

Spring into evidence

Summary report of evidence snakes and ladders activity

March 2020

We asked you to reflect on those things that hinder or enable your engagement with evidence through a 'snakes and ladders' activity. We have summarised your discussions and signposted to various resources either from Iriss or other organisations.

Organisational resources

We found that resources were crucial to your engagement with evidence. These involved both organisational resources but also people resources.

Many of you reflected on having limited time when it came to finding and using evidence. Some of you felt this is because of the amount of paperwork you have to do in your day-to-day jobs or because of competing demands. The Iriss Evidence Search and Summary Service [ESSS](#), can help with that. If you need evidence on certain topics, get in touch with us and we can conduct a quick summary search, or produce a more comprehensive evidence outline.

Others reflected on the role of wider resources like digital tools and budgets in facilitating or hindering engagement with evidence.

Some of you also mentioned that the lack of training might impede your efforts to use and find evidence. Iriss' [Finding Evidence Online Tool](#) might help with developing some of the skills required to find evidence.

Accessibility is also a significant challenge to using evidence. This includes knowing where to find evidence, navigating large volumes of information and inaccessible language. Social Services Knowledge Scotland [SSKS](#) and Social Care Institute for Excellence [SCIE](#) can also help with this. SSKS and the SCIE resource are online libraries specifically aimed at social services and they have a wide range of resources.

People resources

Some of you also talked about the role of being motivated and of having practice knowledge when it came to using evidence. Others reflected on the need for specific skills when it comes to dealing with evidence like data analysis, evaluating good evidence and implementation.

The [Navigating Evidence tool](#) produced by Iriss might help towards helping you navigate your way around using evidence in your practice. Moreover, [Social Services Knowledge Scotland](#) and [ESSS](#) can also help you make sense of the evidence that is out there.

Culture

Culture also emerged as an important aspect of finding and using evidence - both as a deterrent and as a facilitator. Some felt that an organisational culture marked by scepticism and reluctance made it challenging to engage with evidence.

However, more people felt that encouraging organisational cultures and supportive leaders and co-workers helped their efforts to engage with evidence.

Some Iriss resources that might help foster a supportive environment include the ESSS Outline on [Supervision](#), the [Iriss insight on supervision](#), and our [stories on developing effective supervision](#). There is also the [SSSC supervision learning resource](#).

Many of you stressed the importance of collaboration both internally with your colleagues but also externally with other organisations and local champions. Some Iriss tools that could support collaboration are our [Co-production](#) planner and our [Partnerships & Co](#) tool.

Finding and gathering evidence

There are challenges when trying to assess the quality of evidence because of inconsistencies in data collection or because of the difficulties of finding credible evidence.

You stressed the importance of having clear aims that link with action when finding and using evidence, and some of you raised that there was a lack of understanding why your service is gathering evidence or that it is done only for compliance. Our [tool for finding evidence online](#) provides some guidelines for making sense of evidence and for maintaining a clear purpose. Other useful resources around this are the [Care Inspectorate](#) and [SSSC](#) improvement guides, and the SSSC [guide](#) on using evidence.

Some of you raised that it was important to use an appropriate methodology and use various approaches to collect evidence, but also it was important for the evidence to be operationalised in ways that are accessible. Engaging the people who access services to be part of gathering evidence was also a priority. Iriss resources recommended above like the Community Inquiry [tool](#), the [Co-production](#) and [co-design](#) tools and Outcomes and Co [resource](#) could help with engagement.

A practical and accessible set of evidence resources are free to download from the Knowledge Translation Network (KTN) via [Evaluation Support Scotland](#). These are aimed at third sector organisations but the majority of the content is relevant to any organisation.

1. An introduction to gathering and using evidence:
<http://www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/media/uploads/resources/ess-evidenceforsuccess-weblinked.pdf>
2. Finding and using secondary evidence
http://evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/media/uploads/resources/evidencefromelsewhere-printcolour-reduced_size.pdf

3. Collaborating with academics on research and evaluation:

http://www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/media/uploads/resources/ess-collaborating_with_academics-bw_mar_2016.pdf

If you are seeking to gather evidence about services in relation to sensitive topics or vulnerable people, you may find the following sources of guidance and information useful:

- <https://www.iriss.org.uk/resources/insights/trauma-sensitive-practice-children-care>
- https://www.researchgate.net/publication/305452242_Sensitive_Interviewing_in_Qualitative_Research_SENSITIVE_INTERVIEWING
- <https://www.methods.manchester.ac.uk/themes/qualitative-methods/sensitive-interviewing/>
- You may also find related resources on the topic of attachment useful as background reading to support any work with vulnerable groups.
<https://www.iriss.org.uk/tag/attachment>