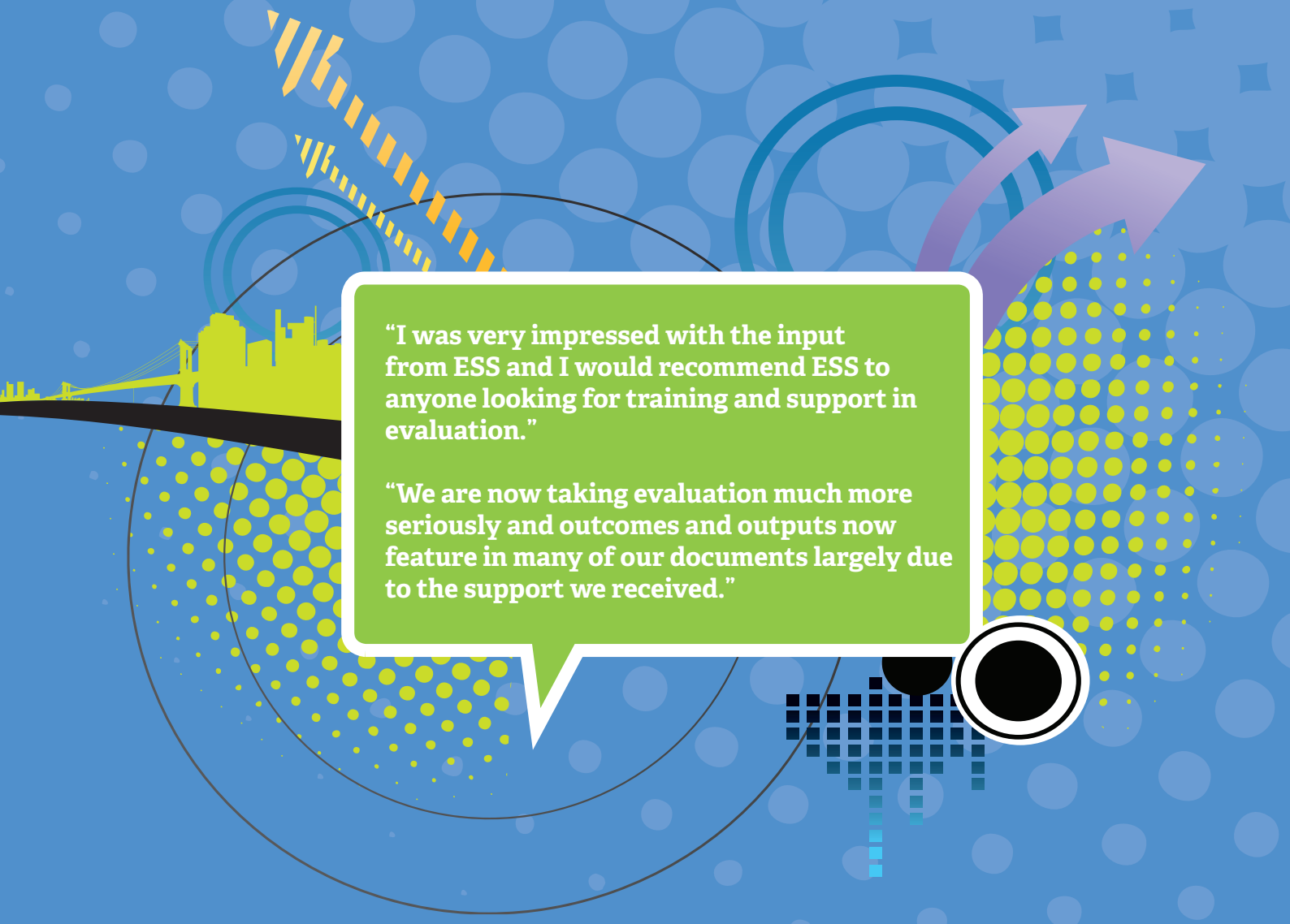
Evaluation Support Scotland

Activities and impact report 2011/12



"I was very impressed with the input from ESS and I would recommend ESS to anyone looking for training and support in evaluation."

"We are now taking evaluation much more seriously and outcomes and outputs now feature in many of our documents largely due to the support we received."

Evaluation Support Scotland (ESS) works with voluntary organisations and funders so that they can measure and report on their impact and improve their services

? What are our outcomes?

Voluntary organisations tell us they need straightforward ways to evidence their impact so they can report to funders and improve services.

Voluntary organisations and funders are better able to measure their impact and deliver better services.

Scottish Government and funders tell us they want more evidence about 'what works' so they can improve services for people and communities, particularly around prevention.

Voluntary organisations, funders and policy makers use learning from evaluation to deliver more effective services for people and communities.

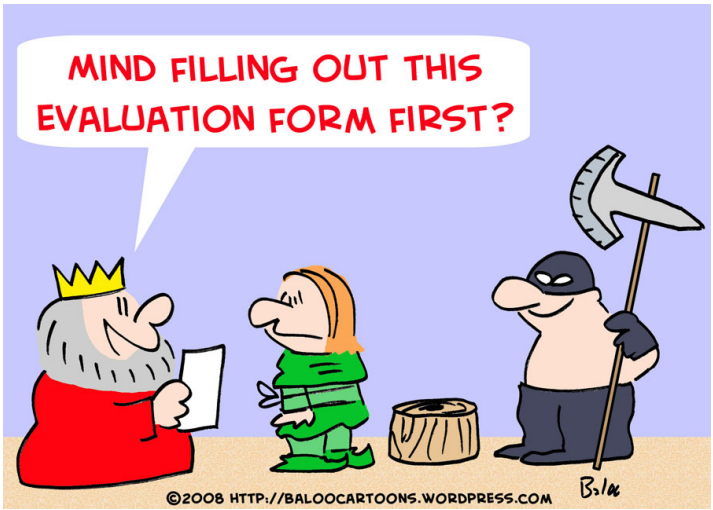
? How do we do this?

We promote **self-evaluation**. By learning how to evaluate their own activity organisations discover what works or doesn't, and make use of that learning. We believe evaluation should be **valuable, relevant** and **proportionate**.

Our focus is on **outcomes**. But we do not promote a single evaluation tool. We use different and creative ways to engage people in evaluation.

? So how are we doing?

This review sets out the highlights of what we did and the difference we made in 2011/12.



> *"Really relaxed and very interesting - amazing really, as my previous experience of evaluation was very boring!"*
> **Katie Smith, Edinburgh Volunteer Centre**

Who we worked with

What we did

141 got support by phone or email

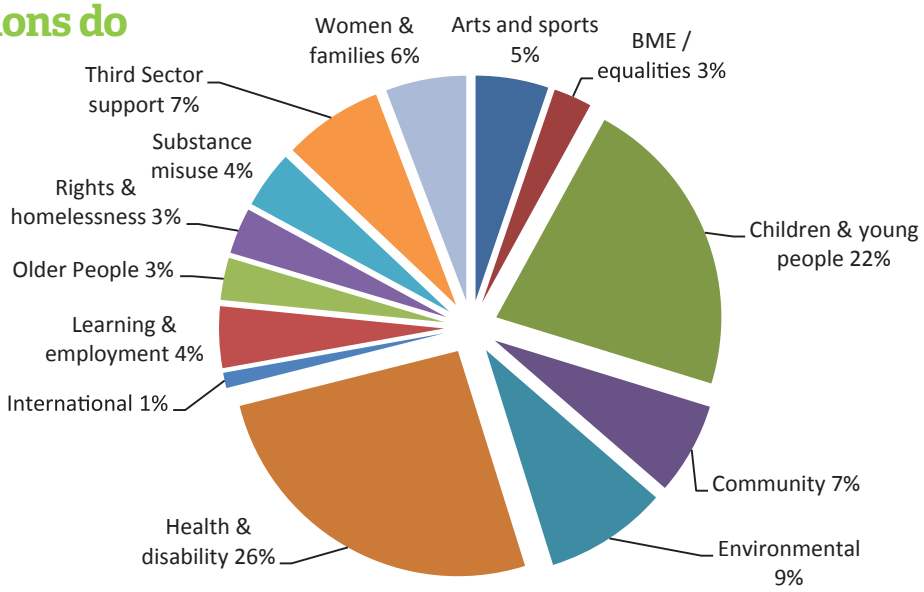
83 got tailored support

241 organisations attended workshops

559 people attended workshops

We supported 363 organisations

What those organisations do



Type of organisation

18 independent funders

308 voluntary organisations and social enterprises

24 public bodies and Gov depts

12 local authorities

Where they are - We worked in 30 out of 32 local authority areas

Training and tailored support

This is support for voluntary organisations and funders to set, measure and report on outcomes

What we did

We ran 61 evaluation workshops.

We provided tailored evaluation support to 72 voluntary organisations and 11 funders.

Our most popular workshop was *What are My Outcomes?* New workshops included *Involving Service Users in Evaluation*.

Organisations told us **we helped them learn about evaluation because:**

✓ We create a **relaxed atmosphere:** *"Manner in which workshop was delivered made the topic fun and interesting."* Substance misuse charity

✓ We are **clear:** *"Simple, clear, uncomplicated approach – easy to understand and chance to try out an example."* A health charity

✓ We are **practical**: *"Very practical, lots of great ideas but with room to think flexibly and tailor tools to our own project."* Young people charity

> *"We now have consistency in terms of understanding and awareness around the importance of evaluation, of incorporating and embedding evaluation related tasks into the way we work."*
> **Douglas Samuel, The Spartans Community Football Academy**

The difference we made

90% of organisations said **we'd helped them increase their evaluation confidence and skills.** We also know this because organisations have set outcomes and indicators, they have created evaluation methods and they have written better evaluation reports for funders and others.

> *"With your help the group got clear guidance which has enabled them to shape the evaluation the way that they wanted."*
> **James Fletcher, Director ARC Scotland**

Case study - ARC Scotland

The 'Charter for Involvement' was written by a group of service users called the National Involvement Network (NIN). With support from ARC Scotland (a voluntary organisation) and ESS, NIN carried out an evaluation to find out if the Charter has made a difference to the lives of people who receive support.

The evaluation report published in June sets out good evidence of the outcomes being achieved and organisations getting better. The moral of the story is that **service users can undertake meaningful and useful evaluation**. As one of the group said, the evaluation "will let folk see that people with learning disabilities are not stupid and can say what they want very clearly."

Evaluation Support Accounts

This is where a funder pays for funded organisations to get evaluation support

What we did

We delivered **11 Evaluation Support Accounts (ESA)** with a wide range of funders. For example:

- Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland paid for workshop places and support for 23 charities.
- Community Food and Health Scotland paid for 12 community projects to attend all of our core workshops.
- The Robertson Trust paid for 8 community sport projects to build their evaluation skills through peer learning.

The difference we made

- ✓ All organisations **improve** their **ability to set outcomes**
- ✓ Over 75% **improve evaluation systems**
- ✓ About half **improve their reporting**
- ✓ Some tell us their **improved skills help them apply successfully for funding** from other funders

> *"Projects are now setting clearer and more measurable outcomes and targets."*
> **Connie Williamson, Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland**

> *"[the ESA] has made a big difference ... our Evaluation Action Plan has enabled us to produce more effective reports for our funders as well as helping us to develop our training programmes."*
> **Carolyn Cornfield, Caberfeidh Horizons**

Case study – Climate Challenge Fund

Keep Scotland Beautiful (KSB)'s Climate Challenge Fund and ESS co-created a workshop: '*Writing Your Final Report*'. After KSB ran the workshop, participants fed back that it **improved their understanding of how to report on outcomes**. They valued hearing what KSB uses projects' reports for. Projects that attended the workshop produced reports that met funder requirements and told the story of the difference they had made through their project.

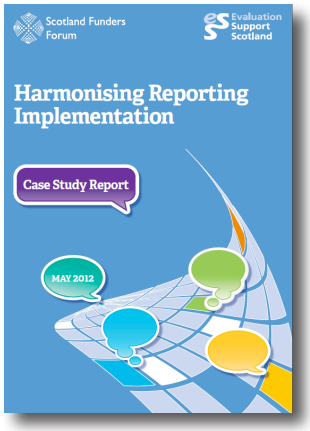
> *"We think it is really important to evaluate and report on the community actions to address climate change which Climate Challenge Fund projects are undertaking across Scotland."*
> **Keep Scotland Beautiful**

Support for funders

Direct support to funders to help them evaluate, improve their reporting systems and share learning

What we did

We ran 4 workshops for funders on working with funded groups to report on outcomes.



We provided tailored support to 11 funders to help them **improve their own monitoring and evaluation systems**.

Last year the Scotland Funders' Forum and ESS developed Harmonising Reporting, a set of practical tips and templates **to make reporting to funders more useful and less burdensome** for funders and funded organisations.

This year we wanted to find out if we are heading in the right direction and showcase positive examples. This led us to produce a case study report, which uses four case studies to illustrate how funders have adopted good practice and the positive difference this has made.

> *"We can more confidently describe to Ministers how funded organisations are performing."*
> **Scottish Government Reshaping Care and Mental Health Division**

The difference we made

Funders and funded organisations agree Harmonising Reporting is helping them make reporting more useful and less burdensome. They can point to **improved communications, better guidance** and **greater clarity**, all of which leads to a **better reporting relationship**:

Angus Council improved their guidance notes for filling in their monitoring form. As a result, monitoring forms are filled in better and there is less need for officers to contact grantees for clarification.

Big Lottery Fund amended their Investing in Communities reporting forms, in line with Harmonising Reporting.

Case study – Paths for All

We worked with Paths for All to help them **improve their systems for getting the information they need back from projects** they work with. ESS also ran workshops for funded projects. Paths for All said *"I've yet to hear anything other than very positive feedback from your sessions."*

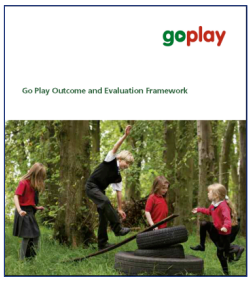
> *"This year's report was significantly easier to write ... [the report was about] what difference you made and what you learned. It gave me the opportunity to reflect."*
> **Scottish Huntington's Association (funded by Mental Health division)**

> *"We already have more useful information coming back in [from projects] which we are able to feedback to the Government so it has been a very worthwhile process."*
> **Paths for All**

Strategic programmes

Structured programmes to improve understanding of the voluntary sector contribution to a policy area

Inspiring Scotland Go Play



This programme was about explaining the contribution that play projects make to national and local outcomes. This year ESS worked with Inspiring Scotland and Scottish Government to disseminate the Outcomes and Evaluation Framework, developed last year. Inspiring Scotland, Scottish Government and play organisations used the pack to evaluate and make the case for play.

Drugs Policy Unit

We worked with four national voluntary organisations and Scottish Government Drugs Policy Unit (DPU) to increase understanding of the contribution of those organisations to the national drug strategy "Road to Recovery". We supported them to create individual and common outcomes models and helped them gather evidence to demonstrate their impact.

Knowledge Translation

Work to champion the use of evaluation evidence in policy and practice and promote self-evaluation

This includes our partnership with Scottish Government Third Sector Unit.

For example we worked as part of the Third Sector Research Forum to co-produce an evidence paper, Why involve the third sector in health and social care delivery, **demonstrating the contribution of the third sector to health and social care delivery**. The paper fed into policy work in the Health Directorate and was used to support the development of the NHS quality strategy and review how Government can improve engagement with the third sector to enhance health outcomes.

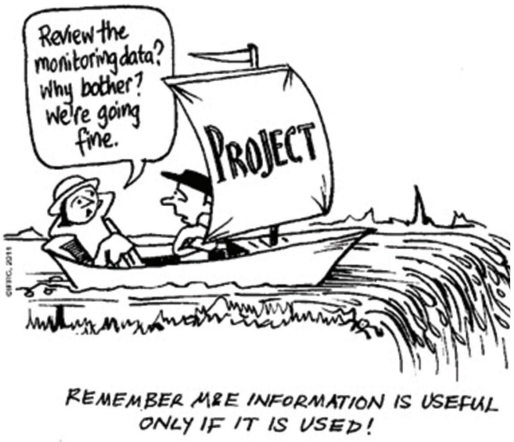
We provided support to officials across Scottish Government to help them **make funding more outcome focussed** including participating in the review of the Unified Voluntary Sector Fund.

We shared learning about third sector evidence on public service reform and preventative spend.

What did we learn?

- Voluntary organisations tell us **our clarity and friendly practical approach** to evaluation, together with a **focus on peer learning** is what **enables them to learn about evaluation**.

- Our Evaluation Support Accounts (ESAs) are effective in supporting organisations. 80% of organisations we worked with this year may not have been able to access support if their funder had not paid for it. Also the **active engagement of the funder is crucial** in ensuring positive take-up.



- We revisited organisations supported through ESAs in past years. We found organisations were more likely to sustain their commitment to evaluation systems if there is a **'champion' to keep things going**.

- We continue to make efforts to **support officials** through our partnership with Third Sector Unit **to respond to Government priorities on prevention** and other policy initiatives.

> *"We embraced the ideas given through the evaluation support ... we transferred all the learning from adults to children's group work ... As a result all of the techniques form part of our baseline before we begin any group, with evaluation being a core feature."*
>
> **A charity we supported last year, whose worker did get her colleagues on board!**

- Funders are adopting the simple steps in **Harmonising Reporting**. This is **making reporting more useful and improving relationships** with funded organisations. However, it is too early to say that Harmonising Reporting has improved reporting across the sector. We will continue to raise awareness and engage with funders.

> *"I thought you were very approachable and translated 'evaluation speak' into plain speaking as well as tailoring it specifically to the project which was ideal."*
>
> **Rights and Advice Charity – this is a typical quote!**

- Strategic programmes are an effective way of **harnessing practice level understanding about 'what works' and sharing it with policy and decision-makers**. However, we want to get better at describing the programmes, at making the links to published research and at disseminating and embedding the learning.

Our resources and people

Trustees and Company Directors

Mary Craig OBE - Convenor
Kirsten Hogg - Treasurer
Patrick Boase
Katie Campbell
Emma Crawshaw
Dr Sam Gardner
Professor Gillian Hogg
Dr Anita Morrison
Rev Barbara O'Donnell
Keith Wimbles
Prof Linda McKie (until Sep 2011)
Dr Nicola Richards (until Sep 2011)
Robin Sinclair (until Jan 2012)

Current staff

Steven Marwick (Director)
Diane Kennedy (Evaluation Support Manager)
Graeme Reekie (Evaluation Support Manager)
Patty Lozano-Casal (Evidence into Policy and Practice Manager)
Tom Scott (Training Officer)
Cecilia Corcoran (Finance and Administration Manager)

Money

Our income was £218,009 and we spent £230,368. We met the difference with reserves. We received a grant of £80,000 from Scottish Government. The rest of our income came from contracts and fees.

Our full Annual Report and financial statement for 2011/12 is on our website. Our independent examiners are Geoghegan and Co.

Evaluation Support Scotland

Address

Thorn House,
5 Rose Street
Edinburgh
EH2 2PR
Phone: 0131 243 2770
info@evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk
www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk

Registered details

Scottish Charity: SC036529
VAT number: 923 2102 72
Registered Company: SC284843

FUNDED BY
SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

The Scottish Government