



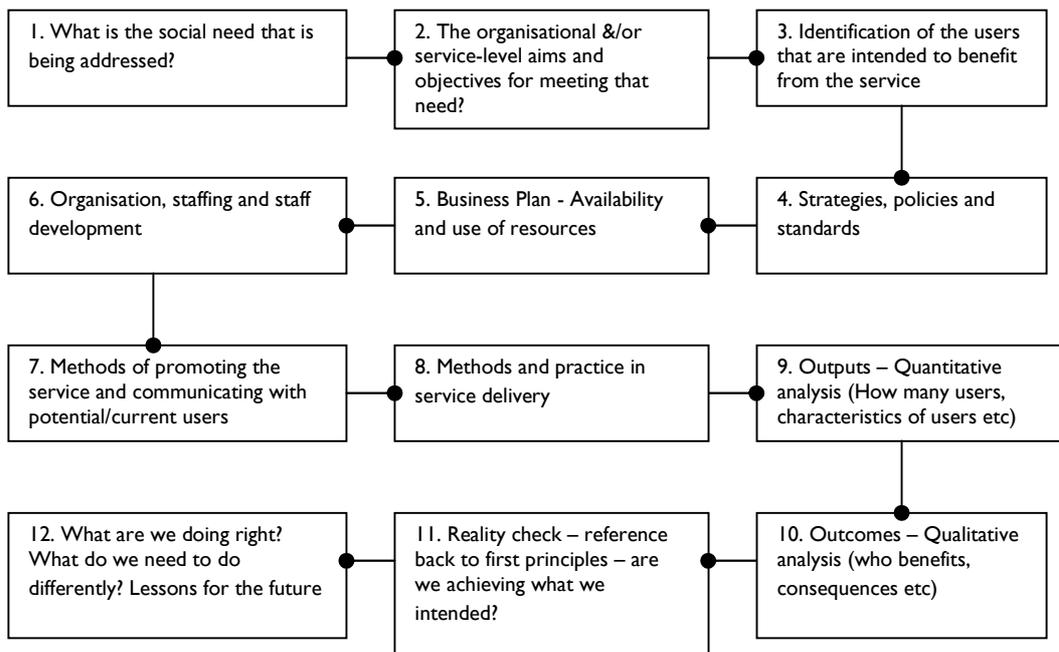
BRIEFING 2: OUR GENERAL APPROACH TO PROJECT AND SERVICE REVIEWS

North Harbour Consulting has carried out a substantial number of project and service reviews in recent years. In this briefing for prospective clients, we set out our general approach.

We start from the proposition that the agency with whom we are working is the 'expert' in a given field. We may well have considerable expertise in that field ourselves, and can offer sound advice but our job is not to second-guess specific management decisions unless that is part of the brief. Our main contribution lies in our ability to help service providers to clarify their aims and objectives, understand the needs and aspirations of their service users, develop realistic programmes of service delivery supported by well-founded business plans. We provide an independent evaluation of the results, and provide advice on identifying and managing any necessary change.

Over the years, we have developed a consistent methodology for project and service reviews that is summarised in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The project evaluation and service review process¹



Different stakeholders may have different perspectives when it comes to the interpretation of information about a project - that of the organisation undertaking the project, of its clients or service users, of its staff, partners and funders, and possibly other external stakeholders. A comprehensive review seeks to take each of these perspectives into account in order to create a rounded overview.

What results is a bit like painting by numbers. As each task is completed, a picture begins to emerge of the way the project operates and what it is achieving. The final stages compare these results with the project's original aims and objectives in order to assess whether, and to what extent, they are being achieved in practice. If the aims are not being achieved, then the process considers why not, and what might need to be done differently.

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