Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse

Measuring your effectiveness

A practical guide for services working with children and young people affected by sexual abuse

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About the Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse

The aim of the Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse (CSA Centre) is to create a future where children are able to live free from the threat and harm of sexual abuse. Our aim is to reduce the impact of child sexual abuse through improved prevention and better response.

We are a multi-disciplinary team, funded by the Home Office and hosted by Barnardo's, working closely with key partners from academic institutions, local authorities, health, education, police and the voluntary sector. However, we are independent and will challenge barriers, assumptions, taboos and ways of working that prevent us from increasing our understanding and improving our approach to child sexual abuse.

To tackle child sexual abuse, we must understand its causes, scope, scale and impact. We know a lot about child sexual abuse and have made progress in dealing with it, but there are still many gaps in our knowledge and understanding which limit how effectively the issue is tackled. The CSA Centre is therefore committed to building the evidence base on the effectiveness of services that respond to child sexual abuse. Commissioning and providing effective services is essential to intervention and recovery for children at risk of or affected by abuse, yet there remains a knowledge gap relating to approaches that work for children.

Acknowledgements

This guide brings together learning from several initiatives and individuals, including:

- the organisations who took part in the CSA Centre's Evaluation Fund
- the individuals who shared their expertise at the CSA Centre's events
- the organisations who reviewed a draft of this document and gave their feedback.

Your feedback

We want this guide to be as useful as possible to child sexual abuse services, so we will be seeking feedback and thoughts on the guide and how services have used it.

If you are a service or commissioner accessing the guide, please provide your contact details so we can gather feedback and track the impact of the guide later in the year. We won't use your details or contact you without your consent for any other reason.

About this guide

This guide aims to provide a specific resource for services working with children and young people affected by child sexual abuse, to help those services develop their monitoring and evaluation. It focuses on how to implement monitoring and evaluation within those services, but also provides information on commissioning an external evaluation. It highlights learning from the experiences of organisations that have been funded by the CSA Centre to develop their monitoring and evaluation.

Throughout the guide you will find links to worksheets which you can use to help develop your own monitoring and evaluation systems, plus signposting to other sources of information and guidance.

Who is the guide for?

This guide is for any child sexual abuse service looking to set up or improve its monitoring and evaluation system. If you are starting from scratch with your monitoring and evaluation (either for your whole service or for a new project), Part Three of the guide will take you through the process step by step. Alternatively, if you are looking for ideas to improve your existing monitoring and evaluation systems, you may prefer to skip to the relevant sections listed on pages 4–5.

Commissioners of services in the field of child sexual abuse may also find this guide helpful in understanding more about how such services can develop the monitoring and evaluation of their work, and how commissioners can support this process.

What does the guide cover?

This guide consists of four parts:

- **Part One** provides a brief overview of monitoring and evaluation, explains why it is important and beneficial for child sexual abuse services, lists some challenges faced by child sexual abuse services wishing to monitor and evaluate their work, and outlines what you can do before you start to ensure your time and resources are well-spent.
- **Part Two** discusses issues that are particularly important for child sexual abuse services to consider when developing their monitoring and evaluation systems, such as obtaining informed consent and taking a trauma-informed approach.
- **Part Three** takes you through the stages of developing your monitoring and evaluation, from articulating your Theory of Change, documenting your approach, creating an evaluation plan and designing data-collection tools to thinking about how to report and share your findings.
- **Part Four** describes how to plan and commission an external evaluation, including how to write a brief, select an evaluator and manage the evaluation.

You can find a more detailed breakdown of the guide's contents on the next two pages.

Contents

Worksheets

You can download these from the CSA Centre website's Measuring your effectiveness page:

- Worksheet 1: Developing your Theory of Change
- Worksheet 2: Identifying outcomes
- Worksheet 3: Documenting your approach
- Worksheet 4: Deciding which aspects of your work to monitor and evaluate
- Worksheet 5: Drawing up an evaluation framework
- Worksheet 6: Running a learning workshop
- Worksheet 7: Writing a brief for an external evaluation

Part One: An introduction to monitoring and evaluation

This section of the guide provides a brief introduction to monitoring and evaluation and explains how you can go about it.

1.1 What do we mean by monitoring and evaluation?

Before going any further, it may be helpful to clarify exactly what we mean by these terms:

Monitoring	The collection of information routinely and systematically, such as through record-keeping and feedback forms.
Evaluation	Using the information collected (and other information) to make judgements on the effectiveness and quality of the work your service is doing.

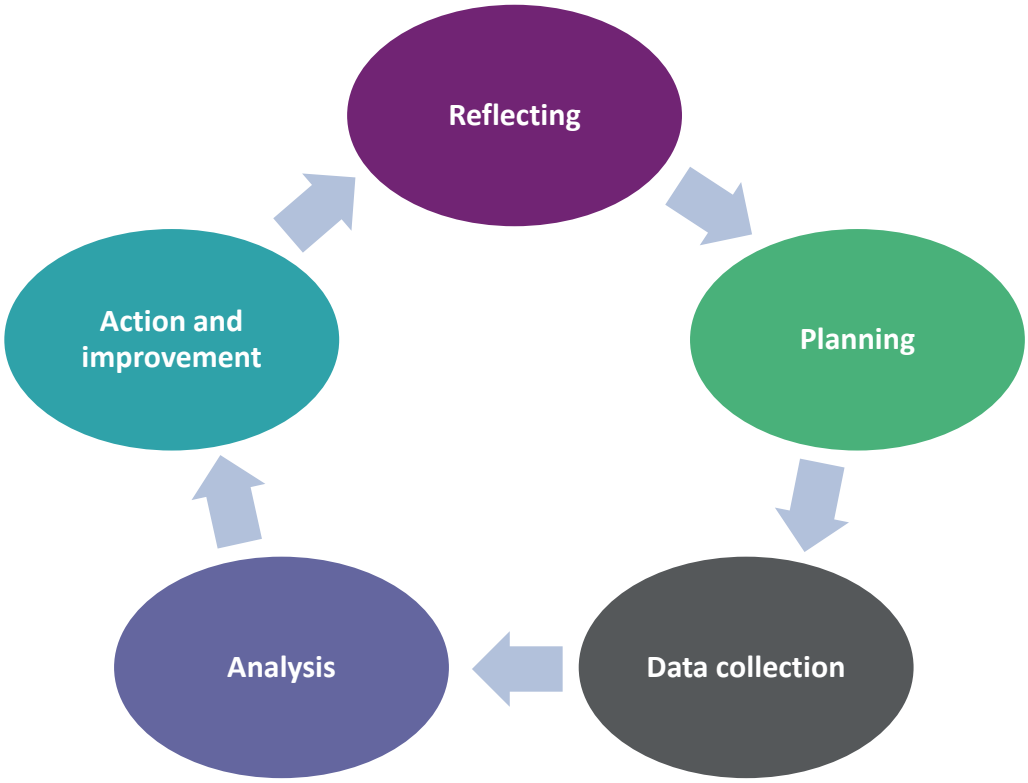
You may well be familiar with most or all of the terminology used in this guide – but if not, please refer to the glossary.

1.2 Why is monitoring and evaluation important?

Monitoring and evaluation has three main purposes. It enables you to:

- **assess progress towards the outcomes** you hope to bring about for the children/young people and others who you support
- **find out how and why things have worked** (or not worked), so you can identify ways to improve the delivery of your services
- **provide insights and information for learning and development**, which you can share with funders and other stakeholders.

As the diagram on the next page illustrates, carrying out monitoring and evaluation involves a cycle where the **initial planning** you do (such as creating a 'Theory of Change' and describing your approach) helps you to **plan** and **create ways to collect information**, which will enable you to **report to your stakeholders** and identify ways to **improve the delivery** of your services. These improvements then need to feed back into your planning, as they are likely to require changes to your approach, your Theory of Change or your monitoring systems.



Reflecting

- Developing a Theory of Change
- Understanding your approach

Planning

- Deciding what to focus on
- Creating an evaluation framework
- Identifying indicators

Data collection

- Designing monitoring forms
- Collecting data

Analysis

- Making sense of your data
- Discussing your findings

Action and improvement

- Using findings to identify improvements to services, and sharing them internally
- Sharing with stakeholders

1.3 Different approaches to monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation can be carried out:

- **internally**, where staff take charge of developing and implementing your monitoring and evaluation systems
- **through an external evaluation**, where an outside person such as an evaluation consultant carries out an evaluation of your service
- **through a combination of the two**, where staff and external consultants work together to develop and carry out the monitoring and evaluation of your service.

There are pros and cons to both internal and external evaluation:

	Pros	Cons
In-house evaluation	The people designing and implementing your monitoring and evaluation systems are familiar with the work and understand the context in which it is being delivered. Children/young people are sometimes more willing to speak to people they already know (i.e. staff or volunteers) than to external evaluators. Carrying out your own monitoring and evaluation activities may feel less threatening to staff than an external evaluation. This may make it easier for those involved to accept the findings. Doing it yourself will cost less than an external evaluation. Being closely involved in the evaluation means you can learn from the findings as you go along and more easily implement action and improvement.	Staff may have a vested interest in reaching positive conclusions about the work and may therefore not be as rigorous as an external evaluator. Other stakeholders, such as funders, may feel your approach is biased and therefore prefer an external evaluation. The team are unlikely to have all the relevant skills or experience to design an evaluation and carry out the work. Setting up new systems can take up a considerable amount of organisational time.
External evaluation	The evaluation is likely to be more objective, as an external person will have more distance from the work. The evaluator should bring a range of relevant evaluation skills and experience. Sometimes people are more honest when speaking to an external evaluator rather than those they already know (i.e. staff). Using an outside evaluator can give greater credibility to the findings.	An external evaluator will not have an in-depth knowledge of the work of your service and may not understand its culture and values. An external evaluation may require additional budget. An external evaluator may misunderstand what you want from the evaluation and not give you what you need. Service users may feel less comfortable talking to an external consultant.

1.4 Benefits and challenges for services

Between October 2017 and March 2018, the CSA Centre's 'Evaluation Fund' supported 17 providers of child sexual abuse services in England and Wales to improve their capacity to assess and evidence their services' effectiveness.

Child sexual abuse services that received support from the Fund said that spending time developing their monitoring and evaluation systems had been valuable. Some had learnt more about how their services were experienced and the difference that their work made:

> *"The testimonies of service users in focus groups and interviews have developed the organisation's thinking around outcomes and service delivery including the importance of creating welcoming and comfortable spaces." [Evaluation Fund grantee]*

> *"Spending the time to outline an evaluation framework has helped to clearly define the work we are doing and the long-term aim of this work." [Evaluation Fund grantee]*

Others talked about how they had gained new perspectives on their work:

> *"We have never conducted interviews with external stakeholders before as we have not had the time or motivation to do so, but the responses … perhaps indicate that this external feedback mechanism could prove valuable on an ongoing basis." [Evaluation Fund grantee]*

Services also described how staff attitudes towards evaluation had changed: this had previously been seen as something required by funders, but now it was "embraced", with a shift from measuring only *activity* to doing more *outcomes*-focused work.

Nonetheless, we know that child sexual abuse services face a number of challenges in developing and implementing their monitoring and evaluation activities. First and foremost, they are generally under constant pressure from many sides and simply have limited capacity and scope to design and implement activities that can capture evidence of their effectiveness. And our experience of working with services has also revealed other challenges:

- **Finding monitoring tools** that are suitable for measuring outcomes, particularly given the specific needs of and issues faced by the children/young people they support and the variety of interventions involved. In particular, some services have found that existing monitoring tools do not reflect the experiences of children/young people from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- **Collecting data from children/young people** who may find it difficult or who may not want to talk about anything that relates to the abuse they have experienced.
- **Demonstrating progress towards outcomes** when the complexity of the issues involved in a child or young person's life may make these hard to distinguish.

- **Involving children/young people** in the development or testing of monitoring and evaluation tools; this requires them to step back from their own experiences, so they need to have moved on sufficiently from the abuse they have experienced.

To find out more, read The CSA Centre Evaluation Fund: A Reflection.

1.5 Before you start

If you want your child sexual abuse service to develop monitoring and evaluation systems, bear in mind that this generally requires considerable time and resources – so it is worth thinking ahead to ensure that these are well-spent.

Commitment from the top

It is crucial to ensure that the people who run your organisation understand the value of committing time and resources to developing your monitoring and evaluation systems, as this means they will actively support the process.

You may want to make a short presentation to your management committee or trustee board, or spend some time with your CEO/senior management team talking through the advantages of engaging in this work and what it will entail.

The charity consultancy New Philanthropy Capital (NPC) has produced a briefing, Impact Reporting: What Trustees Need to Know, which explores the role of trustees in supporting their charity to report on the difference its work makes.

Someone to lead

Identifying and tasking a member of staff to lead the process of developing your monitoring and evaluation systems is also important, as they can make sure the work is well-coordinated and does not lose momentum. You should consider whether they would benefit from additional training, which can also be useful in terms of their professional development.

NCVO Charities Evaluation Services and Wales Council for Voluntary Action run training courses on monitoring and evaluation.

Allowing organisational time

It is important to recognise the amount of organisational time that will be involved in developing your monitoring and evaluation. As well as having someone to lead the process, it is helpful to allow time for other colleagues to be involved in the process. Allowing for sufficient staff engagement is crucial, as it helps ensure that everyone is on board with the process and will actively support its implementation.

> *"Having staff that were engaged with the process really helped … Work was done at the beginning to the project to discuss with staff the value of research and the practical benefits of having our outcome measures and tools shaped by client voices." [Evaluation Fund grantee]*

Schedule time in a staff meeting when you can discuss the work you envisage doing to develop your monitoring and evaluation systems, what this will entail, and what the opportunities will be for staff to be involved. This will allow people to see the value of the work and get a sense of how much time they will need to commit to the process.

Getting external support

While it is quite possible to develop your monitoring and evaluation systems without external support (and this guide aims to make the process as easy as possible), such support can be helpful in terms of bringing in additional expertise and offering a "fresh perspective".

> *"The consultant was able to guide and support us through the process … [She] was very clear about expectations and was very skilled in eliciting what was important to service users in the one-to-one interviews she conducted as well as the focus groups she ran." [Evaluation Fund grantee]*

Some funders such as Lloyds TSB Foundation, BBC Children in Need and the Nationwide Foundation provide training and/or additional funding to support grantees with organisational capacity-building activities, such as developing their monitoring and evaluation systems. It is worth talking to your existing funders to see whether this is something they would support.

Learning and sharing with other child sexual abuse services

Learning from others' experiences of developing their monitoring and evaluation, and taking account of what they have learnt to inform your own work, can be extremely helpful. Equally, others will no doubt appreciate learning from your experiences as you go along.

> *"We ran a local 'call for evidence' as we thought it would be useful to check on what practice already existed about 'what works' with children and young people. We had a positive response from six other organisations, some wanted to share practice and others wanted to hear about our work." [Evaluation Fund grantee]*

Ask other organisations you know whether they would be willing to share with you what they are doing to monitor and evaluate their work, and how this is going.

In the next part of the guide, we will look at some of the issues that are particularly important for child sexual abuse services in developing the monitoring and evaluation of their work.

Part Two: Issues for child sexual abuse services

This part of the guide considers the ethical issues that affect services' monitoring and evaluation activities, and describes how a trauma-informed approach is key.

2.1 Ethical issues

From the outset and throughout the process of developing and carrying out your monitoring and evaluation activities, it is crucial to consider the ethical issues that these may raise:

- **Evaluation should be purposeful** and designed to improve understanding and awareness of effective service responses for children and young people at risk of or affected by child sexual abuse. It should only involve collecting information that will help you to learn about the delivery and effects of your work.
- **The benefits of carrying out your monitoring and evaluation activities should outweigh any risk of harm** to children/young people, other service users or staff. You should therefore consider whether there is any risk that your activities could cause either psychological and physical harm, including putting children/young people at risk of further violence and abuse. Potential risk should be mitigated by robust transparent and up-to-date safeguarding procedures and practice.
- **Anonymity should be protected** and it should be made clear that information and personal data will be kept confidential. However, you will also need to explain the limits to confidentiality in line with safeguarding policies and procedures, including what will happen in the event of a disclosure of abuse.

For further information on ethical issues, see the CSA Centre's Framework for Research Ethics.

Informed consent

Children/young people and other service users must always give their informed consent before taking part in any monitoring or evaluation activities, i.e. you need to make sure that they are taking part voluntarily, free from any pressure or undue influence and are clear about what is involved.

They should therefore be given appropriate information about the purpose, methods and intended uses of the information they are asked to provide, what their participation will entail, and the risks and benefits of being involved. It is also important to ensure that children/young people are clear that the information they provide when taking part in monitoring/evaluation activities will not influence the support they receive from you.

You also need to think about whether you should also seek consent from a responsible adult in addition to getting consent from the child/young person.

You should make it clear that:

- they can discuss whether they want to take part or not with an adult they trust
- if they do decide to take part, they do not have to answer all the questions
- there are no right or wrong answers.

> *"Service users mentioned that the way the group was held made them feel happy to take part i.e. everything was sent out in advance including the questions they would be asked, food and drink was provided, it was held at the centre where they were most familiar, consent was made clear etc." [Evaluation Fund grantee]*

For more information on involving young people in research and evaluation, see this briefing and toolkit from Save the Children:

- **Children and Participation: Research, Monitoring and Evaluation with Children and Young People**
- **So You Want to Involve Children in Research? A Toolkit Supporting Children's Meaningful and Ethical Participation in Research Relating to Violence against Children**

2.2 Taking a trauma-informed approach

In designing your monitoring and evaluation processes, it is important to be alert to any potentially re-traumatising aspects of the process for children/young people, recognising the pervading impact of trauma and seeking to avoid unnecessarily intrusive data collection which may reinforce trauma rather than support recovery from it.

You also need to think about the needs of the children/young people you are working with and to be sensitive to their age, gender, ethnicity, disability and sexual orientation. In particular, make sure that your monitoring processes are appropriate to the age range of the children/young people you support, and do not make assumptions about their gender, ethnicity, ability or sexual orientation in the language or images used.

In practice, this means:

- ensuring that anyone involved in designing or carrying out monitoring and evaluation activities has a **thorough understanding of the kinds of trauma** that the young people you work with may have experienced, and is aware of particular issues and triggers
- carrying out monitoring and evaluation activities in a way that feels **physically and emotionally safe** for children/young people – for example, interviews should be carried out in a place that feels comfortable, and should not involve asking questions that could be intrusive or threatening
- using **appropriate language** and being sensitive to the way in which the wording of questions can come across to children/young people – for example, one of the CSA Centre's Evaluation Fund grantees found that young people considered the phrase "improved understanding of choices made by self and others" to be victim-blaming, so it amended the phrase to "an improved ability to reflect on past experiences"
- taking a **strength-based approach** to the monitoring and evaluation so that, instead of negative outcomes (e.g. reduced risk, less self-harm), the focus is on positive outcomes (e.g. increased safety, improved self-care).

For more information, see the discussion paper produced by the Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Trauma-informed Approaches to Child Sexual Abuse.

The next part of this guide will take you through a step-by-step guide to developing your monitoring and evaluation systems.

Skip straight to Part Four if you want to learn about commissioning an external evaluation of your service.

Part Three: How to develop your monitoring and evaluation systems

Developing your monitoring and evaluation involves a process of planning, defining and then implementing a system for regularly and systematically collecting information on your work. It also involves analysing the data you collect and using this to report on your progress in order to feedback to your funders/commissioners and identify ways to improve your services.

Having spent some time preparing the ground before you begin work on developing your monitoring and evaluation systems, you are now ready to get going. Essentially, this can be broken down into six key steps:

STEP 1: DEVELOPING A THEORY OF CHANGE

The first step in developing your monitoring and evaluation is to spend some time articulating the theory of change that underpins your project. This will help you to clearly and explicitly describe the way you work and the intended benefits of your work, and provide a firm foundation for your monitoring and evaluation activities.

3.1.1 What is a Theory of Change?

A Theory of Change is a description of how a particular way of working is effective, showing how change happens in the short, medium and long-term to achieve the intended impact. Using the Theory of Change approach is a good way of planning new initiatives or of working out how to measure the outcomes and impact of ongoing work. This means it can be used for both planning and for evaluation purposes.

A Theory of Change is often presented as a model or a diagram but what is important in using the Theory of Change approach is the thinking, often captured in a narrative, that accompanies the development of the visual representation.

3.1.2 What are the benefits of using a Theory of Change approach?

- It helps you to develop a clear and testable theory about how change will occur, which is particularly helpful in reflecting the complexity of change in child sexual abuse services and should underpin the evaluation of your work.
- It can also help to get your stakeholders to agree what success means for your work and what it takes to get there.
- It can also enable you to develop a visual representation of the changes your work brings about which can be a powerful communication tool for helping others to understand your work.

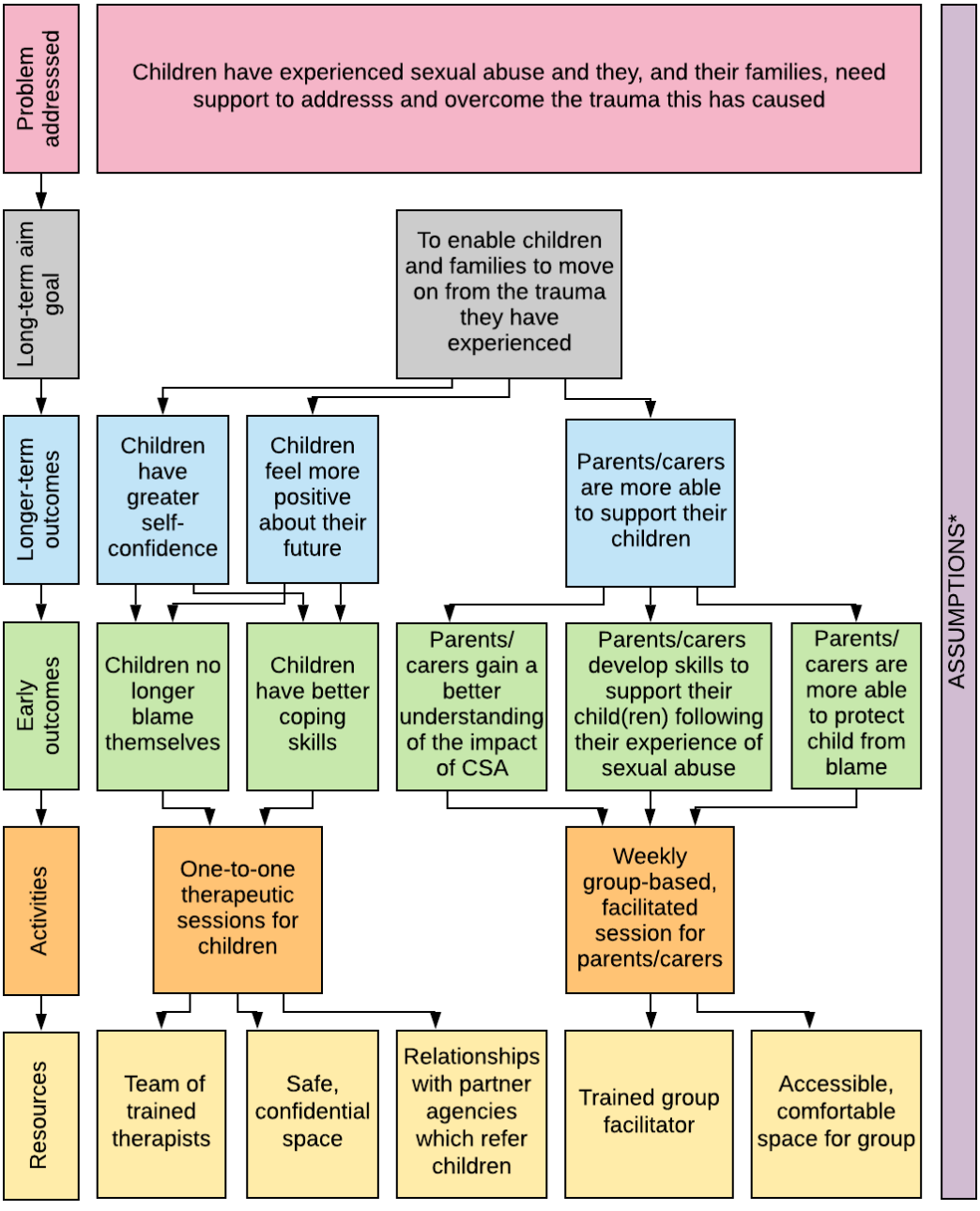
3.1.3 What are the challenges of using a Theory of Change approach?

- It requires considerable time and commitment – particularly if you are involving your stakeholders – so it is not something you can do quickly.
- Creating a Theory of Change generally involves thinking about the sequential order in which your outcomes occur – and this can be hard, particularly as change does not generally occur in a linear way – it may happen in different ways and at different times for different people.

- There may also be little evidence available on which to base the connections you are making between your activities, outcomes and impact. You may have to base these on your own knowledge of your work or look for research in other settings that may help to justify the connections you are making.

Example 1a

This is a Theory of Change for a fictitious child sexual abuse service, the Selley Centre, which we will use to illustrate the different aspects of working through the process of articulating your own Theory of Change.



As this diagram shows, the Selley Centre is aware that some children in its local area have experienced sexual abuse, and that they and their families need support to address and overcome the trauma this has caused (**the problem**). It therefore aims to enable these children and families to move on from the trauma they have experienced (their **long-term aim or goal**).

It knows that, for this to happen, the children will need to gain self-confidence and feel more positive about their future, and their parents/carers will need to become more able to support their children (**longer-term outcomes**). To get to this point, children need support so that they begin to blame themselves less and develop better coping skills; and parents/carers need to develop a better understanding of the impact of child sexual abuse on their children and themselves, and better skills to support their children (**early outcomes**).

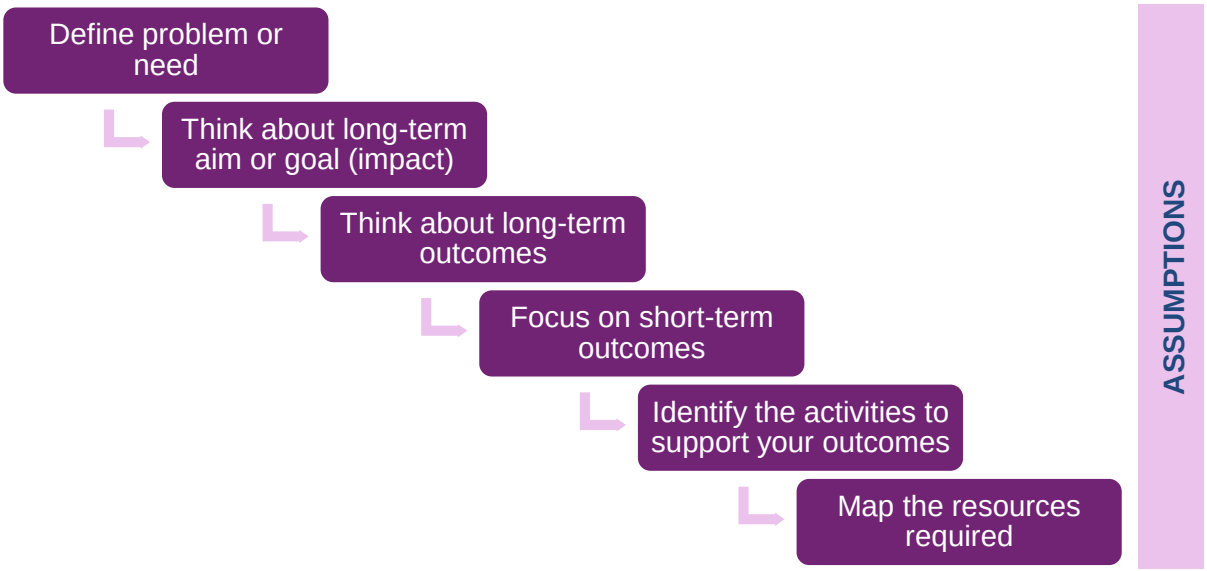
The Selley Centre will facilitate this by providing one-to-one therapeutic sessions for children and hosting weekly group-based, facilitated sessions for parents/carers (its **activities**). And to provide these activities, it will need to have trained therapists and a group facilitator, space for delivering support, and relationships with partner agencies to refer families to the Selley Centre (its **resources**).

*All this is underpinned by a series of **assumptions**. For example, the service is assuming that:

- It will continue to base its work in its current premises
- its model of therapeutic support does actually bring about these outcomes for children and parents
- it will continue to receive suitable referrals from partner agencies.

3.1.4 How to develop your Theory of Change

Developing a Theory of Change involves defining different aspects of your work and thinking about how each aspect leads to or affects others, as well as teasing out the assumptions on which your theory is built.



Below we will work through the process of developing a Theory of Change for your service. If you are developing a Theory of Change for a new service, then working in the order shown (i.e. from problem/impact downwards) will help you to think more creatively.

You can use Worksheet 1 to help you to do this.

i) Defining the problem

First you need to identify the overarching problem(s) that your work addresses. At this stage, you are thinking 'big' and simply expressing the fundamental issue that frames your work.

Example 1b

In the case of the Selley Centre:

"The problem faced by the children/families we support is the trauma they have experienced."

ii) Identifying your long-term aim or goal

The next step is to think about the long-term aim or goal that you can focus on in order to address the problem you have identified. This may reflect the long-term impact that your work will have.

Example 1c

The Selley Centre decides that its long-term aim/goal to address the above issue is:

"To enable children and families to move on from the trauma they have experienced."

iii) Thinking about longer-term changes

Working backwards from your overall problem, you then need to think about the long-term changes that will help people to do this. You can do this by:

- using research/evidence to support your theory
- drawing from your own experience and that of your stakeholders.

There is already a strong body of evidence describing the enduring and adverse impact of child sexual abuse on the life-course of children and adults, including:

- The Impacts of Sexual Abuse (Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, 2017)
- Survivors' Voices (One in Four, 2015)
- Estimating the Cost of Child Sexual Abuse in the UK (NSPCC, 2014)
- Violence, Abuse and Mental Health in England: Briefing 1 (NatCen, Child and Woman Abuse Studies Unit and DMSS Research, 2014).

Looking at research may help you to think about the key issues faced by the children/young people and families you support. Equally, you may want to draw directly from the expertise of your staff who can tell you about the different types of needs and issues faced by the individuals they support.

Having identified the problem(s) and their underlying causes that your work seeks to address, the next step is to identify long-term changes that need to occur in order to address these problems – these are likely to mirror the issues you have identified. It's important to remember that your long-term changes are high-level and describe broad areas of change that your work will bring about.

Example 1d

If the problem identified by the Selley Centre is the trauma of experiencing sexual abuse on children and their parents/carers, longer-term outcomes might be that:

- children/young people feel more positive about their future and have greater self-confidence
- parents/carers are more able to support their children.

iv) Focusing on specific outcomes

The next step is to identify the immediate (or earlier) outcomes that will help to bring about these long-term changes. To do this, you will need to take each long-term outcome in turn and think about the specific changes that will help to achieve this. Your outcomes are the individual changes that occur as a result of what you do, so you may find it helpful to think carefully about how you express your outcomes. For example, it may help:

- focus on your target group when you write your outcomes ("young people", "policy-makers", "other professionals" etc.)
- use language that involves change ("are more able to", "feel less…", "have better…" etc.).

Your outcomes should relate to your interventions, so you should be able to make a clear link between what you do and the changes you hope to bring about. It's also important to consider different perspectives when you develop your outcomes, so you may like to involve your colleagues, your commissioners or look at other research that has been carried out to help you in this. You may also find it helpful to ask the children/young people you support to help you think about the difference your work makes to them, but this is something to be considered carefully as it may not always be appropriate to ask them to do this.

Example 1e

So, if one of the long-term changes the service hopes to bring about is to enable children to feel more positive about their future, outcomes might be that:

- children no longer blame themselves
- children have better coping skills.

And if the long-term change is that parents/carers are more able to support their children, then the outcomes might be that:

- parents/carers better understand the impact of child sexual abuse
- parents/carers have the skills to support their child(ren) following their experience of sexual abuse
- parents/carers are more able to protect their child(ren) from blame.

Of course, outcomes do not necessarily occur in the neat, linear way that our example Theory of Change suggests. In reality, outcomes occur at different times for different people and some may come about as a cumulative result of a number of different interventions.

They are also likely to reflect changes in different aspects of people's lives, such as:

feelings and emotions	**physical health**	**living arrangements**	**education**
relationships	**knowledge**	**skills**	**attitudes**

Your Theory of Change may therefore include outcomes that occur in different ways, at different points in a child/young person's journey and which relate to interventions that are delivered over several months or even years.

A list of outcomes developed by child sexual abuse services is set out in Worksheet 2. You can use this as a menu from which to identify outcomes that are right for your service. Choose outcomes that feel appropriate and relevant to the children/young people you work with and the type of support you provide.

Another way of approaching the process of identifying your outcomes is set out in the Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) framework that a number of local authorities have now adopted. This is already having an impact on social care commissioning and on the kinds of evidence that child sexual abuse services are being expected to provide.

You can find an overview of OBA in Outcomes Based Accountability, a guide produced by the National Children's Bureau.

v) Thinking about your activities

The next step is to clarify the activities (i.e. the specific services) that you will provide in order to bring about the outcomes you have identified. They're ***what's on the menu*** for children/young people when they engage with your services e.g. one-to-one support or peer support groups.

Working from your outcomes, you need to decide which of your activities will help to bring about each outcome (although a number of different activities may contribute to one outcome and, equally, many different outcomes may result from one activity).

Example 1f

So, in order to enable children to have increased self-esteem/self-worth and no longer blame themselves (its **outcomes**), the Selley Centre will provide one-to-one therapeutic support (its **activity**).

Similarly, in order to help parents and carers gain a better understanding of the impact of child sexual abuse and develop skills to support their child(ren) following their experience of sexual abuse (**outcomes**), the Selley Centre will provide group-based, facilitated support for parents/carers (**activity**).

iv) Mapping your resources

If you are using the Theory of Change model to plan a new project or service, you may also find it helpful to think about the resources that will be required to support the delivery of each activity.

Example 1g

Delivering one-to-one therapeutic support for children will require:

- a team of trained therapists
- a safe, confidential space
- relationships with partner agencies which refer children.

Meanwhile, delivering group-based, facilitated support for parents/carers will require:

- a trained group facilitator
- an accessible, comfortable space for the group to meet.

vii) Thinking about your assumptions

The final step is to think through the assumptions that underpin your Theory of Change. You need to ask yourself "what are we assuming" or "what are we relying on" in terms of:

- **the theoretical connections** that you have made in your Theory of Change, e.g. what do you have evidence for, or not have evidence for, in terms of your outcomes and how these result from your activities?
- **the context** in which you are operating e.g. what might affect the work you are doing either in terms of within your organisation or externally.

Example 1h

The assumptions made by the Selley Centre are as follows:

Theoretical assumptions	
We are assuming that attending a group will help parents/carers develop skills to support their child(ren) following their experience of sexual abuse.	• Do we have any evidence to show that attending a group will help parents/carers to develop skills to support their children?
We are assuming that the one-to-one therapeutic sessions we offer will make a difference to children/young people who have experienced child sexual abuse.	• How do we know that there is a demand for this? • How do we know that the way we provide support is appropriate for the age group we work with and the experiences they have had? • What training, qualifications and/or experience do our therapists need?

Contextual assumptions	
We are assuming that we will work with enough children/young people to make our service viable.	• Have we established relationships with agencies who will refer children/young people to us? • Do we need to promote our services or carry out outreach activities?
We are assuming that we can continue to base our work in our current premises.	• Do we have enough funding for this? • How long is our contract for the use of these premises?

viii) Expressing your Theory of Change

Having worked through the process of developing your Theory of Change, you may have already thought about how this can be represented visually. There are various online tools you can use to help you do this (although many of these require you to pay if you want to create more than one diagram) such as Gliffy and Lucidchart. Online platforms that allow you to create as many diagrams as you like for free include Google Drawings and Draw.io.

For an example of a visual presentation of a Theory of Change, see Example 1a above.

It's also important to write up a narrative to explain your Theory of Change. This adds the detail that you cannot capture in the diagram, such as the evidence for the connections you have made, and a fuller description of the needs your work addresses and the services you provide.

ix) Consulting on your Theory of Change

You should test your Theory of Change once you have developed it by consulting with children/young people (see section 2.1 on ethics) and with other people who have a good understanding of your work, to see whether they feel it reflects the way your organisation works and the difference your work makes.

> *"Four young women participated in a focus group held at the centre. They discussed what they thought counselling was and what they got out of it … The service users were really happy being able to feed back on their experiences and told us they really enjoyed the group." [Evaluation Fund grantee]*

> *"Involving one of our contract managers from the local authority in the initial Theory of Change workshop with staff has been beneficial and has enabled them to 'buy in' to this piece of work." [Evaluation Fund grantee]*

You can view our Introduction to Theory of Change video, developed as part of our work supporting child sexual abuse services with their monitoring and evaluation, on YouTube.

You can also access more detailed guidance:

- **Creating Your Theory of Change (NPC)**
- **Theory of Change (NCVO KnowHow)**
- **Developing a Theory of Change (Clinks)**

STEP 2: UNDERSTANDING YOUR APPROACH

Once you have developed your Theory of Change, you may find it helpful to spend some time reflecting on the way in which you provide your services. You can do this by documenting what you do and how you do it. This can be a useful process and you can share the findings both internally (e.g. with new staff joining your organisation) and externally (e.g. with funders).

3.2.1 Describing what you do and why

Child sexual abuse services have also found it helpful to spend some time documenting their work processes before they develop their monitoring and evaluation systems or to strengthen the basis of their existing monitoring and evaluation.

3.2.2 Why does describing what you do matter?

Describing what you do is core to the Theory of Change. What you do needs to be thoroughly described if you are to understand how it is *supposed* to lead to your intended outcomes, or which aspects of your practice may be more or less important ('active ingredients') in doing so. Services have reported some distinct benefits of documenting their approach:

- It helps funders/commissioners understand what you do and why you do it.
- It values and preserves the expertise of your organisation.
- It enables you to clarify ways of working that may not have previously been articulated and shared.
- It can be a helpful process for staff who find it gives them space for reflection and an opportunity to hear different perspectives.
- It enables you to share good practice and for your approach to be replicated by others.

3.2.3 What does documenting your approach involve?

Documenting your approach involves asking a series of questions:

- **What do we do?** e.g. What specific services do we provide? Who do we provide them to?
- **How do we do it?** e.g. Who delivers the services? How long are they provided for? Where are they delivered?
- **Why do we do it in this way?** e.g. Why do you provide this particular type of service? Why do you provide it for the length of time you do? Or to the particular client group you work with?

Documenting your approach therefore involves connecting your **principles** to your **practices** and **purposes**. It's about telling the story of what you do and why you do it in an accessible way that enables others to understand how you work and the rationale for your approach.

Example 2

When the Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre (RASASC) in south London set about documenting its model of therapeutic support for children and young people, it uncovered a number of key working practices. Although these practices are specific to RASASC's service and may not be relevant to yours, we have included this example to illustrate how documenting its approach enabled RASASC to identify and make explicit the practices that it feels makes its work effective, and the rationale for these practices.

Practice	Purpose
The explicit use of the words 'rape' and 'sexual abuse'	Legitimates experience. Helps break sense of isolation and self-blame. Helps build self-worth.
The specialism of the centre (only women, only sexual violence)	Legitimates experience. Creates sense of belonging. Breaks isolation.
The physical space of the centre	Helps create ease and calm externally to support internal process. Use of boundaries builds feelings of control and trust.
Consistency in time and space (sessions held at same time, in same room, on same day each week, with same therapist)	Builds feelings of self-worth and value. Legitimates experience. Helps create ease and calm externally to support internal process. Builds trust.
The use of self-referrals	Encourages and respects autonomy. Builds and demonstrates trust. Helps young women develop trust in their ability to know what they need and ability to ask for what they need.
Acceptance of the client for who they are and where they're at (including "self-harming" behaviours)	Combats self-judgment, blame, and shame. Role models self-responsibility. Builds trust in the self and its responses.

RASASC's model is documented fully in its 2018 report Space for Self.

3.2.4 How to go about documenting your approach

You will need to allocate some resource if you are going to generate really useful descriptions of what you do. You'll also need to decide whether to ask a member of staff (or volunteer) to lead on the process of documenting your approach or whether to bring in external expertise. There are advantages and disadvantages to each approach:

	Advantages	Disadvantages
Internal	• Often holds knowledge that can't easily be accessed by someone external, e.g. knows who knows what	• May lack time to focus • Lack of objectivity
External	• Sees things that someone internal might not see • Can drive the work forwards	• Cost • May take longer to understand the approach.

The lead person will then need to carry out a series of interviews, either as one-to-one or group interviews, with a selection of staff, volunteers and children/young people and ask them:

- What specific services do we provide (or, in the case of children/young people, what support have you received from us)?
- How do we provide these services (or, in the case of children/young people, how did you receive our support)?
- Why do we provide support in this way (or, in the case of children/young people, what did you like most and least in the way we provided our support to you)?

You can use Worksheet 3 to help you work through the process of documenting your approach.

STEP 3: PLANNING YOUR MONITORING AND EVALUATION ACTIVITIES

Having spent some time articulating the Theory of Change and approach that underpins your work, the next stage is to decide which aspects of your work you actually want to monitor and evaluate, and what you want to know about them.

3.3.1 Deciding which aspects of your work to monitor and evaluate

Whether you are just starting to think about your monitoring and evaluation or you want to improve your existing practice, it can be helpful to think about the different aspects of your service that you might wish to monitor. These different aspects are generally described as:

- **Resources** – what is needed in order to provide your services e.g. staff, premises, equipment, funding.
- **Processes** – what is involved in delivering your services e.g. referral arrangements with partner organisations, setting up information-sharing agreements, staff training.
- **Activities** - what you do in order to achieve your outcomes i.e. the services you provide or the products you distribute (can also be known as outputs) e.g. therapeutic sessions, peer support groups.
- **Outcomes –** the changes, benefits, learning or other effects that result from your work e.g. improved coping skills, increased engagement in education.
- **Impact** e.g. children/young people are more able to move on from trauma.

Most services find it essential to collect data on their activities and outcomes and may then choose to carry out additional evaluation activities to assess other aspects of their work. For example, you might sometimes want to carry out a review of the specific processes involved in delivering your services or to investigate longer-term benefits for children/young people.

Remember that it's important to keep your monitoring and evaluation feasible and realistic; you cannot monitor and evaluate every aspect of your work all of the time. So spend some time deciding what will be most helpful for you in learning about the quality and effectiveness of your work and the difference it makes.

You can use Worksheet 4 to help you decide which aspects of your work to monitor and evaluate.

3.3.2 Developing an evaluation framework

Once you have decided which aspects of your work you want to focus on, drawing up an evaluation framework can help you to clarify the specific information that you will need to collect in order to evaluate your work (**your indicators**), and set out how you will go about collecting it (**data collection**). It can also show who you need to report this information to.

The process of setting up your evaluation framework involves working from the activities and outcomes that you identified as part of developing your Theory of Change, to identify indicators for each one and then decide how best you can collect this information.

Prioritising your outcomes

Having articulated your outcomes, you may find you have more that you can hope to measure. So it's important to prioritise outcomes that are most useful to know about and realistic to assess. Ask yourself:

1. Are we able to **influence** this outcome? Is this a direct and clear result of what we do?
2. Is this outcome **important** to our stakeholders? Will it be meaningful to them?
3. Will we be able to **measure** this outcome? (e.g. not too complex or time-consuming to collect and analyse).

It's also important to include **tangible outcomes** (such as 'young people engaging better in education' or 'young people having a safe place to stay') as well as less tangible ones (such as 'young people feel more confident' or 'feel more positive about their future').

Identifying indicators

Once you are happy that you have defined the activities and outcomes that you wish to measure, you need to think about identifying indicators. It's important that each activity and outcome has one or more indicators attached to it so that you can measure your progress in delivering/achieving it. Your indicators also need to be **realistic**, so they need to be things that you can feasibly track and gather evidence on.

Bear in mind, also, that indicators can be either quantitative or qualitative and it's useful to have a mix of both:

Quantitative indicators count numbers of things that happen or numbers of people who receive your services.

Qualitative indicators capture people's perceptions and experiences using words or pictures.

It's also important to think about collecting **different perspectives** in order to strengthen your evaluation (known as *triangulation*). For example, gathering feedback from parents/carers or your staff on the changes that they have seen in children/young people can provide valuable information to supplement what the children/young people themselves report. This is particularly important as children/young people may not be able to present an

accurate picture of their situation, which may be more evident to someone external – for example, children/young people may present their situation positively at initial assessment if they have not built up sufficient trust to feel they can reveal the reality of their situation.

Example 1i

The Selley Centre decides that appropriate indicators relating to some of its activities and outcomes are as follows:

Example activity	Example indicators
One-to-one therapeutic support for children	Number of children/young people who receive therapeutic support
	Profile of children/young people who receive therapeutic support

Example outcome	Example indicators
Children develop better coping skills	How children/young people rate their coping skills
	How children/young people describe changes in their coping skills
	How parents/carers rate their child's coping skills and what changes they observe in young people's ability to cope
	How therapists rate the child's coping skills and what changes they observe in young people's ability to cope

You can use Worksheet 5 to help you develop your indicators as part of your evaluation framework.

For more information on developing indicators, see:

- **Keeping on Track: A Guide to Setting and Using Indicators (NCVO Charities Evaluation Services)**
- **Working Out What to Measure (Setting Indicators for Your Outcomes) (Evaluation Support Scotland).**

Thinking about targets and performance indicators

Once you have identified your indicators, you should also consider whether there are any targets or performance indicators that you need to build into your evaluation plan. For example, you may have targets that have been set by a funder or as part of a strategic or business plan. You may therefore wish – or need – to add targets to your indicators.

Example 1j

Some targets identified by the Selley Centre are as follows:

Example activity	Example indicator	Example target
Therapeutic support	Number of children/young people who receive therapeutic support	At least 50 children/young people will receive therapeutic support per year

Example outcome	Example indicator	Example target
Children/young people develop better coping skills	How children/young people rate their coping skills	75% of children/young people show improvements in coping skills

Do bear in mind, though, that you do not need to add targets to indicators unless they are going to be helpful to you in planning and delivering your work, or in reporting progress to your funders.

> *"Spending the time to outline an evaluation framework has helped to clearly define the work we are doing, and the long-term aim of this work. It has helped bring clarity. This has helped frontline staff see and understand the overall picture as well as managers to help with the areas we are trying to develop and the aims of the services we are providing." [Evaluation Fund grantee]*

Example 1k

In the Selley Centre's completed evaluation framework, activities and outcomes are the starting points for its indicators and data collection methods.

The framework also enables the service to make sure that its monitoring and evaluation will meet its reporting requirements.

Extracts from the evaluation framework are below.

Activities	Indicators	Data collection	Who by and when	Reporting
One-to-one therapeutic support for children	Number of children/young people receiving therapeutic support	Attendance records	Therapist at each session	Quarterly reports to management committee Annual reports to funders
	Profile of children/young people receiving therapeutic support	Referral form	Partner agency	
		Initial assessment form	Therapist during first few sessions	

Outcomes	Indicators	Data collection	When	Reporting
Children/ young people develop better coping skills	How children/ young people rate their coping skills	Young person's self-assessment form	After second session and at closure	Individual reports for children/ young people
	How parents/ carers rate their child's coping skills	Parent/carer feedback form	At closure	Quarterly reports to management committee
	How therapists rate the child's coping skills	Therapist review form	At closure	Annual reports to funders

STEP 4: DEVELOPING WAYS TO COLLECT INFORMATION

Having identified your outcomes and their indicators, the next step is to develop monitoring tools that will help you to assess progress in delivering your activities and achieving your outcomes.

3.4.1 Where will your data come from?

The first step in planning your data collection is to think where your data will come from. Bear in mind that data can come from a number of different sources, including:

- children/young people themselves (self-report)
- your own staff
- parents/carers or other professionals.

You will need to think about who is best placed to provide you with information on each of your indicators and whether it is appropriate and feasible to ask them for this information.

It is often a good idea to plan to collect data from different sources in order to strengthen your reporting. Some services have found that relying on self-reported data has made it difficult to assess progress towards their outcomes, as children/young people are not always in a position to see the progress they have made.

3.4.2 Data collection methods

You will also need to think about which methods will be most appropriate and feasible to collect information on your outcomes. These include:

- **Questionnaires, surveys or feedback forms** – where you ask people to complete a form or questionnaire, either on paper or online. The form/questionnaire/survey may be repeated at intervals to provide data that can be compared over time (sometimes known as 'pre/post assessment'). For example, children/young people could be asked to complete a form detailing their situation at the start and end of the support they receive from you (and sometimes during the support). You can also ask people to complete forms, surveys or questionnaires at the end of your support (i.e. retrospectively).

- **Individual interviews** – where you ask children/young people a set of questions either face-to-face or by telephone to find out whether and how the support they have received has helped them.

- **Group interviews** – where you get children/young people together in a group to discuss their experiences of receiving support from you.

- **Reflexive review** – where staff are asked to provide their views on how an intervention has been of benefit to children/young people.

Each different method has both advantages and disadvantages to bear in mind:

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
Questionnaires, surveys and feedback forms	Enable you to collect information relatively easily and cheaply. Can be sent/given out to large numbers of people and therefore collect views and data from many different people. Can feel less intrusive and more private than an interview and people can answer anonymously. Good for collecting quantitative information, although you can also include open questions (e.g. comments boxes). Can be sent out as an online questionnaire, which means you don't have to enter the responses and you can make use of basic data analysis tools within the online survey package. Can provide information enabling you to measure progress over time.	Require some level of literacy. May not get a good level of response, as many people may not complete them. Can result in biased response, as those who have strong views are more likely to complete them. People may not always answer all the questions, and you cannot check whether they have understood your questions. Not ideal for collecting in-depth information. Need careful design to be accessible. Do not allow people to 'tell their story' in their own way.
Individual interviews	Enable you to ask people directly about their experiences of your services and how things have changed for them. Provide in-depth information about changes in attitudes, feelings and perceptions. Useful when you want to find out about sensitive issues or collect data from people with limited writing skills.	May require interviewees to engage and talk about sensitive issues that they may not want to talk about. Take time to set up, carry out, write up and analyse. Generate a lot of information which may be difficult to capture accurately. May entail extra costs such as telephone charges or transcription costs. Cannot be carried out completely anonymously, although you can assure people of confidentiality.

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
Focus groups or group interviews	Give you lots of qualitative information. Allow children/young people to spark off each other and generate ideas. Enable you to explore issues that emerge from the discussion. Less time-consuming than carrying out individual interviews. Good for getting suggestions on how to improve your services.	Not suitable for collecting sensitive information, as children/young people may not want to talk about personal issues in front of others. Individuals can sometimes dominate the discussion so you don't get to hear different views. Confidentiality can be an issue, as people may want to talk about what has been discussed outside the group. Organising, carrying out, analysing and writing up the information collected can be time-intensive.
Reflexive reviews	Allow you to record evidence of outcomes that children/young people may demonstrate but not actually report. Can highlight changes that children/young people themselves are unaware of. Can capture information that other tools may miss.	Rely on the skills and objectivity of your staff to assess change. Staff may not always understand or correctly interpret what they observe. Other people may be less willing to accept staff feedback as valid evidence of outcomes

How do you choose which method(s) to use?

The method(s) you choose will be determined mainly by the **type of contact** you have with children/young people (or other service users):

- Do you have direct, face-to-face contact with children/young people or do some only have one-off or indirect contact with you, such as by telephone or online?
- Do you have individual contact with children/young people or do some only attend group activities?

It will also depend on the **type of information** you want to collect (e.g. do you want lots of qualitative information or simply a set of numbers?), and on **how much information** you want to collect. For example, a focus group or set of interviews will give you lots of qualitative, detailed information from a small number of children/young people, whereas a

short survey with lots of tick boxes can give you quantitative information from many children/young people.

The **resources** you have available for developing and carrying out your monitoring will also affect the methods that you choose for collecting your information as some methods require more time and resources than others. Some of the costs associated with carrying out your monitoring activities are obvious, such as hiring a venue to hold a focus group. Other costs may be less obvious, such as the time taken by staff to develop and pilot monitoring tools or training costs for staff and volunteers. You will therefore need to balance the resources required against the quality of the information that each method will give you.

Finally, when choosing which method(s) to use, think about selecting methods which will be:

- **appropriate** – i.e. they take account of the age and needs of the children/young people you want to collect information from.
- **reliable** – i.e. they can be used consistently so that the same questions are asked and will provide the same kind of information.
- **feasible** for you to carry out – i.e. they aren't too time-consuming or complex to use and can be incorporated into your work processes.
- **credible** with your stakeholders – i.e. the people you want to share your findings with will consider that the information was obtained in a valid way.

You can update Worksheet 5 (your evaluation framework) to show your data collection methods.

3.4.3 Designing your monitoring tools

Once you have decided what methods you will use to collect your data, you will then need to think about designing the tools themselves that you will use to collect the data. Designing monitoring tools can be done in a number of different ways, including:

- designing **bespoke tools** that focus on the outcomes you want to assess
- designing tools that allow children/young people to **define their own outcomes** on a person-by-person basis, focusing on the outcomes that they want to achieve)
- considering the use of **standardised measures**, e.g. sets of questions that have been tested elsewhere.

Bespoke measures

Designing your own monitoring tools means that they can be tailored to the service provided and can offer an effective way of capturing outcomes directly from children/young people. Nonetheless, designing your own tools is a highly skilled task as it can be hard to get the questions right (e.g. using clear and unambiguous language, avoiding jargon, technical terms or asking leading questions).

User-defined tools

These provide a way of enabling children/young people to identify what they want to achieve and measure their progress towards this. This may be done by providing a list of outcomes that they can pick from or through staff working with them to define their outcomes.

While this method has the advantage of ensuring that children/young people feel the outcomes are highly relevant to them, it can prove difficult to aggregate the data from self-defined outcomes as they can be varied or expressed differently.

Using standardised measures

Some services are drawn to using standardised measures (e.g. scales or assessments) as these have been validated and so are considered to provide a reliable measure of change. However, services have reported a number of issues associated with using standardised measures:

- The data they capture tends to be focused in a specific area (e.g. mental health or trauma symptoms) and therefore does not always do justice to the extent and breadth of changes that may actually occur as a result of the support provided to a child/young person.
- Recovery from trauma is not a linear process and scores on standardised measures may go up as well as down during the time a child/young person receives support.
- Many standardised measures were originally designed as clinical assessment tools so they aren't necessarily appropriate to be used for evaluation purposes. For example, they may require children/young people to provide extremely sensitive information which may prove distressing.
- Moreover, many monitoring tools have been developed from a Eurocentric perspective and therefore do not reflect the experiences of children/young people from different communities or backgrounds.
- There may also be purchase or licensing costs associated with using standardised measures as some providers charge for their use.
- Finally, analysis may be complex and require staff to undertake specific training.

It is therefore worth giving careful consideration before deciding to use standardised measures. Some services who have used measures such as the Trauma Symptom Checklist for Children/Young Children (a standardised tool for assessing the effects of trauma on children/young people) report that these do not fit well with their work, as they are overly focused on specific aspects of mental health and a poor fit with the process of overcoming experiences of sexual abuse.

3.4.4 Making sure your monitoring tools are accessible

Tools that are to be completed by children/young people need to be appropriate to their age, quick to complete and look colourful or creative. Remember that what is appropriate for young children is unlikely to be appropriate for teenagers.

If you use visuals such as smiley faces on your forms or questionnaires, remember to make clear what each visual represents. The best way to do this is by adding labels such as:

Yes *not sure* *No*

Examples of creative methods include:

- **Visuals** – use smiley faces on a form or questionnaire, or ask children/young people to draw pictures (or cut out pictures from magazines) that help them to explain what they are feeling.
- **Card sorts** – put options onto cards and get children/young people to sort them into piles according to criteria such as good/OK/poor.
- **Word clouds** – give children/young people a list of positive and negative words, then ask them a question (e.g. “What did you think of our service?”) and ask them to circle the words they feel are relevant to their experience.

Remember that visual/interactive methods are a good way of enhancing your data collection so that it is more accessible and engaging for children/young people. On their own, however, creative methods are not easy to analyse if they are used instead of more traditional data collection methods such as questionnaires and interviews.

3.4.5 Good practice in designing monitoring tools

- Consult both colleagues and children/young people when you develop your monitoring tools, as this will enable you to check how well people respond to using them. Equally, it’s good to test the tools with a small group of people before you implement them, and review their use regularly to ensure they continue to capture the data you need.
- The questions asked on your monitoring tools should enable you to link the outcomes to your service provision, e.g. “Has receiving our support helped you to…?”
- Use a mixture of tick boxes and open-ended questions, to get data that you can count up (quantify) as well as comments that help to illustrate and explain the outcomes reported.
- Avoid asking children/young people to put their names on evaluation forms. For confidentiality reasons, it is better to use an ID code to identify them if you want to compare their responses at different points in time.

- It is a good idea to have a range of tools, some that can be completed by practitioners and others by children/young people, to strengthen the data you collect.
- Decide how long you will keep the information you collect for, and how you will dispose of it securely.

> *"We have now understood the importance of measuring the 'right' things and asking the 'right' questions! We had in the past tried to make already available tools 'fit' our work." [Evaluation Fund grantee]*

For more on designing monitoring tools, see:

- **Information Collection Methods: Choosing Tools for Assessing Impact (NCVO Charities Evaluation Services)**
- **Assessing Change: Developing and Using Outcomes Monitoring Tools (NCVO Charities Evaluation Services)**
- **Collecting and Analysing Data (DMSS Research)**

STEP 5: COLLECTING, STORING AND ANALYSING INFORMATION

There are a few things to think about when planning how to collect information and then analyse it, particularly around:

- ***when you ask people for information***
- ***how to ensure your approach is ethical***
- ***making sure your staff are on board***
- ***GDPR/data protection issues.***

You will also need to think about how to store the information, as well as how to analyse it both quantitatively and qualitatively.

3.5.1 Deciding when to ask people for information

You need to think carefully about the points at which you'll collect data, in order to minimise distress to children/young people. There are a number of issues to take account of:

- When attempting to **assess change over a period of time** (e.g. at the start, during, at the end and after the intervention), some services have found it difficult to capture baseline information. This is partly because children/young people may not have established sufficient trust to fully disclose their situation, but also because some may not have a full understanding of the reality of their situation and may therefore report a falsely positive picture of their situation or difficulties.

- Capturing information **too early** can also cause additional stress for children/young people because of the potentially sensitive nature of the questions. Many services feel, therefore, that it is not appropriate to gather baseline information during the very early stages of support. However, having good information about where people are at when they first come to your service is really important – you'll never know how far they've travelled if you don't know where they started from. You may therefore want to identify a pre-assessment or introductory phase – such as the first two or three meetings – during which time rapport can be built and the importance of children/young people engaging in the initial assessment is explained.

- Some children/young people may be in **considerable distress** when you work with them. It is therefore important to be sensitive to each person's emotional state and decide whether it is an appropriate time to ask them for monitoring information.

- Thought also needs to be given to capturing **follow-up data** (e.g. after the intervention has ended). Some of the outcomes relevant to work in the child sexual abuse sector are likely to occur only over a long period of time, so they can be assessed only by carrying out some kind of follow-up evaluation. However, services have raised concerns that contacting children/young people after they are no longer receiving support may not be helpful for those who want to move on from this part of their lives. A first step to making

sure it is appropriate to carry out follow-up monitoring is therefore to seek consent for this when children/young people exit your service, making it clear that you will understand if they decide they do not want to hear from you in the future.

> *"We have always been very cautious about following up on progress once children have stopped counselling, being concerned about this being in some way 'triggering'. Whilst this still is a potential concern, the consensus from the children and young people is that they would like to be contacted at a later stage to update on progress." [Evaluation Fund grantee]*

3.5.2 Supporting staff and volunteers

It's also important to make sure that your staff and volunteers are clear why and how information is being collected, and what their role is in this. They need to understand:

- when to ask children/young people to complete monitoring tools (and when it's not appropriate to do this)
- what happens to the information collected
- how to make it clear that children/young people don't have to give you information unless they are happy to do so.

You could do this by:

- running a short session at a staff meeting
- providing written guidance on how and when to use the tools, e.g. a guidance document or a flow chart that staff and volunteers can refer to
- making sure that any monitoring responsibilities are covered in staff or volunteer inductions
- identifying a lead member of staff or volunteer who will provide ongoing support around monitoring issues
- running periodic support sessions to discuss any difficulties.

This is important as it helps to ensure that, when staff ask children/young people to complete monitoring forms or take part in activities (e.g. interviews or focus groups), they will do so in a way that encourages the children/young people to take part.

> *"Some staff members were initially resistant to the piece of work … This is partly due to the fact that they have previously seen evaluation as something required by funders and/or as additional paperwork to be completed. They have however embraced the new tools … and they find them both useful and relatively easy to complete." [Evaluation Fund grantee]*

3.5.3 GDPR and data protection

Even if your monitoring tools are anonymous, you need to be aware that your service is legally required to register with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) and comply with data protection legislation and regulations if it collects *any* personal information (e.g. names, addresses or dates of birth) from children/young people for other reasons. In general, compliance means:

- making sure you get explicit permission to store data and explain how you will use it
- only collecting information that you genuinely need
- only using the information you collect for the purposes for which it is collected
- not passing on the information to anyone else
- bearing in mind that children/young people have a right to view all the information kept about them
- keeping the information in a secure place for as long as your service has decided is necessary, and shredding/deleting it when no longer needed.

For further information, see the ICO website. You can also find a helpful video and guidance produced by the Wales Council for Voluntary Action.

3.5.4 Storing the information you collect

Before you start using your monitoring tools, it is important to think about the best way to store the information you will be collecting. This is likely to involve:

- setting up an IT system or modifying an existing one to make sure this will enable you to store the information you collect
- providing staff/volunteers with time, training and support to ensure they are clear about their responsibilities for inputting information and keeping it up to date.

Once you have started collecting and entering information, it is then helpful to check that the data is being inputted accurately, thoroughly and consistently.

3.5.5 Analysing the information you collect

Once you have been collecting information for a few months, you will probably want to start thinking about analysing the information to see what it is showing you.

How you analyse your information will depend on the type of information you have collected:

- quantitative (numerical) information will need to be counted
- qualitative (descriptive) information will need to be sorted into themes.

Analysing quantitative information

Analysing quantitative information involves counting it up in order to summarise the data and identify any patterns and trends. For example, you should be able to count:

- the number of children/young people who have received your services
- the amount of support you have provided (e.g. how many times children/young people have attended group support sessions within a certain period)
- the number who have reported progress towards your service's outcomes.

You should also be able to break down your information further so that you can report on the number of children/young people in different categories (e.g. by age or ethnic background).

Once you have been collecting information from children/young people over time, you will be able to compare their responses at different points (e.g. at baseline and end of support), in order to calculate the number of children/young people whose responses show change.

If you have data on only a small number of children/young people (e.g. fewer than 30), it is best to report this in numbers – not in percentages, which can be misleading.

Analysing qualitative information

If you have collected information through interviews or open questions on forms/questionnaires, you will also need to analyse this qualitative data. This involves identifying key themes in the responses and grouping similar responses together.

A simple way to do this is to put the set of responses you want to analyse into one column of an Excel spreadsheet, then read through each one and 'code' it by creating new columns based on what is being expressed in the response. You should find that responses tend to reflect similar themes, and you can build up a set of responses under different themes. This will enable you to report on the main themes that have emerged from your analysis.

It is also a good idea to pick out quotes which can illustrate your key themes and bring your findings to life.

3.5.6 Reflecting on your findings

Once you have done your initial analysis, take a step back and look at the findings as a whole and ask yourself:

- Did we achieve what we hoped to, i.e. in terms of delivering our activities and achieving our outcomes?
- Are there differences in the findings between different user groups or different services?
- Is there anything significant that stands out from the findings?
- Are there any surprises or anything that worries you?

For more general information on data analysis, see the Urban Institute's guide Analyzing Outcome Information: Getting the Most from Data.

STEP 6: ACTING ON YOUR FINDINGS

The final stage in the monitoring and evaluation process is to report, share and learn from the information you have collected.

3.6.1 Reporting your findings

Having analysed your data, the next step is to write up your findings in an accessible and useful way. Key points to think about are:

- structuring your findings clearly by organising your information under headings that correspond to your activities and outcomes
- summarising your findings i.e. stepping back from the detail and looking for the overall meaning
- being honest about your findings and including what has worked less well, as well as what has worked well
- using quotes and case studies to bring your findings to life
- checking your findings carefully before you finalise them.

Depending on your audience and the purpose of your report, you may wish to present your findings in different ways:

- a written report summarising the findings
- a presentation is a good way to show staff /volunteers or service-users the difference your services are making
- a two-page summary can be used for funders, commissioners or other stakeholders who do not want a full report
- a discussion paper highlighting the key findings and what has or hasn't worked can be useful for an internal service review or for strategic planning.

3.6.2 Sharing evaluation findings internally

As well as sharing your findings externally, it is important to think about how you can use what you have learnt to help you develop your work. One way of doing this is to run a learning workshop with colleagues to help you to identify what has and has not worked and to see gaps in your work which can feed into future development plans.

Why run a learning workshop?

It provides an opportunity to celebrate success	**It gives people space to respond to findings/ concerns**	**It can involve both delivery staff and young people**	**It can stimulate discussion about how to improve the evaluation of your service**

Planning

Timing	• When can you run this? Is every six months or a year suitable? Is it good to do it soon after an annual report? • Is there a meeting/event (e.g. an all-staff day) you can tag this onto?
Audience	• Is it suitable for funders to attend? (You might want to run an internal learning workshop before inviting external people.) • Which internal staff should come? There should be a mix of levels of internal staff – you can run separate events.
Messages	• What are the key points you want your audience to take away?
Data	• What existing data do you have? For example, do you have referral forms entered onto a spreadsheet/database? • Do you need to carry out further activity to drill down insights? For example, should you be interviewing staff and young people?

Setting up the workshop

You will need to think about:

- **who should run it** – this could be someone in your delivery team, or it could be led by someone not directly involved in service delivery or even by someone external
- how to ensure that **everyone knows the purpose of it**
- **setting the tone** – you want it to be an open discussion to celebrate achievements and discuss solutions to any issues
- whether you need to **send out insights before** the workshop
- ensuring that your **senior management is on board**.

Some ideas for running the workshop

- **Present the findings** from the evaluation to the group.
- Split attendees into **discussion groups** and ask them to discuss the findings. Think about how you spilt staff into groups.
- Ask groups:
  - Are you **surprised** by the findings?
  - Are there any **particular insights** that you feel we need to do something about?
  - What are our **next steps**?
- Ask groups to **take notes** and then **feed back** to the whole room. Keep a write-up of the responses.

After the workshop

- Disseminate a report on the findings, including the responses discussed at the workshop
- You might like to share the responses to findings with your funders – this shows that you are open to change and are utilising the evaluation.

An example learning workshop

Example 11

Aim of the workshop

Managers at the Selley Centre decided to run a learning workshop to help staff discuss and learn from the delivery of a new service. As it was the first year of this service, they decided to focus on:

- the number and backgrounds of young people helped
- young people's experience of support
- staff experience.

Data available

Young people's data from referral forms (n = 68).

Data from three-month post-engagement forms (n = 45).

Interviews with four staff members.

Interviews with 10 young people.

Recap on aim of programme

The project aimed to provide support to young people through individual Youth Advocates, so young people could understand their trauma histories as part of understanding the abuse and exploitation they had experienced, enabling them to overcome their trauma.

The Youth Advocates were originally meant to set up a youth participation group, but we focused on delivery to individual young people as the programme took a while to set up.

Findings presented

We supported 68 children and young people (target = 60).

Of these young people:

- Care leaver – 1
- Disability – 4
- Minority ethnic background – 0

Response to insights at workshop

- Celebrated helping more children and young people than expected.
- Concern over engagement of lesser heard target groups.

Reasons for this:
Lack of outreach in lesser heard communities.

Solution:
New strategies for community engagement and referral pathways.

You can use Worksheet 6 to help you run a learning workshop.

3.6.3 Sharing evaluation findings externally

You can do this in a number of ways, such as:

- putting the information on your website
- writing an article for a newsletter or bulletin
- issuing a press release
- holding an event.

The children/young people you support may also be interested in seeing the results of your evaluation, so you should think about how best to present your findings to them. Some of the suggestions above include ways in which you can feed back to children/young people, but you may also want to run an event specifically for them.

For more guidance and ideas about reporting, sharing and learning from your monitoring and evaluation, see the Urban Institute's guide Using Outcome Information: Making Data Pay Off.

Part Four: Commissioning an external evaluation

This final section of the guide aims to provide some information for child sexual abuse services that want to commission an external evaluation. It provides information on:

- ***planning an external evaluation***
- ***writing an evaluation brief for potential evaluators***
- ***finding evaluators***
- ***selecting an evaluator***
- ***managing an external evaluation.***

4.1 Planning an external evaluation

There are a number of things to think about if you have decided to commission an external evaluation of your work:

- Make sure you are clear exactly what you want the evaluation to focus on and what you want to know about this.
- Consider the audience for your evaluation's findings and how they will be used. This can help you determine the importance of the evaluation, and how much funding should go towards it.
- Estimate costs and think about how you will meet them. Ideally, evaluation planning should be built in to commissioning plans, or when you originally apply for service funding. Rough guidance suggests that around 10% of the cost of the service should go towards evaluation however you may want to allocate more or less than this, depending on the importance and complexity of the evaluation. A new service may require a much more detailed evaluation than the evaluation of an ongoing project with an established way of working and a clear set of outcomes.
- Consider whether the evaluation will also provide opportunities to develop evaluation skills within your organisation.

4.2 Writing an evaluation brief

A brief communicates to potential evaluators the job you want them to do. A large proportion of the problems that services encounter when commissioning evaluations could be avoided by writing a good brief at the start of the process!

The main drafting of the brief should be done by the person with the clearest view of the evaluation being planned. You may need to consult partner agencies, staff who may be involved in carrying out the evaluation, and perhaps funders. Discuss draft briefs thoroughly with all concerned before they are finalised.

You can use Worksheet 7 to help you write a brief for the evaluation you want to commission.

4.3 Finding potential evaluators

Options for finding external evaluators include:

- looking at the Rape Crisis (England and Wales) list of preferred providers (available to services that are members of RCEW)
- asking colleagues or other organisations about evaluators they have used
- searching on the internet for reports of similar work and find out who produced them
- searching on an online directory of approved consultants (e.g. the Consultants for Good directory, or the Clinks partnership finder for services working in the criminal justice system)
- contacting a university department with relevant experience of research/evaluation in the voluntary and community sectors.

4.4 Selecting an evaluator

Ask potential evaluators to submit a written application that enables you to assess:

- **Cost and quality.** You are likely to get better value for money for the evaluation where there is competition for the commission, with at least two evaluators/teams responding to the brief you have written.

- **Previous experience/track record.** Ask potential evaluators to detail what experience they have of working in the field of child sexual abuse. It can be helpful to see something that they have written (and preferably published) that exemplifies the work that they do. Is it similar to the work you are looking for them to do for you? Do they have the writing skills you need, for example have they written summary reports?

- **Individual roles.** Clarify who will actually do the work, and who the main evaluator will be.

- **Understanding of the brief**. Check that they have understood what you want the evaluation to cover and what you want it to achieve.
- **Suitability of proposed methodology**. Make sure that you are happy with the activities that they propose and that these will be appropriate for your service and the children/young people and other stakeholders you work with.

Once you have reviewed the applications you have received, it is a good idea to interview the ones you feel are best placed to do the work. This is really important so that you can make sure that you feel they are the right people to work with you.

4.5 Managing the evaluation

- Draw up a formal contract between you and the evaluator. This should include details of how you will pay the evaluator. One approach is to tie payment to completion of specific tasks, rather than the time they spend on the evaluation project. For example, you could make one payment early on, another when the evaluator completes the fieldwork and/or when they produce interim reports, and the last payment only after you have agreed on the final report with them. Hold onto the last payment until you are satisfied that their final report has met the outputs in the brief.
- Establish a timetable for the evaluation with the evaluator.
- Help negotiate access to information/respondents.
- Arrange appropriate support and supervision for the evaluator and set up an advisory group.
- Make a record of how the evaluation was done, difficulties encountered and how these were dealt with.
- Set up a group discussion with the evaluator at the end of the evaluation to help people in your service learn lessons for next time.

For more detailed guidance on commissioning an external evaluation, see DMSS Research's guide Commissioning an Independent Evaluation.

Glossary

Activities	What you do to achieve your outcomes, i.e. the services you provide or the products you distribute. (Can also be known as **outputs**.)
Aims or goals	Describes why your organisation exists and the broad effect you want to have. It summarises the difference that you want to make.
Baseline	Information about the situation that your project or organisation is trying to change, showing what it is like before an intervention is made.
Impact	The broad or longer-term effects of your work, which can also include effects on a wider field such as government policy.
Indicators	Information which shows whether or not something is happening, and which helps you to measure your progress in delivering your activities and achieving your outcomes.
Outcomes	The changes, benefits, learning or other effects that result from your work.
Process	What is involved in delivering your services, e.g. referral arrangements with partner organisations, information-sharing agreements, and staff training.
Resources	What is needed in order to provide your services, e.g. staff, premises, equipment, funding.
Stakeholders	The people or groups who have an interest in the activities of an organisation. This can include staff, volunteers, service users, trustees, funders and commissioners.
Triangulation	When data is obtained from different sources to provide more than one perspective.
User satisfaction	What your service users think of the activities, products or services that you provide.

Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse

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