

Not just capacity-building, but confidence-building too

This case study is about

... a third sector organisation (ParentSpace) using a variety of ESS support options not only to improve their evaluation planning but their confidence in evaluation too.

Read it if

... you're interested in finding out about the many different ways that ESS can support you to plan your project's evaluation.

It will tell you

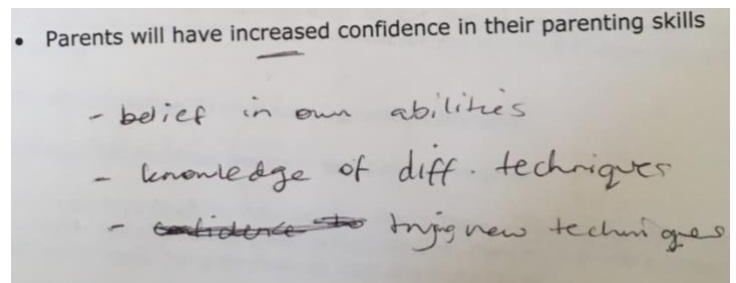
... that ESS can flexibly meet your needs, and that you probably already know more than you think about how to evaluate!

Introduction

ParentSpace was referred to ESS by The National Lottery Community Fund (TNLCF) in 2019. Karen Lerpiniere, Project Manager, hoped to start her evaluation support journey as soon as possible by attending our Let's Evaluate! workshops, but unfortunately the only available dates were some months away. For this reason, alternative support options were offered.

What we did

ESS's workbooks were a good option for Karen to start off with (these are short exercise books that are sent to participants along with the corresponding support guide; the participant completes the workbook and then discusses it with a member of the ESS team). Having completed the first workbook in the series ('Setting Outcomes'), Karen went on to have a tailored support session with an ESS Training Officer. This helped her to refine her project's outcomes and think about what indicators she'd need to measure in order to know the extent to which they were being achieved.



Following the session, Karen completed the second workbook in the series ('Working out What to Measure – Setting Indicators').

'I'm working through the workbook [...] I'm actually really enjoying it and really excited! The support notes are so helpful.'

When Covid-19 hit, Karen attended an ESS 'Why Evaluate?' online peer learning event, where participants shared learning about setting up and evaluating online services.

By this time, places on our newly developed online programme of Let's Evaluate! workshops were also available and Karen attended the two that follow the learning about outcomes and indicators: Make to Measure (evaluation methods and plans); and Telling my Story (analysis and reporting on outcomes).

Having received support in all areas of self-evaluation by this time, Karen began drafting her project's evaluation plan and had further remote tailored support (by email) to get this to a point where it was ready to be tried and tested.

'Thanks Shona and thanks for all your support with all this work! It's been so helpful.'

The difference we made

At the point of being referred by TNLCF, before receiving any support from ESS, Karen told us:

'We're very confident about the difference we want to make and in our ability to help parents make it. What we're not so good at is collecting and analysing data to demonstrate that in a strategic way.'

We saw improvements to Karen's evaluation plan every time she sent us an updated draft, and she went from scoring herself **1 out of 5** for all learning outcomes in the *Make to Measure* and *Telling my Story* workshops (where 1 means 'I really need help' and 5 means 'I'm pretty sure I know about this') to **5 out of 5**. At the end of the workshops, she said she planned to use her learning to:

'Make an evaluation plan for ParentSpace' and '[...] produce reports which reflect what our service has been doing, good and bad and what we have learned, for our own benefit, for the benefit of service users and for funders.'

Karen added:

'I have found these workshops and my whole experience of the training with ESS overall hugely helpful. Brilliant, clear, relatable and useful content delivered clearly, articulately and with humour in a friendly and welcoming way. I would highly recommend.'

What we learned

- A flexible approach that fits around participants' schedules can really help to meet their evaluation support needs, as can offering a variety of different support options
- Short interventions such as providing comments by email on draft evaluation plans can have a big impact
- Participants benefit equally from in-person and online learning (or a combination)
- Sometimes ESS's role is as much about providing reassurance and building confidence as it is about giving evaluation support

Looking to the future

Karen told us:

'I'm not going to pretend it's been easy – as usual, knowing the theory is one thing and putting it into practice another story altogether! But we're still only in our first year of using the evaluation framework and, of course, it hasn't been a straightforward year for anyone. I'm confident we'll get there and I know the support from ESS is always available if we hit a pothole in the road.'

If you are thinking of doing something similar, ParentSpace suggests that you...

'Definitely get in touch with ESS. Their help is invaluable, they're real humans with a friendly approach and a sense of humour and there's no such thing as a silly question'.

Contact details

If you would like to find out how we could support you, please contact us by visiting the [Evaluation Support Scotland](#) website.

Thank you to [The National Lottery Community Fund](#) for funding our work with ParentSpace.

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