

## Outcomes data collection tools

*Do you have well defined outcomes and outcomes indicators?*

*Do you know which methods are the most appropriate to collect the data you will need?*

If the answers are *YES*, then now you have to *decide which the best tools to be used are*.

Once you have selected your methods, you can explore two options:

- Are there **existing tools** that would be suitable or that could be adapted?
- Do you want to **design your own tools**?

### 1. Finding and using off-the-shelf tools (existing tools)

Selecting an appropriate tool will involve answering a number of questions:

#### What do you want to assess?

Make sure there is a good fit between your outcome indicators and the tools you select, or you may find that participants are unable to respond, or you will get information that will not evidence the outcomes of your work.

#### How was it developed?

It's useful to know how the tool was developed, whether users were consulted and how thoroughly it was tested. You might look for research that demonstrates the reliability of the data it produces.

#### How is it being used?

Some tools were originally designed as clinical tools for use in medical settings, so check how your tool will work for evaluation purposes or try and find an organisation that has used it to assess their outcomes.

#### Will it work with your users?

Think carefully how the tool would work with your specific user group. Tools need to be appropriate to your users in terms of language, format and length. If it's too long or complicated, this will put people off completing it. Tools also need to be sensitive to your outcomes. They need to pick up the important changes in the people or situations your work affects, no matter how small these changes may be.

#### How straightforward is it to use?

You may need people to be able to complete the tool without substantial introduction or support. Your pilot may test how straightforward the tool is for participants.

#### Is any support available?

Check whether the tool comes with additional resources, such as training courses, guides or IT systems.

#### How much does it cost?

Many tools are available for free whereas others may charge (either on a one-off basis or each time the tool is used) or require you to attend a training course.

Will it give you meaningful information? Does it provide clear data that you can interpret? For example, will it show you recognisable patterns of difference across client groups?

### Do you want something that has been validated?

Finally, you may want to consider whether any tools you plan to use have been previously validated in a clinical or academic context. They may have been independently tested and shown to measure what they claim to measure. Using validated tools is considered by some people to enable organisations to provide stronger evidence of their outcomes. Validated tools should not be changed to fit your purposes.

## Resources:

### A few sources of 'off-the-shelf' measurement tools

➤ **Several outcomes and experience measures (CORC)**

[www.corc.uk.net/outcome-experience-measures/](http://www.corc.uk.net/outcome-experience-measures/)

CORC put together a comprehensive list of tools to serve as an easily accessible resource for individuals looking for information on how to measure children and young people's mental health and wellbeing.

➤ **The Outcomes Star**

[www.outcomesstar.org.uk](http://www.outcomesstar.org.uk)

The Outcomes Star™ is a tool for supporting and measuring change when working with vulnerable people e.g. older people, people with disabilities or impairments, young people and children. It is widely used and is:

- Underpinned by an explicit model of change
- Carefully adapted for different client groups, including older people, mental health, families, young people, ex-offenders
- Available to download and use for free in paper format – on condition that no changes are made
- Available as a web application: the Star Online.

There is a charge for online or commercial use.

➤ **Adult and Social Care Outcomes Tool (ASCOT)**

<http://www.pssru.ac.uk/ascot/>

The ASCOT measure is designed to capture information about an individual's social care-related quality of life (SCRQoL). The aim is for the measure to be applicable across as wide a range of user groups and care and support settings as possible.

➤ **Survey Monkey**

[www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)

This sophisticated online tool is free for basic surveys. Templates exist for a range of question types. Templates are tried and tested by feedback from users in many disciplines including not for profit so there is some external methodology verification. They can be uploaded to your own website or emailed to service users. Or they can be completed on laptops at the service delivery location.

## 2. TOP TIPS on designing and using your outcomes measurement tools

- a. Be realistic about what you can do.
- b. Involve relevant people in agreeing data collection methods and designing tools.
- c. Agree methods and tools that best fit the information you need to collect and those you are collecting it from.
- d. Make sure your methods are acceptable to your key stakeholders.
- e. Base your tools on your outcome indicators.
- f. Ask questions that will give you information on unexpected outcomes.
- g. Keep your tools short, simple and clear.
- h. Develop tools that complement and supplement each other.
- i. Pilot test tools before using them.
- j. Don't forget to collect baseline data as early as possible.
- k. Make sure people collecting data are trained and supported.
- l. Try to collect both quantitative and qualitative data.
- m. Review your collection methods and tools periodically.

### Further resources: guides to designing and using your outcomes measurement tools

#### ➤ **Assessing change: Developing and using outcomes monitoring tools**

A practical handbook to help you identify and develop ways to collect information on the outcomes of your work, that is, to track the difference your work is making.

<https://knowhownonprofit.org/organisation/impact/measuring-your-impact/questionnaires/assessingchange740748.pdf>

#### ➤ **A practical guide to measuring soft outcomes and distance travelled**

A guide to help projects and organisations to understand and implement systems for recording soft outcomes and distance travelled. It has been written primarily for organisations working in the context of employability.

<http://www.networkforeurope.eu/files/File/downloads/A%20Practical%20Guide%20to%20Measuring%20Soft%20Outcomes%20and%20Distance%20Travelled%20-%20Guidance%20Document%202003.pdf>

#### ➤ **Using interviews and questionnaires to evaluate your project**

Specific guidance on using questionnaires, interviews and group interviews.

<http://www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/media/uploads/resources/supportguide2.2interviews%26questionnairesjul09.pdf>

### Support

- If you would like any support with evaluation and impact please contact Mariana Meirelles at [mariana@communitysouthwark.org](mailto:mariana@communitysouthwark.org) or for any other issues facing your organisation, please contact the Development Team at Community Southwark: [development@communitysouthwark.org.uk](mailto:development@communitysouthwark.org.uk) or 020 7358 7020.