Evaluation Support Scotland

Challenges and Changes due to Covid-19

Useful questions for analysis and reporting

A standard section in many interim or end of project reports is '**Challenges and Changes**'. This is a section to reflect and present on any problems you encountered that slowed progress, stopped the outcomes happening, or things that were changed in how you delivered your project or service.

Challenges and changes could be internal (about how your project or organisation has been running), or external (such as a policy change, or a global pandemic!).

This section is most useful when projects go beyond **what** happened, and explain **how** these things affected their ability to do what they planned to do.

Below are some key questions you can ask as you analyse your evaluation data and get ready to report on challenges and changes. It's not a finite list, and not all questions will be relevant to every organisation. Questions like these will help you capture useful learning for the future that you can use to reflect on internally and share externally.

Affecting project activity...

How did challenges and changes affect your ability to deliver your planned activities?

- Things you had to stop delivering?

- Things you adapted to deliver in a different way?

- New activities you haven't done before?

- Were there delays in getting up and running to a new way of working?

- Did your service users need help to access your activities that they haven't needed before? Is this the same for all groups or did it affect people differently?

- Did any of these changes affect your ability to meet targets you had set (e.g. number of activities run, or number of service users supported)?

Affecting the needs of your service users...
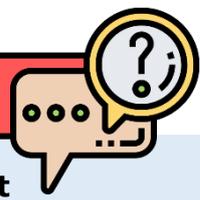
Everyone has been impacted in some way by COVID-19, but what does this look like for the people you support?

- Are the needs they already had worse or better?

- Are you supporting people that didn't have these needs before?

- Have you learned anything about how different groups have been affected?

- Are you supporting new client groups?

This will impact if and how outcomes happened...

- Did any of your planned outcomes stop being possible / relevant?

- Has your focus of your outcome shifted from *improving* something to *sustaining* it?

- Does your evidence tell you about any unexpected outcomes?

- Have your adapted activities been able to achieve the same outcomes?

Affecting your ability to evaluate...

Gaps in your evaluation data can happen for lots of reasons:

- You had to change the way you collect evidence and new methods didn't work the way you thought they would

- Quick reaction work meant you didn't have a plan for evaluating so evidence is patchy

- You haven't had access to records or resources in the office

- People's needs have shifted or worsened so it's difficult to compare to your 'before' data

Key messages on reporting

- Keep this section focused on **how** the challenges and changes affected your work and how you responded to those challenges

- Think about presentation! Using bullet points and headings makes the content easier to engage with

- Keep your report concise and to the point

- Remember to set out clearly your key learning from these changes.