and helps organisations meet their strategic objectives.
- **Managing change in a downturn** – CBI research undertaken in 2008 stated that “Investors in People is a particularly useful framework for organisations undergoing significant or rapid change”.
- **Business improvement focused** – whatever your business priorities, Investors in People's framework can now be geared to ensure you get the best results against your business plan.
- **World class good practice** – our framework has been developed over 18 years with some of the world's leading organisations. You can work with The Standard – the foundation of good management practice - or go broader and deeper and be tested against some, or all, of the full framework.
- **Continuous Development** – our advisers, assessors and self-check tools can tell you how well you are performing, suggest key performance indicators or provide tailored business advice on where to best focus development activity.
- **Customer-centred** – Investors in People grew out of the 1990s recession and is designed by business for business. Our success as a voluntary framework depends on ensuring that employers find us flexible and easy to use.
- **A winning formula** – in addition to helping them improve their business performance, some customers also work with us to stand out from their competitors, attract and retain the most talented people, or win new business.

"Investors in People is an excellent tool that can be used to identify ways of raising our organisation's performance to an even higher level and as a framework for continuous development"

David Fairhurst, VP People, McDonald's



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The Investors in People Offer

Investors in People has introduced a new approach for customers. The Investors in People experience now focuses on identifying organisational priorities and applying the framework towards meeting your specific objectives.

What this means for our customers is a closer working relationship with their Investors in People Specialist. Your appointed Assessor will work with you to identify the parts of The Standard most valuable to the organisation given your particular needs and priorities. Through the assessment process the Assessor will provide feedback and advice on areas of achievement and where there is potential for development.

To support this new approach Investors in People presents to all clients a framework which extends beyond the Standard. The Standard represents the core of good practice and any organisation needs to meet its 39 evidence requirements to become an Investor in People, or retain their existing status.

However, the framework goes beyond this core level to enable you to develop further in areas that support your goals and priorities. This extended framework is designed to give you the opportunity to work further with the parts of the framework that are most valuable to you and enable continuous development.

Alongside this new approach Investors in People has introduced new levels of recognition – Bronze, Silver and Gold, as well as a form of recognition for long term holders of Investors in People accreditation. These reflect the achievements of those working beyond The Standard and celebrate commitment to continuous improvement.



Key Aspects of our Offer

Investors in People understands your needs

Investors in People helps you improve your business by addressing your particular needs and circumstances. We work with you to identify your priorities and to build a development path for the future, drawing on relevant areas of our comprehensive, practical support to help drive your business forward.

We will provide

- Support shaped around your needs
- A tailored service for each customer
- A development path to take the business where it wants to go

A personalised service

Your Investors in People Assessor will help you get the most from working with the Investors in People framework. S/he will listen to your priorities and help you pick the most relevant parts of our best practice framework to drive your business forward. Through your assessment, you will also receive in-depth feedback on the issues that matter most to your business.

We will provide

- A dedicated Investors in People Specialist to help you through the process
- Support shaped around your particular business needs
- More detailed assessment feedback on **your** priority areas

Investors in People offers breadth and depth of expertise

We have drawn together a more comprehensive framework of best practice, from which you can draw according to your needs. It contains The Standard – the core level of good practice – but also additional areas of focus to help you keep developing and improving your business.

We will provide

- One framework, with comprehensive business improvement support

We will work with you over time to support your changing needs

As your needs change, Investors in People can help you keep focused: we deliver tailored support, shaped around your individual business needs, to help you navigate challenges you face. Whether you're planning for growth or facing turbulent times, we can help steer you to success.



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We will provide

- A constant source of guidance and support
- A partner to help you through difficult times
- A personal approach to enhance the benefit you gain
- Annual contact with your Assessor to keep you on track and help you gain the most from using the Investors in People framework

Different levels of recognition to meet customer needs and celebrate achievement

There are now three further stages of recognition, beyond The Standard itself, so you can celebrate your progress through the framework and see the further steps you can take to continue improving your business.

We will provide

- A system for recognising achievement beyond the Standard
- Stages of recognition by which you can benchmark your progress

"Investors in People has developed beyond my expectations. The sky's the limit! The new choices are just fantastic!"

First ScotRail



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Assessment (or Review)

One of the reasons that Investors in People has been so successful is the benefit that can be gained from assessment or from ongoing review if you are already an Investors in People organisation.

We have a very simple and highly effective approach towards how we conduct assessments. Your assessor will agree the focus of your assessment to best match your business priorities. Assessment is based on first hand evidence from staff interviews and you don't need to provide a single piece of paper, policy or strategy (although you may want to, and it might help the Assessor if such things are available). Your assessor will then provide you with a concise feedback report providing you with valuable guidance on development areas for the future.

We know that our assessments and the feedback reports are very well received by our customers. An amazing 90% of our surveyed customers rate our assessments as professional and fair, according to the tracking study carried out by Ipsos MORI in 2009.

Assessments are the gateway to Investors in People recognition, so if you successfully achieve the Investors in People Standard you can display our logo on your letterhead and recruitment advertisements and also display the Investors in People plaque. More importantly, the assessment allows us to provide you with feedback about how your people practice are *currently* enabling you to achieve your goals, and how *future* development of those practices can help you reach those goals more quickly

In addition, if you achieve 65 evidence requirements or more you now become Investors in People Bronze, and to be Investors in People Silver or Gold you need to score 115 or 165 evidence requirements respectively. These additional levels of recognition are designed to allow the most advanced organisations to celebrate and publicise their exceptional performance in terms of people management, leadership and development.

So what are the stages of Assessment?

The assessment or review process can be broken down into the following stages:

1. Submitting an application form
2. Appointing an Assessor
3. First communications with your Assessor
4. Preparing for the planning meeting
5. The planning meeting itself
6. Agreeing the design of the assessment and what will be covered
7. The agreement of an assessment plan and costs
8. Agreeing the assessment 'sample'
9. Exploring evidence and the on-site visit
10. The assessment decision/s
11. Initial, headline feedback
12. The written report
13. The Recognition Process (and Panel)
14. The Improvement Planning Meeting
15. A Customer Satisfaction Questionnaire (CSQ)
16. Annual contact with your Assessor



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The sections following in this guide explain the various stages and what you should expect from your assessor at each stage

1. Submitting an Application

You can request an assessment (or a review if you are already a Recognised Investors in People organisation) whenever you wish. For organisations already recognised as Investors in People the reviews *must* take place no more than three years apart, though many organisations opt for a more frequent cycle of visits.

Application forms can be completed on line on the CQL website (www.cqlgroup.co.uk). If you prefer, a copy can be emailed to you by sending a request to info@cqlgroup.co.uk

There is a small amount of detail to complete on the form, including your preferred choice of dates for the assessment. To meet your required dates, **12 weeks'** notice is usually preferred.

When applying, you are required to identify the number of people “in scope” for the assessment - that is, all those people we have to think about when designing an assessment or review. As well as all staff on the payroll, you need to include any consultants, contractors, agency staff, board members, volunteers, Governors etc – anyone who makes a contribution towards achieving your organisation’s objectives. The Assessor will agree, in discussion with you, how or whether to include a sample from these people to include in discussions.

The inclusion of different types of people in the 'scope' of an assessment doesn't mean that we expect you to do the same things with all of them - some may have a different type of relationship with you than your employees do, for example. Your Assessor will give you guidance on the expectations with regard to people who may be 'in scope' but not your employees. This might include, for example, how you support and manage temporary staff or consultants who make a significant contribution to your success.

2. Appointing an Assessor

Capital Quality Limited engages and manages a large number of qualified and registered Assessors to deliver the assessment service. On receipt of your application, CQL will appoint an Assessor (or team of Assessors if your organisation is large and complex) to undertake the assessment of your organisation.

The selection of Assessors is carefully considered and based on criteria including suitability, experience, commitment, availability and location. It is our role to maintain the integrity and image of Investors in People by providing a local level of quality assurance for the Standard, so the work of all our Assessors is regularly monitored. Assessors also have to complete significant CPD and ensure they are up to date with developments in the business and people worlds.

3. First communications with your Assessor

Once an Assessor is appointed, s/he will contact the person named on your application form within a few days to introduce themselves and start planning the assessment. Communication with the Assessor at this early stage is important. Usually he or she will make contact by telephone, though sometimes by email, to arrange a firm appointment for a planning meeting with you and even perhaps the dates he or she will be on site to carry out the assessment.

Assessment is a positive process with the Assessor looking to find evidence, not making attempts to “catch you out” and so it is important for both parties to start building rapport at this early stage. It would be useful to inform the Assessor about any security arrangements, parking arrangements and anything else they need to be aware of when visiting you.



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4. Preparing for the planning meeting

Who should be there?

In order to gain the most from the assessment or review process, it is important that you give some thought to your business priorities. In order to ensure that the most accurate and up-to-date picture of your organisation's goals, the assessor will usually want to meet with the most senior person in the organisation at the planning stage. If your organisation is particularly large and complex, it may not be the most senior person who needs to attend, but it should be someone who is clearly regarded as one of the senior team and who has a very clear view of the current goals of the organisation.

This is a key stage during which the Assessor will explain the process and begin to agree with you the what, why, who, when, where and how of the assessment. It is important that you are clear about all aspects, so you may want to write a list of questions in advance. It's also useful to think about what you want from the assessment (in addition to a successful outcome of course) and if you have any special requirements such as feedback on a specific process, the Assessor will do his/her best to accommodate that.

The planning meeting also provides an opportunity for key people to be involved at an early stage. There may be benefits to the organisation if the Assessor is able to meet key people at this stage, answer their questions and allay any fears.

Internal Discussions in Advance

Effective preparation for you will include ensuring that the key people in your organisation have familiarised themselves with the Standard and considered for themselves what your organisation wants to gain from the assessment experience. Investors in People is an intelligent framework that needs to be used intelligently for best effect - the more your top team have engaged with the Standard (and any extra areas you wish to explore from the wider framework) then the greater the value you will derive from the assessment or review experience.

Much of the planning meeting will consist of the Assessor ensuring that s/he understands your organisation, and drawing out your business goals and priorities so that the experience can be tailored to your needs. If you can involve relevant senior people or other stakeholders in agreeing the focus of the assessment in advance, this will speed the process of planning. If you are unable to do so, the Assessor will help you to undertake necessary discussions after the planning meeting if they are required.

The Assessor will need to collect some information from you at the planning meeting (or soon after) so you may want to talk about that during your telephone discussion with him /her, to enable you to prepare it in advance. Key information will include:

- Some background information about the organisation – history, successes, issues etc
- Organisation structure charts down through the management line
- A complete “people” list (including all employees and other staff in scope such as consultants, contractors, agency staff, board members, volunteers, governors etc). The list needs to identify how long people have been working in your organisation, their team/department and what their job role / job title is. Additional information such as highlighting “Top” Managers, Managers, night only workers, part-timers, trade union representatives, committee members, remote locations, internal promotions, job changers etc will really help the Assessor to identify a representative sample of people to have discussions with.
- Your organisation's business plan, improvement plan or indeed any other document that identifies what your organisation is planning to achieve and the strategy to achieve it



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The planning meeting is a great opportunity to start presenting any evidence you may be eager for the Assessor to have, so you may want to consider that in advance. For instance, “Top” Managers could describe for the Assessor how their organisation meets the Standard, through:

- A presentation to the Assessor
- Narrative/Storyboard

Please be aware that narratives and storyboards are not mandatory as it is perfectly possible to achieve the Standard without any paperwork whatsoever.

5. The Planning Meeting Itself

The Assessor will need key people to be present at the planning meeting. On average, planning meetings take about 2-3 hours depending on the depth of the discussion. This is a two-way discussion and amongst other things, the Assessor will:

- Work in partnership with you to design an assessment or review experience that has the greatest chance of moving your organisation's performance forward
- Develop an understanding of the unique features of your organisation and the pressures and requirements impacting upon you
- Invite you to explain the history of your organisation's involvement with the Standard, give your views on your position against the requirements of the Standard and identify what benefits you would like to gain from the assessment.
- Explain the complete assessment process
- Discuss potential outcomes
- Assure you of confidentiality of both written and verbal information (see overleaf)
- Explain how people will be selected for interview and how many people will be involved
- Discuss how disruption can be minimised
- Agree the feedback arrangements and written report format
- Confirm the dates on site and other key dates
- Identify the costs, and how these might be impacted by different options or the scale you choose for your assessment / review
- Explain the recognition process, if this is your first assessment

You may wish to show your Assessor around your organisation as part of the planning meeting. Most Assessors find this really useful as there's an opportunity to say a brief “hello” to some staff, see notice boards, see any learning resources in place such as training rooms, libraries etc and they can gain a real feel for the culture and atmosphere. Additionally, your people will have the opportunity to see the Assessor taking an interest in the whole organisation in advance of the focus upon individuals during discussion.

In some cases, particularly if you have opted for assessment against measures from beyond the core Standard, the assessor will need to go away and do some analysis. This is required to help identify which requirements relate best to your goals, and how the design of the activity can maximise the added value you receive. If this is the case, the assessor will send you details of their proposed approach after the event - see the next section.

6. Agreeing the Design of the Assessment and what will be Covered

The choices available to you in terms of how much of the Investors in People framework to engage with as part of your assessment, and the design of that assessment in terms of meeting your organisational priorities, will have varied implications for design and cost.

Your Assessor will explore the best way in which to customise the process to your needs, and either at the planning meeting, or shortly after, will present the implications for the cost of the process. This is an entirely flexible discussion in which you have every opportunity to agree a mutually acceptable strategy. Some of the elements of our assessment package are fixed, as we believe they are



essential to delivering the high quality outcomes we promise, whilst other elements may be subject to different options or approaches.

For example, if you choose to focus on business goals and themes that go beyond the core Standard to a significant extent, we will present to you the cost implications of doing so and ensure you are happy with the value for money that is offered.

In some cases, after the planning meeting you may wish to discuss the possible focus of the assessment (remember the emphasis is on *your choice*) with others internally. This might require you to have some internal discussions or further meetings before the assessment plan can be finalised - this is fine, and an extension of the timescales does not in any way penalise you in outcome or cost terms.

7. The Agreement of an Assessment Plan (and Costs)

Once you have reached agreement with your assessor concerning the way forward, the assessor will prepare a written plan confirming the details send it to you ahead of the onsite visit. This plan will set out the agreed strategy, the goals / issues around which you have chosen to focus the assessment and the various elements of logistics that are needed. The plan also includes a summary of the cost of your assessment package.

8. Agreeing the Assessment 'Sample'

The Assessor will also send you a list of the people that they wish to interview (we call this our 'sample') in a timescale to allow you to inform these people well in advance. The assessor, not the organisation, must select the people for interview. If a selected individual is not available for operational reasons and the interview can't be rescheduled, only the assessor can approve a substitute.

Your organisation will need to draw up the schedule for interviews using guidelines given to you by the assessor, so that the disruption to you is minimised and the Assessor, the interviewees and the organisation all know exactly what will be happening during the time on site. The final schedule should be sent to the assessor at least 3 days before the first on-site date.

9. Exploring Evidence and the On-Site Visit

The assessor will be seeking to find evidence that your organisation meets the requirements of the core Standard, as well as any additional requirements you have selected from the wider framework. At the same time, the assessor will be exploring your goals, using the information s/he has available to determine the contribution your people practices are making to achieving them. This 'two-pronged' approach overlaps significantly, and assessors are skilled at merging the gathering of evidence for their assessment judgement *and* for valuable feedback that adds value to your organisation.

In terms of making assessment judgements against which elements of the Investors in People framework your organisation meets, assessors are required to gather evidence which is acceptable to the requirements of Quality Assurance and which mean that the outcome, and the feedback, are accurate.

The criteria for 'acceptable' evidence are that it should be:

Sufficient Reliable	Current Authentic	Relevant Valid	Consistent
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Whilst there is no requirement to do so, you may be able to identify internal documentation that will help demonstrate to the assessor that your organisation meets the requirements of the Standard. Any documents submitted as evidence should be current and in use generally within the organisation and can often be submitted at the planning stage. However, please bear in mind that the assessor will



have agreed a finite amount of time to be spent on evidence collection, so do talk to the assessor about your intentions before presenting him/her with a trolley full of documents!

Information on your people strategies, processes and practices will be collected from a range of sources. A key part of the assessment is about collecting evidence that these are embedded, applied consistently and do actually work in practice in your organisation. To do this, the assessor needs to talk to people to encourage them to give real examples of how these things work in practice and clarify the outcomes that demonstrate an effective investment in people. The verbal evidence provided by people will confirm, supplement, complement and validate any relevant documentary evidence. So, your assessor will have planned to:

- Review documentary evidence and look at other relevant records
- Speak with a representative cross-section of people to confirm that the processes are in place, are understood and working in practice
- Identify 'trails' of evidence which show activity across all 3 principles of the Standard (plan, do and review)

The assessor will arrive at an agreed time and probably have a short meeting with the named contact, just to confirm the arrangements for the day and agree any changes. Discussions / interviews are informal and confidential and the assessor will require a quiet and secure room so that the discussions may take place in private. Whilst most interviews are conducted on an individual basis, the room needs to be of an adequate size to accommodate any small group interviews that may have been arranged. It is really useful and often saves everyone time if a "co-ordinator" can be appointed to help the smooth running of the day and ensure that people turn up, on time for their interview.

Assessors often have a gruelling schedule so access to some tea/coffee/water will help them maintain energy levels and please don't forget directions to the nearest toilet!

The assessor will greet each interviewee, explain the purpose, process, note-taking and confidentiality aspects and try their very best to make them feel comfortable. Even the most confident of people can be a little nervous at the start. At the end of the interview, they will thank the interviewee for their contribution and see them out. Assessors will often take 5 minutes between interviews to update their notes and prepare for the next discussion.

Possible Changes to the Interview Schedule

It is sometimes necessary, and to your advantage, for the assessor to request a change to the interview schedule if this can be accommodated. This might be to speak to more of a particular type of person (e.g. those in a given role) or to ensure that s/he fully understands the evidence and information emerging. Remember that an assessor is trying to find evidence of your organisation meeting the Standard - not the other way around - so if this can be accommodated it is generally in your best interests. However, changes that are impossible or difficult at short notice will be treated realistically and other arrangements can be made if necessary - e.g. to speak to someone by phone, or on another day.

Keeping you Updated Throughout

The assessment process is one in which a valid and accurate picture builds over time, so an assessor may not be able to (nor consider it wise to) offer you *too much* detailed feedback until they are confident that their conclusions are sound. However, we also encourage our assessors to maintain a dialogue with you throughout the process and to alert you to any concerns they have or gaps in evidence as soon as possible - giving you every chance to point them in the right direction.



10. The Assessment Decision/s

As the process moves ahead, and before the end of the assessment, the assessor will collate his or her findings, carefully review the information they have collected, analyse it and reach a considered decision about whether or not your organisation is meeting all the requirements of the Standard. If you have opted for assessment against additional requirements from the wide framework, a judgement will also be made concerning these. He or she will usually do this whilst still on site, informing you of the decision at a headline feedback meeting. In some exceptional situations, such as when the balance of evidence is very delicate, the assessor may want to consider the evidence and their decision overnight.

Before making a final judgement that any area is not met, the Assessor will give you every chance to point him or her at evidence that may not have become apparent. In the end, you should feel as if the outcome was reached by joint discussion and that you have had every chance to contribute.

11. Giving initial, headline feedback

At the end of the evidence gathering process, the assessor will usually offer you a summary of the main outcomes and observations in headline form. This typically involves a feedback meeting of around an hour at the end of the onsite day/s, which should already have been planned for in earlier discussions.

At this headline feedback meeting, you will be told whether or not the assessor's judgement is that you meet the core Standard, and in most cases those additional evidence requirements you have chosen from the wider framework. In some cases, where the assessor needs more time to review the evidence / notes or needs to liaise with other assessors in the team (if your organisation is large and complex) this decision may not be communicated immediately.

12. The Written Report

All assessments and reviews result in a comprehensive and informative written report. The goal of this report is to:

Inform	giving you information about practices, experiences and views of people in your organisation
Challenge	your thinking, any assumptions about your organisation, and possible ways of improving performance
Motivate	by helping to celebrate and recognise your areas of strength, and help you understand how to gain even more from advancing your people practices
Be individual	providing feedback unique to your organisation and its goals

You have choices regarding the format of your report and its target audience, which your Assessor will have discussed with you at the planning stage.



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13. The Recognition Process (and Panel)

If this is your first assessment against the framework.....

If your organisation is not yet meeting all the requirements of the Standard, then the process is considered incomplete and your assessor will explain to you in detail what needs to happen. This is called "Continuous Assessment" and the assessor will provide you with a detailed, written report within 7 days of the last day on site. You will need to address the gaps that your Assessor has identified and then invite the assessor back at a later date (by submitting another application form) to continue the Assessment. In some cases the action required may be relatively minor and the assessor may be able to return to continue the assessment reasonably quickly. In other cases, where more fundamental action is required, it might be quite some time before you request another visit from the Assessor to continue the Assessment. The amount of time between visits will help decide the depth of evidence collection during the return visit and it may be that the assessor will apply only a "light touch" to areas that were considered met at the previous visit.

This process continues until the assessor has evidence that the Standard is fully met. Your assessor will help you identify when the return visit might be. Should you wish to employ some appropriate advisory support to help with the action planning and/or more consultancy based work, CQL can suggest suitable, qualified Investors in People Advisors. Contact numbers are at the end of this document.

Once the Standard is fully met, recognition as an Investor in People organisation is awarded by a group of people referred to as the Recognition Panel. The Recognition Panel comprises of representatives from employer organisations across the London region that have already been recognised as an Investor in People. Only the Recognition Panel has the power to either award or withdraw Recognition. Your assessor will make a recommendation to the Panel and as well as the contents of the report, they will discuss other things including methodology, approach and judgement – to ensure that a thorough and rigorous assessment has taken place. The Panel's decision will be taken within 21 days of the last day on site. The Panel's decision is final and there is no process of appeal beyond this point.

If you are already an Investors in People organisation and this is a review...

If your organisation is considered to meet the core Standard...

There is no Recognition Panel involved if the assessor's judgement is that your organisation continues to meet the core Standard. If this is the case, the assessor will give you feedback and a written report (to your agreed needs) and also let you know which of the additional requirements beyond the framework your organisation meets on this occasion (if you have opted to include any in the exercise).

If there are gaps in evidence and your organisation is not meeting the core Standard...

Investors in People is designed as a tool to support organisational change and improvement. If your organisation is already Recognised as an Investors in People, but at a review there is insufficient evidence that you are still meeting the core Standard, there is a supportive process in place to help you move forward.

The assessor will ensure that you understand the gaps in evidence and the impact this is having on current performance and achievement of your goals. The focus of your Improvement Planning Meeting is likely to be upon those gaps, and what you may need to do in order to return to meeting the Standard. Remember that this is not just about jumping through hoops for the purposes of a quality Standard - if there are gaps in evidence, this will have implications for your organisation's wider business performance and closing the gaps will be of considerable benefit. Following the Improvement Planning Meeting, you will need to produce an **action plan** which



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shows in clear terms how you will close any gaps against the requirements of the Investors in People core standard. This action plan has to be approved by the Recognition Panel within 3 months of the end of onsite evidence gathering. In the event that this outcome occurs, your assessor will give you extensive guidance concerning the required format, and content, of the plan. The plan should show how you intend to close the gaps within 12 months of the last assessor day onsite, and the assessor will need to come back within those timescales to ensure that you have made sufficient progress.

Although the Recognition Panel has the right not to accept your plan and thus not grant the 12 months to rectify the issues, in practice with a sound plan you can expect to be given this time.

When the assessor returns, s/he will concentrate efforts on exploring those evidence requirements not met at the review - the return visit is, then, likely to be significantly shorter or more focussed. If, at this stage, your organisation has returned to meeting the core Standard then your status as an Investor in People is refreshed anew and you need not have a further review for 3 years.

If, however, the organisation is *still* not meeting the Standard but there is strong evidence of a serious attempt to close the gaps, the Recognition Panel can grant an exceptional extension of a further 12 months, when the assessor returns again.

Organisations who are either (a) not meeting the Standard at the point of the 12 month return visit and show little commitment to do so, or (b) are still not meeting the Standard after 24 months, will have their Investors in People status removed.

14. The Improvement Planning Meeting

Whatever the outcome of your assessment or review, the assessor will meet with you (and those people you think it would be helpful to have present) to discuss next steps. In this meeting you can expect the assessor to:

- Clarify the feedback given in the written report
- Answer any of your questions or queries concerning the outcomes, or what the evidence suggests about people practices in your organisation
- Ensure you understand and are clear about how improvements could be made that will impact positively upon your business goals
- Help you to plan how to make best use of the Investors in People framework in the future, including any tools, resources or opportunities provided by CQL Group and by Investors in People UK
- Encourage you to ensure ongoing involvement of your people in the way Investors in People is used
- Help you to achieve more synergy between use of the Investors in People framework and any other quality initiatives or change processes in your organisation
- Assist you in compiling an action plan of what might be done to advance our organisation further through improved people practices
- Explain the options for assessment and review models, including Rolling Review and Internal Review

15. The Customer Satisfaction Questionnaire (CSQ)

CQL is committed to ensuring that our customers are delighted with their assessment experience and that we are able to continuously improve the service we provide in the light of their feedback. A customer satisfaction questionnaire will be issued to you after the end of the process, and we would be most grateful if you could complete and return this to us as directed. The feedback does not in any way jeopardise your future assessments or your status as an Investors in People organisation, and is very helpful to us in our development efforts.



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16. Annual Contact with Your Assessor

The package of support we offer for assessment and review clients includes provision for an annual visit from your assessor. Our research and customer feedback shows that organisations benefit from periodic contact to help them keep people issues and their use of the Investors in People framework fresh and value-adding. These visits typically last for around 2 hours (more if your organisation is large and complex, and if you have achieved success at levels beyond the core Standard). Your assessor will make arrangements for these visits and contact you roughly 12 and 24 months after your assessment or review is complete.

A NOTE ABOUT CONFIDENTIALITY

Your assessor may request access to confidential information/documents or you may find it unavoidable that sensitive information is disclosed. Please be assured that the assessor will be the only person to see that information and all nationally registered assessors have signed a code of conduct including a confidentiality agreement, which requires them to maintain the confidentiality of all your information. However, if this does not allay your concerns please feel free to submit documents in such a form that anonymity is assured or that commercially sensitive information is disguised.

The assessor may make reference to your organisation's business plan and its objectives within their assessment report. However, the reference will be of a general nature and no specific financial data will be mentioned. Information included in the report will not be attributable to any individual and even if the visit results in the need for further action to satisfy the Standard, the feedback will not be specific enough to point to any individuals.

It is important to stress to people who may be selected for interview, that responses they give to the assessor's questions will be in confidence and that it is the organisation that is being assessed, not the individual person. Many assessors use non-attributable quotes in their reports and reserve the right to change quotes to preserve anonymity. The assessor may provide you with information on confidentiality and data protection to pass onto interviewees in advance of their discussion.



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THE INVESTORS IN PEOPLE STANDARD

PRINCIPLE 1: DEVELOPING STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF THE ORGANISATION

INDICATOR	Guidance
<p>1 A strategy for improving the performance of the organisation is clearly defined and understood</p>	<p>This indicator tests the clarity of your organisation’s business strategy - what your organisation does, where it’s going and how it plans to get there. It also tests whether or not you have shared this with your people to ensure that everyone understands how your organisation aims to improve its performance and realise its vision.</p> <p>To meet it, you need to have a clear purpose and vision supported by a strategy for improving performance. You must demonstrate that a business plan has been developed with the support of representative groups where they exist and you should also ensure that all your people have had the opportunity to contribute their ideas. The plan needs to specify measurable objectives and what actions you are going to take to achieve those objectives. Linked to the business plan, you will need to involve people when agreeing team and individual objectives that contribute to the achievement of the organisation’s overall objectives.</p> <p>An Assessor will ask people if they can explain how they are personally expected to contribute to the development and achievement of the business plan</p>
<p>2 Learning and Development is planned to achieve the organisation’s objectives</p>	<p>This indicator measures how well you plan the learning and development activity that is required in order for your people to achieve the organisation’s objectives.</p> <p>To meet it, you need to have a clear understanding of your organisation’s learning and development needs and have in place plans and resources to meet them. An Assessor will want you to demonstrate how learning and development activities will help achieve organisational objectives and how you will measure their impact. The same approach needs to apply to teams and individuals so that all learning and development is aimed at helping people contribute to achieving the organisation’s objectives.</p> <p>People must be involved in this planning process either individually or through their representative groups, where they exist. In order to meet this indicator, people should be able to explain the linkage between their learning and development and the contribution it will make to their performance and the achievement of team and organisational objectives.</p>



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INDICATOR	Guidance
<p>3 Strategies for managing people are designed to promote equality of opportunity in the development of the organisation's people</p>	<p>This indicator tests whether you have created an environment where people are encouraged to contribute ideas to improve their own and other people's performance and where everyone receives the support and learning and development they need to improve their performance.</p> <p>To meet it, you need to demonstrate to the Assessor that you have created a culture of continuous improvement where people share their ideas for improvement, where their different needs are recognised and appropriate and fair access to the support and learning and development they need is provided. Managers need to be genuinely committed to making this happen and ensuring equality of opportunity for people to learn and develop in line with what the organisation requires them to do.</p> <p>The Assessor will ask people if they believe in this commitment and can describe how they have been encouraged to contribute ideas to improve their own and other people's performance.</p>
<p>4 The capabilities managers need to lead, manage and develop people effectively are clearly defined and understood</p>	<p>This indicator tests whether your organisation is clear about what is expected of its managers in terms of the way they should lead, manage and develop people within the organisation and whether you have plans in place to equip them with these capabilities.</p> <p>To meet it, an Assessor will expect to see that you have clearly defined the knowledge, skills and behaviours your managers are expected to acquire and demonstrate when leading, managing and developing people to achieve your objectives and create the desired culture. You also need to have plans in place to ensure that your managers have these capabilities.</p> <p>An Assessor will ask your managers if they understand the required capabilities and if they can describe what is expected of them. In order that people know what to expect from their manager, they too need to understand what the organisation requires of its managers in terms of the way they lead, manage and develop people. Therefore during assessment an Assessor will ask other employees if they know what is required of their managers.</p>

PRINCIPLE 2: TAKING ACTION TO IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF THE ORGANISATION

<p>5 Managers are effective in leading, managing and developing people</p>	<p>This indicator tests whether your managers are fulfilling the role expected of them and demonstrating the management capabilities required by the organisation.</p> <p>To meet it, managers must be leading, managing and developing their teams in line with the defined capabilities. This includes providing people with constructive feedback on their performance on a timely and regular basis so that they can maximise the contribution they make to the organisation.</p> <p>During an assessment an Assessor will ask people if they can explain how their managers are effective in supporting them and providing them with the feedback they need to strengthen or improve their performance.</p>
<p>6 People's contribution to the organisation is recognised and valued.</p>	<p>This indicator tests how effectively managers recognise and value the contribution people make to the organisation.</p> <p>To meet it, an Assessor will be looking for evidence of a culture whereby individual performance is measured thereby enabling managers to understand the contribution people have made. Secondly, there must be evidence that managers let people know how much they value their input to the organisation.</p> <p>An Assessor will ask people if they understand how they are contributing to the organisation and feel recognised and valued for making a positive difference to its performance. In order to meet this indicator they should be able to give real examples of how they have contributed and how managers have shown their appreciation.</p>
<p>7 People are encouraged to take ownership and responsibility by being involved in decision-making</p>	<p>This indicator tests whether people are encouraged to participate in decision-making and to take ownership and responsibility for decisions that affect the performance of individuals, teams and the organisation.</p> <p>To meet it, managers need to explain to the Assessor how they encourage people to be involved in the decision-making process, either on an individual basis or through representative groups. They also need to demonstrate how they encourage people to take ownership and responsibility for decisions made.</p> <p>As a result of this approach an Assessor will expect to see that people are able to describe how they are involved in decision-making, at a level that is appropriate to their role, and how they are encouraged to take ownership and responsibility for decisions that affect the performance of the organisation.</p>

<p>8 People learn and develop effectively.</p>	<p>This indicator tests how effectively managers implement the organisation's learning and development plans and meet the needs of your people so that they can perform effectively and contribute to the organisation's success.</p> <p>To meet it, managers must show that people's learning and development needs are being met through appropriate activities that enable them to do what is expected of them, whether they have just joined the organisation, taken on a new role or are developing in their current role.</p> <p>An Assessor will be looking for evidence that people undertaking appropriate learning and development activities, are able to describe what they have learnt and how this is helping them fulfil their role.</p>
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PRINCIPLE 3: EVALUATING THE IMPACT ON THE PERFORMANCE OF THE ORGANISATION

<p>9 Investment in people improves the performance of the organisation</p>	<p>This indicator measures whether your investment in people has been worthwhile and whether people in the organisation understand the impact it has had on performance.</p> <p>To meet it, an Assessor will want to see how you identify, review and compare the overall investment in learning and development with the performance improvements it has brought about, and use this information to inform future strategy.</p> <p>As a result of this evaluation activity, you will be able to explain and quantify, not only how learning and development of the workforce has improved performance at all levels but also articulate the impact on future strategies. At an individual level, an Assessor will ask people if they can explain the impact their learning and development has had on their performance, that of their team and the organisation.</p>
<p>10 Improvements are continually made to the way people are managed and developed</p>	<p>This indicator tests how well you continue to learn and improve your approach to managing and developing people in order to improve organisational performance.</p> <p>To meet it, you must demonstrate to an Assessor that the outcomes of the evaluation of your investment in people are used to make ongoing improvements to the way people are managed and developed.</p> <p>As a result of this approach, managers will be able to explain to an Assessor how they have changed their practices and made improvements to the way they manage and develop their people. These improvements must be confirmed by your people.</p>

