

Music to my ears



This case study is about the benefits of involving young people in evaluation and may be of interest to any third sector organisation keen to encourage service users to take the lead in the evaluation process.

Where We Belong, run by [Beatroute Arts](#) in Balornock in North East Glasgow provides young people from the area with the opportunity to take part in musical drop-in sessions, performances and an annual creative residential trip to Arran, due to take place in July 2020.

Young people are involved in planning all aspects of the Arran residential, from fundraising through to finding accommodation so the Youth Engagement Worker thought it made sense for young people to also take charge of evaluation! Evaluation Support Scotland supported Beatroute Arts and other organisations to involve young people to lead on evaluation through a learning set and tailored support sessions. This work was funded by The National Lottery Community Fund.

The Spectrum of Involvement

On the next page, you can find out how Where We Belong moved from asking young people for their individual stories to young people doing some of the evaluation work.



What we did: The Youth Engagement Worker planned to involve young people in setting outcomes and indicators and collecting information but wasn't sure if she would get buy-in from the young people.

"We met with ESS which helped us think about our reasons for involving young people and gave us access to some resources (like an evaluation plan)"



How we did it: We recruited volunteers who are planning the residential to get involved in setting outcomes and indicators and choosing methods. The residential hasn't happened yet but young people have had a lot of involvement in evaluation.

Successes

- Our young people are enthusiastic and dedicated about evaluation!
- They analysed feedback from the previous year's residential, themed the feedback and set outcomes based on these themes. They then checked them out with other young people coming on the residential
- Young people chose outcomes around: improving self-confidence, developing their interpersonal skills and developing their creative skills

Challenges

- Choosing the right project to focus on took a while - in the end we chose the residential because it has a clear beginning and an end rather than a continuous service
- Some young people recognising that their personal outcomes may look different to another person's; they are looking into measuring methods that takes this into account

The difference this made:

For the young people involved:

- *"It encourages young people to take responsibility for setting their own goals and outcomes. It helps us see what needs to be done to achieve them."* – Volunteer

For the organisation:

- Involving young people in setting outcomes helped us to be fresh in our thinking, instead of focussing on methods for outcomes that were set ages ago
- Older members of the groups taking the lead is inspiring younger and newer members to get involved in the evaluation process – they are better at convincing their peers to get involved than staff are. We didn't expect this!



It gives us a new sense of determination to work towards goals that they've set themselves (club member)

Our learning: “I have learned that it’s easy to think that young people may not be interested in evaluation but if a group is leading a practical activity anyway, young people will gravitate towards it, be naturally curious without even knowing they are evaluating!”

We found it helps to involve young people who have had a previous leadership role within the project and if young people can see it’s not a token gesture. They have had opportunity to develop their own skills (gained qualifications and experience to put on their CVs!)

We suggest trying it out on one distinct project to start with.

Tips for you:

For tips on planning how you can support your service users or participants to take the lead in evaluation check out ESS’s [**Why bother involving people in evaluation? Beyond Feedback**](#)

Pages 20-25 guide you through the **planning** stage of involving service users or participants in evaluation. ESS suggest you:

- Set out clearly why you are asking the people you support to become involved in evaluation
- Define clear, meaningful roles for those involved
- Allow plenty of time



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