Evaluation for learning

Mixed approach to evidencing outcomes

www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk
What I’ll cover

- What is evidence?
- Limits of traditional thinking
- A new approach
- Making evaluation useful and friendly
The available body of facts or information indicating whether a belief or proposition is true or valid. OED

What is evidence?

Good evidence is useful evidence! ... information that can help make better decisions ... provide better services .. raise standards. Dr Jonathan Sharples, York University
MY SOURCES ARE UNRELIABLE,

BUT THEIR INFORMATION IS FASCINATING.
Evidence hierarchies

1. Systematic reviews and meta-analyses
2. Randomised Control Trials (RCTs) with definitive results
3. RCTs with non-definitive results
4. Cohort studies
5. Case control studies
6. Cross sectional surveys
7. Case reports

Petticrew & Roberts 2003 quoted Nutley et al 2013
'If decisions were only to be based on available strong evidence of effective actions, the result would often be a very small number and range of actions’

Andrew Tannahill (2008)
Problems with RCTs

- Can be expensive, complicated
- How do you get a ‘control group’
- It worked in US doesn’t mean it will work here.
- Replication is tough
- People’s motivation is big a factor
- Maybe less strong on ‘how & why’
- Still need to evaluate ...

‘Nudge Unit’ for good use
Beyond hierarchies

- **Why** do we need evidence?
- What will we **use** it for?
- What do we **already know**?
- What evidence is **good enough**?
Different aspects of ‘does this work’

- Does doing **this** work better than doing that?
- Does it matter?
- Will it do more good than harm?
- Will service users be willing to or want to take up the service offered?
- Is it worth buying this service?
- Is it the right service for these people?
- Are users, providers, and other stakeholders satisfied with the service?
Preventing Evaluation
Mixed approach
Beyond evidence - to ethics: a decision-making framework for health promotion, public health and health improvement

Andrew Tannahill (2008) Health Promotion International Vol 23 No. 4

**Ethical principles**

E.g. Do good do not harm Equity Respect Empowerment Sustainability Social Responsibility Participation, Openness, Accountability

**Evidence**

**Theory**
Cost effective and flexible
Rich source of evidence about ‘how’ and ‘why’ change happens (or doesn’t).
Complements formal research
Supports people doing the work to learn and improve
Outcome Statement Explanations

"Has learned to sit and listen"
How long does it take?
Practice evidence drawn from projects providing intensive support to young problem drug/alcohol users

Backs up literature - and adds to it. We now know more about successful interventions than the literature alone can tell us.
THE 4 STEP APPROACH TO EVALUATION

1. **Review the evidence**
   - Interventions should be clearly structured and designed using ‘what works’ evidence

2. **Draw a logic model**
   - Draw a logic model for your intervention.

3. **Identify indicators & collect data**
   - Use this logic model to identify indicators and collect data using relevant methods

4. **Evaluate logic model**
   - Analyse data to find out if your intervention worked as the logic model predicted it would and how
Ways to think about ‘evidence-based’

- We’ve run this before and have evidence to show it works
- Another organisation like us has done this before
- Broad research evidence
- ‘What works’ evidence
- Innovation in the evidence gap
How good is your evidence?

Quality criteria

- **Believable**: accurate, representative, reliable
- **Legitimate**: coming from the right sources
- **Enough**: strength of evidence vs proportionality
- **Relevant**: up to date, appropriate
- **Transparency**: methods clear and limitations acknowledged
Get all the information you can, we'll think of a use for it later.
Evaluation Tips

- Do not overclaim: honesty = credibility
- Say what did not work
- Use case study to tell the story – but don’t cherry pick
- Make links to other evidence – similar projects or research
- Focus on outcomes (but also how the outcome achieved)
Evaluation into day to day work

Day to day work into evaluation
Involve the people you work with
Best reports come from organisations that:

- Evidence their work
- Tell their story
- Use reporting to reflect on what they have achieved and learned

(Scotland Funders’ Forum: Harmonising Reporting Working Group 2010)