

The Place Standard tool A Version for Children

How good is my place



The Place Standard tool provides a simple framework to structure a conversation about a place. It allows you to think about the physical and social aspects of a place, and the important relationship between them. It has 14 themes, each with a main question and further prompts to help you have a conversation, make an assessment and identify issues for improvement.

This guide gives a suggested methodology for conducting the assessment using the children's version of the tool.

Why is place important?

Places where we live and spend our time directly affects our lives. The quality of places and the opportunities we have access to can affect our health and wellbeing and our environment.

Understanding what is good about our places now, and what could be better, can help us make good decisions on what needs change, how best to change them and allow us to target resources where they are needed most.

This will help make the places better for us to live, work and play in and help to take care of nature and the environment, now and for the future.

People of all ages and backgrounds have a relationship with where they live and a right to be included in those places – to influence how the places are and how to improve.

Who is the Place Standard for?

The tool is for everyone to use, including communities and professionals, and can be used by individuals or in a group setting. It can be used for parts of cities, whole towns or neighbourhoods, and in rural or island areas.

The different versions of the Place Standard tool help everyone work together using a common framework.

This Children's Version complements the core Place Standard tool and is recommended for ages 6 -12 (or younger, if parents / carers or experienced facilitators are involved).

What is the purpose of the tool?

The Place Standard is a way to assess the quality of places that are well established, undergoing change, or still being planned. The tool helps to identify the good and not so good aspects of the place and where improvements are needed.

The 14 themes in the tool have been carefully selected based on research and evidence for their combined influence on our health and wellbeing.

The same themes run across all versions of the Place Standard tool. In this Children's Version, the theme names have been adapted through participatory action research to resonate better with children.

The Children's Version is adapted to help to improve children's understanding of a place through talking about what's important to them in their everyday lives, by asking the questions:

1. Where I go and what I do (quality of place)
2. How I get from one place to another (movement)
3. How I care and how I feel (self-efficacy and stewardship)
4. What I need to live well (community context)

Thinking about and discussing with friends and trusted adults if these important things:

- are good now;
- how they could be made better for the future;
- what and how they would change, if the children had a magic wand

will help the children develop, communicate and share their views about their places.

Based on the children's lived experience and their local knowledge, the scoring and written information produced through the use of the tool are collected on a common framework that help to make sense for everyone taking part. This includes those living in the area being assessed and the professionals who might be interpreting the information.

The output can help make better, more informed decisions and allow resources to be targeted where they are needed most. This approach can deliver better results over the long term.



Getting started

Record the following information:

Area of assessment
Date of assessment
Postcode [first 5 letters]

Age:
0-4
5-8
9-12
13-15
16-17
18-21
22-25

With parents or carer/s?

Gender:
Male
Female
Non-binary
Other

This information will only be used by organisers of your Place Standard assessment to support their analysis of the data by age, gender and postcode.

If you are completing the Place Standard tool as a group, you may want to collect the information for each individual.

Structuring the conversation

Through experience of working with children, the following structure based on a “route of enquiry” method, is suggested to enable a more natural flow for the Place Standard conversations to take place. This is recommended as good practice but facilitators can adapt to suit what work best for the group.

In this structure, the conversations begin with discussing with the children around “what’s important to our lives here in <place name>...”

The 14 Place Standard themes are asked under 4 broader questions:

1. Where I go and what I do (quality of place)
2. How I get from one place to another (movement)
3. How I feel and how I care (self-efficacy and stewardship)
4. What I need to live well (community context)

The ordering of the 4 questions represents the way children and young people are most likely to think about place.

Each of the 4 questions seeks to address a set of Place Standard themes as presented in the table below.

The Place Standard themes under each broader question can be discussed in any order the children / groups prefer. A discussion about which themes within each set are most important for the group may help to inform the order they are discussed.

Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4
Where I go and what I do (quality of place)	How I get from one place to another (movement)	How I feel and how I care (self-efficacy and stewardship)	What I need to live well (community context)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Places to play • Streets, squares and buildings • Nature – parks, trees, animals, plants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking, wheeling and cycling • Buses, trains, trams, boats • Traffic and parking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling safe • Feeling proud and part of a place • Having our say and being listened to • Fixed, clean and looking nice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools, libraries, shops and other services • Jobs and places to work • Homes, friends and neighbours • Meeting and talking with people

Starting the conversation

By following the “route of enquiry”, it is suggested that ‘Where I go and what I do’, may be the most effective starting point for groups, particularly those of a younger age, and helped build shared context for the themes.

This helps participants to start with talking about what comes most naturally to them, and then more specific themes and ideas can cascade from these broader conversations.

By the end of the process, a child or young person is more likely to understand what you are asking and why. This also helps you and your group understand emerging priorities for action, which are likely to span multiple themes.

Taking each Place Standard theme in turn, introduce the theme and discuss the heading question.

Use the Place Standard Theme sheets to guide the discussion of each theme and make sure the score is with reference to the heading question of the theme. Extra questions and prompts are provided to help.

Some general principles when exploring the themes, ask the children to:

- think about the place now and in the future – what could change and what impact would that have on your place?
- think about the place under different conditions, for example time of day, day of the week, the different seasons or weather conditions (sunny, wet, dry, icy, snowy, windy, other).
- think about the place from your own perspective but also from the point of view of others: mum/dad, grandparents, brother/sister, friends and neighbours and others who may be different, for example older/younger, from different backgrounds or with a disability.
- think about what / how it could be made better and why
- ask the children what they would change if they had a magic wand

Capturing the conversation

As the conversation progresses, capture the key points from your discussion, recording agreement and any differences.

For each theme you should also record:

- What is good now?
- How could we make it better in the future?
- What would we change if we had a magic wand?

Recording may be done by participants themselves, facilitators, or a combination of the two – do what feels more appropriate for your group.

If participants are recording their views through drawing, photography, videos, audio clips or other media, make sure you collect these (with permission) and consider with the children how to interpret these and what to use them for.

It is helpful to remember:

- DO need to answer all of the heading questions for all the themes – capture the score and key points.
- Do NOT need to answer every 'think about' question – these are prompts that may or may not be appropriate in your place.
- MAY want to think about other things that are not included but are important in your place and add your own questions.
- If a child or young person does not think they know enough to score or does not want to give a score to a certain theme, they should never be compelled to do so.

Scoring

The core Place Standard tool uses a 1 to 7 scoring system, where 1 means there is a lot of room for improvement and 7 means there is very little improvement required.

To make this more appropriate for children, the scoring is simplified to a scale of 1 to 3 or thumbs down, sideways and up:

A score of 1 is not good

Lots of improvement needed!



A score of 2 is okay

Some improvement needed!



A score of 3 is great

It's good or as good as it can be!



Discuss and agree a score for the theme with reference to the heading question of that theme. If the group is having trouble deciding on a score then see if you can agree on an 'in-between' score.

It may be that participants want to give different scores within one theme, such as for walking and then for cycling which you can record in notes before giving a combined score.

If you are working with very young age groups, you may not be able to score each theme individually. If there seems to be strong overlap between themes in the minds of the children and young people, discuss them as a whole and determine if each theme should receive the same or different scores.

Additionally, if a child or young person does not think they know enough to score or does not want to give a score to a certain theme, they should never be compelled to do so.

Drawing the Place Standard shape

Once decided on a score for a theme, this can be marked on the Place Standard wheel.

Once you have marked all of the scores, you can join the dots do draw the Place Standard shape.

If children complete individual Place Standard shapes, they can then compare shapes with anyone else who have also completed the wheel.

Top Things for Change

Engage the children in an overall group discussion and see if you can determine with the children what the priorities for action are.

Think about all the questions, themes and everything that has been talked about / recorded, discuss what are the things / themes that are very important, important and less important to the children.

Observe if the very important things / themes have scored high / low and discuss what things / themes need to change most in the place. For example:

- Things / Themes that are very important and scored 1 are likely to be high priorities
- Things / Themes that are less important and scored 3 are likely to be low priorities

Encourage the children to use their imagination and get creative about making the place better.

Ask the children: If you had a magic wand, what would you change in your place?

Once the priorities are agreed, record them. The children can write them down, draw pictures or add photos – or by any other innovative means to illustrate their ideas and communicate their views.

What happens next?

When you have agreed on the top things for change in the place you have assessed, you can use the output to get started on developing actions.

A Place Standard assessment is part of a bigger process of improving a place, *not the end*. When considering what you might do afterwards, you can think about opportunities to develop and build on the conversations and relationships that have started from using the tool. The results might help to develop a local place plan.

The tools also enable you to assess and re-assess a place in a consistent way. This helps you to see if improvements have been made over time, as well as to identify any new areas for improvement.

A key attribute of the Children's Version is its direct comparability with outputs produced by adults and other population groups using the core Place Standard tool.

The Place Standard shape can be overlaid with the ones produced from parallel conversations involving adults and different population groups.

This provides a very quick and powerful visual comparison showing where the views of different population groups within a place either aligns or varies, which can help better decision making on actions and resource planning in the long term.