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Research and Evaluation at Apex

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Evidence-informed practice

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What difference does Apex make?

Step 1 – Clarifying aims

Why does Apex Scotland exist and what broad impact do you want to have?

Apex aims to improve the quality of life for people who have offended and young people at risk

Step 2 – Identifying activities and services (outputs)

What do you do? (activities and services outputs)

- Get Ready for Work
- Work Programme
- School inclusion
- All cleaned up

Etc. Etc. Etc

Step 3: Outcomes

How do your activities change the lives of people who are involved?

The changes to people's lives are called 'outcomes'

Types of outcomes

1. Quality of life:

- *Having things to do*
- *Feeling happy*
- *Freedom from financial hardship*

Types of outcomes

2. *Process*

- *Listened to*
- *Having a say*
- *Treated with respect*

Types of outcomes

3. Change

- *Improved confidence/morale*
- *Improved skills*
- *Reduced substance misuse*

Outcomes are:

- About change/difference
- The result of activity
- Be about improving, developing, increasing, decreasing, expanding etc

Show creative storyboard:

[http://www.iriss.org.uk/resources/
measuring-personal-outcomes-
challenges-and-strategies-video](http://www.iriss.org.uk/resources/measuring-personal-outcomes-challenges-and-strategies-video)

Step 4. Linking aims, outcomes and activities

To improve the quality of life for people who have offended and young people at risk

Aim

- Increase confidence
- Reduce substance misuse
- Improve CV writing skills

Outcomes

Get ready to work programme etc

**Activities or
Outputs**

Exercise a: What are the outcomes

- **So what? Technique**
- **Think about an activity/programme you are involved in.**
- **Take 10 mins to identify 3 outcomes**

Logic modelling

Short term outcomes	Medium term outcomes	Longer term outcomes
Improved knowledge and understanding about factors affecting health	People make healthier choices	Local people are healthier

- Linking to policy outcomes
- Evidenced-based assumptions

Exercise b: Level of outcome

- Have you developed short, medium or long term outcomes?
- What would the other levels of outcome be?

Step 5. Developing indicators

- Output indicators – how many of each activity etc
e.g. 6 workshops held, 100 advocacy sessions
- Outcome indicators – help you determine whether you have made a difference

Outcome indicators

- Individual: assess the progress of individuals
- Group: measure the progress of the group of people you are working with (young people know about sources of support)
- Whole population: help measure things for the wider community (absence rates from school)

Example indicators

AIM: increase quality of life for young people in Edinburgh

OUTCOME: young people have better access to support services

INDICATORS:

- Young people know what support services are available in their local area
- Young people use support services

Exercise c: developing indicators...

- For each outcome what would it look like if you achieved it?
- Imagine all sorts of possibilities and list them (potential indicators)
- Choose 2 most appropriate indicators for each outcome (may want to check with funders, partners etc)

Step 6: Measuring indicators

On post-its jot down

- 1) Ways you could measure your indicators
- 2) How you currently measure

15 mins

Look at ESS guides 2.1 & 2.2

Things to bear in mind:

- Measure before activity begins (baseline)
- Can you do the measurement (resource, skills etc)
- How can measurement be integrated into day to day activity, individual practice?

Step 7: Analysing

Step 8: Report writing

See ESS guides:

www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/resources

External evaluation

- Best practice to go to tender
- Advertise or contact potential consultants directly
- Prepare an evaluation brief
- Budget or method (revise brief!)
- Think about days required (calculate £300-600 per day)
- Get feedback on initial brief (ideally from someone with evaluation expertise)

Managing external evaluation

- Communicating regularly
- Ensuring access
- Troubleshooting where sensitive issues arise
- Checking deadlines, payments, outputs

Step 8: Learning the lessons

- Get better at what you do – like improve services or motivate your staff
- involve and engage service users
- get more funding
- lobby for change – in government policy or local authority practice
- improve wider understanding of what works and why

Action research

- Research to solve a problem
- How could we improve our service?
- Process of change whilst researching it
- Trying things out, reflecting on whether they have worked
- Can be effective way if you are evaluating to improve

Apex placement

- **Aim:** improve research use in Apex and improve understanding about how research use can be improved
- **Outcomes:**
 - Greater awareness about the value of research
 - Greater knowledge about how to access and use research
 - Increased use of research

Activities

- Baseline survey
- Research session – Apex away day
- Forth valley local area report
- Forth valley service list
- Highlighting research resources
- Research consulting activity
- Map out organisational evidence base
- Project planning documentation
- Evaluation session

Any impact?

Next steps

- Repeat the survey (has anything changed)
- Apex embedding research group – meets quarterly?

Outputs...

- Case study about what we've done and learnt
- 10 tips for improving research use in third sector organisations
- Report for Apex about lessons and areas for improvement
- Write article about improving research use in the third sector