

Activities and impact report

2016/17

Shining a light on third
sector evidence



**THIRD SECTOR
EVIDENCE**

EVIDENCE MATTERS.



Evidence matters. Without it how can organisations show the difference they make? They need evidence to understand what they do well or could improve. But what counts as evidence! What makes evidence 'good enough'? How can you use your evidence to influence others?

We've always talked about evidence but over this year ESS has become even more aware of the need to support different types of projects to collect and use evidence meaningfully. Our work has reflected this. We have continued to help third sector organisations and funders to collect evidence to report the difference they make and use that learning to improve their services. We have supported funders and funded to work together to collaborate for evidence - getting the right evidence in the right way for it to be useful. Responding to demand to address some evidence challenges we have tackled topics such as evaluating asset-based projects, for example evaluating Community Resilience, prevention, and policy influencing work.

This year we have also done several pieces of work to improve the use of third sector evidence by funders and decision makers, such as, in our Threading the Needle programme. The Scottish Third Sector Research Forum and Knowledge Translation Network have produced several guides about using evidence.

In this Activities and Impact Report we share more detail about our work and share evidence of our impact in a variety of ways. We also share what we have learned about evidence itself. So I hope you will continue to read and please get in touch with any feedback.

Thank you.

Steven Marwick
Director



OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES IN 2016/17

518

Organisations we worked with in total

421

third sector organisations

97

funders and public sector

We delivered

73

workshops and learning events

for

896

participants

117

tailored support sessions

We trained

675

people

from

393

organisations

86

people were involved in thematic programme¹ learning sets

from

63

organisations

70

people have participated in forums²

from

36

organisations

¹ For example Threading the Needle, Experiencing Recovery – Everyone has a Story, Harmonising Indicators Project

² For example Third Sector Research Forum, Knowledge Translation Network

WORKSHOPS AND TAILORED SUPPORT

What we did

This year we continued to support third sector organisations to improve their evaluation skills and knowledge, so that they can gather the evidence that shows the difference they make. We achieved this through our 'Let's evaluate!' workshops and advanced and tailored workshops.

By offering tailored support sessions as well, we supported third sector organisations to put their knowledge and skills into practice. 76 organisations received tailored support.

Feedback from workshop participants tells us that they rate our training highly:



SAY OUR TRAINERS WERE CLEAR



SAY THE TRAINING WAS RELAXED AND FRIENDLY



SAY THE AMOUNT OF PRACTICAL EXERCISES WAS JUST RIGHT

I really liked how the course progressed from my first course to the 2nd. It made it all really clear. I feel much more confident and less daunted.

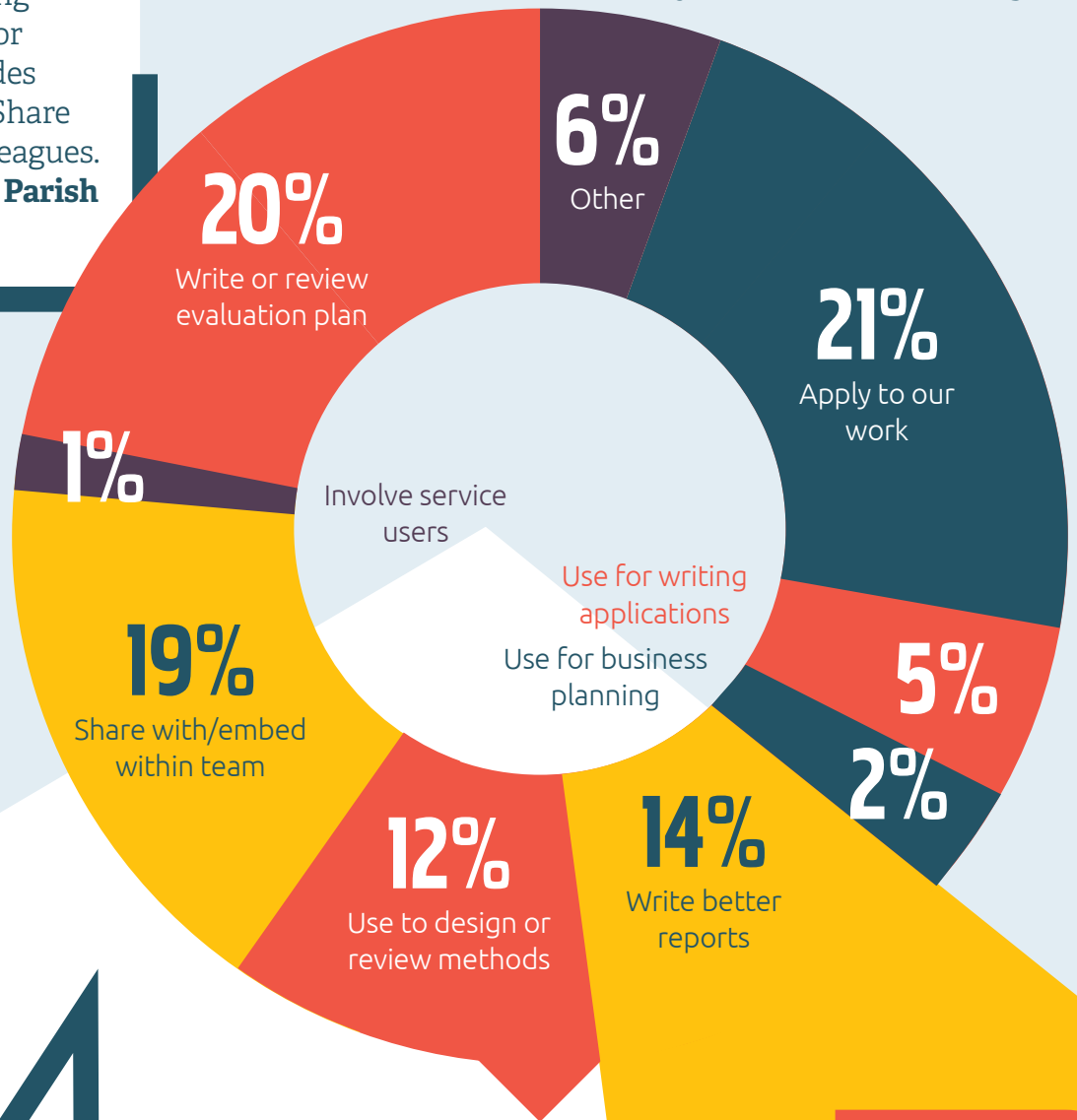
Laura Hopkins, Bishopbriggs Community Church

Fabulous, informal, fun way to learn something that can be considered a bit dry.

Joanna Lawrence, Dunfermline Advocacy Initiative



After attending workshops 417 participants said they would use their learning to:

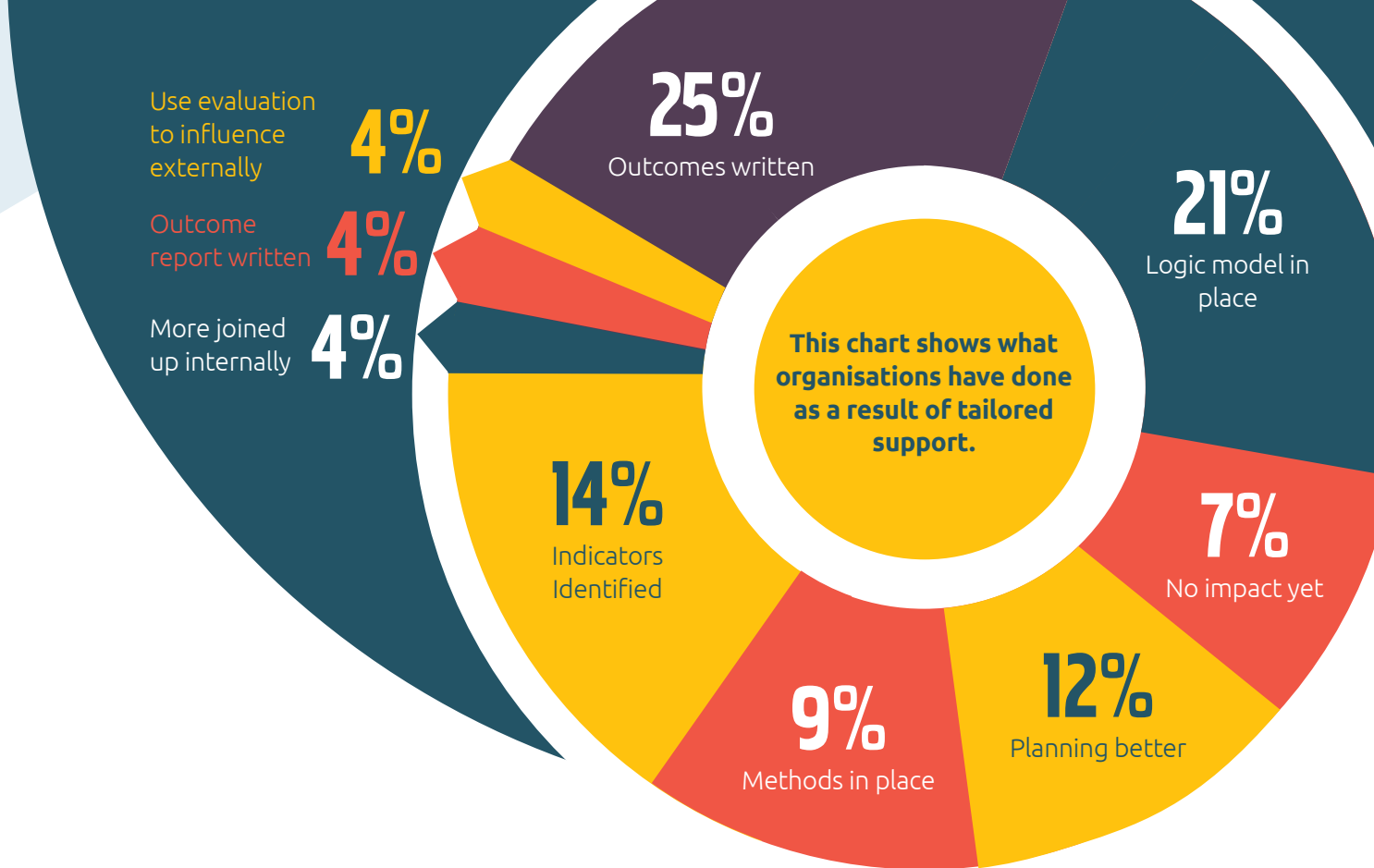


Use what I have learnt to develop a monitoring and evaluation plan for my project that includes evaluation methods. Share learning with key colleagues.
Louise Davis, Lochee Parish Church

Our organisation engaged ESS to enable the development of an evaluation framework to allow us to be in a stronger position to evidence our outcomes. They provided expert advice, simple solutions and engaged with us in a very positive way to ensure that we own the framework and now have a range of bespoke outcomes, indicators and methods.
ESS Stakeholder Survey 2017 respondent

We received invaluable support at the early stages of our project which gave us a bit more clarity and confidence about capturing data and challenged our thinking about why and what we are capturing by what means and for whom!
Laura Barrie, KA Leisure





Train the Trainer in Evaluation

We trained third sector interface staff to deliver local evaluation support.

In the last 15 years I have never had training that has been so beneficial. From basic capacity building to strategic governance, from understanding outcome evidence to funder accountability the course has been fantastic.

East Dumbartonshire Voluntary Action

What we learnt

- This was the first year of our revised core programme – Let’s Evaluate! Nearly all participants improved against the planned outcomes for the workshops and we continue to get a high standard of qualitative feedback.
- Training the trainer means ESS materials and messages reach, and are accessible to, groups that ESS could not reach alone.

Resources and tools

We published new guides and tools on our website to enable organisations to collect evidence that they may have overlooked previously or didn’t know how to capture. These included:

- Our series of evaluation methods and templates, for example ‘Capturing casual moments’, and ‘Observation’.
- ‘From the source to the sea – Understanding how befriending can help Fife Health and Social Care Partnership address its priorities’ about gathering evidence that others can draw on to inform future strategic commissioning decisions.

Feedback about our website and publications from our biennial stakeholder survey:

Excellent bank of resources, great to have access to this open source approach.

I use Evidence for Success and Evaluation method sheets and find them very helpful in encouraging out the box thinking and varied ways of evaluating.



SECTION 2: COLLABORATING FOR EVIDENCE



Embedding evaluation

We supported organisations to embed evaluation and funded by Inspiring Impact we

- Facilitated the Embedding Impact Practice Group and provided tailored support sessions. Three group members produced case studies.
- Delivered a Champions Network event on 'embedding impact practice'.
- We learned more about how organisations embed evaluation. Our guide will be published in Summer 2017.

The tailored support session was useful to get impartial advice, to share ideas, and receive support from someone with the relevant knowledge and experience. I left the session feeling really energised and ready to go back to the RSE and start phase 2 of my embedding impact plan.

Hannah Ormston, Royal Society of Edinburgh

Excellent! It was great to hear from so many different types of organisations and I'll be using some of the good practice examples to inform our own work." **Cassy Rutherford, The Robertson Trust who attended the Champions Network event**



One area of collaboration is building effective funder and funded relationships.

We deliver **Evaluation Support Accounts (ESAs)** where a funder refers a funded organisation to a workshop and/or tailored support to meet their evaluation support needs. Our main ESAs are with

- Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland
- The Robertson Trust.

And the following funders have commissioned core workshops for their funded organisations:

- RS Macdonald Charitable Trust
- Go For It Fund
- Inspiring Scotland
- Scottish Government Learning Disability and Autism branch.

We also supported organisations funded by Spirit of 2012.



FunderFest2016

Learn Share Influence Network

Our **Funder Learning Programme** is funded by The Robertson Trust. This year we engaged new funders and delivered 16 workshops and 8 events specifically for funders including:

- **Master classes:** *Small grant, big impact* master class and *Getting the best from your grant holders*.
- **FunderFest2016:** 36 funders from 28 organisations came together to look at common challenges for funders' use of evidence.

And produced publications:

- *Walking the Talk* a guide for funders on how to evaluate policy and practice influencing work.
- *Funders and Funded in Harmony* which reviewed *Harmonising Reporting* (published in May 2017).
- *Getting the best from External Evaluation: Principles for Funders*.

We learnt

- Progress has been made in meaningful reporting. Funders and funded organisations have a better understanding of evidence and are more comfortable with using and reporting on different types of evidence. But there is still more to do.

ESS helped the 11 Legacy 2014 Physical Activity Fund partners grow in confidence in their approach to evaluation and outcomes setting. ESS provided an effective range of tools to help them capture impact and learning in a meaningful way. They reported back that ESS support allowed them to rethink things and understand what is learning. The quality [of reports] had improved and they reported back on progress against outcomes not just a list of outputs.

Alex Johnston, Spirit of 2012

Authentically works with and for third sector organisations; connects and partners with others; shares knowledge and give advice while respecting where people are starting from and their own skills and assets; holds to its values.

Feedback from ESS Stakeholder Survey 2017

It was great to have the opportunity to connect, and the space to explore some interesting topics.

Janet Morton, BBC Children In Need

Harmonising Indicators



Funded by Citizens Advice Scotland we worked with Citizens Advice Bureaux and their funders to set indicators to make monitoring and evaluation more valuable and less onerous, and to improve reporting. *Indicators for Measuring Citizens Advice* was published in May 2017.

SECTION 3: RESPONDING TO EVIDENCE CHALLENGES

There has been a growing demand for ESS to address evidence challenges, such as, evaluating asset-based approaches in an asset-based way and evaluating prevention. We have responded by supporting organisations to collect evidence in new ways and to use evidence more effectively.

Evaluating prevention

We produced:

- *Evaluating prevention resource* – a 5 step approach.
- *Breaking the Pattern: Practitioner guide* to help evaluate activities that prevent violence against women and girls and *Breaking the Pattern: The Report*.
- We presented our learning on **evaluating prevention** to Scottish Government officials, The Scottish Evaluation Network, and Third Sector Prevention Roundtable.
- We facilitated a working group to create a framework to help practitioners to explain and evaluate their work to **prevent child abuse**.

Found the discussions on prevention and early intervention really interesting! The logic model was a useful exercise and the evaluation methods handouts are great – will share with colleagues.

Prevention workshop participant

I wish we'd had your 5 steps 6 months ago.
Louise Scott, Scottish Government, about the Evaluating Prevention Resource

Asset-based approach to evaluation

- We supported Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland's **Place Based** programme to support small communities in Lanarkshire, Ayrshire and Fife to develop ways to capture their impact.
- Commissioned by the Scottish Government Community Resilience Team we helped community groups to measure and report on their **community resilience** work.
- We worked in partnership with Lloyds TSB Foundation on Experiencing Recovery – **Everyone Has a Story** to build practitioners' capacity to collect, analyse and report on young people's stories.

We produced guidance:

- *How to evaluate asset-based approaches in an asset-based way*
- *How to collect, analyse and report on young people's stories.*

We learnt

- Experiential evidence, as in stories, are important sources of evidence enabling service users' voices to be heard by service providers and decision-makers.
- Reflective practice is a useful way to evaluate asset-based programmes but practitioners need support with analysis.



Evaluating policy influence

We launched *Charting the waters* - a guide to evaluating policy influence. This was produced with a third sector working group and incorporated feedback from a Scottish Government seminar.

Economic evaluation

We published research into funders' views about economic evaluation. In consultation with funders we identified key messages for third sector.



ESS builds a great rapport with the different communities and their knowledge and understanding of the importance of capturing the informal evidence in community settings is really useful. **Pam Dawson, National Place Based Coordinator**



I think the policy influence checklist is great and would be particularly useful for smaller organisations just beginning to influence policy.
Official attending the seminar



SECTION 4: USING THIRD SECTOR EVIDENCE

Supporting decision makers

Scottish Government funded programme *Threading the Needle* (TTN) supported four health and social care partnerships to use third sector evidence for better commissioning and improved outcomes.

We produced a range of reports including:

- Three 'Learning points':
 - *We need to talk about data and evidence*
 - *We need to understand where the third sector fits in*
 - *We need to build the focus on outcomes*
- *How to explore decision making and the role of evidence.*



Bringing people from different cultures and sectors together to deal with an issue works. It builds trust and relationships and confidence. **Feedback from participant at TTN final event**

We learned – all partners are equal partners – different views add to the rich tapestry of monitoring and it's no easy! **Annie Weir, North Ayrshire Health & Social Care Partnership (from blog)**

North Ayrshire improved their systems for reporting on and using evidence by all partners.

We're exploring how we connect our evidence across sectors to tell the outcomes-story of 'the individual' and better understand our collective contributions to that story. **Helen MacKinnon, Perth and Kinross Association of Voluntary Service (from blog)**

Perth and Kinross learned how third sector evidence and intelligence can feed into strategic planning.

[Threading the Needle]... **was extremely valuable** to me enabling me to consider alternative ways of developing Service Level Agreements with providers, setting realistic outcomes and outputs and above all exploring different ways to evaluate services. **Quoted in Fife storyboard.**

Fife developed systems, relationships and skills so they can better understand the impact of befriending.

The logic model **has underpinned our work**. We've been able to keep sight of later outcomes, not just the short term outcomes of the project and it's helped us to stick to collecting key information. **Jean Blackwood, Glasgow Health and Social Care Partnership**

Glasgow saw the benefits of a person-centred Anticipatory Care Plan and the role the third sector can play in enabling this.

Using evidence to improve policy and practice

ESS convenes the Scottish Third Sector Research Forum to promote and share research from and about the third sector to improve policy and practice.

In 2016 the Forum ran its third conference 'Let's collaborate for impact' attended by 69 academics, third sector practitioners and people from the public sector.



What are you taking away from Let's collaborate for impact?

Ideas

Contacts

Useful resources

Other's willingness to collaborate

Learning from presentations: brokers, different perspectives

Intelligence about solutions to address common barriers to collaboration

We learnt

- Harmonising Reporting principles work well in helping to shift the focus to outcomes and in turn enable public sector to make use of funded organisations' evidence for decision making.

The Forum produced

- *Evidencing genuine co-production in the third sector* - An evidence paper
- *How to communicate research effectively* infographic.

I think it's a really effective document for demonstrating co-production in action.
Jane Cullingworth, University of Glasgow

Feedback received this year through the Forum's work showed that we increased their awareness of third sector evidence and how it can be used.

Our **Knowledge Translation Network (KTN)** produces resources to help the third sector generate and use evidence to influence policy and practice. The KTN produced *Evidence from Elsewhere: Gathering, analysing and using other people's evidence* guide.

We encouraged the use of third sector evidence by contributing to research, publications and events.

We learnt

- We have made progress brokering conversations about 'impact' and 'collaboration' between third sector and academics. Each sector means different things by 'impact'; however, there is a willingness on both sides to collaborate.

SECTION 5: MORE EVIDENCE OF OUR IMPACT

ESS using evidence to improve our practice

Who responded to our survey

82

people responded who worked for:

64%

Third sector organisation or Social enterprise

11%

Local authority or other public sector

10%

Funder organisation

6%

Scottish Government

5%

Other

4%

University

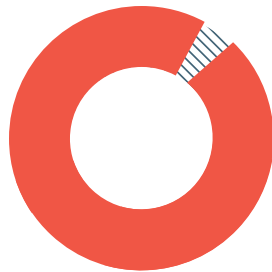
WHAT OUR STAKEHOLDER 2017 SURVEY TOLD US

97%

of respondents said they **would** refer others to ESS

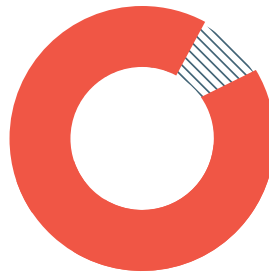
86%

had referred



94%

OF RESPONDENTS AGREED THAT ESS IS SUCCESSFUL IN MAKING EVALUATION VALUABLE, RELEVANT & APPROPRIATE



90%

AGREED THAT ESS SUPPORTS THIRD SECTOR ORGANISATIONS & FUNDERS TO MEASURE AND REPORT ON THEIR OUTCOMES

How you use our services

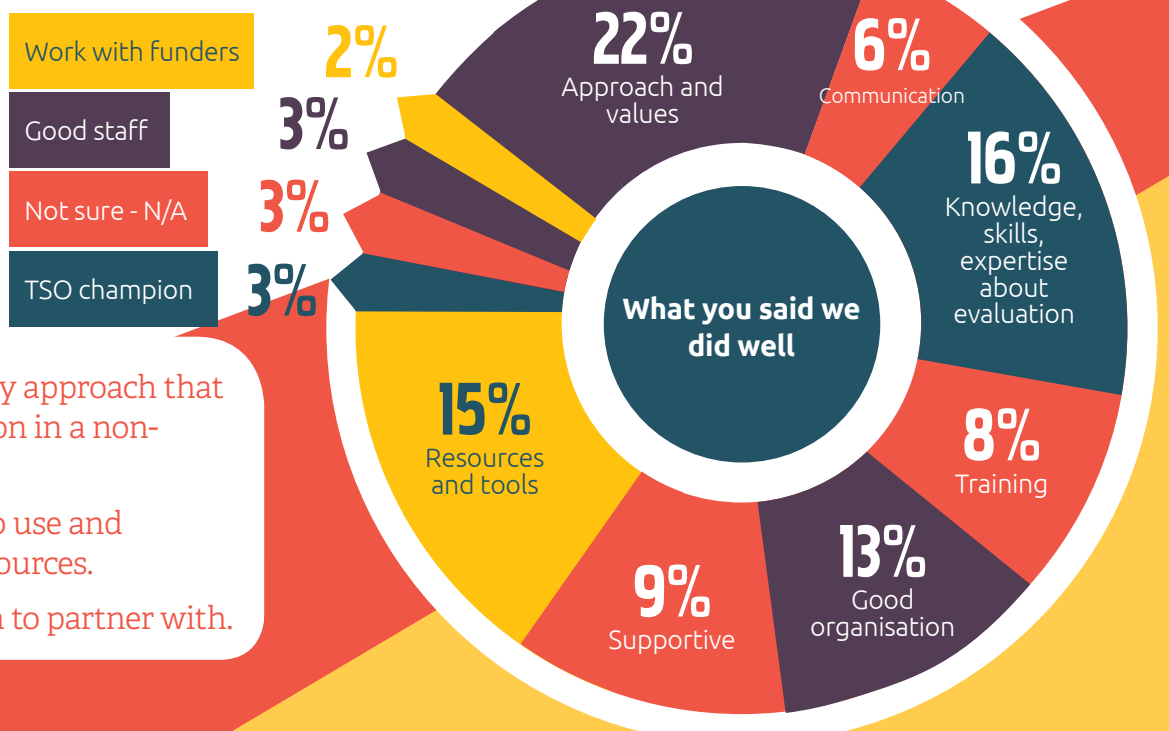
- Website
- Workshop/Training
- Newsletter Conference/Event
- Face to face support
- Working group/Learning set
- Telephone or email support
- Follow us on social media
- Member of Scottish Third Sector Research Forum

What you said we could do better

64% made suggestions for improvement which included:

- Increase our reach
- Hold more local events
- Raise our profile
- Work with statutory sector
- Improve communications

In the coming year we plan to improve our website and connect with more people working in different fields.



I appreciate the friendly approach that encourages participation in a non-threatening way.

Provide helpful, easy to use and thought provoking resources.

It's a great organisation to partner with.



Victim Support Scotland (VSS) provides support and information services to victims and witnesses of crime in Scotland. VSS had moved to an outcome focused approach but knew they were not collecting the right data consistently to show the difference they made.

What did ESS do?

ESS facilitated a **champions group** from different VSS services. The group explored VSS's outcomes and evaluation processes including indicators and methods of gathering evidence and embedding evaluation into everyday work.

The group revised the outcomes and designed a new unified evidence collection form that worked for **all** VSS services.

What made it work

Consultation and involvement, a clear rationale for change and a process to consult frontline staff paved the way for success. Read the full case study on our website.

This has given me a greater understanding of what VSS are trying to achieve with regards to their outcomes. It also confirmed to me that what we were doing previously wasn't working. **Champion**

Without the expert knowledge of ESS we would most likely deviate from the good work done so far and stray from the main objective... of evidencing outcomes.

Eilidh Brown, Operations Manager

The following extract from **Interest Link Borders** blog tells how ESS supported them to find the evaluation method that worked well and enabled them to gather their evidence and report it in a more meaningful and interesting way.

With funding from Paul Hamlyn Foundation we worked with ESS on a new evaluation strategy. ESS's advice was to become better at self-evaluation and concentrate on approaches which fitted with our way of working and our service user group... After three years, local evidencing and evaluation are now a natural part of branch activities and recent material is being drawn together for the three-yearly organisation-wide Impact Report... This hopefully strikes a balance between formally assessing the quality and effectiveness of our service over a period of time and giving a visually attractive demonstration of the range and variety of our work.

Read the full blog on ESS website.





LESS LEARNING ABOUT EVIDENCE

Through our work this year we have learnt much about the challenges of collecting, analysing and reporting on different types of evidence for diverse projects.

Key things we've learnt are:

Experiential evidence expressed as stories is an important source of evidence but can be challenging to collect. But with support, practitioners can collect and use stories to support individuals, improve services and illustrate and report on outcomes.

Reflective practice is a helpful way to evaluate asset-based programmes but difficult to analyse. The tricky bit is identifying how informal practice can be captured for more formal reporting and building an evidence bank. One of the big questions in **asset-based work** is to what extent local people are involved at every stage of evaluation, including the analysis of the information that's gathered.

Evaluating prevention is an ongoing challenge. Our resources are helpful especially the concepts set out in our 5 step approach.

People talk about 'evidence' and mean different things.

Threading the Needle produced learning **about using evidence in decision making**, blending big data with qualitative evidence, 'what works' to achieve positive outcomes and positive partnership across sectors in a complex environment.

In Scotland, we take a **different approach to hierarchal 'Standards of evidence'** as illustrated in the *Evidence for What?* infographic.

Academics can view evidence differently from the third sector.

They also do not always make the same distinction as we would between research and evaluation. This means we need clarity around roles and expectations when collaborating or sharing evidence.

OUR RESOURCES

Our Full Annual Report and Financial Statement 2016/2017 is on our website.

£366.930

Our income was

£351.910

And we spent

We received grants from the Scottish Government and The Robertson Trust. The rest of income comes from contracts and fees.

OUR PEOPLE IN 2016/2017

STAFF

Front row from left to right:

Martha Lester-Cribb (Senior Evaluation Support Manager)

Steven Marwick (Director)

Jane Marryat (Research and Communications Officer)

Back row:

Wing Yen Yip (Workshops and Office Administrator)

Diane Kennedy (Depute Director)

Emma Liddell (Evaluation Support Manager)

Lydia Morrow (Finance and Business Manager)

Shona Wells (Training Officer)

Not pictured:

Patty Lozano-Casal (Evidence into Action Manager)

TRUSTEES

Jennifer Wallace, **Convenor**

Lindsay Robertson, **Treasurer**

Andrew Fleming

Lynne Irons

Dr Joanne McLean

Dr Anita Morrison

Janet Morton

Professor Stephen Platt

Linda Rodgers

Stephanie Rose

Diana Wilkinson

Derek Young





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Evaluation Support Scotland works with third sector organisations and funders so that they can measure and report on their impact and use learning to improve policy and practice.

Our work includes delivering workshops, tailored support, learning programmes, events and facilitating Forums.

See Evaluation Support Scotland website for evaluation tools and guides, and other resources.

September 2017

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Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot



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