

Section 12

Evaluating success



in drugs work

Section 12: Evaluating success in drugs work

The Problem:

How do we evaluate 'success' in drugs work?

- An individual who cuts down on their drug use?
- Reduced crime rates?
- A slower rate of spread of diseases like hepatitis or Aids?
- Achieving a drug-free society?
- Catching more drug traffickers?

And what methods do we use for planning and carrying out a process of evaluation that will give useful results?

Number	Title	Purpose	What To Do	Use with Young People
40	Planning an evaluation of your drugs work	To develop a plan for evaluating drugs work, and increase understanding of the issues and methods for carrying out evaluation of drugs work.	Presentation, hand-out, group discussion, experiential exercises and planning activities.	

Activity 40: Planning an evaluation of your drugs work

Purpose

To develop a plan for participants to evaluate their drugs work, and to increase participants' understanding of the issues and practicalities in carrying out evaluation in this area of work.

What To Do

1. Each member of the group should identify an area of their drugs work they want to evaluate. They will be applying the ideas about evaluation they learn to that area of work as we go along. (This preparation could be done before the session).
2. Give a presentation of the initial design questions (Handout 59). Discuss the points fully for clarification.
3. (a) People in pairs take it in turns to work through the initial design questions in the handout for the area of work they want to evaluate.

(b) Large group discuss any further questions or dilemmas.
4. Give a presentation of the basic steps in carrying out an evaluation (Handout 60). Discuss these points fully for clarification.
5. Focus the discussion on what are indicators of success in drugs work. Ask the group to brainstorm possible 'indicators' of success. Discuss these indicators
 - who says what is success?
 - should the drug user decide what success is?
 - how can drug users get involved in the planning and evaluation processes of the work?
6. Get the group to practice using different methods of information collection by asking them to work in groups to judge how good the training venue is as a venue, using different methods.
 - One group should design and administer a questionnaire to find out the views of the rest of the group.
 - One group should design and administer a series of one-to-one interviews.
 - One group should design, use, and ask others to use, an observation recording sheet.
 - One group should gather written material about the venue, read it and write up the results.

Each group should present their data to the whole group and describe the lessons they learnt from doing it.
7. In pairs, people should discuss and write out the indicators of success and the information collection methods they might use for their evaluation of their area of work.

Reference 11

Handout 59

Evaluating success in drugs work



The initial design questions

1. What is the focus of the evaluation?

Example

Are we trying to:
(a) Explain the problem?

Why has heroin use increased in the last year?

OR

(b) Judge whether the objectives of the work have been achieved and why?

Have we achieved our aim of reducing heroin use among young men and was it our counselling programme that achieved this?

OR

(c) Judge how well the resources were used?

Did the work start on time? Did the counsellors turn up? Were people left with little or nothing to do?

2. Why Is The Evaluation Being Done?

• Who is the audience?

Our funders.

• How will the results be used?

To decide whether to continue, amend or close the project.

3. Who Will Do The Evaluation?

• Ourselves?

An independent group of consultants with experience of evaluation in the drugs field.

• Others inside the organisation?

• People outside the organisation?



Handout 60

The basic steps in carrying out an evaluation



**EVALUATING
SUCCESS**

1. Decide what is being evaluated.

Either

(a) The problem

Example

Is heroin use on the increase and if so, why?

(b) The objectives you want to achieve

We wish to reduce heroin use among men and to change their intravenous drug use so as to minimise the harm they do to themselves. The drug users themselves will set their own goals within this broad aim.

(c) The methods you intend to use

A team of trained counsellors will work in a detached way on the streets, in people's homes, to meet and talk to heroin users, and give non-judgemental advice.

2. Choose indicators that will give you information about:

(a) Whether the problem has changed and why

- Doctors' reports of heroin dependents.
- Numbers of people using heroin in a specific geographical area.
- Feedback from other professionals on prevalence (eg. youth workers).
- Increase in demand for syringes and needles at the needle exchange.

(b) Whether the objectives were achieved

As above and in addition:

- Heroin users using clean 'works' every time and not sharing needles.
- Individuals demonstrating a decrease in their usage of heroin.
- Increase in numbers using methadone substitutes.
- Positive reactions to counsellors by heroin users.

Handout 60 (continued)

The basic steps in carrying out an evaluation



3. Collect the information through:

- asking questions verbally;
- asking questions in writing;
- watching what happens;
- reading relevant materials and papers

- Counsellors keep a regular diary of who they've seen and what they saw happening.

- Questionnaires to local workers in other agencies.

- Records kept by GPs
- Records kept by needle exchange schemes.

4. Provide something to compare with, e.g.

- Do the evaluation at two or more different times

Comparisons will be made over a period of time - comparing data collected at the beginning, after six months and after a year.

5. Look at the information collected, make judgments and draw conclusions.

6. On the basis of your interpretation of the results and the conclusions, make recommendations for the future.

