Change Fund: Enhancing the Role of the Third Sector

Briefing: Outcomes-focused evaluation methods and approaches

This brief has been designed as a guide for anyone working within the reshaping care for older people and wider health and social care integration agenda that has an interest in demonstrating the impact of the third sector.

It outlines some common outcomes-focused evaluation methods and approaches which may prove useful for third sector organisations (TSOs) working within the current context of joint strategic commissioning.

This resource is not exhaustive but serves as a starting point for those concerned with impact measurement.

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Considerations for the evaluation process:

1. It is Important to Investigate Whether What We Do Works

The purpose of an evaluation is to understand the extent to which we are making a positive difference to people and importantly, what else we could be doing to improve. Evaluations should help us to improve and not merely prove.

The process of setting out a ‘theory of change’ is a useful exercise for every organisation, project or service. This involves setting out what we are trying to achieve and what we expect to change as a result of a project or service – the long term outcomes.

Developing a theory of change involves a ‘backwards planning’ approach. This maps the intermediate outcomes required to achieve longer term outcomes, as well as the activities that will generate this. The approach highlights the relationship between activities and intended outcomes and helps to identify what information it is necessary to gather during an evaluation.

Every organisation’s long term outcomes are likely to be driven by what matters to the people the organisation works with. Some useful tools when establishing the outcomes that matter to people are:

- Talking Points personal outcomes framework - for people who use services, their carers and people living in care homes - [http://www.jitscotland.org.uk/action-areas/talking-points-user-and-carer-involvement/](http://www.jitscotland.org.uk/action-areas/talking-points-user-and-carer-involvement/); and
- The 18 sub-domains of Scotland’s Humankind Index for the factors which Scottish people say are important to them to live well in their communities: [http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/our-work/poverty-in-the-uk/humankind-index](http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/our-work/poverty-in-the-uk/humankind-index)

2. We Should Be Clear About What We Are Measuring and Why

It is worth spending some time working out what we want to find out from the evaluation: i.e. what are the questions we want the evaluation to answer?

For example, in order to understand the extent to which the objectives or desired outcomes of the service have been achieved, it is important to ask questions such as:
• Have we achieved our intended outcomes?
• How will we know?
• What are the changes we expect to see?
• To what extent are the observed changes due to the service?

In order to understand to what extent the process and activities have been effective, it is important to ask questions such as:

• Has our understanding of the situation been assessed correctly?
• Are we doing the right things?
• Has the service been implemented effectively?
• Have we managed to reach the people we wanted to reach?
• Are there ways we could improve the service?

3. One Tool Does Not Fit All

There are many tools which have been developed to help organisations measure their impact. This briefing note includes an outline of some ‘common’ evaluation methods and some tools which can be used for measuring outcomes. However, the right tool for each organisation will depend on what is being measured (the outcomes) as well as the time and expertise available.

4. There is No Right Tool to Use

IRISS and CCPS have developed a useful toolbox that brings together a range of resources and knowledge relevant to an outcomes-focused approach in the social services. 
http://lx.iriss.org.uk/category/learning-exchange-collections/outcomes-toolbox

Inspiring Impact has also identified 130 tools and approaches for measuring impact: 
http://inspiringimpact.org/

5. The Social World is Not Simple;
   Therefore we shouldn’t expect impact measurement to be

Effective evaluation and monitoring strategies should be creative and recognise the complexity of the social world.
It is useful to consider who we need to involve in the evaluation process – whether this means people within an organisation, people who use the service, or other organisations and wider community. Gathering information to inform an evaluation involves using everyday skills of making contact, getting people to speak, and listening and taking notes - but in a more planned and rigorous way. Evaluation Support Scotland’s website includes useful information and resources when carrying out an evaluation http://evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/.
### Social Capital, Health and Wellbeing Toolkit

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| Social Capital, Health and Wellbeing: A planning and evaluation toolkit | • Designed to help organisations measure the impact of their work in increasing social capital — the friendship networks and community connections people have.  
• It is based on the evidence that developing social capital is one way to tackle the health inequalities that result from social isolation, low levels of support and low self-confidence.  
• Uses a logic modelling approach to show how short-term outcomes make a long-term difference.  
• A blank logic model template is provided, along with examples of useful tools to help explore with a person how they feel, what social networks they have, and how involved they are in their community. | • Useful for community organisations and associations in particular who want to show how their work in bringing people together and building strong, inclusive communities can contribute to reshaping care for older people.  
• The various steps are set out for an organisation to follow.  
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| LEAP – Learning, Evaluation and Planning | • The framework was developed by the Scottish Community Development Centre and is designed to be a useful tool in all aspects of project, programme and policy development, planning and management.  
• Supports a partnership approach to achieving change and improvement in the quality of community life.  
• It is outcome focused, participatory and learning based.  
• LEAP for health includes useful information and tools to help clarify the outcomes and measure the impact of community health and wellbeing activities. | • LEAP is based on the principles of empowerment, participation, inclusion, self-determination and partnership.  
• It is outcomes focused and can be used for individual, community or organisation level outcomes.  
• Useful for a range of third sector organisations - community organisations and service provider organisations to plan and evaluate the impact of their activities. | LEAP resources are available: [http://www.scdc.org.uk/what/LEAP/resources/](http://www.scdc.org.uk/what/LEAP/resources/)  
Voluntary Action East Renfrewshire have used LEAP to develop its strategic plan. |
## Logic Modelling

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| Logic modelling   | • A logic model tells the story of the project or programme in a diagram.  
                     • It helps to plan a project or programme and determine the purpose of certain activities and what difference those activities will make.  
                     • Shows the connection between the problem you have identified, what you will do, and what difference this will make to the lives of individuals and communities.  
                     • Logic models can be used where the project or programme has different activities which contribute to the desired outcomes.  
                     • They can also help evaluate the project/programme by identifying what is expected to happen and when – it provides a pathway of cause and effect. | • A logic model is most effective when developed in collaboration with the range of stakeholders affected by the project or programme.  
                     • Can be used for both planning a project or programme and evaluating it.  
                     • Can be used by organisations of any size.  
                     • Can be a straightforward or more developed model of the relationship between activities and their outcomes over time. | Two common logic model formats are the Weaver’s Triangle and the Wisconsin Model.  
A guide to developing a logic model is available at Evaluation Support Scotland: [http://evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/resources/127/](http://evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/resources/127/) |
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| Action Research   | • A method which explores whether, how and why things happen.  
|                   | • Carried out in real time to help inform practice as the project develops.  
|                   | • A participatory method – action research should always involve people who have an interest in the problem or are affected by the problem – to make sure their voices are heard.  
|                   | • Views about how the project is proceeding should be continually gathered to understand whether changes need to be made.  
|                   | • The changes should then be implemented and the process of trialling, learning and reflection continues throughout the pilot.  
|                   | • It helps to look at the impact and the implementation of a policy or project – with a focus on continually learning and improving the policy or project.  
|                   | • It helps to develop a shared understanding of whether, how and why things happen and what might happen differently.  
|                   | • Throughout the process, evidence is drawn upon to help provide suggestions for what might need to change.  
|                   | • Time commitment - it requires time to be set aside to ensure learning, reflection and inquiry are on-going throughout the process.  
|                   | • It is useful to have an external facilitator to help facilitate the discussions.  
|                   | See IRISS storyboard on action research:  
|                   | [http://www.iris\s.org.uk/category/resource\ntags/action\nresearch](http://www.iris\s.org.uk/category/resource\ntags/action\nresearch)  
|                   | You can access the Action Research by, for and in Communities (ARC) guide here:  
|                   | [http://www.scd\c.org.uk/what/community\n-led-action\n-research/ARC/](http://www.scd\c.org.uk/what/community\n-led-action\n-research/ARC/)  
|                   | Cedar:  
|                   | [http://cedarnet\work.org.uk/](http://cedarnet\work.org.uk/)  
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## Contribution Analysis

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| **Contribution Analysis** | - A theory-based impact evaluation method – involves building a shared understanding of the current situation and setting out the ‘theory of change’ and risks to it.  
- Involves setting out the long term outcomes desired and mapping out the activities which will deliver these outcomes and how the outcomes will be monitored and evaluated.  
- Does not attempt to prove that one factor will cause the desired outcome, but rather to explore the contribution the intervention is making to observed results - the aim is to build up a credible ‘performance story’.  

**Note:** Logic models are often used as a way of mapping out the policy or programme and establishing the link between the activities and intended outcome(s). | - Theory driven evaluation methods are widely seen as better suited to complex, real world situations.  
- It has similar strengths to other theory-based evaluations.  
- It involves explicitly exploring the most likely explanations, presenting evidence to discuss them, and where appropriate, discounting them.  
- It supports a collaborative process - involving the key stakeholders involved in a policy.  
- There are not many examples, as yet, of where contribution analysis has been implemented. | NHS Health Scotland is facilitating 3 pilots involving contribution analysis.  
The pilots involve 3 Reshaping Care for Older People partnerships. |
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| **Realist Evaluation** | • A theory-based impact evaluation method to explore what works, for whom, how and in what circumstances.  
• It recognises that it is often more instructive to understand why a change is occurring and whether or not / how it could be applied to other settings.  
• Central to realist evaluation is the concept of a ‘mechanism’. A mechanism is the answer to the question ‘what is it about this programme or project that makes it work?’ | • Useful for evaluating policy interventions because of the focus on understanding 'how things change' and not merely on whether the desired outcome has been realised. This enables consideration of how the policy could be scaled up.  
• Helps to clarify the 'theory of change' which is the underlying rationale for the intervention.  
• There is a significant time commitment required to carry out this method of evaluation.  
• Relies on having a good evidence base with which to set out your theory of change.  
• To understand whether the policy or programme can be scaled up, it requires testing of the theory/mechanisms in other sites/case studies to see whether the same outcomes are achieved.  
• Previous evaluation experience may be required to oversee this method. | Realistic evaluation of Aberlour Child Care Trust, see: http://www.ccp/scotland.org/assets/files/hseu/information/Better%20Futures/Aberlour%20evaluation%20strategy%20CCPS%202010.doc  
Has been used by Moray Council for past 10 years. |
# Social Accounting and Audit

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| **Social Accounting and Audit (SAA)** | • Investigates the social, environmental and community impacts of an organisation which do not translate readily into numbers.  
• Measures impact against an organisation's existing mission, values and objectives.  
• Establishes indicators and social bookkeeping systems to collect relevant quantitative and qualitative data.  
• Produces draft social accounts, which are then audited and the information verified by an independent panel. | • It is a flexible approach that builds on the existing reporting systems of an organisation.  
• Introductory sessions are available.  
• Can be used by any size of organisation.  
• It is helpful to have someone involved who has experience of social research.  
• It can be time consuming and resource intensive.  
• Is more qualitative than SROI and does not require the monetisation of value through the use of financial proxies. | See Social Audit Network: [www.socialauditnetwork.org.uk](http://www.socialauditnetwork.org.uk)  
And AccountAbility [www.accountability21.net](http://www.accountability21.net) for more information. |
### Social Return on Investment

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| Social Return on Investment | • Evaluates the impacts and outcomes of a project or service.  
• Uses a framework based on accounting principles which place a monetary value on each outcome.  
• Establishes a cost: benefit ratio which details the value derived from the outcomes against the investment made.  
• Financial proxies are used for indicators that don’t have an obvious market price. The SROI project (funded by Scottish Government) developed a database of indicators and financial proxies, see: www.socialimpactscotland.org.uk/  
• SROI is based on 7 principles and involves 6 stages. See the SROI Network’s guide: http://www.sroi-uk.org/publications-uk/doc_details/241-a-guide-to-social-return-on-investment-2012 | • Can be used to help understand the social, economic and environmental outcomes created by an activity or organisation.  
• Useful for strategic planning and improvement - it helps organisations think about outcomes rather than merely outputs.  
• A good method for describing the cost of a service.  
• Relies on getting robust information about sometimes complex outcomes.  
• It’s a complex tool that can be difficult to set up without support.  
• There is a tendency for the focus on the SROI ratio to overshadow the impact of the change.  
• It is unsuitable for comparing different projects and which to invest in.  
• Can require skills in finance, accounting and evaluation. | Impact Arts have used SROI: http://www.impactarts.co.uk/files/Craft20Cafe20SROI20Summary.pdf  
WRVS have used SROI: http://www.wrvs.org.uk/our-impact/reports-and-reviews/social-return-on-investment |
## Improvement Science

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| Improvement Science | This is a suite of quality improvement methods that are commonly used within health – they are not evaluation methods in their own right but evaluation is an integral part of the process. Common elements to the different approaches: 1. A focus on quality as defined by the patient/customer (in this respect it’s in line with the person-centred ambition). 2. An emphasis on involving a range of stakeholders in defining the ‘problem’ and coming up with solutions. 3. A focus on an iterative process of learning (also seen in action research). | • Most of the quality improvement methods rely heavily on measuring clinical activity through statistical process control – with data collected at the front-line and used to feedback on the effect of changes.  
• The effectiveness of any model will depend on its application in the local context and any evaluation needs to consider the interaction between the interventions and local context to understand why it worked.  
• There can be problems obtaining robust data to help evidence the impact of the changes.  
• It is often difficult to assess whether the reported improvements or effects are directly attributable to the intervention(s).  
• Activities can be disconnected from the overall organisational strategy – some argue that this will not lead to sustained improvements. | [http://www.healthcareimprovementscotland.org/previous_resources/hta_report/a_systematic_narrative_review.asp](http://www.healthcareimprovementscotland.org/previous_resources/hta_report/a_systematic_narrative_review.asp)  
**Note:** A separate information sheet has been produced which provides an overview of commonly used quality improvement methods. |
If you would like to discuss any of the topics raised within this briefing or to request any further information, please contact

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Or look at the programme’s page on the ALLIANCE website:  
W: www.alliance-scotland.org.uk

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**About the Programme**

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