

***Evaluating the Early Years
Early Action Fund: Exploring
Successful Outcomes
Reporting***

Steven Marwick, Evaluation Support
Scotland

Kelly Shiell-Davis, CRFR

ESS/CRFR 'Quality Ratings'

Excellent /Very Good

- Convincing outcome evidence
- Well written
- Challenges not hidden

Good

- Strong but a few gaps in relation to quality or presentation of evidence

ESS/CRFR 'Quality Ratings'

Average

- Weaknesses with evidence rigour and/or report layout
- Positive elements as well

Poor

- Evidence poor or non-existent
- Presentation/layout problems

‘ ... qualitative evaluation frequently shows up accomplishments which may not be recognized in standard outcome measures – usually labelled ‘unintended’ – but which are socially desirable, even so ‘

- Kushner, Saville. 2005. ‘Qualitative Control: A Review of the Framework for Assessing Qualitative Evaluation’, *Evaluation* 11 (1): 111 – 122.

Qualitative Outcome Questions

- Stakeholders' Views and Satisfaction?
- Symmetry and 'matching up'?
- Services meeting the needs of Fund Outcomes?
- Responses to obstacles and challenges?

DOs and DON'Ts for Outcome Reporting

- In the Early Stages
- **DO:** think carefully about how to incorporate data collection and analysis and evaluation tools into the programme from day one
- **DO:** research into the tools of measurement you plan to use to ensure they fit with your project and client group

DOs & DON'Ts for Outcome Reporting

ACTION	SERVICES	DATA	CLAIMS
CLARIFY	Layout and structure of interventions	All data should be explicitly identified & labelled	Supporting research must be referenced, explain if possible
DISCLOSE	Incomplete planned services	All collection, measurement & analysis methods	Small numbers of participants who evidence outcomes
INCLUDE	Copies of recruitment forms & participant numbers	Copies of questionnaires, surveys, etc.	How an 'achieved' indicator or outcome was defined & determined

DOs & DON'Ts for Outcome Reporting

ACTION	WRITING	VISUALS
CLARIFY	Stakeholder quotes should directly link to the outcome discussed	Use numbers as well as percentages – if percentages in a chart, numbers should be in the text
DISCLOSE	Explain any gaps in evidence	State any missing numbers or missing data
INCLUDE	Number of completed forms (feedback, baseline surveys, service completion questionnaires)	Any charts, tables, or diagrams mentioned

DOs & DON'Ts for Outcome Reporting

- **DON'T:** confuse 'target achievement' with 'outcome achievement', e.g. the number of clients participating in the programme rather than the numbers achieving the desired outcomes
- **DON'T:** use jargon and unexplained abbreviations

Ideas from Workshop Discussions

- ❖ **Obtaining and using service user views were a common strong point for workshop attendees**
- Incorporating service user views can help to highlight the ‘intangible’ outcomes and are highly effective tools for outcomes
- Areas for improvement are whole family impact assessment and extracting what children and young people ‘really’ need and want

Ideas from Workshop Discussions

- ❖ **Common challenges were related to perceptions and data management**
 - Need to induce that Evaluation \neq Judgement
 - Effective and user-friendly measurement tools difficult to find (esp for 0-3 year olds)
 - Questions around what to do with data \rightarrow need to improve the culture of research
 - Ethics of data collection can be murky
 - Accessing outside research info difficult (esp US data)

Ideas from Workshop Discussions

❖ Future developments focused on sharing and support

- A system of report templates as a learning tool
- Sharing examples of more accessible language
- Sharing examples of effective stakeholder involvement from Day 1 of a project
- Improved support for early stage evaluation and cyclical data collection/analysis
- Improved support for workers directly involved in data management and report writing (esp from funders and local groups)