



Improving use of research with Apex Scotland: What we have learnt

The requirement for all agencies delivering services within the criminal justice system to evidence the value of the work they do has become increasingly important in recent years as scrutiny of outcomes has become more commonplace and the competition for funding has significantly intensified. Apex Scotland has always put a high priority on evaluating its effectiveness and using this information along with relevant research to inform service development. We welcomed the opportunity to get involved in a year long project which looked at ways to improve research use in Apex Scotland and that could also be applied across the third sector.

The findings of the project reinforced the value that research evidence can have in developing Apex's work. The support offered by project manager Claire Lightowler helped raise awareness about how to source and make use of research evidence and confirmed that there was an interest and enthusiasm amongst staff to incorporate it into the work they were involved in. It also highlighted the need for the momentum built up during the year long project to be maintained to achieve a lasting impact.

It was always intended that the lessons learned from the project could not only be applied to Apex Scotland as the host but also to the wider third sector and to other academics involved in this area. The project has identified a wide range of recommendations, some relatively easy to implement, others a little bit more challenging, but all useful suggestions on how to improve the use of research.

Our experience of working with Claire on this project was entirely positive. She was very clear about what her approach would be but also flexible in terms of incorporating other people's ideas into how she proceeded. She communicated well with staff and was very quickly accepted and treated as a valuable work colleague. Her natural enthusiasm for the project was very evident to all and this, coupled with her drive to improve outcomes for individuals and communities through better use of evidence rubbed off on Apex's research "champions." We recognise the potential for the work undertaken during this placement to help Apex develop and grow. With Claire's continued assistance, we intend to implement all the recommendations listed in the report and ensure that research evidence is further embedded into everything we do.

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