



## Third Sector Business Development

# Better Data: An introduction to using publically available health & wellbeing data and intelligence in business and service development in third sector organisations **May 2016**

## Introduction

This briefing aims to provide those with business/funding/service development responsibilities in third sector organisations with an introduction to some of the underlying principles that help to make up an effective business case for investment through the use of data and intelligence. The guide has been developed as part of the 'Better Data' project, a multiagency partnership led and funded by Public Health England East Midlands to improve the utilisation of publically available health & wellbeing data and intelligence by the third sector. Further support materials and resources can be found on the ['Better Data' project](#) webpage hosted by One East Midlands.

## Background

In the current financial climate all organisations are having to work harder to secure the necessary financial investment to continue to deliver vital services for the benefit of local communities across England. At a time of austerity the intensity of the competition increases as organisations compete against each other for reduced amounts of funding.

This is particularly true in the third sector where many organisations are currently grappling with the long standing issue of sustainability. To add to the complexity of the situation organisations must also consider

which funding opportunities they wish to explore. This could be represented through public sector tenders from local or national government bodies, grant funding applications, major European Funded programmes or a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities.

Whilst numerous opportunities exist it can be difficult for organisations to know how to approach different stakeholders with a compelling case for investment. Typically organisations may not have the awareness or time to research, access and apply a range of possible data sources. This can often manifest itself in applications and approaches that are heavily reliant on internal organisational data, systems and processes. Whilst an internal perspective is a critical part of any effective business case or funding application there are inherent dangers of creating cases for investment that have weak relationships with a range of external factors. By these external factors we might mean recognised research materials, emerging government policy, credible sources of data on assessed need.

The below steps describes how readily available data and intelligence tools can be utilised to support business case development and assisting in demonstrating service outcomes on an ongoing basis.



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## STEP ONE Understanding the strategic priorities of funder or commissioner of services

Before approaching any funder or commissioner it is useful to consider the specific strategic priorities and challenges that they are committed to as an organisation. The main aim of doing background research around the aims of funders and commissioners is to understand the key priorities which they are keen to address or tackle. Any insights that you gain can be used to frame your approach to potential funders.

For example an organisation interested in delivering services on behalf of their Local Authority to address homelessness should consult the homelessness chapter of the council's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA). As an example, reference to [the Homelessness JSNA chapter in Nottingham](#) reveals specific details on existing service gaps and unmet needs affecting homeless people. These include the need to:

- improve the marketing of services to those at risk of homelessness
- adapt provision to cater for the increasing numbers of Eastern Europeans who are 'rough sleeping' in Nottingham.

The JSNA also reveals the cost benefits of homelessness prevention and the underlying priorities associated with Nottingham's Homelessness prevention strategy.

Similarly local Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategies also represent a key intelligence source to understand the key strategic priorities of local public sector partners. For example, [Leicester's strategy for 2013-2016](#) describes prioritisation of: improving outcomes for children and young people, reducing premature mortality, supporting independence, mental health and emotional resilience, and addressing wider social determinants which impact upon health.

## STEP TWO Extracting the data and intelligence to evidence the need for the services you provide

To create a business case for any product or service that you provide, most third sector organisations have a significant amount of internally held data and intelligence which could be used to build an 'evidence of service usage'.

Whilst this is a potentially valuable resource it is also imperative that organisations also research and identify alternative external sources of data that could also contribute to the development of an evidence base of need. The wider use of data and intelligence adds credibility to the development of a business case and enables organisations to create a compelling evidence base of need through the sensitive use of both internal and external data sources to provide a complementary picture of need.

Examples of valuable external resource include tools such as the [Public Health England health profiles](#) and the [Public Health Outcomes](#)



[Framework](#). Health profiles provide a diverse range of indicators that can be benchmarked against regional and national averages to quickly and easily provide valuable context around the prevalence of a particular health and wellbeing indicator. For example reference to the [Mansfield health profile](#) reveals the presence of over many indicators in which Mansfield are significantly worse than the national average. Other useful tools for determining local health need are described in the [Better Data: Making the third sector business case for health improvement briefing](#).

### **STEP THREE Aligning the outcomes of your service matched with the assessed needs of a specific area**

Organisations that have carefully considered how to promote their service to funders will have used all the intelligence gleaned from the preceding stages to develop a range of outcomes that are matched with the specific priorities and needs of a specific area. A crucial aspect of outcome monitoring involves the ability of organisations to measure the 'distance travelled' of participants through the programmes. Sensitively developed approaches to measure outcomes and progression can only support the development of a strong case for investment. Organisations that are unable or unwilling to take this broader perspective risk developing services and applications that are not aligned with the interests and priorities of key stakeholders. By comparison, if there is no recognition of existing service gaps or needs then organisations have to work much

harder to create this recognition in order to facilitate the development of a business case. The danger for many organisations is that they create applications that are not aligned with the motivations of funders or commissioners. The less contact that organisations have with funders and commissioners throughout the business development process the more likely it is that misunderstandings are likely to exist. In this respect it is important to find a common language to promote a shared understanding of key service outcomes.

### **STEP FOUR – Evidencing the credibility and quality of the service you provide**

Organisations that are approaching funders or commissioners for the first time need to work hard to illustrate the credibility and quality of the services that they provide. There are a number of tools and freely available resources that are provided by the [National Institute for Health and Care Excellence \(NICE\)](#). These resources contain specific evidence based guidance on good practice in numerous areas associated with third sector service delivery. Examples include anxiety and depression, domestic violence, housing, substance misuse and obesity.

Resources such as NICE pathways, NICE guidance and NICE standards & indicators can be used to support the evidence base underpinning the approach taken within a given service.

**Nice Pathways** provide quick and easy access, topic by topic, to the range of guidance from NICE, including quality standards, technology



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appraisals, clinical, public health and social care guidelines and NICE implementation tools. Many of the tools are aligned with third sector areas of expertise e.g. mental health services. <http://pathways.nice.org.uk/>

**NICE standard & indicators** are concise sets of prioritised statements designed to support measurable quality improvements within a particular area of health or care. They use the best available evidence which could potentially be used to assist providers to refine and improve the way they deliver services. <https://www.nice.org.uk/standards-and-indicators>

**NICE guidelines** are evidence-based recommendations on a wide range of topics, from preventing and managing specific conditions, improving health and managing medicines in different settings, to providing social care to adults and children, and planning broader services and interventions to improve the health of communities. The guidelines aim to promote integrated care where appropriate. <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/publi shed?type=guidelines>

Referenced appropriately NICE tools provide an effective additional reference point to communicate the quality of the services an organisation provides.

## **STEP FIVE - Utilising available costings evidence to promote potential cost savings through service development**

Perhaps the most compelling part of the development of a robust business case is represented by the ability to organisations to illustrate the potential cost savings that could be made. There are now publically available tools such as New Economy Foundation's [Unit cost database](#) which provide details of the specific unit costs to the state to provide specific services i.e. – accident & emergency admissions, prison services, policing incidents. These tools have potential uses to illustrate the cost savings that could be harnessed through initiatives designed to reduce demand for particular types of public services. Many of the smaller voluntary sector organisations may have particularly lean cost structures when compared with public sector infrastructure. For further resources on cost savings please consult [cost benefit analysis](#) or social return on investment methodologies.

## **Conclusion**

In a competitive funding environment all third sector organisations are faced with the dilemma of how to best illustrate the effectiveness of the services they provide. The organisations that are able to embrace the principles outlined in this guide provide themselves with the best possible foundation to achieve the desired outcomes from their endeavours to secure funding.

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