

A Short Guide to Evaluation

A brief guide to be used in conjunction with the associated “Evaluation Toolkit: For Public Health and Related Activity”

Date: August 2018
Date for Review: August 2020

Introduction

This short guide is intended as an accompaniment to the longer toolkit, “Evaluation Toolkit: For Public Health and Related Activity”. The toolkit has been designed and written to help Public Health professionals to undertake high quality evaluations of current and proposed work. Good quality evaluation is vital to Public Health work but often small changes to evaluation planning and implementation could lead to great improvement in the quality of the output. High quality evaluation can benefit projects and wider Public Health in a number of ways:

- **Demonstrate effectiveness** – It is vital that we know how effective our work is and how things can be improved. Good evaluation allows us to demonstrate to the public and other stakeholders that we are using public resources wisely by effectively improving health and reducing inequalities.
- **Improve efficiency** – By discovering the effectiveness of our programmes, we can move resources away from those which are least effective and towards those which are more effective.
- **Promote staff development and improve services** – Assessing the performance of our services helps to identify opportunities for skill development in staff to maximise their effectiveness with service users.
- **Prevent duplication and broaden impact** – Undertaking high quality evaluation and disseminating the findings means that others may not need to undertake similar work. Through this, effective programmes and interventions can spread more quickly and ineffective programmes can be identified early on.
- **Performance Management** – Evaluation can be used to demonstrate that the project or programme is performing in line with organisational objectives and to help improve performance.
- **Show good governance and accountability** – By showing that we have procedures in place to ensure high quality evaluation; we show that we take the effectiveness, efficacy and efficiency of our work seriously. Demonstrating this can serve to build and maintain public and partner trust.
- **Justify need for funding and support** – Showing the scale of uptake and effectiveness of services provides evidence of its merits to funders and commissioners.

The most appropriate evaluation will differ from project to project, but this toolkit aims to set out all of the essentials necessary to any evaluation as well as adding a number of more specific items which may be useful for particular projects. This document will cover research, audit and evaluation for Public Health projects. It is intended to be a living document, to be adapted, enlarged and edited as appropriate to changing times and needs.

The following page contains a checklist detailing the key aspects of evaluation and guiding you to the relevant part of the main toolkit for ease of reference. The larger toolkit document can be read in order or sections can be “dipped into” as needed; however, all aspects of evaluation should be considered. The sections of the main toolkit are detailed here:

1. Scoping the Evaluation

Evaluation is a systematic process which takes place before, during and after an activity. This section aims to help you determine if your work is research, evaluation or audit; and to make use of previous work undertaken.

2. Planning the Evaluation

There are a number of different types of evaluation and theoretical models for how it can be undertaken. This section helps you to consider these different types and what is most appropriate for your project. It also covers issues around resourcing the evaluation; stakeholder identification and engagement; community participation and engagement; and different evaluator roles.

3. Developing the Evaluation Question, Aims and Objectives

It is crucial to successful evaluation to define what question you are hoping to answer as well as the aims and objectives of the evaluation. This chapter leads you through this process including unintended consequences, baselines, benchmarking and risk assessment.

4. Conducting the Evaluation

This section goes through some areas of public health work and details different evaluation tools for the specific areas covered. It is hoped that this part of the toolkit will expand over time as more people add tools and advice. It currently contains information on evaluation of behaviour change interventions, community development, physical activity interventions and public mental health interventions.

5. Collecting the Data

Once you have decided the outcomes and processes you would like to measure, it is important to choose appropriate data collection methods. This section guides you through some of the more popular and useful methods helping you to decide on the most appropriate, including both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. It also runs through some of the practicalities of data collection such as survey design and how to conduct successful focus groups.

6. Data Analysis

Once you have decided on your aims and objectives, what information you want and how you are going to collect it, you must consider how the data will be analysed. Again, this section guides you through some of the more popular and useful methods, including both quantitative and qualitative methods.

7. Ethics and Governance

An evaluation cannot be said to have been successfully undertaken if ethical consequences have not been considered and taken into account. Section 7 runs through a wide range of ethical considerations which must be considered, as well as a handy checklist to make the process easier. The section also details what you must do if you need to apply for NHS research ethics committee approval.

8. Dissemination and Communication

While the results of your evaluation will be important to you and your team, it is important to make the most of your evaluation by sharing it more widely. This section gives advice on writing a report of your evaluation, communicating the evaluation to stakeholders and publishing the results of your evaluation.

DRAFT

Checklist

Scoping the Evaluation		v
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is your work Research, Evaluation or Audit? 	Section 1.1	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No need to reinvent the wheel. Have you checked for pre-existing evaluation processes? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Within the Public Health directorate? ○ In the academic, scientific and/or grey literature? ○ With colleagues in other regions, sectors etc? 	Section 1.2 (Guidance on undertaking a rigorous literature review is given in Appendix 3)	
Planning the Evaluation		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you undertaking formative, process and/or summative evaluation? 	Section 2.1	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you determined resources needed and available for evaluation? 	Section 2.2	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you identified stakeholders and assigned roles? 	Sections 2.3-2.5	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you engaged the community in the evaluation? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If yes, how? If not, why not? 	Section 2.4	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you considered who should undertake the evaluation and why? 	Section 2.6 & 2.7	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you identified any gaps in expertise and developed plans to fill these? 	Section 2.8	
Developing the Evaluation Question, Aims and Objectives		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you developed an evaluation question(s)? 	Section 3.1	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you developed the aims and objectives of the project? 	Section 3.2	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you considered how unintended consequences may be evaluated? 	Section 3.3	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you explored baselines and benchmarking options and chosen appropriate ones? 	Section 3.4	
Tools for Conducting Evaluation		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you explored evaluation toolkits/models suitable for your field of activity? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Evaluation of Behaviour Change Interventions ○ Evaluation of Community Development ○ Evaluation of Physical Activity Interventions ○ Evaluation of Public Mental Health Interventions 	Section 4.1 Section 4.2 Section 4.3 Section 4.4	
Data Collection		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you considered how you will collect data? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Questionnaire/Survey ○ Participatory Methods ○ Interviews or Focus Groups ○ Return on Investment and Social Return on Investment 	Section 5.1 Section 5.2 Section 5.3 Section 5.4	
Data Analysis		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you considered how you will analyse the data collected? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Quantitative Data ○ Qualitative Data 	Section 6.1 Section 6.2	
Ethics and Governance		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you completed the ethics checklist? 	Section 7.	
Dissemination of Findings		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you considered and recorded how the findings of the evaluation will be reported and disseminated? Is this included in the project comms strategy? 	Section 8.	