Evaluation toolkit
FOR
HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS
INNOVATION & VOICE PROGRAMME

Contents

What is an evaluation toolkit?

This toolkit has a selection of evaluation methods that we can use to find out if and how:

- the programme is leading to change and meeting its aims
- the programme activities work to help make change
- people with lived experience are at the heart of the programme
- the right range of people and organsiations are involved to help building lasting solutions that address root causes.

It outlines the different kinds of evaluation methods that we might need and includes short descriptions of different methods. At different points during the programme we will need to evaluate what has happened so far.

We will choose which evaluation questions we need and then choose and adapt methods to help us answer those questions. The evaluator will provide more information and support and training for methods as needed.

It is important to have a range of different methods to draw on because:

- different approaches suit different people and situations (for example, filling in a form or talking to another person)
- different kinds of information need to be collected in different ways (for example, numbers or people's opinions)
- practicalities – we need methods that suit people with busy lives and limited resources and we might have to work online
- using different methods is a way to double check your findings by asking questions to different people in different ways.

Collecting information and evidence over time

Collecting the same kind of information regularly during a project can help to show what has happened and/or what has changed.

You need to think about

- what information you want to collect and why
- how to collect it
- how to store and organize it.

Tracking tools

When you have an idea of the information you want to collect you can make a tracking tool to collect, store and organize the information.

Tracking tools are everywhere. For example step or calorie counters on smart phones. School attendance registers.

Tracking tools don't have to be apps. They can be a simple table.

This is a tracker for chocolates eaten by one person for a week

Chocolates Eaten			
DAY	Type	How many	Cost.
Monday	Crunchie, crème egg	1 2	0.60 1.20
Tuesday	crunchie	2	0.60
Wednesday			
Thursday	Crème egg	2	£1.20
Friday	Crème egg	3	£1.80
Saturday	Crunchie Crème egg	2 1	£1.20 0.60
Sunday	Lindt bunny	1	2.99

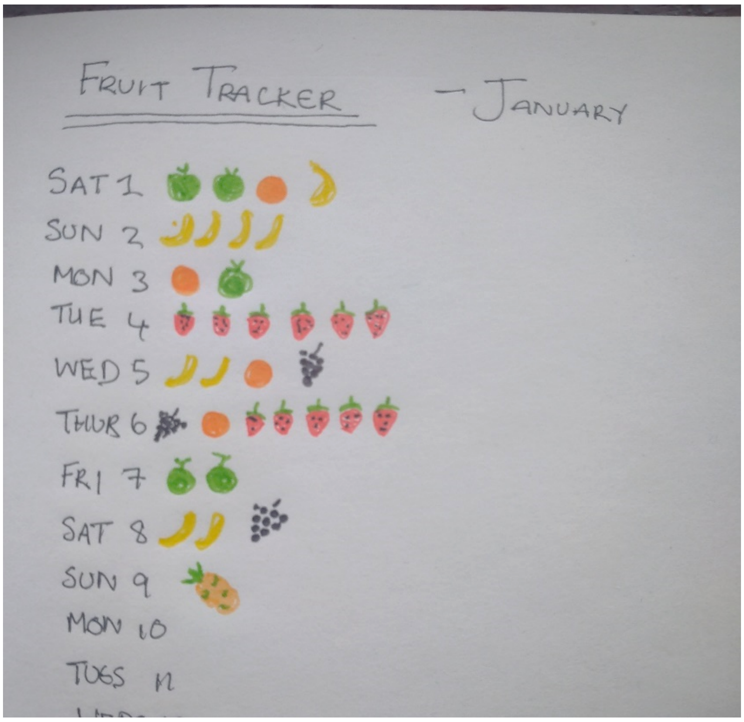
A tracking tool like this can help to build up a description of what happened - for example, how many chocolates were eaten and how much money spent.

It can show patterns – for example - they eat more expensive chocolate on Sunday

It can show gaps and help think through what other information is needed – for example - why is Wednesday blank. Did they not eat chocolate or did they forget to fill in the table?

Tracking Tools don't have to be tables. This example uses drawn symbols to represent fruit eaten each day

Using symbols and colours can show patterns which help tell a story. It can be more immediate.



Finding out what individuals think, feel and do

Tracking tools are good at collecting information about what and who and when but we need to other tools to find out information about why.

An important part of an evaluation is to understand if there are changes in attitudes and behaviour and what is the motivation or reasons for these changes.

- What do people think and feel about an activity or an idea or a change?
- Have people learned something or changed their attitudes?
- What are people doing differently (or not) because of the programme?

A big part of any evaluation is asking the right kinds of questions to get the information needed.

Asking Questions

A good way to find out what people, think, feel and do is to ask questions. There are different ways to ask questions that suit different people, situations and information.

Choosing the right kind of questions

Do you want to find exactly the same thing from everyone so you can compare their answers or do you want to encourage people to talk t so you can find out more about what they think and feel and do?

Different question types will lead to different kinds of answers.

Open questions – questions which invite someone to talk or write as much as they want in response. These are good for understanding experiences and perspectives.

For example:

Tell me about what you like to watch on television?

Closed questions – questions which get a yes/no/don't know answer or a limited range of answers

These are good for getting the same information from everyone for comparison.

For example:

Do you like watching television?

How many hours of television do you watch a day?

Rating questions - Asking people to select options or place themselves on a scale

For example

On a scale of 1 to 10 how important is watching television for you?

Questions should try to avoid assumptions

For example all the questions above assume that the person being interviewed watches television

Finding the right way to ask the questions

How you ask the questions will depend on

- how much and what kind of information you want,
- where and when you are asking the questions
- to whom you are asking the questions

Here are some different methods

Short Questionnaire

Good for asking mostly closed or rating questions

Useful to get information from a large number of people at an event or in public

Could be asked in person, be a paper feedback form or be filled in online.

Survey

Good for getting answers you can add together or compare.

A longer questionnaire with a mix of open, closed and rating questions

Can include a set of questions answered by a defined set of people or include questions to get demographic data about who completes it

If lots of people fill it in then you can get a sense of scope and scale and trends..

Surveys can open up lines of questioning for interviews and focus groups where you go more in depth

Interviews

Interviews are like a structured conversation where one person does most of the asking and one more of the talking.

Interviews generally use open questions to encourage the interviewee to talk in detail about what they think, feel and do.

They are good for getting at why and how a change may have happened and understanding individual experience.

It can make a difference who the interviewer is and sometimes the interviewee might be more comfortable talking to someone with similar experience.

Focus groups

Focus groups bring a group of people together. Like interviews it can be a good way of finding out about what people think, feel and do. Bringing people together helps to delve into a topic. People respond and add on to or provide different points of views to each other.

Often the use a mix of open questions and possibly some activities where people rank and compare information.

It's important to think about who would be in a focus group together and to pay attention to participation during the focus group to make sure that everyone is comfortable and has a chance to share their views.

Getting feedback about an event or activity

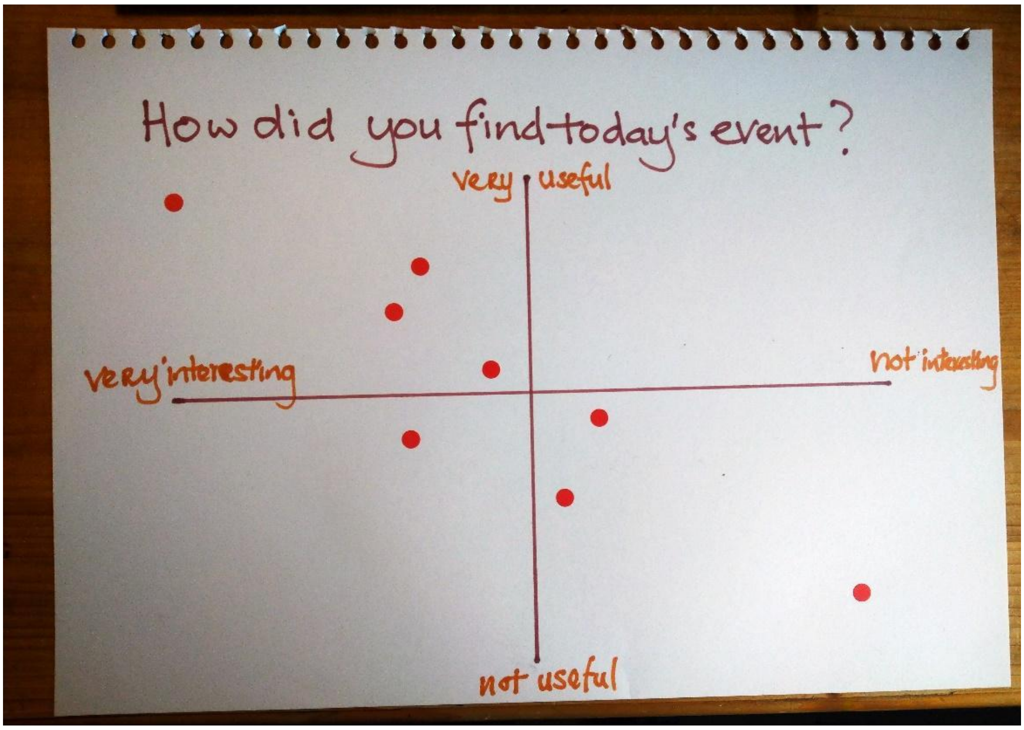
It is useful to find out about people's experience of an event or an activity to see if it achieved what you hoped it would and achieve and to learn for future events and activities.

You can collect feedback at the time of the event and you might want to follow up at a later date to find out what impact the event had on its participants. For example, did they later use something they learned at the event and /or did they do something differently or share information with other people?

You could use a *questionnaire* at the end of the event and then send a follow up to participants at a later date.

If you just want to get a general impression of people's experience of the activity or event then you could use a visual tool. This can be useful if there are a lot of people and not much time to get feedback.

Big sheets of paper, marker pens and post-its or sticky dots can be useful as you can adapt your feedback request to suit what has happened during the event.



In this example, everyone was given a sticky dot and asked to place it in the place that represented how useful and how interesting they found the event. A really useful and interesting event will have all the dots at the top left. If most are in the bottom right (not useful and not interesting) then it is worth following up with participants to see what went wrong.

Participant observation

Observation can be useful as a complementary method for evaluating an event or activity. It can be useful to have someone who isn't busy organizing or speaking at the event but who can spend time thinking and making notes about how it is going.

Identify a few things that are really important to you in how the event or activity works.

Then choose someone to pay attention to these things and make notes of what they notice during the event.

This can be very useful for assessing how participatory your event was.

For example - did some groups of people do all the talking? Did some people never talk or get talked over?

Finding out about individual experience

When introducing a new way to do things or testing a new idea, it can be really valuable to have records of individual experience. They can be rewarding and interesting for individuals too as you can see what you are achieving and learning.

Journals

One way to do this is to ask people to keep a journal. This is a personal record of experiences and perspectives during a project.

This can be completely open and they can write anything that comes to mind. Or you might agree some prompts and questions that they will use to structure what they record.

Journals are a good way to find out about how your project or process works for different people and in 'real world' conditions. For someone with lived experience involved in testing a project idea, it can be a way of showing how an idea plays out in practice and how impacts on other parts of their life.

It doesn't have to be a written journal. It could be video diaries, photographs, or a cartoon or a mix of these.

Impact - Are we making a difference?

From time to time we should look at the bigger picture and consider if the programme is achieving its intended outcomes or leading to other positive or negative outcomes.

All the information and evidence that has been collected using a range of methods during the programme stages will be useful when thinking about impact. It can be reviewed to look for examples of changes and also how different activities of the programme have helped create that change.

It is also valuable to get people together in one or more review workshops to think about the programme so far and look at the evidence. This review should take place with a range of people involved in the programme because they will bring different insights and understanding. In particular, people who are most affected by what the programme is trying to achieve- individuals with lived experience of homelessness.

The review process can involve looking back at what has happened so far, identifying changes and looking at those changes in more detail and also how the programme helped create the changes.

At the end of the review there could be a description of the changes and why they matter and a collection of learnings from what has happened so far and finally some recommendations for what happens next.

The following are some ways to think about and organize information about outcomes.

Timelines – what has happened so far?

A good place to start can be to make a timeline of everything that has happened in the programme so far. If a timeline is drawn out on a long sheet of paper then everyone can see and add to it.

Start by adding what has happened in detail. The different stages during the programme and what happened at each stage. Then using different colours of post it participants can add to the timeline with more details. For example

- adding challenges and adaptations to the process
- adding achievements
- adding what was learned at certain points
- and changes

This then becomes a detailed record which includes the different experience of different people who will have been involved in different ways during the programme. Everyone can see what other people have been doing and experiencing and what they see as changes and achievements etc..

Outcome harvesting - what has changed?

A programme like this one involves lots of different people who play different roles at different times. Everyone will see different indications of change or might have different ideas or evidence of how change is happening. It can be useful to bring everyone together to collect all these different ideas and observations together to build a bigger picture of the change that is happening.

This might be the changes hoped for by the project or unexpected positive or negative changes.

Outcome harvesting is a way to identify changes, describe them and think about how and why they happened.

It involves working together to

- Identify changes
- Describe them including who what where and when
- Explaining why they matter
- Describe how the programme led to or contributed to this change
- Noting how we know that this change happened (evidence)

These descriptions build an evidence base about what the programme is achieving and can help to adapt the programme to be as effective as possible as well as providing learning to share with others.

Stories of change

Once the outcomes or changes have been identified, it can be valuable to produce stories of change about what we decide are the most significant changes from the programme.

This involves deciding which are the most significant changes that have come out of the programme at the time of the review. There might be different views on what is most significant depending on people's perspectives. So it could be a process of agreeing which are most significant or it could the most significant stories from the perspective of people with lived experience.

A small number of stories /case studies are then written up with those involved in making the change with a view to helping others understand why the change matters and what needs to be done differently to help make change.

Longer term impact

It takes time to understand the impact of a programme and usually you can only find out the impact some time after the programme is finished. In particular you need to look at what has happened a year or maybe several years later to understand whether any changes or solutions are sustainable (continue beyond the programme and its funding) and scaleable (do they spread to wider use).

Later in the programme, we will come back to thinking about if and how we can evaluate its impact longer term.

In the shorter term we can make use of the fact that the programme has two rounds of participatory grant making. This means that there will be an opportunity at the end of the programme to evaluate what happened to the first round of seed funded projects in the first year after the end of the seed funding.

In the longer term it can be possible to monitor what happens and see if there is lasting impact in the sector. This might require a dedicated funds beyond the programme and decisions about who would collect and analyse this information.