Evaluating the Early Years
Early Action Fund: Exploring Successful Outcomes Reporting

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ESS/CRFR ‘Quality Ratings’

**Excellent /Very Good**

- Convincing outcome evidence
- Well written
- Challenges not hidden

**Good**

- Strong but a few gaps in relation to quality or presentation of evidence
ESS/CRFR ‘Quality Ratings’

**Average**
- Weaknesses with evidence rigour and/or report layout
- Positive elements as well

**Poor**
- Evidence poor or non-existent
- Presentation/layout problems
‘... qualitative evaluation frequently shows up accomplishments which may not be recognized in standard outcome measures – usually labelled ‘unintended’ – but which are socially desirable, even so ‘

Qualitative Outcome Questions

• Stakeholders’ Views and Satisfaction?
• Symmetry and ‘matching up’?
• Services meeting the needs of Fund Outcomes?
• Responses to obstacles and challenges?
DOs and DON’Ts for Outcome Reporting

• **In the Early Stages**

• **DO:** think carefully about how to incorporate data collection and analysis and evaluation tools into the programme from day one

• **DO:** research into the tools of measurement you plan to use to ensure they fit with your project and client group
# DOs & DON’Ts for Outcome Reporting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTION</th>
<th>SERVICES</th>
<th>DATA</th>
<th>CLAIMS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CLARIFY</td>
<td>Layout and structure of interventions</td>
<td>All data should be explicitly identified &amp; labelled</td>
<td>Supporting research must be referenced, explain if possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISCLOSE</td>
<td>Incomplete planned services</td>
<td>All collection, measurement &amp; analysis methods</td>
<td>Small numbers of participants who evidence outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INCLUDE</td>
<td>Copies of recruitment forms &amp; participant numbers</td>
<td>Copies of questionnaires, surveys, etc.</td>
<td>How an ‘achieved’ indicator or outcome was defined &amp; determined</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## DOs & DON’Ts for Outcome Reporting

<table>
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<tr>
<th>ACTION</th>
<th>WRITING</th>
<th>VISUALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CLARIFY</td>
<td>Stakeholder quotes should directly link to the outcome discussed</td>
<td>Use numbers as well as percentages – if percentages in a chart, numbers should be in the text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISCLOSE</td>
<td>Explain any gaps in evidence</td>
<td>State any missing numbers or missing data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INCLUDE</td>
<td>Number of completed forms (feedback, baseline surveys, service completion questionnaires)</td>
<td>Any charts, tables, or diagrams mentioned</td>
</tr>
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</table>
DOs & DON’Ts for Outcome Reporting

• DON’T: confuse ‘target achievement’ with ‘outcome achievement’, e.g. the number of clients participating in the programme rather than the numbers achieving the desired outcomes

• DON’T: use jargon and unexplained abbreviations
Ideas from Workshop Discussions

- Obtaining and using service user views were a common strong point for workshop attendees.
  - Incorporating service user views can help to highlight the ‘intangible’ outcomes and are highly effective tools for outcomes.
  - Areas for improvement are whole family impact assessment and extracting what children and young people ‘really’ need and want.
Ideas from Workshop Discussions

- Common challenges were related to perceptions and data management
  - Need to induce that Evaluation ≠ Judgement
  - Effective and user-friendly measurement tools difficult to find (esp for 0-3 year olds)
  - Questions around what to do with data → need to improve the culture of research
  - Ethics of data collection can be murky
  - Accessing outside research info difficult (esp US data)
Ideas from Workshop Discussions

- Future developments focused on sharing and support
  - A system of report templates as a learning tool
  - Sharing examples of more accessible language
  - Sharing examples of effective stakeholder involvement from Day 1 of a project
  - Improved support for early stage evaluation and cyclical data collection/analysis
  - Improved support for workers directly involved in data management and report writing (esp from funders and local groups)