

Evidence for What? Lessons from the third sector

Thursday 26 April 9.45am for 10am start, finish 12.45

South Leith Church Halls, 6 Henderson St, Edinburgh EH6 6BS

This is an invited event, for people interested in improving evidence use and in using a wider and richer range of evidence.

You will

- Hear ESS's insights from our work in the third sector about evaluation and evidence
- Share your experiences about evidence and its use
- Decide what ESS, you and others can do to improve understanding about and use of evidence

Programme

- 9.45 Arrival, tea and coffee
- 10.00 Introduction and scene setting
- 10.20 Presentation from ESS
- 10.50 Roundtable discussions / world café (including time for a break):
- Whose evidence
 - Whose outcomes
 - Who decides what's good enough
- Please see attached paper to prompt discussion:
- Have we identified the right territory
 - What is your experience?
- 12.15 Plenary discussion and action planning:
Who else cares and what should we do next alone or together
- 12.45 Finish

Thank you to the Scottish Government for supporting this event

We need to give greater value to people’s views and experiences and involve them in evaluation.

Policy context

Christie Commission suggested “public services are built around people and communities, their needs, aspirations, capacities and skills, and work to build up their autonomy and resilience”

ESS Resources

[Why bother involving people in evaluation](#)

[Evidencing genuine co-production in the third sector](#)

Stitch in time pages: [storytelling](#)

Stitch in Time evidence reports based on collecting client experiences:

[Dementia-friendly communities Edinburgh City Initiatives 2014-15](#)

["Better than Pills" Evidence of the benefits of volunteering](#)

["Getting There"](#) - Older people telling their stories of the role of community transport in their lives, May 2014

[ESS Methods sheets](#) for getting [peoples’ feedback, stories and views](#)

[How to evaluate asset based approaches in an asset based way](#)

Some things ESS thinks are important

- Co-production is when service user and professional knowledge is combined to design and deliver services
- It means a shift from top down to more equal engagement, a greater recognition of people’s experiences and a strengths based approach
- There are benefits in involving people in evaluation and in evidence
- Involving people in evaluation: there is a spectrum depending on degree of commitment from organisation and people they work with

Not everyone wants to be involved in the same way

Challenges: what’s the evidence problem we are trying to solve?

- How can we really listen and not just hear what we want or are programmed to hear?
- What should we do when there are incompatible aims and agendas (and conflicting evidence)?
- How can we hear from people who are seldom heard?
- How can we elevate experiences beyond being ‘anecdotal’? Especially when we know politicians are influenced by stories.
- We live in a sea of stories and experiences: what do we record, whom do we share it with, how do we analyse and act on stories as evidence?
- How do we combine experiences with other sorts of evidence (statistics and stories)?

Whose outcomes?

Different people in 'the system' have outcomes (for themselves, their clients, their organisation, particular communities) and need evidence for different purposes (personal planning, improving services managing performance, making funding decisions).

Policy context

There are now outcomes in legislation and they are here to stay.

National and local government are increasingly setting 'strategic outcomes'. Commissioners at local and national level need to align their services and funding to those strategic outcomes.

There is a policy focus on

- personalisation of services and on personal outcomes
- coproducing services and promoting community-led initiatives

ESS Resources

[Threading the Needle Learning Point: We need to build the focus on outcomes](#)

[Support Guide: developing a logic model](#)

[Workshop: Theory of change and logic modelling](#)

[Various thematic programmes which link project outcomes to strategic outcomes](#)

Some things ESS thinks are important

- There are outcomes at different levels: personal, project, organisational, service level and strategic
- We need to understand how they fit together and who sets those outcomes
- Different types and quality of evidence might be needed for understanding and measuring different outcomes and for different purposes
- At a community level, we need to hold higher level outcomes lightly if we want communities to take a lead
- Commissioners need to understand their own service level outcomes if they are to target and understand the effectiveness of their funding
- It's only together that we can achieve outcomes for individuals and communities; contribution not attribution
- Outcomes as road maps not targets

Challenges: what's the evidence problem we are trying to solve?

- Understanding how these different levels of outcomes differ and connect (an analytical challenge and a linking challenge)
- Understanding how to set service level outcomes
- Setting outcomes in a community setting, when the journey ahead is often unclear and it's more of an action learning process

Who decides what's good enough?

How do we combine different types of evidence and for what? How do we know if we have enough evidence of the right quality? Who decides?

Policy context

There seems to be a general acceptance that evidence informed policymaking and evidence-informed practice are a Good Thing. Updated national performance framework likely to put a fresh emphasis on evidence – and on combining different types of evidence.

ESS resources

[Threading the Needle learning point: we need to talk about data and evidence](#)

[Evidence for Success](#)

[Evidence from Elsewhere](#)

[Evidence for what infographic](#)

Some things ESS thinks are important

- We don't accept there is an absolute hierarchy of evidence
- Good evidence is useful evidence.
- A key question is good enough for what?
- It's good to get evidence from different sources
- Not enough use is made of third sector and client evidence in policy and funding decisions
- Good enough evidence is evidence that: adapted to TREBL¹ test:
 - Transparent: methods clear, limitations acknowledged
 - Relevant: up to date, appropriate
 - Enough: proportionate
 - Believable: accurate, representative, reliable
 - Legitimate: coming from the right sources

Challenges: what's the evidence problem we are trying to solve?

- Is evidence really used to make decisions?
- How can we encourage more evidence informed decisions?
- How can we build confidence in "good enough" evidence?
- How can people access evidence?
- How can assess the value of different types of evidence in decision-making?

¹ Based on R Levitt, S Martin, S Nutley, W Solesbury (2010)