

## **Fact sheet 5: Why do I need to evaluate my project/service?**

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

- The importance of and benefits associated with evaluation.

It will also provide links to other useful fact sheets and documents that relate to evaluation.

### ***1. Why evaluate?***

Evaluation enables us to measure the success or otherwise of a project, justify its continued support, identify where outcomes need to be improved and provide an evidence base for future work. A key reason to evaluate is to improve what we do. Key outcomes of evaluation may include improved performance monitoring, demonstration of cost effectiveness and service redesign to improve quality.

### ***2. What is service evaluation?***

Service evaluation is a mechanism to provide comprehensive and reliable information about the performance and results of a project or service. A full definition can be found in [Factsheet 4: What is the difference between research, evaluation and audit?](#)

Evaluation can help to:

- assess how the objectives of the service or project are being met and any areas where they are not being met;
- assess value for money;
- assess whether a service is progressing according to plan and identify corrective actions;
- assess service users and/or service providers actual experience of a service;
- document the lessons to be learned for others and for the future;
- establish a baseline of performance against which the impact of future initiatives can be compared; and
- identify opportunities for improving current performance.

### ***3. Benefits of service evaluation***

The knowledge and information gained from evaluation can benefit your service, service users, staff, and the organisation as a whole. Key benefits include a demonstration of efficient use of resources, information that can direct service planning, demonstration of success and provision of feedback to all those involved (Meyrick and Sinker 1992).

### ***Efficient use of resources***

Without evaluation of actual impact and value of a service or who is being reached by it, it is difficult to demonstrate whether a finite resource of money or personnel is best invested in it. Evaluation can provide objective information about costs and impacts to allow comparison with other competing calls for commissioning resource.

### ***Development and informing service planning***

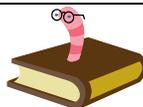
Evaluation identifies what is working and what is not. This information helps improve the achievement of service aims through a) making changes to existing activities and services, b) stopping ones that do not seem effective, c) redirecting resource to those that are working well or d) adding new ones. When results of evaluation are documented and disseminated, they can also help to improve decision-making and resource allocation in the longer term (e.g. by informing more effective project management arrangements), and avoiding repetition of costly mistakes.

### ***Accountability and providing evidence of success***

Service providers need to be accountable for the money and resources they have used. Commissioners will want to know whether their investment has been effective. Service evaluation can improve accountability by objectively demonstrating whether resources have been used efficiently and effectively to achieve the proposed aims. A well-designed evaluation will provide valuable evidence concerning both outcomes and service delivery. Demonstrating tangible outcomes and/or management action will make it easier to obtain additional resources from the funders to develop or change the service. Findings will also demonstrate to potential new funders or partners that the service is a good investment.

### ***Knowledge and giving feedback to those involved***

Members of the community, service users, staff, managers and commissioners will want to know how the service is helping them and may want to contribute to further shaping the direction of the service. Showing how the service impacts on the community or user outcomes also allows you to pass on the learning from your work to other similar local service providers. This will help to promote individual and organisational learning to improve current and future performance (DH 2002).



#### **More on this topic and further reading**

For more information about different types of evaluation, when to consider evaluation and how to evaluate your project or service, see [Factsheet 6: How do I evaluate my project or service?](#)

Examples of evaluation projects run by NHS Wirral can be found on the JSNA website: [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment - Evaluation](#)