NHS Cambridgeshire
Full Evaluation Toolkit

Adapted from the PRIMARY CARE **SERVICE EVALUATION TOOLKIT** Version 1.5
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USING THE TOOLKIT

This Evaluation Toolkit is designed to support staff carrying out an evaluation of any service in both health and social care. It will guide you through the steps you need to carry out, and point you at additional resources you may need for some parts of the evaluation.

To complete the evaluation, you will need:

- involvement from all stakeholders to ensure the evaluation is complete and relevant,
- dedicated resource for carrying out the evaluation
- and in some cases additional support for the data collection and analysis is required.

This format will be accepted by NHS Cambridgeshire as part of their monitoring requirements.

MARSH AND GLENDENNING'S TEN STEPS

The evaluation toolkit follows a ten step process. Each step is set out with a checklist which asks a number of questions. The notes that you make in connection with these questions will provide the basis of a first draft of your evaluation design.

While there is a logic to the sequence, the steps are not a completely linear process. You may need to revisit some of the steps as you progress through the Toolkit.

While carrying out the evaluation, keep thorough notes so that your conversations and meetings with others, and your ideas and thoughts about the evaluation are not lost. These notes are often an important element of the evaluation process.

TEN STEPS FOR SUCESSFUL EVALUATION

STEP ONE DO YOU REALLY NEED TO CONDUCT AN EVALUATION?
Evaluation is valuable, but there may be other and more effective ways to generate knowledge, and there may be competing priorities for the resources evaluation needs.

STEP TWO THE NEED TO INVOLVE OTHERS
Involving others in an evaluation is not a luxury: it is vital. Involvement will help make sure there is real action resulting from the evaluation. They will also help with efficient access for data gathering and making sure resources are used most efficiently

STEP THREE DEFINING YOUR QUESTION
If you do want to conduct an evaluation it needs a clear focus. Look at the objectives of the service and use your stakeholders to help get the right questions. Think about the reasons for carrying out the evaluation as this may also affect the evaluation questions.

STEP FOUR REALISTIC RESOURCES
Evaluation costs time and money, which needs to be spent wisely, with a sensible budget for all the different stages of the work.

STEP FIVE ETHICS AND GOVERNANCE
Conducting your work to high ethical standards is very important, and there are a number of research and governance issues that you will need to consider. The key message is to contact people with responsibility for these areas to make sure you receive the best advice and make appropriate plans for your work.

STEP SIX FOUNDATIONS FOR ACTION
Evaluation is designed to help with service improvement. Therefore it needs to be designed so it will lead to action. For example it must provide credible evidence for its audience and be delivered in a timescale that allows it to affect decisions. These issues can affect your decisions about the need and focus for evaluation, the type of involvement and the resources you need. You should review your work so far to make sure the evaluation design can provide foundations for action.

STEP SEVEN CHOICE OF METHODS
The Toolkit provides a decision tree for you to work through which gives some indications of likely methods for different sorts of evaluation focus (finding out about people’s opinions and attitudes, finding factual information, and working in an area that needs exploring). Remember your methodology must be robust so your results provide credible evidence for decision making.

STEP EIGHT ASSESSING AND DEVELOPING EXPERTISE
This step asks you to reflect on the expertise needed for the project and to conduct a self assessment to see what may be missing from your repertoire or your team’s repertoire.

STEP NINE REPORTS AND COMMUNICATION
Is the evaluation for one or more audiences, what is expected and what is agreed? What are the deadlines for reporting. Think about how you will communicate the results and how will you plan this in to the project?

STEP TEN PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER
You will by now have worked through the key areas of evaluation design. You will need to review it as a whole, and use your notes from each area to put together a final evaluation plan.

STEP ONE - DO YOU REALLY NEED TO CONDUCT AN EVALUATION?

Before you start an evaluation, you need to consider what is involved in evaluation, what alternatives there are and is evaluation the right tool for what you want to achieve.

What is an evaluation?

An evaluation is applied research for a purpose. It is concerned with making an assessment, judging an activity or a service against a set of criteria. Evaluation assesses the worth or value of something.

What can an evaluation tell you?

The kinds of questions that can be answered by an evaluation include:

- Are we meeting the needs of our users/patients?
- How are people responding to specific services of ours, can we improve the programme?
- What happens to our users/patients as a result of following the programme?
- What is actually going on during a specific programme?
- Are we making the best use of our resources in delivering specific programmes?

Do you really need to do this?

Evaluation costs time and money. Is an evaluation the best use of this time and money? There can be strong pressures pushing for an evaluation, that does not mean it is necessarily the best use of time and money.

You should consider the following, and make sure you are confident answering ‘no’ to each question.

- Has the question already been answered?
- Can you use research, generalisable to your work, to answer your enquiry?
- If ‘politics’ is pushing you to conduct an evaluation, could you add a local audit to existing research findings, and thus avoid a full scale evaluation but still provide some local data and greater credibility?

Can, and should, you achieve the result without full scale evaluation?

A full scale evaluation aims to look at all aspects of a service. This may not always be necessary. You may decide to focus on one area and use techniques which will give you enough data to inform action in this area. For example:

Group and individual discussions with staff and users. - It is perfectly sensible, in a wide variety of circumstances, to engage in much less structured forms of feedback on services

Audit.-This could apply if there is existing research but also pressure for something local as well. It is one method supporting evaluation which is useful you need to look at outcome data but not necessarily understand a service in detail.

Are you really thinking of research?

You should be very careful to distinguish research from evaluation. Research is designed to provide generalisable knowledge. The results of research are not just about specific programmes or areas, they have the likelihood of being applicable to similar programmes elsewhere. Many of the methods of research are those used in evaluation, but the focus is different, and the scale of resources required is likely to be different, along with the level of skills and knowledge.

Step One Evaluation Checklist

Justification for Evaluation				
Is this a new, expanding or changing service?	Yes	☐	No	☐
Is there user or public pressure for better services in this area?	Yes	☐	No	☐
Is this a national or local priority	Yes	☐	No	☐
Are you required to carry out an evaluation as part of your contract?	Yes	☐	No	☐
Rationale for the Evaluation				

Is an Evaluation the right tool?				
Can you answer the question some other way?	Yes	☐	No	☐
Are you really thinking of research?	Yes	☐	No	☐
Do you need to do a full scale evaluation?	Yes	☐	No	☐
Rationale for using Evaluation	Yes	☐	No	☐
Rationale for the Evaluation				

STEP TWO - THE NEED TO INVOLVE OTHERS

Why involve stakeholders

'People are more likely to accept and use information, and make changes based on information, when they are personally involved in and have a personal stake with decision-making processes aimed at bringing about change' (Patton, 1982: 61)

With the involvement of key stakeholders:

- The resources for evaluation will expand
- The evaluation results will have more credibility
- The evaluation is more likely to lead to change, if necessary
- It is easier to define relevant evaluation questions
- You will find gaining access to information easier

There are some key issues to be considered in the involvement of others

- Who are the stakeholders?
- The level of involvement of stakeholders
- Service user motivation and support
- Persuading practitioners to be involved
- Vulnerable and/or hard to reach groups

Who are the stakeholders?

A stakeholder is anyone who has a stake, or interest, in an evaluation and who may be involved or affected by it. Potentially this could be a very wide audience but typically it will involve:

- Policy-makers and decision-makers with responsibility for the service
- Sponsors/funding bodies responsible for setting up/funding the service/evaluation
- Managers with responsibility for the particular service
- Staff/practitioners/volunteers responsible for the delivery of the service
- Patients/clients/users of the service
- Interested others such as people, groups or organisations geographically, organisationally or politically 'close' (residents, local politicians, providers of the competing services).

Stakeholders are sometimes divided into:

- Primary Stakeholders: People who are directly affected by the service (benefiting or adversely affected)
- Secondary Stakeholders: all others who have a stake or interest in the service

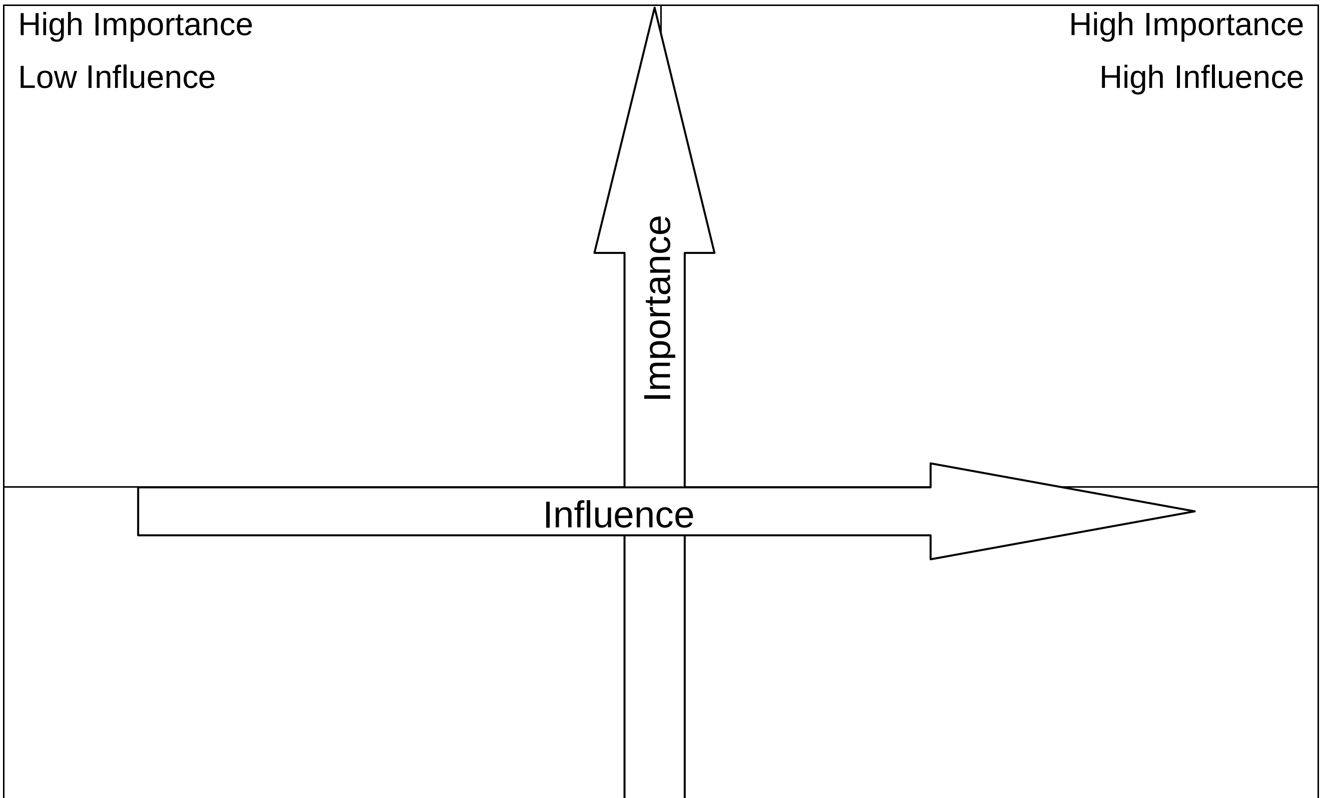
In practice, the stakeholders most likely to take a keen interest in the evaluation and its findings are sponsors, management, staff and service users. Sponsors because they have paid for it, management and staff because they may, in some sense, be judged by the findings, and service users because they are likely to be directly affected by decisions made as a result of the evaluation. From the point of view of making the evaluation ‘useful and used’ these key stakeholders should be actively involved in shaping and focusing the evaluation.

Developing ‘linkages’ between stakeholders can also develop potential for future collaboration and facilitate wider networking, (Huberman, 1990) and a pre-disposition to think in evaluative terms when an issue or problem arises.

Stakeholder Analysis

When planning an evaluation it can be useful to carry out a stakeholder analysis to consider who your stakeholders are, and how important and influential they are to your service.

One way to do this is to use a matrix as below, listing all your stakeholders, and categorising them in terms of their importance to, and influence on, the service. When considering the matrix you need to think about people who may be very important to your evaluation but who may typically have very little influence. If this is the case, you may want to think about how you can involve them and give them more influence.



The level of stakeholder involvement

Stakeholders can be involved in the evaluation process in different ways as illustrated below:

Stakeholders' participation in evaluation – an illustration adapted from McNeish, D (1999).

Role of Stakeholder	**Role of Evaluation / Nature of Evaluation**
Stakeholders as non-participants	Evaluator develops evaluation focus, designs and implements study and does not involve stakeholders at any stage.
Stakeholders as 'evaluation objects'	Evaluator develops evaluation focus and designs study which involves stakeholders in a passive capacity e.g. observational study.
Stakeholders as passive respondents	Evaluator develops evaluation focus, designs study which involves people as respondents (e.g. of structured interviews/survey). Participation is limited to giving consent and responding within interview confines.
Stakeholders as active respondents	As above except stakeholder is given greater freedom to express views and influence the questions. A wide variety of methods may be used e.g. focus groups, semi-structured interviews, creative techniques. Evaluator may invite comment on findings.
Stakeholders as consultants	Evaluator develops focus but involves stakeholder in shaping the design and implementation of the evaluation. Stakeholder may also be involved in other aspects e.g. dissemination, steering group member.
Stakeholders as evaluators	Stakeholder involved in design and implementation and have varying degrees of direct involvement in carrying out the evaluation.

The illustration is not intended to be viewed as a hierarchy: extensive participation is not a guarantee of good evaluation. What needs to be decided is 'who needs to be involved and to what degree.'

Service user motivation and support

Where service users are key stakeholders they can be involved at every stage of the process; setting the outcome measures, developing ways of collecting data, carrying out the evaluation, helping in the analysis and dissemination.

It is important to consider what will motivate people to get involved, what their role and responsibility will be, and how they will receive feedback. You may also need to consider what training and support may be needed by those who get involved.

Encouraging practitioners to be involved

As with service users, practitioners may need to be persuaded that there is ' good reason' to be involved. For those playing a direct role, there is the likely tension that stress and anxiety is increased simply because they are spending time away from their 'real job'.

Factors such as staff morale, quality of leadership and experience of previous evaluation may be crucial in determining the attitude of practitioners.

Robson (2000) gives suggestions about what might be done to avoid some likely problems when staff act as participants:

- Deliver on promises about what will happen and when
- Allow for release time from normal duties (this time tends to be underestimated in many evaluation studies)
- Recognise that practitioners may be seen by their colleagues as in some way ‘privileged’ and avoid this by ensuring some general organisation benefit flows
- Avoid really problematic organisation settings unless the evaluation is about ‘problematic settings’

Do not be too constrained by ‘traditional’ ways of involving others. As an indication of thinking more broadly you may like to look at:

- Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) - http://www.livelihoods.org
- Visualisation and community visioning - http://www.sustainable.org
- Involving service users in evaluation and research - http://www.invo.org.uk/

Vulnerable and/or hard to reach groups

Stakeholder involvement is central to good evaluation. It needs care and attention, particularly when there are vulnerable and/or hard to reach groups involved. Involvement of these groups is also key when addressing health inequalities for a service.

Two such groups are discussed below, but there are many other groups were different ways of encouraging participation will be needed. Specialist support may be required for this work.

1. Participatory work with children

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child places in law the right of young people to have their opinions on matters that affect them taken into account in accordance with their maturity. Participation is a right but it can also bring about better knowledge of views and priorities, more effective action through ‘ownership’, better measurement of impact and empowerment of those who have effectively participated.

Particular attention needs to be given to Ethics. Although the majority of ethical issues that apply to adults also apply to children, there are specific concerns to be addressed in respect of: child protection, diversity, disability and very young children.

Particular methodologies are likely to yield better participation e.g.

- Visual techniques such as drawings, diagrams and maps
- Role play, drama and music
- Photographic and video work
- Writing, diaries, recall and observation, storyboards

For further discussion on this area see: Save the Children Fund (2000)

2. Evaluating with people dissimilar from oneself

There is a major debate, which has continued from the very earliest days of social research, about the role that personal knowledge and experience plays in providing data. One issue is how difficult it is to 'transgress the boundaries' set by proponents of essentialism (an insistence upon core characteristics as necessary in any research/evaluation activity and that 'to be the same' confers the right to be held as authentic or expert in a given field).

Essentialism is particularly an issue in areas such as Feminist and Disability Studies and has led to a view that e.g. 'it is culturally incorrect' for hearing people to interview deaf people.

In an important critique of this position Harris and Paylor (1999) challenge this view and highlight the importance of evaluator personality. Clearly in service evaluation, these issues need to be addressed and decisions taken as to the fit between evaluator and area of enquiry. You need to think very carefully about this issue and how it might affect your evaluation.

References

Harris and Paylor (1999) The politics of difference: researching those dissimilar from oneself *in* Broad, B*: The Politics of Social Work Research and Evaluation*, Birmingham: Venture Press

McNeish, D (1999*). From Rhetoric to Reality: participatory approaches to health promotion with young people.* London: Health Education Authority.

Robson, C (2000): *Small – Scale Evaluation*, Sage

Save the Children Fund (2000) *Children and Participation: research, monitoring and evaluation with children and young people* London: Save the Children Fund

Step Two Evaluation Checklist

Who are the stakeholders in your evaluation both primary and secondary? Interested others will need some thought.
What steps will you take to make sure all stakeholders will have a voice? Also, develop your rationale for involving some but not others
Are there any likely problems stakeholders will face as a result of involvement and how will you deal with these problems? What are the potential benefits to stakeholders of being involved? What are the potential risk of being involved?
Are there any specific issues regarding the stakeholders you need to take into account regarding hard to reach or vulnerable groups?

What training and support will stake holders want and need?
Develop a steering group for your project. Who should be members, what should be its remit?

Stakeholder:
What are their interests in relation to the service?
How important is this stakeholder?
How influential is this stakeholder?
What level of involvement should they have?
What role should they play in the evaluation?
• In planning
• In collecting information
• In interpreting the findings
• In making use of the findings
• In dissemination

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• In making use of the findings
• In dissemination

STEP THREE - DEFINING YOUR QUESTION

Defining the question that your evaluation seeks to answer is the key to a successful evaluation. From this you can develop specific criteria to evaluate against. The focus of an evaluation is nearly always too broad at the beginning, and the work done in defining the question helps in narrowing the focus, so the evaluation is both credible and achievable..

You will always need to involve stakeholders in the question and criteria, and there is a circular process of involvement and refining which can mean moving back and forth between steps two and three of evaluation planning.

Formulating evaluation questions

A crucial part of the planning process is ensuring that the study has a tightly defined focus. To do this you need to identify what you really need to know. This means narrowing it down to something manageable and ideally having only one question to answer.

Some common general evaluation questions are as follows:

- What is needed?
- Does what is provided meet user/patient/client needs? (Relevant to a proposed service)
- Does it attain its goals or objectives?
- What are the outcomes?
- How do costs and benefits compare?
- Does it meet required standards?
- Should it continue?
- How can it be improved?

Although you may wish to seek answers to many of these questions it is unlikely you will have the time and the resources to do this. **So it is preferable to design the evaluation to obtain high quality information about the really key question**. When this has been done, you might consider if, and how, other data that is relevant to subsidiary questions, might be collected within the resources allocated.

Some aspects of common evaluation questions

Eight common evaluation questions are outlined below. Which one or ones seem most applicable to your work?

What is needed?

- Gathering information about currently unmet needs within a community, organisation or group through discussions with stakeholders.

Does what is provided meet user/patient/client needs?

- Identifying possible mismatches between the audience and the service and whether the target audience is being reached.

Does it attain its goals and objectives?

- Often regarded as the key evaluation question. It is important to establish in what ways the service has succeeded in meeting the objectives it set out to achieve.

What are its outcomes?

- The task is to measure/assess ‘output’, some of which might be unintended. Often called effectiveness or impact evaluation, the basic notion is that something is supposed to change and improve as a result of the programme of activity/service change. This question calls for a more open, exploratory style of evaluation. Selection of some outcome measures to target is the (relatively) easy part; however, difficulties can start to arise when trying to move from saying there has been a change, to claiming that the change can be attributable to the programme/service itself and not to some other cause.

How do costs and benefits compare?

- When both costs and benefits are expressed in monetary terms this is known as a cost-benefit analysis. When costs are expressed in monetary terms but benefits in non-monetary terms this is cost-effectiveness analysis.

Does it meet required standards?

- The validation of services is typically a matter of assuring that certain minimum requirements are met. There may be detailed rules laid down.

Should it continue?

- Answering this question will require seeking evidence on some or all of the other questions on this list, and what will count as persuasive evidence will need to be established through discussion with some or all stakeholders.

How can it be improved?

- Improvement is often a central question in new services, particularly if a ‘pilot’ has been run. Evaluation for improvement is designed to be part of the development of the service. However, even with well established and apparently successful services, the question will often be important, particularly in a culture of ‘continuous improvement’. Also, suggestions for improvement will be welcome when a service is experiencing difficulties.

Useful ideas and common pitfalls

Three ideas that are relevant to the development of evaluation questions:

- Develop good and frequent contacts with colleagues
- Take account of your intuition that the work is important, timely and ‘right’
- Value a problem that arises from practice that could lead to tangible and useful ideas

(from Campbell et al, 1982 pp 97-103)

Some critical pitfalls are to be avoided:

- Allowing a pre-decided method or technique to determine questions to be asked (including a preference for analytical software)
- Posing questions that can’t be answered (either in general or by the methods that it is feasible for you to use)
- Asking questions that have already been answered satisfactorily (often arising from ignorance or the literature)

(from Robson C, 2002 pp 57-58)

Below are three examples of evaluations with ‘good enough’ questions. Could you provide a better evaluation question? Bear in mind that - ‘what we need to know is what it is about a program which makes it work’ *(Pawson and Tilley, 1997: 26)*

The reasons behind your development/service, the context of it, and the outcomes you want it to achieve, all need careful thought.

EXAMPLE 1

Evaluating an existing mainstream service

The context is that PCT managers have identified child health services provided by Health Visitors as in need of review.

The following issues have been raised:

- The current resources invested in the provision of child health services in the PCT ‘patch’ is unclear.
- It is uncertain who is using the current service and for what purpose.
- Different Health Visitor services are provided in different parts of the PCT ‘patch’.
- There are problems reported by General Practitioners about levels of staffing of child health clinics in individual practices.

The evaluation question might be:

“Do we have an appropriate match between the provision of our child health services by Health Visitors and the need for those services?”

EXAMPLE 2

Evaluating a new prevention programme

The context is that a new falls prevention programme was introduced into the residential homes for older people in your ‘patch’ one year ago. Continuation funding is being reviewed by PCT managers and the following issues have been raised:

- The number of falls reported has decreased in the past year.
- It is uncertain whether this is due to the new falls prevention programme.
- Staff and users have given a positive response to the introduction of the programme.
- It is also uncertain if continuation of the programme represents “value for money”.
- Staff have reported changes in their working practices and an improvement in their physical environment.

The evaluation question might be:

“Should we continue to fund the programme on the basis of its effectiveness in preventing falls and its value for money?”

EXAMPLE 3

Evaluating an aspect of working practice and staff roles

The context is that within the PCT 'patch' there is a wide variation in the roles carried out by the Practice Nurses in individual practices. The PCT managers are interested in the extent to which Practice Nurses are becoming 'Nurse Practitioners'. The following issues have been raised:

- It is uncertain which tasks the Practice Nurses are currently undertaking (including volume and frequency).
- The proportion of tasks which the nurses are doing to meet the Practice Quality and Outcomes Framework is also unknown.
- Practice Nurses are using increasing amounts of their time in administrative tasks which may not be an appropriate use of their skills.
- The implications of increasing the numbers of Nurse Practitioners in the PCT 'patch' are uncertain.

The evaluation question might be:

"How can the tasks undertaken by our Practice Nurses best utilise their skills and be complementary to those provided by other members of the primary health care team?"

Requirements of Evaluation Questions

Your evaluation question(s) should be:

- **Clear** - unambiguous and easily understood
- **Specific** - Sufficiently specific for it to be clear what constitutes an answer
- **Answerable -** we can see what data are needed to answer them and how those data will be collected
- **Interconnected** - the questions are related in some meaningful way, forming a coherent whole
- **Substantially relevant** - they are worthwhile, non-trivial questions worthy of the effort to be expended
- **Measurable and Timebound** (from SMART objectives) *(from Robson C, 2002: 57-58)*

References

Campbell, J.T., Daft, R.L and Hulin, C.L (1982*) What to Study: Generating and Developing Research Questions*. Newbury

Park, Calif: Sage

Robson, C (2002) *Real World Research.* Oxford: Blackwell

Pawson, R. and Tilley, N (1997) *Realistic Evaluation.* London: Sage

Step Three Evaluation Checklist

Use the grid below to consider the issues relevant to your evaluation

Setting the Context

What are the goals / objectives of the service?
How does it fit in the wider user pathway?
What is the context and the boundaries of this evaluation?
Any national or local standards?

Defining the questions

What is needed?
Gathering information about currently unmet needs within a community, organisation or group through discussions with stakeholders.
Does what is provided meet user/patient/client needs?
Identifying possible mismatches between the audience and the service and whether the target audience is being reached.

What happens when it is in operation?
Studying the processes involved in the delivery of a service and whether the intended service is actually implemented as planned.
Does it attain its goals and objectives?
Often regarded as the key evaluation question. It is important to establish in what ways the service has succeeded in meeting the objectives it set out to achieve.
What are its outcomes?
The task is to measure/assess ‘output’, some of which might be unintended. Often called effectiveness or impact evaluation, the basic notion is that something is supposed to change and improve as a result of the programme of activity/service change. This question calls for a more open, exploratory style of evaluation. Selection of some outcome measures to target is the (relatively) easy part; however, difficulties can start to arise when trying to move from saying there has been a change, to claiming that the change can be attributable to the programme/service itself and not to some other cause.
How do costs and benefits compare?
When both costs and benefits are expressed in monetary terms this is known as a cost-benefit analysis. When costs are expressed in monetary terms but benefits in non-monetary terms this is cost-effectiveness analysis.
Does it meet required standards?
The validation of services is typically a matter of assuring that certain minimum requirements are met. There may be detailed rules laid down.

Should it continue?
Answering this question will require seeking evidence on some or all of the other questions on this list, and what will count as persuasive evidence will need to be established through discussion with some or all stakeholders.
How can it be improved?
Improvement is often a central question in new services, particularly if a ‘pilot’ has been run. Evaluation for improvement is designed to be part of the development of the service. However, even with well established and apparently successful services, the question will often be important, particularly in a culture of ‘continuous improvement’. Also, suggestions for improvement will be welcome when a service is experiencing difficulties.

2. Summarise the issues

3. Draft Evaluation questions

These initial questions need to be discussed and refined with stakeholders.

You may find new questions are raised as the evaluation progresses. For each of these consider if they need to be incorporated in the evaluation.

STEP FOUR - REALISTIC RESOURCES

What resources *should* you give to this?

You need to define the boundaries for the work:

- The time that will be available to work on this evaluation
- The timescale needed for conclusions (produce a rough timetable)
- The people available to work on this evaluation
- The finance available, over and above the 'people time' that is involved.

Useful ideas

- Aim for maximum output from minimum input. Use existing data, join up with others, and time it for maximum likelihood of co-operation.
- Access to data may well be a key part of deciding on resource needs.
- Have a plan for managing information, which is as simple and straightforward to use as you can. Keep a log of events; it will help maximise resources.
- Have a plan for personal support. Experience shows the road to evaluation output can be a rough and rocky one.

Step Four Evaluation Checklist

Can you answer YES to the question Is it value for money,

1) in the context of the service being evaluated, and

2) given other priorities for both services and service evaluation?"

If not, should you be doing the evaluation?

2. Estimate of resources required
People available
Time allocated (eg 1 day a week for 10 weeks)
Additional expertise required
Other resources (eg software, literature, training)
Support required (eg access to data)

STEP FIVE - ETHICS AND GOVERNANCE

You will need to carry out your evaluation within best ethical practice, and subject to relevant governance. You will need to consider the appropriate governance arrangements for your project. It has been recognized that it is not always easy to distinguish research from other forms of innovative work, and that there are a number of grey areas. You will need to discuss this carefully within your organization.

Evaluations must recognise and respect the interests of different stakeholders and carry out evaluations in an ethically responsible manner. Three areas to consider are:

- Consent
- Privacy and confidentiality
- Risks as related to benefits

Consent

The general principle is one of *voluntary informed consent* and there is much to be said for a formal consent form although this will depend on circumstances. However, where it is straightforward for people to refuse (e.g. a postal questionnaire) this is not such an issue.

Privacy and confidentiality

The voluntary nature of involvement acknowledges a right to privacy that can be exercised by a refusal to take part. Confidentiality in relation to information about a person needs to be agreed and respected, as with anonymity. What is crucial is that any undertakings need to be honoured.

Risk in relation to benefit

Attention needs to be given to those who are likely to be vulnerable or at risk. These might include:

- Anyone without power or with diminished power (e.g. people in prison or hospital)
- Those who might be damaged by the process or by implementation of the findings
- People in the public eye or who might be placed in the public eye as a result of the evaluation
- Children and those who can’t speak for themselves

There is also risk due to misuse or misrepresentation of findings or the perverse use and interpretation by decision makers. There is no absolute safeguard here but building a good relationship and active involvement goes a long way to minimising risk.

The *benefits* of the evaluation need to outweigh the risks and devising a table of benefits is a useful exercise (e.g. list benefits against different stakeholders). The main requirement is that everyone has a realistic appreciation of both likely risks and likely benefits when they give their informed consent.

Research Governance

Because many outputs of evaluation will not be generalisable it could be that the evaluation will fall outside of the mainstream procedures. However, it is probably helpful (and may be necessary in a particular context) to follow ‘best practice’ in research governance as regards ethics. So it is important to verify whether the work falls within the research governance requirements. Contact your research governance lead for advice.

Step Five Evaluation Checklist

Before you move on with the evaluation, you must answer the following questions

Have you talked to ethics / governance leads about the work? Did they raise any ethical or governance issues?	
Are there any ethical issues to consider for any of the stakeholders?	
Do you need formal ethics approval and if so have you made arrangements?	
Will you need to consider consent?	
Have you analysed risk and benefit? Have you carried out a risk assessment?	
Risks identified	Benefits identified
Any actions taken to mitigate risks	

STEP SIX - FOUNDATIONS FOR ACTION

Evaluation is designed to have an impact. It needs to be convincing to its target audience. A poorly designed evaluation will not be convincing, but even a well designed one will probably be less convincing if it does not attend to the needs of its audience throughout its development.

Some audiences are particularly convinced by real voices of real people (an evaluation that uses a great deal of quotations for example) and if there are none it will be much more difficult to connect evaluation with action.

So a crucial question is ‘what is the target audience?’ and, of course, what sort of evidence will convince them. It might involve adding a few interviews to an evaluation, so that points otherwise demonstrated via quantitative approaches in questionnaires can have some life to them, it might involve building in some comparative work with a service that is highly thought of by the target audience.

User and community involvement in the evaluation is important. It might also increase the likelihood of the evaluation resulting in action, for example by allowing user involvement with dissemination.

External consultants may, if their reputation is good with the target audience, also help credibility.

Alongside the need for convincing data is the importance of timeliness. An excellent evaluation, with convincing data, delivered just after the date for a key decision that it *could* have informed is not doing its job. What timescale must the evaluation work to and how can it manage this (for example via interim reports if the full evaluation cannot be undertaken in time).

Step Six Evaluation Checklist

Consider the following questions, and then revisit your Evaluation Questions. Also use you answers here when developing the methodology for the evaluation.

What is the target audience?
How will the evaluation be credible to those who will be interested in it?
How will the evaluation be credible to those who need to take action on it?
How can the steering group be involved?

STEP SEVEN - CHOICE OF METHODS

This section gives some ideas of the methods that you can use for an evaluation. However, it does not cover all methods and you may want to seek specialist help to make sure your evaluation methodology is robust so it leads to credible results that can lead to action.

Methods Decision Tree

The methods decision tree on the next page divides the evaluation methods into three broad strands of evaluation focus:

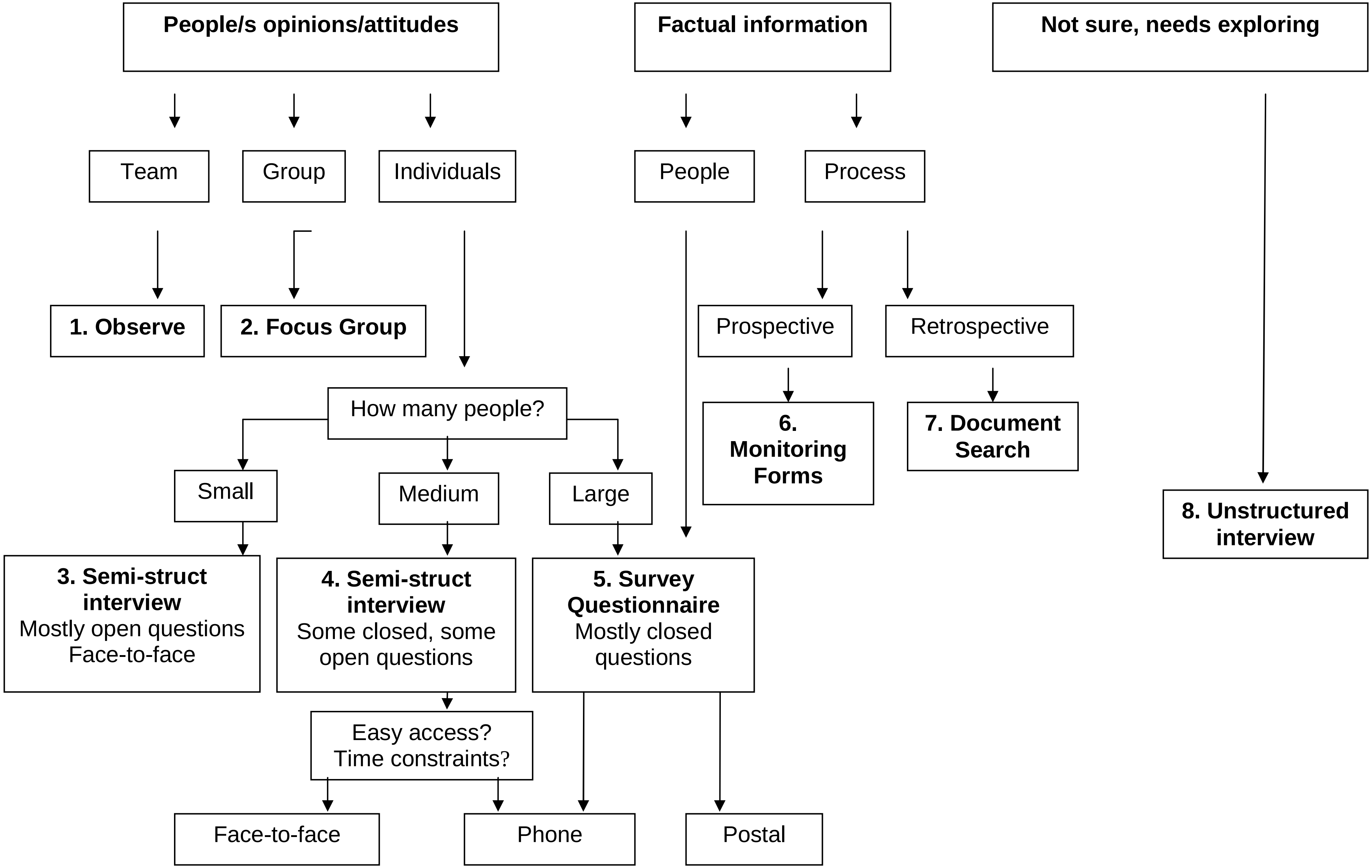
- Finding out about people's opinions and attitudes
- Finding factual information
- Working in an area where you are not clear that one or other of the above applies, or which simply needs exploring

These will lead you to some of the key methods you might want to use as follows:

1. Observing
2. Focus groups
3. Semi-structured interview: mostly open-ended questions (face to face)
4. Semi-structured interview: mix of closed and open-ended questions (face to face or phone)
5. Survey questionnaire: mostly closed questions (phone or postal)
6. Monitoring forms
7. Document search
8. Unstructured interview

METHODS DECISION TREE

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO KNOW?



Observe

Unstructured observation

This will help you to understand 'what is going on' by keeping your eyes and ears open and combines well with informal interviews, where an observation can be followed up through a discussion with those involved. This is similar to participant observation, used widely in ethnographic work, e.g. on culture (Fetterman, 1998). Generally, the more you participate, the more likely you will have an effect on what is happening, but the easier it becomes to understand what is happening! Perhaps an ideal balance is to aim to be a 'kind of insider who is pretty unobtrusive'.

Observation seeks to identify patterns and regularities and may focus on language, communication, activities and behaviours, the social environment, etc.

Structured observation

This involves the use of observation schedules and calls for the identification of observational categories. The task is to observe the occurrence of these categories. Reliability (consistency between different observers and at different times) and validity (that it measures what you want it to measure) necessitate piloting (time and money!). So the use of existing schedules may be preferable but equally they may not cover the things you want to observe!

Basically you need to find a schedule that:

- Provides answers to questions you seek an answer to
- Has acceptable reliability (see Loewenthal, 1996: 9-12)
- Provides some evidence of its validity (see Loewenthal, 1996: 12-14)
- Is appropriate to your target group
- Can be understood by your group
- Makes acceptable demands on your group
- You are able/trained/qualified to administer

Focus Group

Essentially focus groups are a type of semi-structured interview or discussion carried out in a group setting. The typical group size will be 8-12 people. They are commonly used for:

- Obtaining background information
- Stimulating new ideas
- Needs analysis
- Diagnosing the potential for problems with a new programme/service
- Generating impressions of programmes/services

Typically the session will be facilitated and run for 1-2 hours.

The main benefits are:

- Additional insights gained through interaction of ideas and suggestions from the group
- Focus groups are cost effective, quick and often easy to set up in the workplace setting

- Group process can help to focus topics
- Participants can feel empowered, valued and stimulated

Disadvantages relate to:

- The availability of a good facilitator, as this is the key to quality data being elicited
- The cost of having a second person to support the facilitator in recording interactions and outputs
- Problems linked to convenience sampling (groups made up of people who are easily available but not necessarily 'the right people'
- Limited generalisability

Interviewing

Probably the most widely used method that lends itself to be used in combination with other methods, in a multimethod approach. Interviews are typically face to face, although group and telephone interviews are increasingly popular. Three types are discussed: informal (or unstructured), semi-structured, and structured. The distinction tends to reflect the degree of structure or standardisation of the interview.

Informal Interviews

The interviewer has a general area of interest and allows conversations to develop in an informal manner. The approach is often exploratory and can involve peoples' perceptions. People often do not see these conversations as interviews but providing there is a clear understanding that you are in the role of evaluator it is not likely to be seen as unethical. The main challenge is to 'think on your feet' when generating questions that will allow you to explore the issue from the others' perspective rather than imposing your own views. Also, the insights gained need to be captured and noted as soon as possible after the conversation or during the discussion itself.

Semi-structured Interviews

The interviewer has pre-determined questions, but is free to vary wording and order based on the perception of what seems most appropriate. Explanations can be given, questions omitted or additional ones added. In addition a topic or interview guide is useful to check that all topics have been covered. Semi-structured interview are particularly useful when the interview takes place in a group setting and where different phrasing and language may be useful to communicate effectively. The interview schedule is likely to include the following:

- Introductory comments
- List of topic headings and key questions to ask under the headings
- Set of associated prompts
- Closing comments

Also it is common to have some structured parts (e.g. to obtain standard biographical information). One technique is to have topics, questions and prompts on a series of cards that can be put on one side when the topic has been covered.

Structured interviews

Has pre-determined questions with fixed wording, usually in a pre-set order. Essentially this may look very much like a self-completion questionnaire but open-ended or probing questions will often be asked. This type of standardized interview reduces variability from one interviewee to the other and data can be more easily compared. This type of interview is useful where there is more than one interviewer involved in data collection. The wording of any open-ended questions is particularly important in structured interviews. So the wording of the question should:

- Allow the interviewee to respond in their own terms
- Be clearly understandable to interviewees
- Be sensitive to the possible effects of questions (contexts to questions can be useful which can reduce the intrusive impact of potentially sensitive areas, e.g. a 'simulation' question such as 'suppose I was present at a consultation, what would I see happening?')

Unstructured interview

These can be akin to informal discussions, but where it is understood and agreed that the discussion will be noted down and used as data in the project. They are an exploratory interview, taking a broad brush approach to the issues involved. They can be depth interviews, facilitating the interviewee to explore in detail the area concerned, but conducting requires considerable sensitivity and experience and should be avoided for those not trained in the method.

Survey Questionnaire

Very frequently used in evaluations and needs analysis. Completion can be time efficient and analysis can be cost effective and generate useful quantitative data. The choice of a questionnaire should be governed by the evaluation questions and a judgement made as to whether a questionnaire will help

Much of the effort is upfront in the design phase as it can be surprisingly difficult to generate a well-crafted set of questions that are understandable and unambiguous and relevant to the evaluation question(s). However, once designed, the instrument can be used with a large group of people.

Fowler (1998) provides guidance on how to devise evaluation questions, including:

- Asking people about their first hand experience
- Asking one question at a time
- Careful wording so that meaning is understood by all respondents
- A complete and adequate script if the survey is to be interviewer administered
- Easy reading, instructions and recording of answers

Monitoring Forms

Sometimes it is straightforward monitoring of work that is needed: design a suitable and brief form, pilot it with a friendly participant, keep it as brief and clear as you possibly can.

Document Search

The approach of using documents as the basic data source differs from previous methods because we are dealing with something produced by someone else (written materials and non-written documents such as films and television programmes, pictures, drawings and photographs) rather than our own data gathered by directly observing, or interviewing, or getting a questionnaire response. This is an unobtrusive method as the document is not affected by the fact you are using it. Content analysis is a common approach to the analysis of what is in the document and is similar to structured observation but in a particular context, and particular contexts generate specific types of content, e.g. case/patient records, policy documents, minutes of meetings.

It is likely that in an evaluation, document search and its associated content analysis will be a supplementary method in a multi-method approach. As with structured observation it is essential that the categories that are used are exhaustive, mutually exclusive, and operationalised. Sorting out the categories is the most important aspect of content analysis. As content analysis can be very time consuming there could be value in using a computer-based approach. Fan (1997) considers a range of possibilities in computer content analysis.

Sampling

A sample is a selection from a population being considered. If you are interested in tests and relationships you should seek advice from a statistician as there are complex rules for different statistical approaches. It is more likely that you will be involved in types of sampling that will provide you with a more cost effective and quick result so this may lead you to consider:

- Convenience sampling: choosing the nearest and most convenient persons to act as respondents and continuing with this until sample size is approached. Most widely used and least satisfactory!
- Purposive sampling: judgement made as to the typicality of respondents. Sample built up that meets the specific needs of the evaluation
- Snowballing sampling: identify a few individuals from the population of interest and post-interview, use them to identify others who are themselves used as informants, and so on

In general look for a reasonable total number (not minute but not too big…think resources!), and a reasonable response rate within the population being studied in order to achieve an element of representativeness.

References

Fetterman, D.M. (1998) Ethnography. In L. Bickman and D.J. Rog., eds*. Handbook of Applied Social Research Methods.* Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage

Loewenthal, M. (1996) *An Introduction to Psychological Tests and Scales*. London: UCL Press

Fowler, F.J. (1998) Design and Evaluation of Survey Questions. In L. Bickman and D.J. Rog eds*. Handbook of Applied Social Research Methods.* Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage

Fan, D.P. (1997) Possibilities in computer content analysis of text: introduction to a symposium. *Social Sciences Computer Review*, 15, 349-50

Also two books that might help you think more widely about methodological issues:

Morgan, G., ed (1983) *Beyond Method: Strategies for Social Research*. Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage

Reason, P and Rowan, J., eds (1981*) Human Enquiry: A Sourcebook of New Paradigm Research*. New York: Wiley

Step Seven Evaluation Checklist

Consider the following questions when deciding on your methods – you will almost certainly need a range of methods to collect different types of data.

What mix of methods will you use / What does the decision tree lead you to?
For each different method, ALWAYS CARRY OUT A PILOT
Note the following information for each area.
Method 1
Data to be collected
Method(s)
Any potential problems in the methods chosen
What is the population and sample and how is it justified
How will you access the sample / data?
Will you need to get consent? Are there any ethical considerations?

Method 2
Data to be collected
Method(s)
Any potential problems in the methods chosen
What is the population and sample and how is it justified
How will you access the sample / data?
Will you need to get consent? Are there any ethical considerations?
Method 3
Data to be collected
Method(s)
Any potential problems in the methods chosen
What is the population and sample and how is it justified
How will you access the sample / data?
Will you need to get consent? Are there any ethical considerations?

STEP EIGHT - ASSESSING AND DEVELOPING EXPERTISE

You now have a basic plan for your evaluation, but are you lacking some skills to carry it out? If you are then one solution, if you have a budget that allows it, is to commission some expertise to help you. This could link with the importance of involving users and the community, as it may be possible to do this via user groups or community organisations.

You should carry out an assessment on your needs, considering if any of the stakeholders could receive appropriate training, or if you need additional expert support.

You are likely to find some resources to help you with your evaluation within your organisation, for example your research and development, public health, audit or clinical governance teams. You will need to be in touch with other staff for research governance purposes and this may also connect you to various forms of help.

Resources for Research and Evaluation Methodology and Training

Full details of a very wide range of research training courses, throughout the UK, and updated regularly can be found on the Department of Health research training website http://www.rdlearning.org.uk/

You will find information on a number of research training opportunities at the Royal College of General Practitioners' website
http://www.rcgp.org.uk/research/training/index.asp

- The ***Research Mindedness*** website at **http://www.resmind.swap.ac.uk/** is inclined towards social care, and covers relevant questions on understanding research, knowledge about research and relating research to practice.

  From the **Welcome** page you can go straight to the link **'Are you Research Minded?'** on the left hand menu bar. This will take you to a self-assessment tool designed to gauge your current level of awareness and understanding of research mindedness.

  What is particularly clever about this website is that it uses your self-assessment results to order the available materials as 'Strongly Recommended', 'Recommended' and 'Less Relevant For You'. This enables you to direct your time and attention towards the resources that you really need.

  The 'Glossary' on this site can be used as a handy reference when reading about research and evaluation. It gives a comprehensive listing of over 100 research terms and definitions. The link to 'Glossary' is just below the search box on the horizontal logo bar.

- The page for the ***Primary Care Research and the Research and Development Support Unit*** (RDSU) at United Bristol Healthcare NHT, **http://www.ubht.nhs.uk/R&D/RDSU/Primary%20care%20page.htm,** has links to Ethical Approval and Research Governance on the left-hand menu.

- The ***Centre for Reviews and Dissemination*** at the University of York **http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/crd/** has useful definitions and further information under ‘Review Methods and Resources’ and a page of relevant Links.

- ***The Trent Research Information Access Gateway (TRIAGE)*** **http://www.shef.ac.uk/scharr/triage/** has a number of links pages in the left-hand menu including:
  - Consumer Involvement in Research
  - Health Economics
  - Literature Searching
  - Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health
  - Qualitative Research
  - Research (for example ‘A Guide To The Design Of Questionnaires’)

  It should be noted that this site needs updating as a proportion of the links are broken.

- The ***Integrated Care Network*** **http://www.integratedcarenetwork.gov.uk/themes/integration.php** has a Research link on the horizontal menu bar. This takes you to pages on National, Organisational and Team level research on integrated working between local authorities and health organisations, and to some Key Resources.

- The ***National Primary Care Research and Development Centre*** **http://www.npcrdc.man.ac.uk/NewsDetail.cfm?ID=36** is based at Manchester University. Clicking on the list of all publications on the page ‘Our Publications’ gives 82 Publications and 953 Journal Articles, with useful summaries downloadable as PDF files.

- ***NHS Research & Development Forum*** **http://www.rdforum.nhs.uk/** There is a link to a PCT Research Management & Governance Toolkit in the left-hand menu bar.

- ***The Community Toolbox***

  http://ctb.ku.edu/en/Default.htm has free information on essential skills for evaluation, creating change and improvement, and is growing as a global resource for this work.

- ***The CDC Evaluation*** **Working Group**

  http://www.cdc.gov/EVAL/ The Centre for Disease Control and Prevention has an Evaluation Working Group and a framework for evaluation.

Step Eight Evaluation Checklist

Consider what expertise you need, what you have in the team and any external support you need.

Method
Expertise required
Is this expertise available / could be developed in the team? Yes / No If Yes, specify people / training requirements
If No, where could expertise be obtained?

Method
Expertise required
Is this expertise available / could be developed in the team? Yes / No If Yes, specify people / training requirements
If No, where could expertise be obtained?

Method
Expertise required
Is this expertise available / could be developed in the team? Yes / No If Yes, specify people / training requirements
If No, where could expertise be obtained?

STEP NINE - REPORTS AND COMMUNICATION

Reporting Process

To plan the reporting process, consider who the evaluation is for, what they want to know and what you want to tell them in addition to what they want to know.

One purpose will be to fulfil the terms of the contract or agreement; similarly, undertakings about feedback need to be honoured. Another purpose might be to facilitate implementation of the findings.

There can of course be multiple audiences that may require separate reporting and communication approaches. So the philosophy probably needs to one of ‘multifaceted communication’ not just a report model. In terms of ‘who to influence, with what sort of material?’ consider your previous thinking on foundations for action in step six.

Communicating the results

Communicating the findings is often a much bigger task than simply writing a report and may involve:

- Oral presentations (use existing meetings where possible)
- Use of existing literature, e.g. newsletters
- Posters, web pages and visual presentation

Make sure the feedback fits the culture, for example whether or not people want verbal as compared with written material, the brevity of material, and the desire for more picturesque images or more factual simplicity.

Have a plan to inform those directly involved in the evaluation, and preferably to involve them in feedback to others.

The format of any report will need to be negotiated with (at least) the main sponsor/decision maker with prime responsibility for implementing the findings. Use Executive Summaries and use a language that speaks to the audience.

Step Nine Evaluation Checklist

Who is it for? What do they want to know?
One or more audiences?
What is expected and what agreed?
What type(s) of presentation?
Existing channels of communication or Other avenues for communicating results
What will you feed back to those directly involved?

STEP TEN - PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Step Ten Evaluation Checklist

You should now have notes from each of the steps above, built up from consideration of key questions in evaluation planning, your final evaluation design is now in reach. It will need putting together under (at least) the following headings:

The context and rationale for the evaluation.
The question(s) that your evaluation seeks to answer.
Who is to be involved, how they are to be involved and why?
The budget, and the justification the evaluation will be value for money.
The methods you will use, the rationale for them, the sample you will use, and the rationale for it and how it will be obtained.

The target audience(s) and the role of the steering group.
Communication plans appropriate for any segmentation of the audience(s), the existing channels of communication to be used, and a timetable for communication.
Any areas of evaluation expertise that need development to carry out the project, and how this will be done, and any longer term issues about the development of expertise that will be beyond the lifetime of this project.
The ethical and governance arrangements that are needed to undertake the evaluation and how these will be met.

Your ten steps are now complete. If you have done all the work, and assembled it as above, then you have the first draft of an evaluation design.