

Commissioning and conducting successful evaluations

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Covering

- Perspectives on successful evaluations
 - Commissioners/paymasters
 - Service Providers & Users (the 'evaluated')
 - Evaluators
- An unsuccessful (?) case study
- Some thoughts on how to do better

Success for Commissioners/paymasters

- The programme worked as planned
- The investment was justified
- Commissioning the project & the evaluation showed good judgement
- Results generated good publicity
 - minor changes to enhance impact
 - major lessons for their work elsewhere and good practice for other people

Success for those helping and being helped

Service providers

- Independent proof of value
- Secure existing funding
- Competitive edge when applying for funding
- Results generated good publicity
 - minor changes to enhance impact
 - good practice for other people

Service users

- Giving something back/helping others
- Pride in achievement

Success for evaluators?

- We learned something interesting- even if it was not related to the evaluation
- The work showcased (or improved) the evaluator's skill/expertise
- Enhanced reputation/promotion prospects
- The work was profitable/led to more work
- The work was publishable

The programme/intervention being evaluated does not need to be successful

An unsuccessful (?) case study

- Three voluntary sector agencies given €11m (£9m) government funding over 3 years
- Community-based support for women at risk of offending, reoffending or prosecution and imprisonment
- 4 publications
 - action research
 - outcome study
 - sentencers' views
 - service users' feedback

Why 'unsuccessful'?

'Action' research showed:

- Lack of explicit theory of change
- Funders and providers had different views on which women to help (what is 'at risk' and when is a woman 'an offender' ?)
- Variable data quality on users' needs & support given
- Data for non reconviction outcomes not available
- Dates referred to scheme missing - hard to begin reconviction count

Little 'action' resulted!

The final state of project data

	Project 1	Project 2	Project 3
Referred	1464	871	1121
% Assessed	63%	45%	89%
% Needs (of Assessed)	89%	99%	108%
% Support (of Needs)	44%	45%	51%

- Project 3 usually only recorded referral if assessed
- Workers did not record support they gave routinely
- Could not aggregate needs & support data across centres
- Recording by different staff at same centres varied

Outcome results inevitable

No difference between reconvictions of women referred to centres and comparison group

'The data available to support this evaluation was not sufficiently robust to allow firm conclusions about the impact of [intervention] on proven re-offending or other desirable outcomes (e.g. reduced drug/alcohol use). This does not mean [intervention] was not successful in achieving these, but that any success (or failure) cannot be reliably demonstrated using the data recorded by the centres and PNC [reconviction] data. These data limitations have been identified and discussed previously (Hedderman et al., 2008, 2009).

Elements of success

Service User interviews

- Valued help received
- Able to identify what made these projects different
- Highlighted what help they needed
- Identified role of self-confidence in stopping offending

Sentencers interviews

- Attitudes to sentencing men and women
- How they think about 'diversion' from custody

This is not uncommon!

Reviews of 'what works' evidence focus on positive results but also show

- Most interventions have little or no effect
- Few learn from the mistakes of others
- Comparisons across interventions or even sites is impossible without common, consistent outcome measures
- Reconviction measures are often not refined enough to pick up small effects

Some thoughts on how to do better

Planning for commissioners & service providers

- Can you articulate a model of change?
- What would success look like (put numbers on it)?
- Does monitoring data show service is delivered in line with objectives?
- Walk-through cases (mystery shopper)
- Random file reading
- Do staff feel overwhelmed/adequately trained
- Have they mentioned gaps
- What do clients/users say?

Some thoughts on how to do better

Planning for commissioners & service providers

Be a partner in, not subject to, evaluation

- Free written guidance (e.g. www.thinknpc.org)
- You cannot involve researchers too early - only too late
 - review model of change
 - check monitoring data
 - help design evaluation specification
 - otherwise make reviewing and checking first stage of evaluation

Some thoughts on how to do better

Planning for evaluators

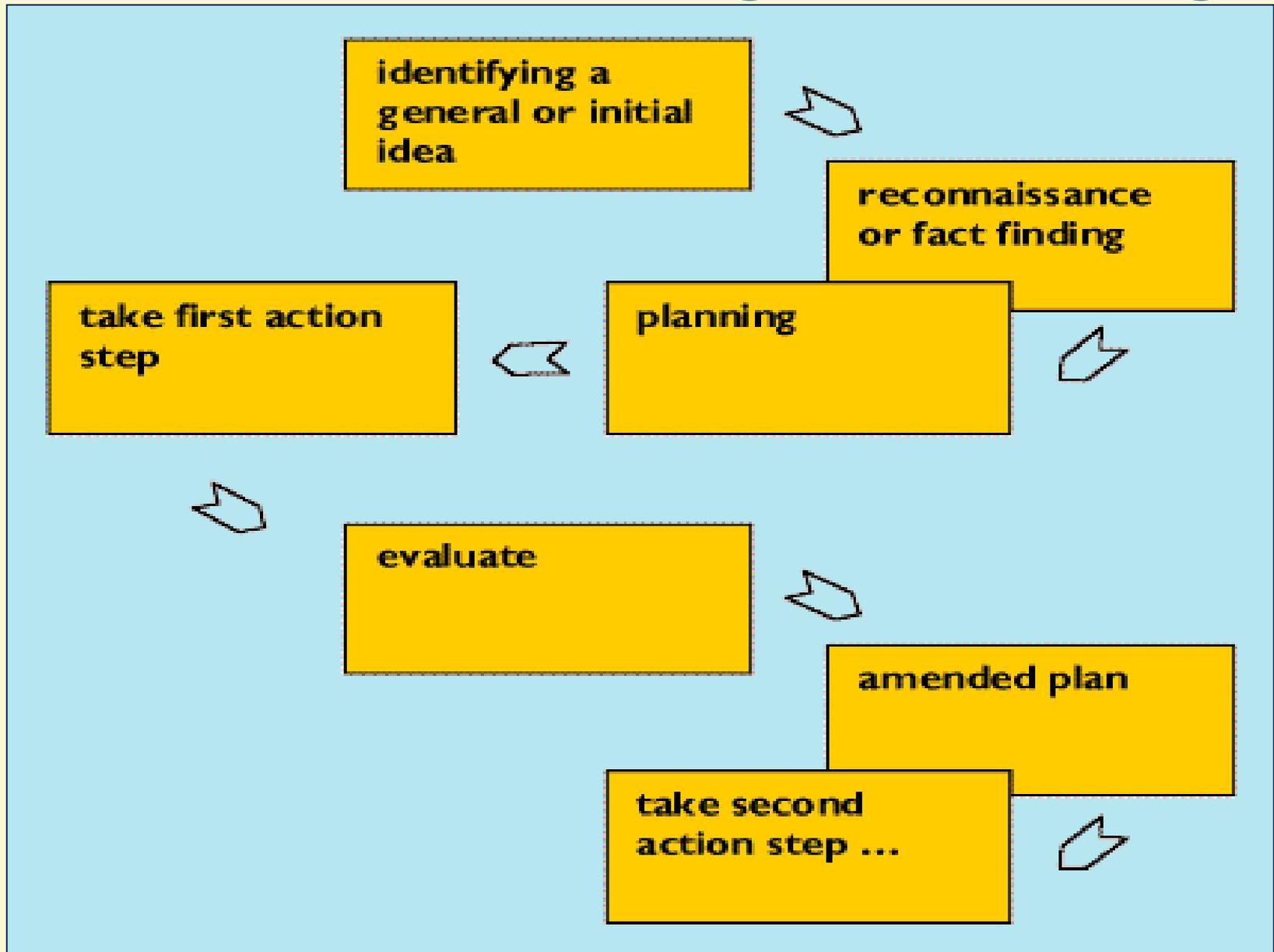
- Ask to check data availability/quality before tendering for work or as first stage of evaluation
- Can timetable be extended so data is available?
- Identify other data sources/ways of accessing data
- Suggest alternative questions which can be answered (eg reports to police rather than proven reoffending)

Some thoughts on how to do better

Action research

- Common in education/rare in criminal justice
- Aimed at improving not simply reporting
- Active partners not subjects
- The best research question I know
- Evaluator's role:
 - knowledge of other similar projects
 - 'fact-finding'
 - ensure changes are determined by evidence not instinct/convenience or habit

Action Research: 'freezing' & 'unfreezing'



Example

- Probation area with higher than expected reoffending rates
- Focused on 'what makes our reoffenders different to other area?'
- Revised question - 'what makes our reoffenders different to those who do not reoffend in our area?'
- Younger, more theft, not being supervised in line with risk scores
- Workshop - results, exercise, ideas for change
- Changes implemented (and worked!)

And finally.....reporting

'Do not impose your own ponderous scientific style for communicating results...., for science should not be necessarily a mystery nor a monopoly of experts and intellectuals' Orlando Fals-Borda (1995)

- Key points - 1 side of A4
- Report through participatory workshops (finalise written reports afterwards)
- Infographics!

ELECTRONIC MONITORING (EM) IN SCOTLAND

For more, see the SCCJR report by Graham & McIvor (2015) 'Scottish and International Review of the Uses of Electronic Monitoring', available online at www.sccjr.ac.uk

85%

ORDER COMPLETION RATE FOR PEOPLE ON A RESTRICTION OF LIBERTY ORDER (RLO) IN DECEMBER 2014.

£743

AVERAGE UNIT COST OF ELECTRONIC MONITORING IN SCOTLAND IN 2013-2014. ELECTRONIC MONITORING COSTS LESS THAN PRISON.

56%

OF MONITORED PEOPLE ON A RESTRICTION OF LIBERTY ORDER IN 2014 WERE AGED BETWEEN 16-30 YEARS OLD.



NUMBERS OF EM ORDERS IMPOSED

IN 2014

19 PAROLE ORDERS WITH EM CONDITION

1,221 RESTRICTION OF LIBERTY ORDERS

1,656 HOME DETENTION CURFEW LICENCES



GENDER OF MONITORED PEOPLE

88% OF PRISONERS ON HOME DETENTION CURFEW (HDC) IN 2014 WERE MALE.



85% OF PEOPLE ON A RESTRICTION OF LIBERTY ORDER (RLO) IN 2014 WERE MALE.