






Evaluation Leaders' Network session 28 May 2024

Evaluation Support Scotland (ESS) convenes the Evaluation Leaders' network for people with responsibility for making evaluation happen in their third sector organisation.

The third evaluation leaders' network meeting on **28 May 2024** was attended by 26 members.



Good evaluation principles

-  About what matters
-  Fits the way you do your work
-  Involves the people you support
-  Used by you
-  Communicated well to others

We started by sharing ESS's [principles for good evaluation](#). Participants shared what good evaluation means to them – see next page.



Dave Close, Executive Director at [Hot Chocolate Trust](#) (a youthwork charity), talked us through his organisation's evaluation journey and the development of their database (www.teckledata.org.uk). "Evaluation reflects and shapes the work we do" so it is essential to **get the order right**: Start by making evaluation about what is **meaningful and significant** for young people, then evaluation is for worker reflective practice, then evaluation is for managers to use to learn and improve and finally evaluation should show the funder the difference their money makes. It **is** possible to achieve all those things and provide the funder with rich evidence. Of course it takes time to embed. A key aspect of Hot Chocolate's evaluation process is the way youth workers complete the database in the form of a letter to the young person.

Participant feedback:

"I loved hearing from Dave at Hot Chocolate Trust - I could have listened to the story of their work for much longer!"

"Hearing Hot Chocolate Trust's evaluation story from Dave himself ...the context of how it came about and their commitment to this work over many years was really inspiring."

"Hearing from Dave about his approach and commitment to reflective practice but also how that translated into the tasks (letter writing)"

What good evaluation means to us

Ability to learn

Used for continuous improvement

Helps services evolve

Robust

Reflection

Meaningful responses, good or bad

Involves everyone

Useful and used!

Not being scared of highlighting learning points or things didn't go so well

Useful and gives a better understanding

That we can show impact i.e. the difference we are making

Information for improvement, what works, what can be changed

Clearly shows impact

Involving people in a way that uses their own language/way of working

Good evaluation helps to identify the ways in which your work is helping clients

Involves others - team, staff, stakeholders, customers, etc, etc

A simple way of gathering information on the impact you're having

Something that is used and learnt from - not just sitting in a report no one read

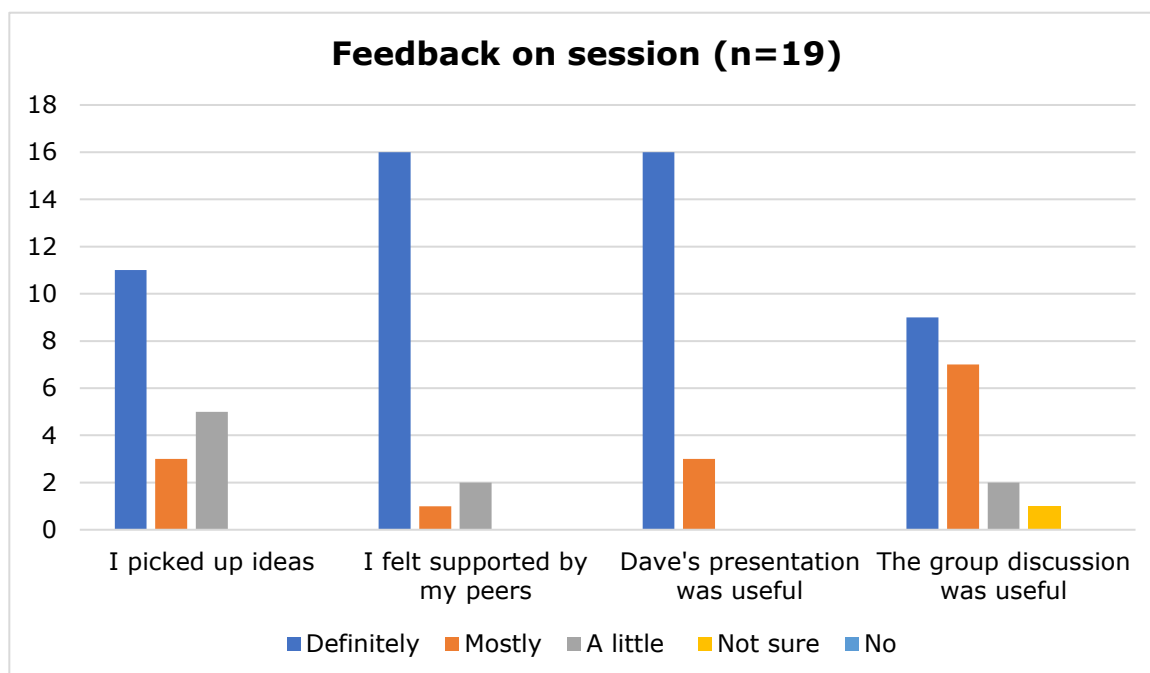
Digging out and sharing the meanings from our everyday work

Involves people you support - only customers/ service users can say what has changed for them

Succinct and meaningful

The rest of the session involved small group discussions using a "solution sounding board" (action learning) approach so members could **support each other with challenges** around getting colleagues on board, involving service users in evaluation and reporting to funders.

Session review



Themes in the qualitative feedback;

- Participants picked up **ideas** from talking with peers
- Participants were **reassured** by what we have in common
- Participants feel part of a **community**
- Participants were **inspired** by Dave

Illustrative quotes (ESS bolding):

*"Being able to talk to colleagues about similar issues and seeing **we all share some aspect of the issue**. Also, good suggestions!"*

*"I definitely benefited from other attendants' description of how they do evaluation, **I picked up ideas**, some of which I had not thought of!"*

*"Really good to chat to colleagues in different contexts about how they are involving service users and think about **how we can incorporate elements of their practice**."*

*"Just generally being in the same 'room' with **people that fully understand evaluation**. Bliss."*

*"Evaluation and impact measurement as a specialism can be **quite isolating** as few doing similar in the same organisation. So good to meet and get peer support and discussions - **you are not alone**"*

Most people who expressed a view felt **the format works well** - for example: *"I think the format works really well - nice to have some choice in topic for the breakout rooms and prompts to help etc."*

One participant thoughtfully pointed out a **challenge ESS will think about** for the future: *"The breakout rooms were really useful to chat to peers about the work we were doing, however it seemed like we were all struggling with the same thing (involving*

service users in evaluation) so didn't have many definitive answers for each other, which made conversation a little tricky at times. However still useful in getting to chat with people doing similar things. Perhaps we needed some more clarification on the solution sounding board instructions first."

There were a few suggestions about **future discussion topics** that ESS will use to design future sessions.

- Evaluating work where you are not the main contact for the beneficiary
- Dig more into technical areas, such as best practice for analysis
- Keep going the way it is for now, but let's think about what we might be facing in the future - any insight into funders changing the way they want us to report for example?

Our next session will be in the early autumn – we'll be in touch in due course with the date

Links to resources or sites mentioned in the session

www.teckledata.org.uk

<https://evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/news/a-database-with-a-heart-using-it-for-meaningful-evaluation/>

<https://www.ivar.org.uk/unrestricted-funding/>

<https://evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/news/funders-its-time-to-trust-an-evidence-based-rant/>

<https://evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/news/good-news-funders-do-read-and-use-granholder-reports/>

<https://evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/resources/evaluating-prevention/>

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