

Fact sheet 2. What sort of evidence is available to me in Wirral Council?

This fact sheet aims to give you information to help you to understand:

- Different types and quality of evidence; and
- Local and national sources of evidence.

It will also provide links to other useful fact sheets, documents and resources that relate to evidence.

1. Types of evidence

Evidence can be considered in 3 broad domains or types - theoretical, empirical and experiential. Ideally, decisions should be informed by aspects of all three. However, the emphasis placed on each domain may vary according to the issue being addressed.

Theoretical Evidence

- How and why does/should a particular approach work?
- What is the modelled impact of a particular approach?
- What has been shown to work in previous research or what is the professional consensus?
 - Review the published literature, clinical knowledge and other relevant research in considering the rationale for your approach.

Empirical Evidence

- Measured outcomes, demonstrating the impact of a service.
 - Consider performance indicators, quantitative evaluation of impact, data collected through public surveys, cost and quality data.

Experiential Evidence

- The subjective experience of users and providers engaging with a service.
 - Consider public and/or user experience, staff response/experience in engagement surveys, evaluations and research.
 - Perhaps also consider the views of those people who don't engage in services
 - Their reasons for not engaging may inform you about barriers to access and inform awareness raising, or targeting work, for example.

For more information on the role of evidence in the delivery of services and the opportunities for evidence input and generation throughout the project cycle, see [Factsheet 1: How can I make sure my project is evidence based?](#) and [Evidence in project lifespan presentation](#).

2. Quality of evidence

It is very important to choose the most appropriate evidence for the issue being addressed. 'Gold standard' quality evidence may not always be available but this should not necessarily hinder action. It is often more important to understand and communicate the limitations and possible caveats within your evidence. Some key considerations include:

- Where has this evidence come from? Is the information/source reliable? Are any possible biases clearly stated?

- How many examples is the evidence drawn from? A single interview or a survey of 3000 people?
- If sourcing evidence from colleagues, where have they obtained their opinions from? Is their knowledge up-to-date and relevant?
- If using published documents (e.g. textbooks, scientific papers), are they up-to-date and how did the author reach their conclusion?

There is a generally accepted hierarchy of evidence, often used within the field of health but which can be applied to other areas, which categorises types of information in terms of their likely reliability. Again, the ideal is to consider a range of evidence but an understanding of reliability is important, especially where there is no clear consensus. One such hierarchy can be found on the Evidence Based Nursing Practice site: <http://www.ebnp.co.uk/The%20Hierarchy%20of%20Evidence.htm>. See also this useful [Public Health Skills Presentation on The Hierarchy of Evidence](#) produced in February 2014.

3. Sources of evidence

There are many sources of useful, valid and reliable information that will be helpful to you when evidencing your work or proposed work. As well as gathering facts and figures relating to the need for your service, you should also think about the approach that you intend to take to deliver your service. You need to know what works.

Information from existing services

At the outset, consider evidence that you may already have around you. Can you get evidence from existing services? Information from existing services may provide good evidence that there is a need for your project. Are things getting better, worse or staying the same? Look for information that can show you how things have changed over time; these trends will provide a useful context to your work. Consider performance and service data and any local evaluation reports of existing services.

Published evidence in your topic area

Try to access research and evaluations of other similar projects. Many of these will have been published in scientific journals or on websites. Are there any existing evidence based guidelines (e.g. NICE guidelines)? Have there been any systematic reviews of studies (objective summaries of all information available) that might be relevant and able to shape the design of this project?

Stakeholder perspectives

It is also important to include evidence from the people you will be working with – stakeholders. A local perspective is crucial to ascertain information about local gaps in services and what is known to be successful or unsuccessful in your specific context. Information could be sought through consulting with local residents/ users of a specific service or interviewing people already delivering services in the area. Your own knowledge and experience is also often a valuable source of information. As above, putting a range of information together and being aware of its relative reliability is the best approach.

Where can I find evidence?

There is a wide variety of local and national sources of evidence across the three domains described, including:

- The online information portal for Wirral (<http://info.wirral.nhs.uk/>) includes the local Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (including the demography of the Wirral population, the leading causes of ill-health and inequalities locally and the wider determinants of health). Evaluations

carried out locally of a number of Wirral services are available on this site as part of an 'Intelligence Hub' of information.

- The Wirral Council Performance & Public Health Intelligence Team is also a useful source of other local empirical and experiential information that may be relevant to your project area.
- The EPPI Centre - The Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Coordinating Centre is part of the Social Science Research Unit at the Institute of Education, University of London. The EPPI-Centre offers support and expertise to those undertaking systematic reviews. <http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/cms/Default.aspx>
- The Office of National Statistics (ONS) publishes diverse and detailed statistics relevant to health, including some online analytical tools. The 'Neighbourhood Statistics' section of the site allows you to access information at a very local level. (www.statistics.gov.uk)
- The Joseph Rowntree Foundation publishes a wide range of research about services for vulnerable groups. Many of these reports are available as 3-4 page summaries. www.jrf.org.uk
- The Cochrane Library is a database of systematic reviews; rigorously developed comprehensive and objective summaries of research evidence. (<http://www.thecochranelibrary.com>)
- The Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust Integrated Library Service (ILS) provides access to an abundance of published literature about Wirral and a literature searching service. Training is available on search techniques, finding and evaluating information on the web and searching the Cochrane Library and other evidence based resources. (http://www.whnt.nhs.uk/hrod/development/library_services/)
- The North West Public Health Observatory provides a variety of regional public health information, intelligence and analytical tools (<http://www.nwph.net/nwpho/>)
- Large searchable databases allowing comprehensive access to published scientific articles – e.g. Medline, cinahl, Pubmed. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed>. <http://www.ebscohost.com/cinahl/>
- The NHS evidence website provides easy access to a comprehensive and searchable evidence base that includes information on comparative quality of evidence. (<http://www.evidence.nhs.uk>)
- The Department of Health and other Government departments publish a wide range of research, statistics and evidence based policy documents – (www.dh.gov.uk)
- The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) commissions and publishes robust evidence reviews pertinent to current NHS policy and delivery. The 'Evidence Briefings' on the website are especially useful <http://guidance.nice.org.uk/PHG/Published>



More on this topic and further reading

For more information on the role of evidence in the delivery of services and the opportunities for evidence input and generation throughout the project cycle, see [Factsheet 1: How can I make sure my project is evidence based?](#)

For more information on how to construct a web or literature search, suggested format of an evidence review and considering and interpreting evidence, see [Factsheet 3: How do I prepare a review of existing evidence on a topic?](#)

For more information about evidence based practice visit: <http://www.ebnp.co.uk>