

## **Appendix – Guide to evaluating projects**

### **1. The difference between outcomes and outputs**

Projects need to measure both outputs and outcomes as part of an evaluation. Outputs are collected as part of the regular monitoring data used by the project to keep a check on progress. They focus on quantifying what the project has done, and the throughput of the project.

Examples of outputs are:

- number of referrals;
- number of attendees;
- number of sessions delivered; and
- cost of each session.

Outputs give an *indication* of whether the project is on track to be able to deliver its outcomes.

Outcomes show the difference the project has made to its local community, or the changes that happen as a result of young people attending the project. These are the impacts the project had.

Examples of outcomes are:

- residents are less worried about anti-social behaviour;
- young people re-engage with mainstream education; and
- young people gain qualifications in football coaching.

It is important to monitor whether there are any differences in the type of outcomes achieved for different groups of attendees. For example, do boys do better than girls, or do younger age groups achieve more than older age groups. Collecting monitoring data about the profile of attendees ensures that you are able to see whether any such differences exist, and then take action to improve things.

### **2. Intermediate and long-term outcomes**

Some outcomes, for example stopping entrenched patterns of offending or years of educational under-achievement, happen over the medium to long term (three to five years). Projects can still measure progress in the shorter term by focusing on intermediate outcomes. These are the milestones on the way to achieving the long-term outcomes (Table 1). Intermediate outcomes give you an indication of whether the longer term outcomes are likely to be achieved.

**Table 1 – Long term and intermediate outcomes**

<b>Long term aim</b>	<b>Intermediate outcome measures</b>	<b>Long term outcome</b>
To reduce levels of anti-social behaviour by young people in the area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of young people involved in positive activities.</li> <li>• Number of successful interventions in response to ASB hotspots.</li> <li>• Project workers report young people behaving more pro-socially.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reductions in level of anti-social behaviour by young people</li> <li>• Reduced proportion of residents who feel anti-social behaviour is a problem in their area</li> <li>• Increased participation by young people in other community activities.</li> </ul>
To increase the proportion of school leavers entering education, employment or training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proportion of young people accessing careers advice</li> <li>• Self-assessed change in young peoples aspirations for the future</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced number of NEETs</li> </ul>

### **3. Using hard and soft outcomes**

Outcomes can be quantitative (hard outcomes), or qualitative (soft outcomes). Using both types of outcomes will give you a better overview of whether the project is working. Qualitative data can help you to understand the reasons a project is working, so you can build on good practice. It can also help you to improve by pointing to weaknesses.

Examples of quantitative (hard outcomes) include:

- complaints to the police about anti-social behaviour;
- truancy rates; and
- educational attainment levels.

Qualitative (soft outcomes) include:

- user feedback;
- self-assessed changes in confidence levels; and
- feedback from schools about changes in behaviour.

### **4. Examples of outcomes and how to measure them**

As well as measuring quantitative and qualitative outcomes, you may also want to include outcomes that measure different aspects of progress (Table 2). This will give a more reliable assessment of the project than relying on just one source of data. For example, levels of anti-social behaviour may not be reducing, but measuring other outcomes reveals that young people identify that they find some of the sessions at the project boring and attendance is sporadic.

**Table 2 – Examples of outcome measures and ways of measuring them**

<b>Type of outcome</b>	<b>Example</b>	<b>Ways of measuring</b>
Attitudes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attitudes towards offending</li> <li>• Attitudes towards drinking or taking drugs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-assessed by young people</li> <li>• Assessed by staff</li> <li>• Quizzes or questionnaires</li> </ul>
Self-confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Level of self-esteem and self-confidence</li> <li>• Taking part in new opportunities</li> <li>• Meeting new people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-report by young people</li> <li>• Assessed by staff or other partners</li> </ul>
Behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagement in anti-social behaviour</li> <li>• Engagement in positive activities</li> <li>• Volunteering</li> <li>• School attendance levels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Police data</li> <li>• Survey of residents perceptions</li> <li>• Self-report by young people</li> <li>• Project records</li> <li>• Records from other partners</li> </ul>
Skills/ability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gaining football coaching qualification</li> <li>• Producing a music CD</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-report by young people</li> <li>• Assessed by project staff</li> <li>• Project records</li> </ul>
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased awareness of the effects of alcohol on the body</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-assessed by young people</li> <li>• Assessed by staff</li> <li>• Quizzes or questionnaires</li> </ul>
Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost of the project</li> <li>• Cost benefit ratio for the project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project records</li> <li>• Comparison with other data</li> </ul>
Change in social circumstances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Entering training or employment</li> <li>• Re-entering mainstream education</li> <li>• Levels of educational attainment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Projects records</li> <li>• Self-report by young people</li> <li>• Records from other partners</li> </ul>
Feedback from users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• User views on the project, self-reported changes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews, focus groups, questionnaires</li> </ul>
Feedback from staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff views on changes in young people</li> <li>• Staff views on the effectiveness of the project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews, focus groups, questionnaires</li> <li>• Project records</li> </ul>
Feedback from other stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes in young people from parents/carers, schools, other partners</li> <li>• Changes in local area from residents, local businesses, other partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews, focus groups, questionnaires</li> <li>• Records from other partners</li> </ul>

*We welcome your feedback. If you have any comments on this guidance, or are intending to implement any of the advice, please do get in touch: please email [nationalstudies@audit-commission.gov.uk](mailto:nationalstudies@audit-commission.gov.uk)*