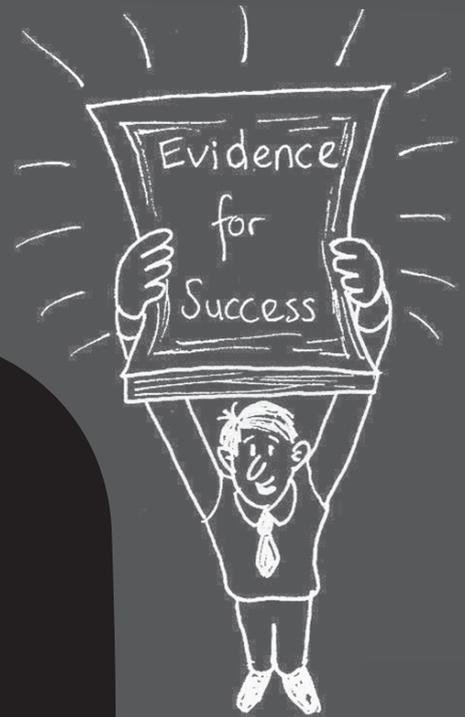




Evidence for Success

The guide to getting evidence and using it

August 2014



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Foreword

The Knowledge Translation Network (KTN) was established in 2012 in response to an identified need to support the third sector to maximise the impact of the knowledge and evidence they generate by ensuring it reaches Scotland's service providers and decision-makers. Running parallel to the Scottish Third Sector Research Forum, the KTN has two key aims: (i) to share learning about effective knowledge translations and (ii) to promote the use of evidence in decision-making.

This guide responds to a demand amongst third sector organisations for guidance on how to use evidence to influence policy and practice. In summer 2013, the KTN conducted an online survey amongst a range of organisations across Scotland to better understand how they currently generate and use evidence. Of the 67 organisations who responded to the survey, 53 noted that they need more support with using evidence to influence policy and practice, and highlighted that having an easy-to-use guide that identifies and supports organisations through the key steps of doing so would be of value to the sector.

The learning in this guide is based on the findings from this survey and from interviews that were conducted with 25 of the key stakeholders that are currently involved in this area of work in Scotland, including third sector service providers, funders, policy makers and researchers. A full list of these organisations has been included in the 'Acknowledgements' section of this Guide.

This is the first in a series of resources that will be produced by the KTN going forward and aims to provide organisations with the knowledge, skills and confidence to maximise the impact that evidence can have on policy and practice. We would very much welcome your views on both this guide and on other resources that would be useful for the sector.

Joanna McLaughlin



Patty Lozano-Casal



Mark Meiklejohn



Cath Logan



Andrew Paterson



Kirsten Thomlinson



Introduction

Evidence has become a valuable currency.
Karen Indoo, Barnardo's Scotland

Evidence can be a powerful tool for influencing change and is one of the key features of effective policy-making¹. The Oxford English Dictionary defines evidence as "the available body of facts or information indicating whether a belief or proposition is true or valid." This term can therefore cover a wide spectrum, from the results of randomised control trials to qualitative feedback from service-users. What counts as 'useful evidence' depends on its purpose; the question the evidence is trying to answer; how it is going to be used, and in what environment (Nutley, 2013).

Good evidence is useful evidence! It is information that can help a charity make better decisions, provide better services and raise standards.

Dr Jonathan Sharples, University of York

In a time of reduced public sector budgets and increased demand for services, there is a growing need to ensure that an evidence-based approach is taken to developing policy and practice. The third sector plays a key role in delivering services that meet the needs of vulnerable communities and can make a valuable contribution to developing the evidence-base about 'what works' and 'why' when working with these groups. Therefore, it is vital that these organisations have the knowledge, skills and resources they need to generate useful evidence about the work they do and use this evidence to inform internal and external policy and practice.

¹ The Cabinet Office identify nine key features of effective policy-making, which include being: (i) forward looking; (ii) outward looking; (iii) innovative and creative; (iv) evidence-based; (v) inclusive; (vi) joined up; (vii) regularly reviewed; (viii) regularly evaluated, and (ix) willing to learn from experiences of what works and what does not. (Strategic Policy Making Team, Cabinet Office)

Aims of the Guide

This guide aims to provide easy to follow, step-by-step guidance and resources to support organisations to use evidence to influence policy and practice. The guide is split into three parts:

● **Part 1** outlines how you can generate evidence that is relevant, robust and persuasive to the stakeholders that you are trying to influence. Although this guide is primarily about using evidence, this part of the guide helps to ensure you have the quality of evidence you need to maximise your chances of influencing policy and practice.

● **Part 2** explores how this evidence can then be used to influence (i) internal policy and practice; (ii) external policy and practice, and (iii) future funding and commissioning decisions. It concludes by providing '10 top tips for using evidence for success'.

● **Part 3** identifies a range of resources that you can access to help you achieve your goals.

How you choose to use this guide will depend on what you want to use evidence to achieve and the stage you are in this process. While the guide can be read as a whole, each of the sections can also be read independently. At the end of each section there is also a tailored checklist that you can print out and consult. This guide also touches on the important area of evaluation. There is already a range of resources dedicated to these topics so we have focussed our advice specifically on how evaluation relates to the use of evidence. If you feel you would benefit from additional support around evaluation, please see the 'Resources' section of this guide or contact Evaluation Support Scotland.

Who is this Guide for?

This guide is for anyone who wants to use evidence to improve policy and practice, regardless of the level of experience they have in doing so. Therefore, it is intended that this guide will also be of value to a wide range of stakeholders including:

- practitioners
- service managers
- funders and commissioners
- policy makers and planners.

Most importantly, the guide is aimed at 'learning organisations' who are committed to both sharing their evidence about 'what works', 'what doesn't work' and 'why', and to amending their own practices on the basis of this evidence.

Part 1: Generating useful evidence



This part of the guide explores how you can generate evidence that is relevant, robust and persuasive to the stakeholders that you are trying to influence. By the end of this part, you will know how to:

- Gather data about your service
- Analyse the data you have collected
- Gather secondary data and evidence about your area of work

Most organisations have a wealth of data about what they do and who they work with. However, gathering that data and turning it into the type of evidence that is persuasive to policy-makers, funders and practitioners can sometimes be challenging. It is important to think about the type and quality of evidence you'll need to influence policy and practice from an early stage and put a plan together to allow you to gather this.

To have an impact on policy and practice you have to start from the theory of change; say what you're trying to achieve, and leave strategic and systemic change for the end. You must start from the point where you gather the evidence and ask yourself, what evidence do I need to gather now to answer that final question and what is next? If you do not have that from the onset the whole thing falters.

Jennifer Wallace, Carnegie UK Trust

To maximise your chances of influencing policy and practice, it is important that this evidence:

- is robust, relevant and solves a problem
- uses an appropriate balance of quantitative and qualitative data
- draws from a wide range of available data
- is up to date, timely and makes use of current data
- demonstrates the efficacy of your approach
- is clear, reasonable and doesn't overclaim
- is honest about its limitations.

If we are going to interfere in peoples' lives through new services, we need a clear evidence base to show that it will be to their benefit. Producing a statement of challenges or needs is not a reason to take any particular action; we need a good explanation of how the proposed approach will work including the delivery mechanism and practical steps leading to change and improvement. Also, it needs to take account of local factors as all change is local.

Geoff Huggins, Scottish Government

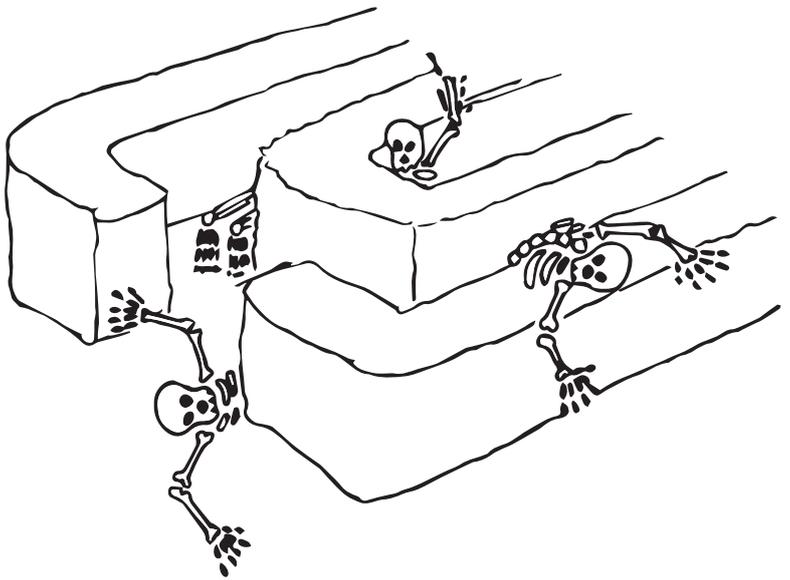
Step 1: Gather data about your work

*The last 10 years has seen a growth in self-evaluation amongst third sector organisations. Many third sector organisations are now routinely gathering data about their outcomes so they can measure, understand and demonstrate their impact. **Steven Marwick, Evaluation Support Scotland***

In the KTN's survey, 48 out of 57 organisations (82%) highlighted that they face challenges when gathering data and evidence about their service. The most common reasons cited for this included:

- Staff not having enough time/ capacity to do so;
- Service users/ stakeholders not having enough time to provide this data, and
- Gathering data not being seen as a priority by the organisation or its staff.

As this is not a guide to evaluation, we can't address all of these challenges here but we have included a list of resources where you can access support with these issues in 'Part 3'. However, despite these challenges, it is important to remember that organisations can and do gather data and evidence about their work and use it to influence policy and practice.



Ask the right questions

Identifying what data you need to collect

Before collecting data about your service, make sure you are clear about the questions you are trying to answer and what data you will need to collect to allow you to do so. Thinking about this at an early stage will help to ensure that the process is as easy as possible and that you are able to collect the data you need.

Begin by considering what situation your service aims to address and then identify the inputs, outputs and outcomes that will be required to achieve the desired change. Using a planning tool, such as a logic model, can provide a useful way to work through each of these stages and can also help you to understand if and how each of these stages link together.

As an organisation we have a strong theory of change and this provides a really beneficial framework for examining the evidence needs for each of our programmes in more depth. As a result, we are able to focus on a number of key questions and provide learning that is specifically focused on these areas rather than undertaking a wide variety of general research.

Neil Mathers, Save the Children

Once you have your plan, it will be easier to identify the types of data that you'll need to gather to understand and demonstrate if the service is achieving its desired outcome. For each input, output and outcome you have identified in your planning tool, ask yourself how you will know these have taken place and what data you will need to collect to evidence this. These are called your indicators. By approaching data collection in this way, you will also ensure that all the data you collect (i.e. primary data) will be used to answer specific questions, and that you are not wasting time and resources gathering data that has no useful purpose.

Make sure you collect data about your outcomes as well as your inputs and activities. For example, if you want to improve the lives of young people with multiple support needs, it is insufficient to only record the number of young people who engage with your service. Instead, you should aim to collect data on some or all of the following: the number of young people who engage with the service; the support needs of each young person; the activities your service undertook to address these needs; how much they cost; any outcomes achieved as a result of these activities, and how you know these were achieved.

Outputs are great - to have reams and reams of evidence on what somebody's done - but what we're ultimately interested in is how effective these outputs have been. You need to be able to evidence that and use your data to demonstrate the benefit that your service has had. That's the sort of thing we're looking for.

David Berry, Scottish Government

Most organisations who responded to the KTN survey reported gathering a mixture of both quantitative data and qualitative data:

- Quantitative data tells us about what happened, where and when, and to whom. It can include information about inputs (e.g. the cost of your service), activities (e.g. numbers of training courses delivered) or outcomes (e.g. the number of people who stop smoking).
- Qualitative data helps us to identify the factors or reasons affecting behaviour – the 'how' and 'why'. The term 'qualitative' is also used to describe information relating to 'soft' outcomes, such as increased confidence.

The best reports are clear and concise and have a good mix of qualitative and quantitative data. A real mix of the hard evidence with case studies but all focused on the impact that you've had.

Kevin Geddes, Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (The ALLIANCE)

Gathering this data can have implications on your time and budget, so it is important that you plan ahead and allocate sufficient resources. Think about the range of methods you will need to use to collect this data including surveys or face-to-face feedback. If you are undertaking this work internally, you may want to consider whether your organisation needs any training to do so.



Make sure you can claim attribution

Step 2: Analyse the data you have collected

In order to understand what your data means you need to analyse and interpret it. It may be helpful to go back to the plan you created at the start of your project and check whether the data you have collected indicates that your service's outputs and outcomes have taken place as planned. Regardless of whether they have or they have not, the next step is to understand why this is the case.

Analysis is a vital stage in helping your organisation to understand which parts of your service have worked, which parts have not worked and most importantly, 'why'.

Identifying the internal and external factors that may have impacted on your outcomes

Outside of a science laboratory, it is very rare that anything ever happens in a vacuum. Therefore, when analysing your data, it is critical to consider what factors might have impacted on your outcomes.

While your planning tool will help you to understand how your service's inputs and outputs link to your intended outcomes, it is important to realise that there may also be inputs and outputs outwith your service that have impacted on these outcomes.

If I'm looking for an evidence base to undertake a type of programme or an activity, I will want to understand the model for change that shows the relation between the inputs and the outcome. There will be other co-occurring factors in play in any test of change and its important to be able to demonstrate that we are seeing causality not just correlation.

Geoff Huggins, Scottish Government

While it may not be possible to control or isolate these external factors, before attributing a specific outcome to your service a good evaluation should seek to (i) identify any relevant external factors and (ii) consider what impact they may have had on your outcomes. Asking a critical friend to look at your findings can help with this process.

Getting external help to analyse data

In the KTN survey, the majority of organisations stated that they feel confident in analysing the data that they collect but 17 out of 54 organisations (33%) highlighted that they can find this process challenging.

Key reasons cited for this include:

- time constraints
- lack of skills in this area
- lack of support and advice about how to analyse data.

30 out of 49 organisations (61%) also stated that they don't believe the evidence from self-evaluations are seen as robust or as persuasive to funders and policy-makers as evidence from external evaluations. However, discussions with funders and policy-makers reveal that, provided they are properly undertaken, evidence from self-evaluations is seen to be as valuable and persuasive as evidence from external evaluations.

Have a little bit of faith in the work you're producing and the work you're doing. I completely understand that people want that external validation but actually if you're doing good evaluation, using solid tools, and are able to justify the results that you get, then you should also be confident about the impact that you're making.

Kevin Geddes, The ALLIANCE

While conducting an evaluation requires a certain level of time, skills and resources, any third sector organisation can do self-evaluation well with some support. However, generating evidence from evaluations that you can use to influence policy and practice can sometimes be more difficult.

There's an element of training which is required for this - it is a specialised task. There are a lot of academics who have spent years training in evaluation to understand what the evidence says. Yet we're expecting people to do it. They either need to buy expertise or you need to give them a lot of training.

Catherine Bisset, Scottish Government

To help you with this, you may want to use an external agency to gather data on a specific project you have undertaken or to help you analyse the data you have gathered. Another option might be to consider whether an intern could be used to undertake this piece of work. However, as noted above, evidence from external evaluations is not necessarily any more robust or persuasive than evidence from internal evaluations so if you decide to commission an organisation to undertake this work on your behalf, it is important that you fully research them first and are confident that they have the necessary skills and experience to do so. It is also important that you identify the specific research questions that you want the evaluation to address and communicate these to the organisation you commission to undertake this work. You may find it helpful to go to ESS's webpages on self-evaluation and online course on how to get the best from external evaluation.

External evaluations can also be expensive so it is important you plan for this and where appropriate, speak to your funders about building these costs into your service's budget. Like you, funders want to know the difference you are making as a result of your work. Supporting you to collect relevant information to evidence that difference is important to them. Depending on your capacity, you may also want to consider developing relationships with academics and working in partnership with them to analyse your data.

Universities get assessed every 5 years or so and part of this assessment now looks at the wider impact that university research is making, which means that there's a real incentive for researchers to work with external organisations and individuals, including in the third sector. In this sense, it's a good time for people working in the third sector who are seeking to draw on academic support in gathering or analysing evidence - if you can find someone in a local university who has an interest in the issue your organisation is concerned with then they may well be willing to help.

Dr Katherine Smith, University of Edinburgh

Step 3: Gather secondary data/ evidence about your area of work

Secondary data is any data that has been generated by someone other than yourself or your organisation. Most organisations will struggle to generate enough data themselves to draw robust conclusions about the impact of their work. It is therefore important that you consider how your findings relate and compare to any other relevant data/ evidence. If your evidence is supported by a wider body of evidence it will also carry more weight when you come to use it, and will be more likely to help you to influence policy and practice.

Clearly, if you can link your individual findings to what others have found there'll be more weight behind them and, as you'll be talking about more than one study, they will be more difficult for people to dismiss. It's about showing how your findings fit with an existing body of work. **Prof Sandra Nutley, University of St Andrews**

Even where your organisation generates its own evidence, you might find it helpful to consider evidence that has been produced by other organisations if you want to maximise your chances of influencing policy and practice. By gathering secondary data you will keep up to date with new statistics or studies about your area of work, learn what other organisations have found to work, and gain a better understanding of the context in which your own work is taking place. Depending on the policy area and the context in which you are working you might find it helpful to gather secondary data produced in other countries other than Scotland and the rest of the UK.

Many organisations find accessing secondary data challenging. While, on some occasions, this may be because the type of data they are looking for either does not exist or has not been made available to the public, the main reasons organisations gave for this in the KTN survey were:

- They don't know where to look;
- Gathering a wide range of data can be expensive and time-consuming, and
- It is difficult to tell which secondary data is the most reliable/ appropriate.

It depends on the purpose of the research as to what data we'll use. We make use of a range of primary research methods, including surveys, interviews and focus group type discussions, to gather evidence directly from practitioners about 'what works'. We also use evidence from elsewhere (e.g. evaluations that have been published, inspection reports, literature reviews and other pieces of research) to inform briefing papers and consultation responses.

Laura Mulcahy, Criminal Justice Voluntary Sector Forum

Accessing secondary data

There are a wide range of sources of secondary data including statistical bulletins, academic studies, online journals, project evaluations and reports published by third sector and public sector organisations. While you may need a subscription or membership to access certain sources of secondary data (e.g. academic journals) the vast majority of sources can be accessed for free. Other third sector organisations can be a key source of secondary data and you shouldn't underestimate the value of the evidence that you can get from your peers, or the impact that this evidence can have when used collaboratively. While the best resources to access will depend on your area of work and the type of data you are looking for, a few websites in the 'Resources' section might help.

Don't think you have to go to a library and search the evidence base yourself because that's a big job to do. Try and find other people who've done reviews in the area you're interested in and use intermediaries like our organisation.

Dr Sarah Morton, Centre for Research on Families and Relationships

Drawing data from a wide range of sources

While it can sometimes be tempting to only focus on data that supports your own findings, try to draw secondary data from as wide a range of sources as possible. This will help to increase your knowledge of your area of interest as well as enabling you to make better judgements about whether certain data is reliable or not. For example, it will help you to identify where one source of data is very different from other data you have read and consider why this might be the case.

*Secondary data is crucial and I suppose you can say it's a gut judgement on what's reliable. If you're trying to prove that a particular area is deprived, national statistics like census statistics are wonderful because they're done by the chief statistician, making them very, very hard to refute. **David Griffiths, Ecas***

It is also important to ensure that the secondary data you are accessing is as up to date as possible so you are not basing decisions on data that is now out of date. Accordingly, it is important that your organisation allocates sufficient time to reading and keeping up to data with relevant secondary data that is being published.

The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funded What Works Centres are one of the key places to go for secondary evidence, and one of their core functions is to produce and apply a common currency for comparing the effectiveness of different interventions. A number of centres have been setup across the UK as part of this programme of work including What Works Scotland, which was launched in June 2014. Led by the Universities of Glasgow and Edinburgh, What Works Scotland will

work closely with Community Planning Partnerships and other stakeholders over the next 3 years to find, create, evaluate and communicate the evidence of what works in delivering the Scottish model of public service delivery. For more information visit: <http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/>

*'What Works' Centres are quite a new initiative, even in England. I think that there are probably pockets of information around that need to be addressed. In England they've probably pulled together all of the evidence produced by different sectors into a very clear place for people to go to for evidence, the "what works" centres. It will be good to have that in Scotland too. **Carolyn Sawers, Big Lottery Fund Scotland***

A useful way of both identifying other sources of secondary data and determining how reliable and relevant they are to your needs is to engage with other stakeholders and discuss as a group. Networks and forums can offer a valuable space for discussions and provide an opportunity for organisations to discuss both primary and secondary data in an open and collaborative environment.

Checklist



Here is a quick **checklist** for you to consider when you want to generate useful evidence that will be persuasive to policy makers and practitioners:

- Identify the question** you want to use your evidence to answer.
- Create a plan** that outlines your service's inputs, outputs and outcomes.
- Consider how you will **measure outcomes** and identify the data that you'll collect at each stage to understand if these are taking place as planned.
- Analyse your data** and identify any trends/ patterns.
- Consider whether any **external factors** may have impacted on your outcomes.
- Consider how your **evidence links** into other evidence people have produced.
- Draw secondary data** from a wide evidence base. Look at a number of robust studies, which have found very strong and consistent results.
- Consider all evidence** – not only those findings which support your argument.
- Engage** with other stakeholders and discuss your findings.

Part 2:

How to use evidence to influence policy and practice



This part of the guide combines advice from third sector service providers, policy-makers, academics, funders and commissioners about how to use the evidence you have generated to influence policy and practice. It is split into four sections:

- Section 1: Using evidence to influence internal policy and practice
- Section 2: Using evidence to influence external policy and practice
- Section 3: Using evidence to influence funding and commissioning decisions
- Section 4: 10 tops tips for using evidence for success

53 out of 54 organisations (98%) who responded to the KTN survey stated that policy and practice should be based on evidence to ensure that the best use of available resources is made and that future service provision is informed by learning from 'what works', 'for whom' and 'why'. The organisations reported using evidence in a number of ways, including: (i) to improve their own services; (ii) to influence future decisions, and (iii) to inform future policy and practice within the area they work.

The successful implementation of an outcome focussed approach to public services needs good data and information to improve decision making, reduce the likelihood of wasteful expenditure and improve the evaluation and learning of which approaches are effective.

SOLACE Scotland

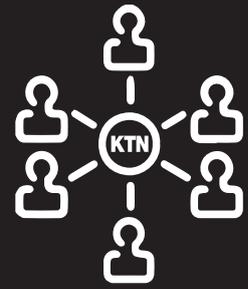
The sets of steps needed to achieve these goals are outlined in the first three sections of this part of the guide. The final section offers some final tips from stakeholders who have had success in this area.



Sharing evidence

Section 1:

How to use evidence to influence internal policy and practice



This section of the guide explores how to use evidence to influence policy and practice within your own organisation. By the end of this section, you will know how to:

- Identify the problem you want to address within your organisation and how evidence can help you to do so
- Identify and communicate with your internal stakeholders
- Understand when there is a need to try something new and innovative

In the KTN survey, one of the most common reasons organisations gave for using evidence was to better understand the impact that their services are having so they can ensure they are of maximum benefit to their service users. This section explores how you can use evidence to influence your internal stakeholders and improve policy and practice within your own organisation.

Step 1: Identify the problem you want to address

In order to use evidence to improve internal policy and practice, you first have to identify the problem that you want to address. For example, does your service have a low engagement or high drop-out rate? Are some service users achieving better outcomes than others? Is your organisation making the impact that it wants to make in your local community?

It works best when it starts from a practical need, when it is led by an issue that people want something to be done about and not done for the sake of it, like they are told to. It works with the practical issues that people are faced with. There are a lot of options and evidence can be used in a number of things. Therefore, it can be a really useful thing to inform decision making, in any organisation.

Dr Jonathan Sharples, University of York

Once you have identified this problem you then need to ask yourself:

1. Does my evidence indicate how this problem can be addressed?
2. Is there enough capacity within the organisation to implement these changes?
3. Do others within my team have the right skills to apply the evidence into practice?
4. Can I communicate this evidence to other people within my organisation in a way that is relevant and persuasive?
5. Have I made clear what changes are needed within my organisation based on this evidence and made a convincing case for doing so?
6. Are there tools in place to assess and evaluate the amended service?

It is also important to remember that adapting your service based on what evidence suggests will work will not automatically give you improved outcomes. Other internal and external factors can influence whether or not the service is successful, such as the environment in which the service is being embedded. Before you use evidence to adapt your services, it is therefore important to think about the challenges you might face and discuss these with your colleagues.

Step 2: Communicate your evidence to internal stakeholders

If you want to influence change within your organisation it is vital that you are able to identify those internal stakeholders who have the power to influence or implement this change and communicate your evidence in a way that is relevant to them. These stakeholders are likely to include your service users; other members of staff and volunteers; your senior management team, and your trustees.

It can sometimes be difficult for staff who work directly with service users - and see the progress they are making first-hand - to look objectively at their service and question whether it can be improved. Similarly, management staff, who are a step removed from the delivery side of the service, may find it difficult to understand why changes are needed if the service is generally producing positive outcomes. Collecting and using evidence about 'what is working', 'what is not working' and 'why' can help you to address both of these challenges.

If you're involved with running a service, you're there on the ground and are immersed in what the service does and how it does it. However, we also need to get our colleagues across the board to see what our service providers are seeing. To do this we have to support them to gather information in a formalised way and help staff to understand the benefits of doing so.

Alison McIntyre, Barnardo's Scotland

Step 3: Identify when you need to try something new

In the KTN's survey, a number of organisations noted that there is not always conclusive evidence about 'what works' when addressing the needs of vulnerable groups. On these occasions, organisations highlight that there may be a need to take an innovative - opposed to purely evidence-based approach when developing and delivering new services. This may include piloting a service within their own community that has had positive results in another part of the world, or designing a new service based on feedback from service users. By building evaluation into any new services they pilot, organisations also highlight that this approach can help to develop the evidence base about 'what works' and 'what doesn't work' in an area.

When developing a new and innovative service, it is advisable to:

1. Identify what the existing evidence suggests might work and might not work in this area.
2. Speak to your service users about what they think is needed.
3. Develop a pilot based on the evidence you have gathered from your service users and external sources.
4. Test your pilot on a small scale and build in monitoring and evaluation so you know whether it achieves its intended outcomes. Remember if something doesn't work then this is useful learning too as long as you explore why.
5. Explore how successful elements of the service can be expanded upon or rolled out to other areas or groups of service users.

Checklist

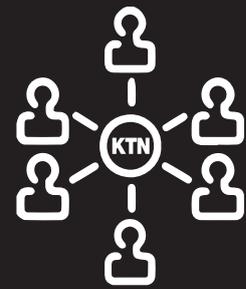


Here is a quick **checklist** for you to consider when you want to use evidence to influence internal policy and practice:

- Identify the problem/** situation within your organisation that you want to address.
- Consider how the **evidence** that you've gathered suggests that this problem can be addressed.
- Create a plan** for making these changes. This should identify what changes are needed within your organisation, what resources will be required and what difference they'll make.
- Identify and engage** with the stakeholders within your organisation who will need to authorise and implement these changes. Make sure they understand the benefits and any potential risks of doing so.
- If there is not conclusive evidence about 'what works', explore if there is a need to **develop a small pilot** to test out a new approach.
- Evaluate** any changes you implement to understand if they have achieved their intended outcomes and identify whether any further changes are needed.

Section 2:

How to use evidence to influence external policy and practice



This section of the guide explores how to use evidence to influence external policy and practice at local and national level. The steps outlined below draw from the knowledge and experience of decision and policy-makers, funders, practitioners and academics who have influenced the policy and practice landscape using evidence of what works and what doesn't effectively. By the end of this section, you will know how to:

- Understand the policy cycle and the evidence needs at different stages
- Plan to influence the policy cycle
- Find different mechanisms to influence the policy cycle
- Be aware of what helps and what gets in the way

53 of the 54 organisations (98%) who responded to the KTN survey agreed that evidence should be used to influence policy and practice. Some of the reasons for this included:

Using evidence in this manner contributes to ensuring that policy and practice remain rooted in reality. While working values, the political agenda and other considerations need to be taken in to account the evidence base should also be a part of the picture.

Anonymous survey quote

It is important to use the learning from a variety of arenas to help shape the direction and to stop re-inventing new things.

Elaine Wilson, Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland

So it is clear that we should use evidence to influence external policy and practice but, as another respondent pointed out:

It's relatively easy to influence internal practice, but much more difficult to influence wider policy - especially as a small organisation with few resources and relatively few contacts.

Anonymous survey quote

The following steps should help you use your evidence effectively, within the capacity of your organisation.

Step 1: Understand the policy cycle and its evidence needs

If you want to influence policy you need to know how the system works; how to present your evidence really concisely, and what the most effective way to work through the system in Government and Parliament is.

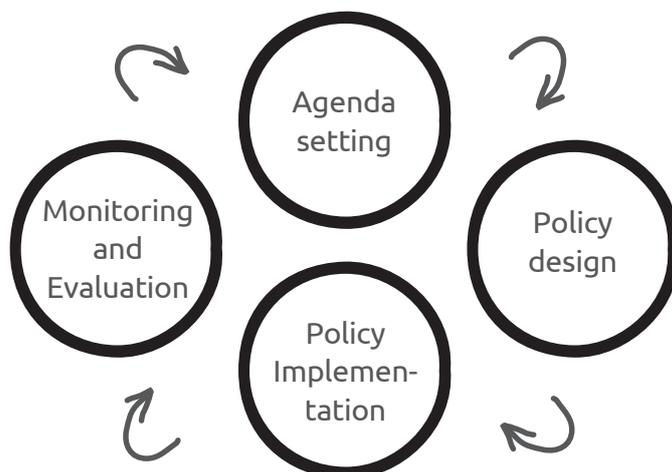
David Berry, Scottish Government

The Wellcome Trust, a global charitable foundation, highlights that 'policy' is closely linked to a problem and the strategies needed to solve it.

The policy process is often characterised as a cycle of activities, where the final stage of one move through the cycle becomes the starting point for the next. This is what is known as the 'policy cycle'.

The policy cycle has a number of stages that can be summarised as: 1) Agenda setting; 2) Policy design; 3) Policy implementation, and 4) Monitoring and Evaluation. The Scottish Government uses the illustration below to depict the policy cycle.

The policy cycle



The table below gives an overview of the activities that are often involved at the different stages of the policy cycle, as well as evidence needs at each stage [adapted from Pollard and Court (2005)]. Evidence should flow through the whole policy process to ensure that decisions are based on what works. This means that there are points in

the policy process when you can use your evidence to influence decisions. But you need to anticipate at what stages and when your evidence could be most useful.

You can find more information about the policy cycle in the 'Resources' section at the end of the guide.

Evidence needs of the policy cycle

Stage of the policy process	Description	Evidence needs
Agenda setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A problem is identified ● The causal relationship between different factors is explored ● Policies are researched and analysed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify new problems ● Build up evidence of the magnitude of the problem so that relevant policy-makers are aware that the problem is important <p>Key factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Credibility of evidence ● How evidence is communicated
Policy design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Possible solution and alternatives are developed ● The potential impact of these solutions is analysed ● Consultation ● The policy proposal is developed and revised accordingly ● The policy proposal is adopted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Support policy-makers to ensure their understanding of the specific situation and the different options is as detailed and comprehensive as possible so they can make informed decisions <p>Key factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Links between activities and outcomes; expected cost and impact of intervention ● Quantity and credibility of evidence
Policy implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The policy objectives are translated in concrete activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Operational evidence to improve the effectiveness of initiatives <p>Key factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Evidence is relevant across different context
Monitoring and Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The implementation data is used to assess whether the policy is being implemented as planned, and is achieving the expected objectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop M&E to determine the effectiveness of an implemented policy <p>Key factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Evidence is objective, thorough and relevant, and communicated successfully into the continuing policy process

Step 2: Plan to influence the policy cycle

Find out why, what, who, how and when to influence

The 'policy influencing cycle' provides a set of actions to take at different stages of the policy cycle to ensure policy influence.

MDF, a global training and consultancy agency with extensive experience in facilitating learning of professionals, organisations and partnerships, developed an 'influencing cycle', which is shown in the adapted illustration on the following page. You can use the influencing cycle to identify what you might want to do with your evidence, by combining it with the policy cycle, described in Step 1. You will always start from identifying a problem, whatever the stage is. Then you can use the influencing map to:

- Formulate messages drawing from evidence
- Build up a constituency of people with the same problem
- Put together a dissemination plan
- Deliver the message effectively to those you want to influence
- Assess the outcome/s achieved through the process.

The influencing cycle also suggests practical steps to help you in your influencing:

- Consult with service users and other stakeholders
- Identify implications for the policy process (e.g. have you identified a gap in a policy area or something that isn't working? Do you know how to improve it?)
- Network with others to find allies and check your message is clear (linking to practitioner networks can help you with this – see the 'Resources' section at the end)
- Tailor the message and delivery mechanism to the particular policy audience (for example a civil servant, a Minister or a Councillor)
- Assess the impact of your policy influence on your beneficiaries.

We have tried to influence policy and practice but it's very, very difficult. I don't think you can be a voice on your own, I think you have to be aware of what other people are saying and what is happening across the horizon. Find out what you want to influence and who else is saying the same things as you, and join up.

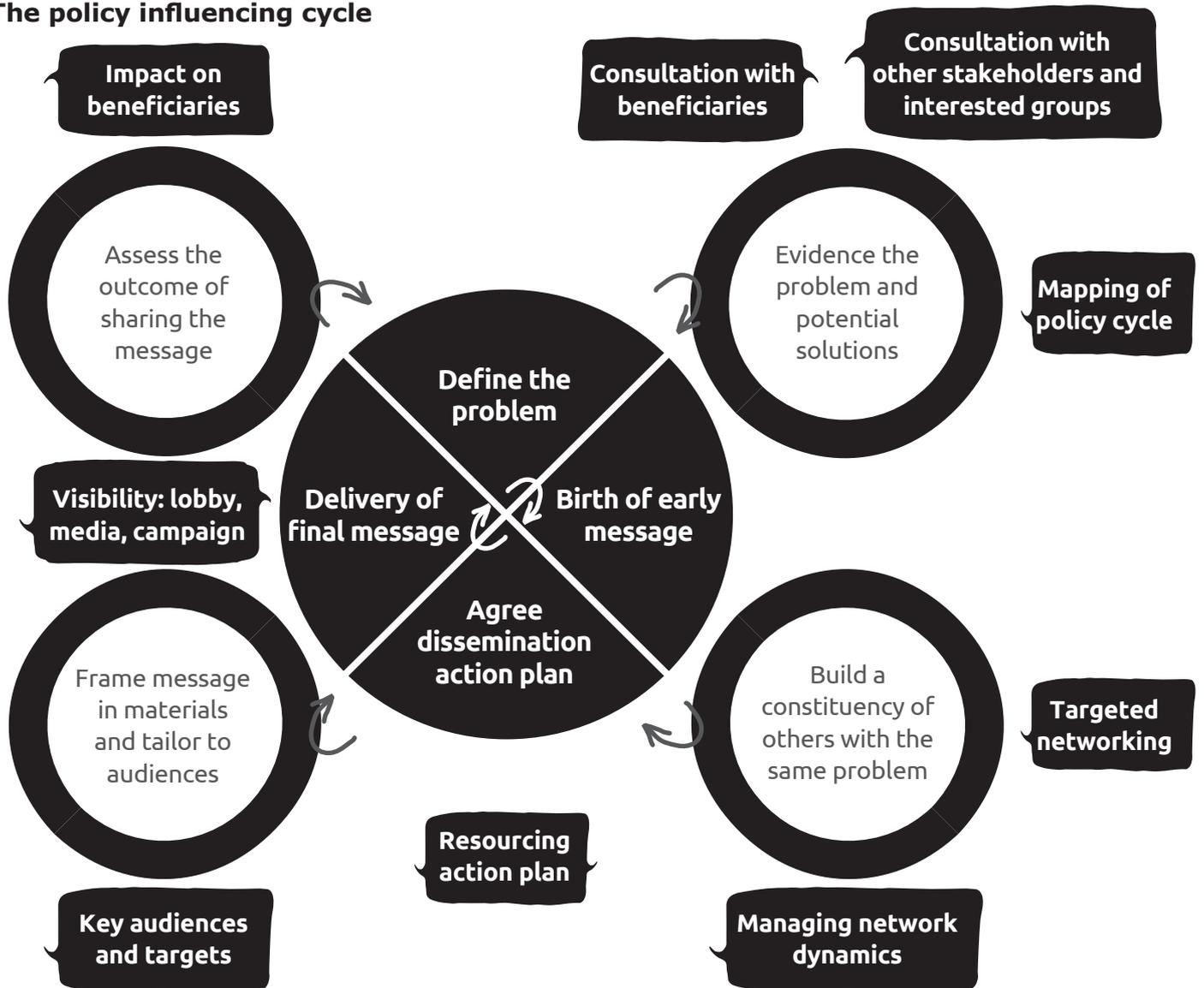
Pamela Barnes, Includem

The policy influencing cycle is not linear - it is circular and dynamic. More often than not you will need to go around the cycle more than once to successfully influence policy and practice. The 'CLASP' policy influencing principles developed by Technical Assistance for Civil Society Organisations (TACSO), can help you maximise your chances of using your evidence to influence change.

The principles are:

- C** – Credibility (your message is based on evidence and is trustworthy)
- L** – Legitimacy (your message is popularly accepted)
- A** – Accountability (you are reliable as a person and/or organisation)
- S** – Service-oriented (you represent beneficiaries and speak for them)
- P** – Power based (prove that others are raising the same issue)

The policy influencing cycle



Step 3: Find different mechanisms to influence policy and practice

Once you are sure you have the message, the evidence behind it and a supportive constituency around you, you can:

- **Approach policy and decision makers when you have evidence that something in their policy area isn't working or could be working better.**

Request a meeting with these policy makers to explore the situation and ask them what they think of the evidence. If they don't feel your evidence is robust enough you need to make a decision, find out what kind of evidence they would find persuasive.

As part of the Scottish Government's Analytical Exchange Programme, the Trust asked Justice Analytical Services to review all of the evaluations we had commissioned to check whether they were robust and provided useful evidence for funders and policy makers. We found their feedback incredibly valuable and it has helped to inform the approach we now take to funding and evaluating projects.

Christine Scullion, The Robertson Trust

If you don't feel you have the resources to generate the evidence, try approaching others working in the same area and join forces. Once you manage to get the kind of evidence that the policy-makers need to make their decisions, take it back to them and offer solutions for them to consider based on 'what works'.

- **Find a 'champion' local councillor to help you take your message and evidence to the local authority.**

Councillors provide a direct link to the public and fulfil a unique role in representing individual constituents, working with local community and voluntary groups and act as local champions for their area and their communities. One of the key roles that councillors are expected to fulfil is a policy making and scrutiny role. They do this by contributing actively to the formulation and scrutiny of the council's policies, budgets, strategies and service delivery. Your evidence can help councillors ensure that their decisions are based on 'what works'.

Good practice impact story type reports (e.g. a day in the life of a person who used their project and the difference it's made to him/her) always get very positive feedback from elected members because it personalises the outcomes of the project on an individual.

Annette Lang, Midlothian Council

Some councillor, chair of a committee relevant to us, tweeted about something that was related to our policy area of interest, and we used that opportunity to do a direct message on Twitter, saying 'if you want to find out more about this, you should know about Includem'. He was interested and wanted to meet us. He was the person that we were looking for.

Pamela Barnes, Includem

- **Get policy and decision-makers to understand your case and help you to promote it.**

Have conversations with the civil servants and MSPs involved in making the amendments to the legislation you want to influence. Aim to have a conversation about what you want to happen and back it up with evidence like graphs, research papers and service users' statements. Be brief, wrap your quantitative data in a story and work with them in the long-term to help them understand your evidence.

Dee Fraser, Coalition of Care and Support Providers in Scotland

- **Respond to local, national and UK government consultations using your evidence.** The Scottish Government has a newsletter with current and forthcoming consultations. (<http://register.scotland.gov.uk/Subscribe/Step1>).

Depending on whether the issue is a devolved matter or not, you might want to keep an eye on UK consultations. You can find out about consultations from UK government departments and agencies here: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications?publication_filter_option=consultations

Our approach to influencing policy and practice is to build our evidence and our members' evidence into our briefings and consultation responses.

Ruchir Shah, Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations

- **Submit a petition to Parliament to influence a particular policy issue and find an MSP/MP/MEP who will offer support².** The 'Get Involved' series of information guides includes leaflets with information on the public petitions process. You can access these via the 'Visit and Learn' website: (<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/visitandlearn/16703.aspx>).

The public petitions process is a key part of the Parliament's commitment to participation. Individuals, community groups and organisations can drive the policy process by raising issues of concern.
Scottish Parliament's website

- **Find out about forthcoming debates, events and calls for evidence** taking place in the Scottish Parliament by signing up to their weekly e-Bulletin. These provide great opportunities to feed in your evidence. Government officials support Ministers at debates so the more evidence they have the better!
<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/eBulletin.aspx>.

You can also find out about debates and committee inquiries at Westminster and sign up for relevant e-bulletins here: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/news/>.

Don't forget, you have to submit written evidence to a parliamentary committee before they call you to give oral evidence. If they like your written evidence they'll call you up to give more. When giving evidence you will sit in front of a panel of say 11 politicians for up to 2 hours. They have all the right to ask the questions so try and work out in advance the supplementary questions they might ask and have the data to answer them. **David Griffiths, Ecas**

● Follow what the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe) is doing in terms of **research and briefings for MSPs** and get in touch with them to discuss how they can use your evidence to inform the Scottish Parliament:

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/Research.aspx>.

SPICe provides research, information and documentation services to the Scottish Parliament. They work solely and impartially for the Parliament and its Members and they shouldn't be confused with the "political" researchers and other staff of individual MSPs or parties within or outwith Parliament.

SPICe staff have expertise in their relevant (primarily devolved) areas. They undertake and commission research for the Parliament's Committees, individual MSPs and for the Parliament itself.

Briefing papers are produced on all bills, major issues relating to forthcoming parliamentary business and other subjects of topical interest. SPICe also compiles reference information on parliamentary and other related issues including a range of statistical analyses.

² MSP = Member of the Scottish Parliament;
MP = Member of Parliament;
MEP = Member of the European Parliament

● **Get a Parliamentary committee to champion your cause:** Committees play a central role in the Scottish Parliament and are effective ways of influencing at Holyrood, Westminster and council levels. Committees take evidence from witnesses, scrutinise legislation and conduct inquiries. Most committees meet weekly or fortnightly. If you want a committee to champion your cause, start by getting to know committee clerks because they have some influence on the process. Check out the reports that your committee of interest produces to find out who is in the 'clerk team'. For more information on Scottish Parliament's committees visit:

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/Committees.aspx>.

Attending relevant cross party groups might also be useful:

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/msps/cross-party-groups.aspx>

For UK Parliament Committees visit:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/>.

If you really want your evidence to be listened to, find the windows when people are talking about that area, and identify cross-party groups and committees in government and Parliament that will help you get your evidence in.

Christine Scullion, The Robertson Trust

Step 4: Build relationships

Unfortunately, some of policy influence is luck and timing! And the policy cycle does not always work quite as cleanly as the diagrams above suggest. One way to improve your chances of being lucky is to build relationships.

Part of having an influence is finding opportunities; some you can create but others you just come across.

**Prof Sandra Nutley,
University of St Andrews**

Get others on board

When policy-makers are looking for evidence they do not always know where to look. So try to increase the chance that you are the person they contact. If you meet an official or politician at a conference or event, **give them your details or a very short summary of your key areas of interest.** They might not use it there and then but they might come back to you when they do need evidence.

We spend too much time on this information 'push-push' model and we assume that people are going to pick it up, but it doesn't work like that. Just writing reports is not enough; it's useful, but not sufficient. The materials we produce, we use as a starting point to help start a conversation with someone, but that's not the conversation. Interaction and networks are social processes: research use; sitting down and being able to engage with it; going through practical issues that people are being faced with... That seems to be where you get the most bang for your buck. **Dr Jonathan Sharples, University of York**

If you can get a **longer face-to-face discussion** with the person who might use your evidence, ask them questions like, 'in what format would you like your evidence?'; 'what is it that you need to know?', and 'what persuades you?'

Too often organisations get caught out by relying on verbal contributions at meetings. Having a few bits of good evidence at your finger tips to illustrate a point can be really valuable in persuading policy-makers and making your case for change. **Janet Muir, Community Health Exchange (CHEX)**



Make sure your evidence is timely

Put it quite explicitly early on in the conversation when you are at meetings with those you want to influence. Ask questions like 'what's the background for this?', 'why are we doing this?', 'what problem are we trying to solve?'; bring a piece of evidence in the policy area they're interested in, and even offer to facilitate a session the policy area that they want to develop. It's all about confidence and saying 'actually, we can help you with that, we've got data and we've got skills and we'd be delighted to pitch in and help you solve your policy problem'. Most people will be up for having a conversation.

Dee Fraser, Coalition of Care and Support Providers in Scotland

Building strong relationships with **independent influencers**, such as funders, is important. Work with them to carry your messages. Remember that most funders are not in a position to implement policy changes so work with them on a small scale project, and also with government to implement them at a larger scale.

We use our funded projects' case studies and stories from their evaluations, to give evidence to ministers for speeches.

Kevin Geddes, The ALLIANCE

Finally, you can **get endorsement from someone influential**, like a politician or a well-recognised academic with expertise in your field. Equally important are the testimonies from funders and/or policy-makers who support your messages so do not be afraid to use those either.

If you've got a piece of evidence that you think is influential and you want to make a bit of a splash about it but perhaps you feel you don't have much of a reputation for this sort of work already, think of those who do. There may be other researchers, a particular person, another organisation or a support network who could endorse your evidence as an important piece of work. This will improve the credibility of your evidence and its influence.

Prof Sandra Nutley, University of St Andrews

How you present your evidence matters

The way in which you present your evidence to those you want to influence can help you to achieve the change you want. For example, comparing your evidence to that produced by others inside and outside your organisation can help you challenge your own practice and be seen as more honest. In fact, peer learning networks can help you get around this issue.

Some third sector organisations cherry pick evidence and use worst case scenarios, long before realistic figures can be produced and forward them as facts. I think that is unhelpful, especially because a parliamentary committee can pick up on these without wondering how the figures were substantiated. Some of that data is often based on estimates and that doesn't help our cause.

David Griffiths, Ecas

Additionally, presenting your evidence in a comparative way can also help policy-makers and funders understand how your evidence fits in with other types of data they receive from different sources. Without good analytical skills picking one type of evidence over another can be challenging. You can grab the opportunity to push your evidence and help them make sense of your evidence whenever you meet them at meetings, conferences and other events.

If you're sitting in a policy meeting and someone is saying something blatantly untrue, and you know you have the evidence to counter that be confident in your data and speak up. It's probably no worse than whatever somebody else sitting around the table has.

Dee Fraser, Coalition of Care and Support Providers in Scotland

Checklist



Here is a simple **checklist** for you to consider when you want to use evidence to influence policy and practice:

Identify key messages and audiences

– who needs to know what? Involve stakeholders, beneficiaries and allies.

Consider what **evidence** you have/ need to back up those messages.

Get **endorsement from an expert** in your field of work.

Build up a **constituency of people** with the same problem as you.

Tailor the evidence and messages to audiences.

Find advocates and influencers to help you push your messages out.

Draw a **creative dissemination plan** to communicate effectively.

Share evidence and engage in/ provoke debate with different audiences.

Evaluate your efforts to influence policy and practice throughout.

Share examples of what you have done to successfully influence change with others.

Section 4 of this part of the guide provides additional tips to help you use evidence to successfully communicate and engage different audiences.

Section 3:

How to use evidence to influence funding and commissioning decisions



This section of the guide explores how to use evidence to influence future decisions around funding and commissioning. By the end of this section, you will know how to:

- Identify your key messages
- Identify potential funders
- Communicate your evidence to funders
- Develop an open and honest dialogue with funders

In the KTN survey, the majority of organisations stated that they use evidence to influence funding and commissioning decisions. Ensuring that funders and commissioners invest their resources in the approaches that evidence suggests will work is increasingly important at a time when funding is limited and encouraging them to do so is an important part of influencing policy and practice.

The public sector will always seek to improve upon their policies and services to ensure they best meet the needs of communities. Local and national government officials will often rely on practitioners and researchers to bring evidence to their attention about what is working and what isn't working. If this evidence is robust and persuasive, it may lead to the public sector disinvesting in programmes that are no longer producing positive outcomes and commissioning services that the evidence-base suggests will be more effective.

Until recently, local authorities and The Scottish Government were telling funded organisations 'that's your money for one year, you need to deliver support to X service users'. It was not about making a difference; it was about delivering a service. This is changing now.

Florence Garabedian, Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living

This section aims to address some of the challenges that organisations face when using evidence to influence funding and commissioning decisions and outlines the key steps required to achieve this goal.

Step 1: Identify your key messages

To maximise your chances of influencing funding and commissioning decisions, frame the evidence from your work in a clear and persuasive way. As a minimum, you should make sure you outline: (i) why your work is needed and how you know this; (ii) what you want to do to meet that need and what outcomes your evidence suggest will be achieved through this approach; (iii) how you'll monitor and evaluate your work to know if it achieves its intended outcomes, and (iv) how much this will cost.

*Be clear about the message you want to give to funders. Third sector organisations need funding to continue the work they're doing so sometimes they see their message as 'give us more money'. However, their message should be 'this is the difference that we're currently making and this is what else we can achieve with your support'. **Kevin Geddes, The ALLIANCE***

Step 2: Identify potential funders and commissioners

Most funders and commissioners have set criteria about the areas and types of work they can fund. Before approaching them, be sure to research their areas of interest, what they can and cannot fund and also any deadlines that you should be aware of. Doing this at the start of the process will ensure you do not invest time and resources in engaging with funders who are not in a position to support your work.

Keeping up to date with key strategies such as your local Community Planning Partnership's Single Outcome Agreement will help you understand the specific outcomes that the key stakeholders within the public sector are working towards. These strategies can also help you to understand who is responsible for what within the public sector and to identify the specific stakeholders that you will need to engage with to influence funding decisions.

Step 3: Communicate your evidence to funders

Different funders will look for and respond to different types of evidence depending on the outcomes they are working towards. For example, some funders may respond to quantitative data while others will be more interested in qualitative data. Most funders will want a mixture of both. It is important that you communicate with potential funders and commissioners at an early stage to identify the types of evidence that they'll find the most persuasive.

People think that funders are looking for a big statistical survey or report. But actually, the learning from what an organisation has done and from what other organisations have done is completely legitimate, very authentic and quite persuasive actually.

Carolyn Sawers, Big Lottery Fund Scotland

Case studies can be a useful way to illustrate the impact that your work has had on service users. However, remember that case studies will be most persuasive when used in combination with other evidence about the impact of your work.

A good case study should illustrate your evidence and be representative of your broader data. A good case study should tell a story - it needs a hook that ties people in, a hero or heroine and other key characters. It should be written in personal terms and should engage people's emotions - their heart as well as their head.

Prof Sandra Nutley, University of St Andrews

The Scotland Funders' Forum's (SFF) "Harmonising Reporting" report provides good practice reporting guidance, tips and resources to ensure reporting is less burdensome and more meaningful for both funders and service providers. It also includes good practice about using evidence in funding relationships.

Finally, funders and commissioners are often willing to pay for the monitoring and evaluation costs of projects that they fund. Remember to build these costs into your budget so you have the resources you need to measure, understand and demonstrate the social and economic impact that your work has had.

Step 4: Create an open and honest dialogue with funders

In order to secure funding for their work, some organisations feel under pressure to either tell funders and commissioners that their services are having a positive impact despite not having evidence to support these claims and/ or to hide aspects of a service that have not worked. This pressure is caused both by the competitive funding environment and the lack of multi-year funding available, which mean organisations often have to report back on what their service has achieved before it has been fully embedded and evaluated. However, Harmonising Reporting illustrates that funders and commissioners want to know what hasn't worked as well as what has worked.

Just because something doesn't work that doesn't mean we're going to say "no more money - go away!" We're actually willing to sit down and look at things, and change things, and carry on. You sometimes learn more from the things that don't work than the things that do and learning from the difficulties that services face is all part of the process. So we try to encourage organisations to share what isn't working with us as much as what is. However, organisations are under a lot of pressures and it requires a huge degree of trust on their part to share what hasn't worked with their funder.

Christine Scullion, The Robertson Trust

Checklist



Here is a quick **checklist** for you to consider when you want to use evidence to influence funding and commissioning decisions:

- Identify the key messages** about your work that will help you to influence funding and commissioning decisions.
- Identify and develop relationships** with stakeholders who have the power to making funding decisions within your area of work
- Research the outcomes** that these funders are working towards and tailor your messages to highlight how your work contributes towards these outcomes being achieved.
- Speak to funders** to understand what types of evidence they find persuasive and then provide it to them.
- Build monitoring and evaluation costs** into any funded projects you undertake.
- Don't be afraid to **have honest conversations** with funders about what isn't working, as well as what is.

Section 4:

10 Top tips to use evidence for success

This section provides ten top tips to engage stakeholders in communicating your evidence to influence policy and practice successfully. These tips draw from the experience and learning of policy-makers, academics, funders and commissioners who have had success in this area.



TIP #1: Ensure your organisation engages with evidence at different levels

If you want others to use your evidence you will have to lead by example. Get your whole organisation on board with using evidence to influence change by using examples of where you've succeeded with those you want to influence, so they can see the benefits. You might want to identify an 'evidence champion' in your organisation who has oversight of how evidence is being used in general.

Politicians need the personal aspect of evidence. That's the world that they operate in. You have got to get quite adept in matching your evidence to your anecdote, so that there is something personal that decision makers can grasp and understand, as well as, complex arguments that underpin them. Quite often you'll get people who'll use an anecdote as an illustration of an evidence-based point; that works quite well, so if you can get the real world's story, that exemplifies your evidence-based point, then you'll get people pulling around that. Give them real stories about real people and you might be onto a winner!

Jennifer Wallace, Carnegie UK Trust

TIP #2: Bring in stakeholders and beneficiaries early

Make sure you communicate and work with beneficiaries, stakeholders, intermediaries and umbrella bodies; use critical friends, and involve service users right from the start and throughout the influencing process.

Anecdotes and case studies are great to illustrate something, but they're not an evidence base; particularly because they don't take you into the territory of why this and why that, and that's a key component: what are the downsides? Being frank about the challenges of service delivery also raises trust. Telling policy-makers about the things that didn't work, as well as the things that did, raises authenticity. **Geoff Huggins, Scottish Government**

TIP #3: Be confident about your evidence

A mixture of confidence and understanding of the evidence helps put your message across to those you want to influence.

Your message should also answer 'so what' and 'what next' - tell those you want to influence what to do about the issue. Some evidence will struggle to make that jump, so it will describe something that has happened and describe the barriers, but it will not lift it up to the strategic level to say what needs changed. Some of that is about lack of confidence in the quality of the evidence gathered so some people feel that it doesn't have the weight to make that jump. You have to be quite clear in your messaging, in what it means and what the implications of it are. **Jennifer Wallace, Carnegie UK Trust**



Make sure your evidence is relevant to your stakeholders

TIP #4: Match different types of evidence to audiences

If you want to successfully influence policy and decision-makers you need to provide useful evidence to them. We have already covered in 'Part 1' what we mean by 'useful evidence'; however, you must tailor the type of evidence to different audiences.

TIP #5: Wrap your message around evidence to tell the full story

If you want policy-makers to take your message seriously you have to present it in a way that makes complete sense and it provides the full picture. They will probably ask you questions so make sure you back up your answers with a mixture of both qualitative and quantitative useful evidence. It is also important to share your evidence of what doesn't work, even if they funded you to carry the work. Remember that without this evidence, funders and policy-makers will not know where to invest their resources to ensure they have the most value.

Get the best evidence you can to use to influence a council or a government department. For example, issue a freedom of information request to gather data; once you have it you can go back to the council or the government department and say, "you've told me that this is what is going on but my evidence shows that..." It's very difficult for them to dispute evidence that they've given you. If you can't get the evidence from them going to a reputable source to help you with your research might help. For example, if you can quote research from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Carnegie UK Trust, etc. you will probably be taken seriously.

David Griffiths, Ecas

*In a given local authority the council might say to some of the third sector organisations that they fund in the health and social care field, 'we expect you to prove your efficacy on the basis of user testimony'. In that area, that's not a problem, but you shouldn't assume that other areas will too. The 'qualitative vs. quantitative evidence' debate has not been won yet. You might find yourself in a lucky position in a given area, or you might find yourself in an unlucky position in another local authority area, in which case you will need to gather these statistics. In general, policy-makers need your evidence to tell them how you are making an impact on people's lives. Saying with qualitative evidence that the service is making lots of people happy will not make policy-makers give you money. They need to see that the money they invest will make a difference. **Andrew Jackson, Joint Improvement Team***

TIP #6: Communicate your message effectively

Including your messages and evidence in a report and sending it to everyone in your mailing list is not going to guarantee you success. How will you even know who reads the report? How can you make sure that those who read it are actually the people you want to influence? Reports might work for those who fund you but most times you will need to do more than that to succeed.

TIP #7: Use multiple communication methods to disseminate your message

● **Spread the word using written publications:** Disseminate your evidence and messages through: reports in electronic and print versions; annual reviews; infographics; summaries/ briefings; pamphlets, and case studies. You can also publish short articles and/ or blogs.

● **Update your website to include all your work news, events and publications:** People will be able to share webpages easily by referring people to specific links. Don't forget to include information about networks you are part of and links to partners. Your website helps your stakeholders to understand who you are, what you do, how you do it and the impact you have. You can use it to share your messages in a consistent way. The tricky bit is to ensure that you write them in a way that suits everybody. Keep your language simple, clear and jargon-free.

Create posters; do presentations at different levels; have one-to-one meetings with staff and key stakeholders; do follow-ups; do practice sessions, and get them to own it. If there is a lot of change, get a champions group or a working group for them to find the solutions to where there are problems. You can use conferences to share best practice and talk about what works and what doesn't.

Pamela Barnes, Includem

Don't just rely on the written word, however well written a piece of paper or a briefing note is. We know now that the research that has had the most influence has usually been communicated on a person-to-person basis. It requires networking with and talking to a wide range of people and having repeat conversations over time. If you want to have an influence you need to develop this approach in your organisation; you have to talk about how you'll advocate the messages and who's going to take that forward.

Prof Sandra Nutley, University of St Andrews

We've been producing thematic reports, which we use to match different policy areas. As the themes have emerged we did a series 6 or 7 reports, looking at the impact the types of projects have had and the types of evidence on what they've achieved. The feedback we received from the policymakers was very positive because they could pick one up that was really interesting to them, and leave one that wasn't particularly as interesting, at that time; and mix and match a bit easily. I guess it's about making it relevant for them too.

Kevin Geddes, The ALLIANCE

TIP #8: Use social media to engage and prompt discussion

Social media is currently one of the most commonly used communication mechanisms to influence policy and practice. In general, social media works well for:

- Getting to a much wider group of people
- Engaging directly with policy-makers, completely by-passing the bureaucratic infrastructure that surrounds them
- People who just don't have the time and are used to processing information really quickly
- Engaging directly with politicians and journalists rather than be mediated through their researchers
- Measuring your impact.

But be aware that:

- You need the content for policy-makers and politicians to delve into, otherwise there's no point in doing it
- Discussions can take place really quickly and could be nothing to do with evidence
- It is so fast that there can be not really much time for proper analysis
- There is a risk that you create a lot of noise and the quality can easily get lost. Again, you need to build quality analysis into its use
- You can't control what happens to the information and which elements will be picked up on, once it's out there.

Check out the 'Resources' section for details on how other social media tools can help you.

*It helps you be more flexible in terms of how quickly ideas spread. Currently, a lot of the ideas that gain attention come from social media: tweeted out or shared through Facebook or virtual seminars. It catches attention and for example, politicians might get a sense of it and enquire more building a bit of steam and momentum. **Ruchir Shah, Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations***

*If your charity isn't on board with Twitter, it needs to be. It's really powerful. Once you've got it and know how to use it, put your evidence out there; it gets dialogues going. That's where you want to put your evidence like quotes or podcasts. There's always so much going on... Don't try to do things on your own. **Pamela Barnes, Includem***

*I don't think you should ever rely on social media. For some issues we know that it can be a powerful way of judging and demonstrating that this is an issue that's got broad concern and, in that instance, it can be important. If you're trying to influence decision makers, the extent of interest showed in social media might be important, but in order to influence decision makers, it still requires those one-to-one, person-to-person types of conversations. **Prof Sandra Nutley, University of St Andrews***

TIP #9: Use networks to share/ test your messages and identify allies and advocates

Check out networks that work around evidence, such as the Third Sector Research Forum; SCVO's Policy Officers Network (PON); Inspiring Impact Network; the Alliance for Useful Evidence, and the Social Policy Analysis for Robust Knowledge (SPARK).

TIP #10: Learn as you go along and check that you are on the right track

Have strategies to identify when and how you succeeded in using evidence to influence change, and what communication methods have helped you get there. Also take note of the times when your efforts have failed and reflect on potential reasons. It is a steep learning curve so the more you try, the more you learn what works and what doesn't, and for whom.



Networks work best when they start from a practical need and are led by an issue that people want something to be done about rather than done for the sake of it, like they are told to. Networks work with the practical issues that people are faced with. There are a lot of options and evidence can be used in a number of things. They can be really useful to inform decision making in any organisation. **Dr Jonathan Sharples, University of York**

You know when you've got it right because you'll get some kind of momentum. Sometimes you'll just hear nothing, and that silence tells you something is wrong, rather than your research. You will then have to probe what happened; was it the evidence you gave? Was it not the right kind of evidence? Or was it something out of your control like it's just not the right time? The latter does happen, and it's not the fault of the evidence.

Jennifer Wallace, Carnegie UK Trust

Track the effect of the evidence you are using (e.g. did it result in an amendment?); collect third party feedback and ran stakeholder surveys; record feedback, both through formal self-evaluations but also anecdotes from those you work with or use your reports (e.g. how do they use them?). **Dee Fraser, Coalition of Care and Support Providers in Scotland**

Part 3: Additional Resources



Resources for Part 1: Generating useful evidence

The following practical guides can help you check that you have good monitoring and evaluation systems in place to generate useful evidence. The list is not exhaustive and you might have resources of your own.

ESS Support Guide 1.1: Clarifying your aims, outcomes and activities

This guide clarifies the logical connection between what you plan to do (your services or activities) and the impact you are trying to make (your aim and outcomes).

ESS Support Guide 2.1: Developing and using indicators

This guide explains ways to develop and use indicators to help you measure your outcomes.

ESS Support Guide 1.2 - Developing a logic model

This guide explains ways to develop and use indicators to measure how well you are delivering your activities and to help show the differences that you are making.

ESS Support Guide 5.1: Getting the best from an external evaluation

This guide looks at how you can get the best from external consultants.

ESS Support Guide: How to budget for self-evaluation

This short guide is about budgeting for self-evaluation.

ESS Support Guide 2.2: Using interviews and questionnaires to evaluate your project

This guide looks at some of the more

traditional approaches to collect information for evaluation: questionnaires, interviews and group interviews (focus groups).

ESS Support Guide 2.3: Visual approaches

This guide looks at some visual approaches you can use to collect information for evaluation, including: relationship maps, service use maps, lifelines and body maps.

ESS Support Guide 2.4: Using technology to evaluate your work

This guide covers some ways you can use technology to collect information for evaluation: audio, video, and photography and gives advice on how to use them.

ESS Support Guide 2.5: Storing information

This guide covers some ways you can store information that you need to evaluate your work.

ESS Support Guide 3.1 - Analysing information for evaluation

This guide covers how you can analyse the information you have gathered.

The Ruthless Research Guide to... Commissioning and managing research projects

This e-book aims to help charities and other not for profit organisations to commission and manage external research and evaluation projects.

ARC – A Practical Guide to Community-led Action Research

This guide aims to help community and voluntary groups to carry out research in and with their communities. It is based on the experiences of the Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC) of developing and delivering Community-led Action Research programmes.

Resources for Part 2: Using useful evidence

The following resources can help you get ideas to how best communicate your evidence for various audiences. The list is not exhaustive and you might have resources of your own.

Practical guides:

ESS Support Guide 3.2 - Writing case studies

One of the ways we report on our work and our evaluation is through case studies. This support guide gives some tips on how to write case studies.

ESS Support Guide 3.4 - Using qualitative information for evaluation

This guide will help you to think through how you can make use of qualitative information in evaluation. It looks at what qualitative information you might already be collecting, how you might analyse that information and how you might use it alongside quantitative information to report on your activities and outcomes.

ESS Support Guide 3.3: Report writing

This guide helps you think about how to turn your evaluation information into a report for funders and others.

Scotland Funders' Forum's Harmonising Reporting

Harmonising Reporting was published in 2010 by the Scotland Funders' Forum (SFF) to make reporting to funders less burdensome and more useful for funders and

funded organisations. It sets out tips, good practice guidance and templates for use by funders to improve reporting. There are also top tips for funded organisations on what makes a good report.

ESS Support Guide 4.1: Using what you learn from evaluation

This support guide explains about the many different ways you can use evaluation for example to get better at what you do, to engage service users, or to secure funding.

Tools:

The Policy Toolkit

The Policy Toolkit is intended to provide a practical overview of the key steps and key phases in the policy development process. It is divided into individual workbooks, which are structured around the key stages of the policy process to enable policy-makers to dip into the guidance as appropriate.

Tools for Policy Impact

This handbook provides a comprehensive selection of tools that can be used when attempting to turn research into policy influence.

SUPPORT tool for using research evidence in policy implementation

This SUPPORT tool can be used to design implementation strategies for evidence-based policies, with implementation strategies involving clients, communities, practitioners, organizations and public health systems.

Social media:

The following link contains information about different social media tools that you can use to share your evidence:

<http://theword.co.uk/blog/how-the-voluntary-sector-use-social-media-examples.html>

Video from Nesta on "The phenomenon of social media and its future impact":

<http://www.nesta.org.uk/event/social-media-force-good>.

A number of case studies are available on the Alliance for Useful Evidence's, "Social Media and Public Policy: Where is the Evidence?" report (Leavey, 2013).

<http://www.alliance4usefulevidence.org>

Helpful reading:

Tools for Implementing an Evidence-Based Approach in Public Health Practice

http://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2012/11_0324.htm

Finding and Using Secondary Data for Research Projects

http://ukdataservice.ac.uk/media/355776/britlib_13dec2013.pdf

Guidance on Contacts with the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe)

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/1066/0006095.pdf>

The resources included in this guide can be found at
www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk.

Useful websites

For guidance on how to do (self-) evaluation:

Evaluation Support Scotland (ESS) is

a registered Scottish charity that works with third sector organisations and funders so that they can measure and report on their impact. ESS aims to make evaluation valuable, relevant and proportionate.

<http://www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/>

Charities Evaluation Services (CES)

supports third sector organisations and their funders so they can focus on doing what they do best and achieve more for the causes they serve. CES's work directly helps organisations become more effective and better equipped to demonstrate their value.

<http://www.ces-vol.org.uk/>

Community Evaluation Northern Ireland (CENI) is a not-for-profit organisation

providing evaluation support services to the third sector and its funders.

<http://www.ceni.org/>

NPC is a think tank that brings shared values and different skills to both charities and funders to help them use their resources more effectively, by inspiring through new thinking and by prioritising impact.

<https://www.thinknpc.org/>

For guidance on how to measure your impact:

Inspiring Impact (II) is a UK-wide initiative to make high quality impact measurement the norm in the third sector. The programme is administered by NPC and contains five main strands of work: impact leadership; coordinating support; data, tools and methods, shared measurement and funders, commissioners and investors. Evaluation Support Scotland leads II in Scotland.

<http://inspiringimpact.org/>

Joseph Roundtree Foundation (JRF) is an endowed foundation funding a UK-wide research and development programme. JRF aims to provide evidence, ideas and solutions which show how as a society we can combat inequality and promote the common good.

<http://www.jrf.org.uk/>

For guidance on using evidence into policy and practice:

Nesta is an innovation charity with a mission to help people and organisations bring great ideas to life. Nesta is dedicated to supporting ideas that can help improve all our lives, with activities ranging from early stage investment to in-depth research and practical programmes. <http://www.nesta.org.uk/>

Alliance for Useful Evidence champions the use of evidence in social policy and practice. They are an open-access network of more than 1,800 individuals from across government, universities, charities, business and local authorities in the UK and internationally.

<http://www.alliance4usefulevidence.org/>

Policy Network is a leading think tank and international political network based in London. Policy Network organise debates and conduct research on policy and political challenges that present all governments and political parties with urgent dilemmas, either because sustainable solutions remain elusive, or because there are political barriers to their implementation.

<http://www.policy-network.net/>

The Scottish Co-production Network

is a response to the growing interest in co-production across several sectors in Scotland. The network was formed as an informal network in 2010, co-facilitated and chaired by Scottish Community Development Centre and NHS Tayside on a voluntary basis. Network events are held in different locations around Scotland, usually co-hosted by a network member, and focus mainly on practice and learning exchange to stimulate dialogue about co-production in practice.

<http://www.coproductionscotland.org.uk/>

MDF is a global training and consultancy agency, with over 25 years of experience in international co-operation. MDF's services include assisting organisations to improve performances and maximising the impact of partnerships and networks.

<http://www.mdf.nl/>

The following can help you engage with academics:

Interface is a central hub established in 2005 to connect businesses from a wide variety of national and international industries to Scotland's 23 higher education and research institutes. Interface's free and impartial service aims to stimulate innovation and encourage companies to consider academic support to help solve their business challenges.

<http://www.interface-online.org.uk/>

Third Sector Internships Scotland

(TSIS) is an innovative and collaborative partnership between higher education and the third sector to help students to find paid work experience in the third sector.

<http://www.3rdsectorintern.com/>

The UK- Innovation Research Centre

(UK-IRC) is a collaborative initiative for cutting-edge research and knowledge exchange activities on how innovation can make businesses more competitive, improve public services delivery and help the UK meet the social, environmental and economic challenges it faces.

<http://www.ukirc.ac.uk/>

The Economic and Social Research

Council (ESRC) is the UK's largest organisation for funding research on economic and social issues. ESRC supports independent, high quality research, which has an impact on business, the public sector and the third sector. ESRC is a non-departmental public body (NDPB) established by Royal Charter in 1965 and receive most of our funding through the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). Its research is vigorous and authoritative, as they support independent, high-quality and relevant social science.

<http://www.esrc.org.uk>

For communities of practice:

PolicyNL is a Canada-based vibrant policy community of practice dedicated to improving public policy development and decision making through meaningful non-partisan dialogue and more effective information sharing.

<http://policynl.ca/>

For research on the use of evidence to influence change:

The **Evidence Exchange project** (Carnegie UK Trust and Joseph Roundtree Foundation partnership) aims to test out whether there is demand for better evidence sharing across the UK and, if there is, to consider how we might best go about responding and stimulating further demand.

<http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/changing-minds/knowledge---culture/evidence-exchange>

For guidance on a bit of everything:

Know How Non Profit is the online place for nonprofit people to learn and share what they have learnt with others. Whether you work in a large charity, are setting up your own social enterprise or are helping out your local community group, this site is for you. Whatever your organisation or role within it, if you want information, to update your skills or to talk to others in similar situations, this website might be able to help.

<http://knowhownonprofit.org/>

Discover the Third Sector is an online resource set up to help partnership working between the statutory and third sectors. It is part of a wider work that aims to build closer relationships across sectors to help improve health and social care, produce better outcomes for individuals and families, support co-production, person-centredness and preventative approaches.

<http://www.discoverthethirdsector.org.uk>

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We would value your feedback

Your evidence could help us improve this guide further so please share your thoughts with the KTN. Did you find the guidance useful? Do you have any comments on how it can be improved? If so, please return any comments or queries to:

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Knowledge Translation Network (KTN)

Glossary of terms

Evaluation - A process of asking questions, gathering evidence, analysing it and then being prepared to act on the results.

Inputs - The resources you need to carry out your activities (e.g. staff, funding).

Learning organisation - An organisation that learns and celebrates from what works but that is not afraid of finding out what does not work and acts on the evidence to improve.

Logic model - A logic model tells the story of your project or programme in a diagram and a few simple words. It shows a causal connection between the need you have identified, what you do and how this makes a difference for individuals and communities. The process by which you develop a logic model is logic modelling.

Outcome - The change or difference you make through your activities.

Outputs - The activities or services that an organisation provides.

Primary data - Information that is gathered directly by your organisation (e.g. through user surveys, observation or self-monitoring and evaluation).

Qualitative data - Information about what you do or achieve that explains the nature of the thing you are doing or achieving.

Quantitative data - Information about what you do or achieve that tells you how many, how long or how often you have done it or achieved.

Secondary data - Information that is gathered from external sources (e.g. studies, statistics or research that have been published by other agencies).

Theory of change - A planning tool for mapping the inputs, outputs and outcomes required to achieve a particular outcome.

Policy cycle - The process whereby policy is designed, developed, implemented, evaluated and reviewed.

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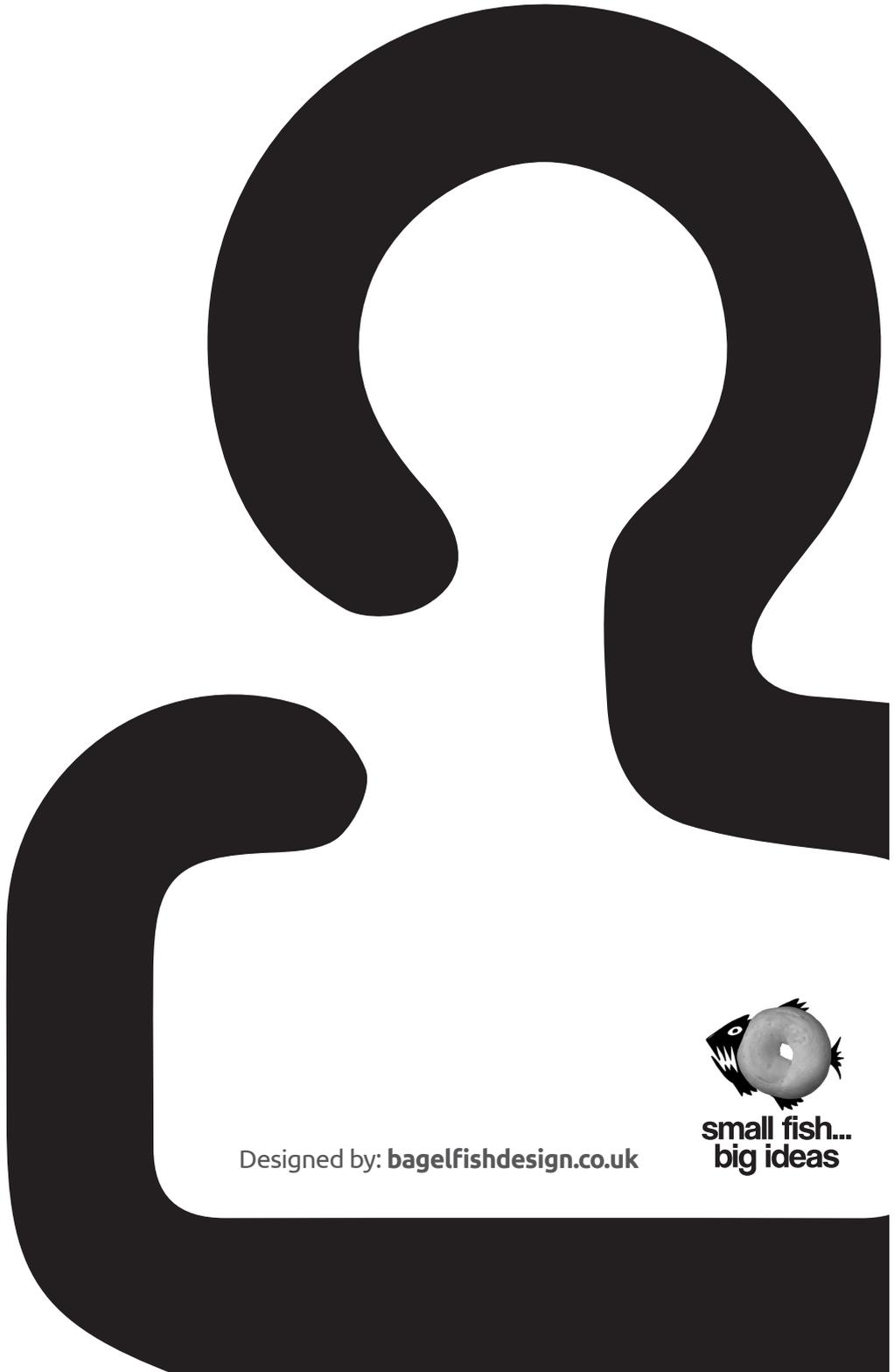
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