

Monitoring and evaluation for small groups

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Many funders now ask groups how they will measure the success of their work. They want to know what difference their funding will make to the people who use your group's services or take part in activities.

Thinking through how you will monitor and evaluate your group's activities is an important part of planning your work. It can help you learn what works and what doesn't so that you can change or improve future activities or repeat things that you know went well.

Monitoring and evaluating what you do does not have to be complicated. It's an activity that we all do constantly without thinking about it. For instance, when you organise a bonfire party you will ask yourselves afterwards 'was it a success?' 'did people enjoy themselves?' 'Was there enough food?' 'Was it safe enough for the children?' 'Would we do it again?' You just need to spend time making sure that you collect useful information and take time to discuss any important issues. It can help to reassure you that things are going well after all the hard work you have put in.

What is monitoring and evaluation?

Monitoring means collecting and recording information about what is happening. Activities can be monitored in different ways, like recording the numbers of people attending the Friday night youth club sessions, or asking what people thought about the activities that were organised.

Evaluation means reviewing how things went by looking at the information that was collected and assessing how worthwhile it was. You might ask questions like: -

- Did the activity or project achieve what we wanted it to?
- Who benefited from it?
- What did people think of it and did it make any difference to them?
- Could we have done it better?
- What changes will we make next time?

Your group might decide to review the information in a management committee meeting and discuss the conclusions.

What to monitor and evaluate

To decide what to monitor and evaluate, you need to think about the following:

- What does our activity or project aim to do or achieve?
- What information will help us to see whether this has happened?
- What methods can we use to collect the information?
- Who needs to be involved in the evaluation?

Funders are interested not only in the numbers of people involved in activities, but also the quality of their experience. So, you might organise an event for a small number of people, but everyone there gets a lot of support and information and finds it very helpful. In addition to recording the number and types of people attending the event, it would be just as important to collect information that shows how people benefited. This could be done through a questionnaire or interviews at the end of the activity.

You need to think through how much time you spend collecting information. You may just need a simple questionnaire or registration form for the information you need.

Writing a report

It's a good idea to write a short report summarising your evaluation. This can be useful for yourselves when planning future activities, and for funders as it shows them that you know what you are doing.

A report could include:

- The aims of the activity or project.
- The purpose of the evaluation.
- What was being evaluated, & for who.
- The timescale for the evaluation.
- Who carried out the evaluation.
- What information was collected.
- What methods were used to collect information.
- An analysis of the results.
- Your conclusions.

- How the group will use the evaluation and make any changes when organising future activities.

Useful Books:

Just About Managing by Sandy Adirondack, *London Voluntary Services Council, 1998*

Directory of Social Change, 24 Stephenson Way, London NW1 2DP
Tel: 020 7209 5151
Fax: 020 7391 4804
email: books@dsc.org.uk
online: www.dsc.org.uk/charitybooks

Making Evaluation and Monitoring Work for Us by Christine Pope, *Rape Crisis Federation Wales and England, 2000*

Unit 7 Provident Works, Newdigate Street, Nottingham NG7 4FD
Tel: 0115 900 3560
Fax: 0115 900 3562
email: info@rapecrisis.co.uk

The Complete Guide to Creating & Managing New Projects for Voluntary Organisations by Alan Lawrie, *Directory of Social Change, 2002*

Directory of Social Change, 24 Stephenson Way, London NW1 2DP
Tel: 020 7209 5151
Fax: 020 7391 4804
email: books@dsc.org.uk
online: www.dsc.org.uk/charitybooks

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