

Planning for measuring change

Aim: To work with your partnership to make a plan for measuring change in your Big Local area.

WHY USE THIS TOOL?

- Help projects to be more accountable to the wider community
- Highlight and celebrate successes and achievements
- Encourage honest appraisal of progress
- Learn from what has and hasn't worked
- To create or update your partnership plan for measuring change

Running the activity

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PREPARING FOR THE ACTIVITY

In advance, you will need to set up the presentation which will be slides of your Big Local Area Plan.

SET THE SCENE FOR THOUGHTFUL EVALUATION

- Big Local partnerships are accountable to the people who live in the area and it is important to be able to tell the story of what is happening.
- Big Local partnerships have created a vision for what the area will look like in 10 years' time – they need to know if they are achieving that vision.
- Planning for measuring change helps improve what partnerships do and how they plan.
- Planning for measuring change helps other Big Local areas learn about what works.
- Having evidence of what impacts they are creating helps make the case that local people can plan and manage programmes that change their areas – there are still sceptics who are not convinced by this approach.

YOU WILL NEED



A large room with a flipchart stand



Flipchart pens and paper



30 mins prep
2 hours to run the activity



Ideally a laptop and a projector

Part 1. What should we measure?

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1. SPLIT THE ROOM AND DISCUSS

Split the room into two groups - group A and group B.

Ask each group to discuss what changes should our Big Local be making?

You can use big sheets of paper, post it notes - whatever helps the group feel works best to give them the space to think deeply

2. FEEDBACK

Get the group to feed back the changes they would like to see looking for **overlap and **difference in opinions**.**

Collect all information from groups and affirm their input and remind them of the Big Locals four programme outcomes:

- Communities will be better able to identify local needs and take action in response to them.
- People will have increased skills and confidence so that they can continue to identify and respond to local needs in the future.
- The community will make a difference to the needs it prioritises.
- People will feel that their area is an even better place to live.

3. LINK MEASURING CHANGE TO YOUR BIG LOCAL PLAN

Show all projects in the areas plan on a slide.

Ask the room to look at the Big Local plan and have a conversation on whether the upcoming projects are likely to achieve the desired change set out in part one.

Give group A the first two Big Local outcomes and Group B the second.

Write the changes you wanted to make on one side of a flip chart paper, and on the other side projects in the plan that will help achieve that change

4. FEEDBACK

See where the gaps are - are any desired changes not linked strongly to a planned project

Are any planned projects not linked to a desired change? Any actions needed to address gaps? Are any of the 4 outcomes not being met?

AIMS

- To explore the challenges faced when measuring change, and ways in which they can be overcome.

1. IDENTIFYING CHALLENGES

Split the room into two or three groups depending on the size of the teams. Ask each group to identify challenges they would foresee in measuring the change their Big Local Partnership is aiming to make to their local community. **Let them discuss for 20 minutes.**

2. FEEDBACK

Get feedback from the room, asking questions such as “does anyone else relate to this challenge” or “has anyone had this challenge and been able to overcome it?”

Once the room has given their feedback show a slide with some suggestions of challenges they are likely to face.

Share these challenges with the group

Challenge 1:

Getting consensus on what change is important and should be measured. Can the Partnership members agree on what you should be measuring? How can we support reaching consensus?

Challenge 2:

Causal links - how do you know the outcomes and impacts reported are directly linked to your delivery activities? There may well be other interventions, investments, processes taking place in your area which may have been responsible, or partly responsible, to any changes. E.g. crime may have fallen, but is that down to the recruitment of more PCSO's, target hardening measures, or simply part of a national trend that has seen crime fall in all areas?

Challenge 3:

Getting people to fill out evaluations, surveys or interviews. It can be time consuming, people may find it intrusive or prying and could find the process unengaging.

Challenge 4:

We didn't make measuring change a priority at the beginning and now we are having to work backwards.

Example: you may want to get more people to volunteer in your area, do you know how many people, and to what extent, people were volunteering at the start of your Big Local Programme, or at the point any projects addressing that issue started?

1. BEST PRACTICE PRINCIPLES

In the groups ask participants to discuss what principles they think should underpin 'best practice' when doing this work. Any particular do's or don'ts? Let them discuss for 15 minutes.

2. FEEDBACK

From the front list of principles that should underpin any approach to measuring change/assessing impact

- Be relevant - e.g. value the things that matter, including those that relate to the aims and objectives of the programme, to your Vision
- Be open and transparent - include all information, evidence and feedback, to give a true and fair picture thus enabling people to draw their own conclusions
- Be independent and impartial - whilst a lot of the work can be done 'in house' (e.g. collecting the information from stakeholders etc) better to commission an independent body, person to analyse the evidence, data, information you have collected
- Be objective - whilst some data/evidence will be qualitative, there should also be quantitative evidence, that is not subject to interpretation.

Local Trust have a lot of resources, training and support partner offers to help you plan for measuring change. Please ask your Rep, or find out more on the Local Trust Website. Local Trust also recommend the ARVAC Community research toolkit a great place to learn about Community research:
www.arvac.org.uk/community-research-toolkit/

Quantitative

i.e. numbers (for example, the number of people you have reached, the number of people getting work, the number of good stories in the press, changes in crime levels);

Qualitative

e.g. people's opinions, views and experiences (for example, people's stories about their experience on the programme, photos of the area 'before and after', people's views on whether they think they have more influence, the area has improved etc.

Be proportionate - whilst evaluation and measuring change should always be an important part of what you do, it is a complex area, and the resources committed.

Any other principles to add to the list?

5. HOW DO WE COLLECT INFORMATION

Split into new groups and think of all the different ways we can collect information to measure change, drawing on your own experience.

Either before, or after that discussion, show some different ways of collecting information. If you are new to data gathering, it might be helpful to have a look at the ARVAC website:

www.arvac.org.uk/community-research-toolkit/before-you-start

Using this website and/or the short summary below, discuss with the group which methods might work best, and consider some of the strengths and weaknesses of using the methods in your area.

- **A questionnaire survey**
Surveys can be given to lots of people and can provide easily measurable data. Without a lot of effort being put in, response rates are often low and the format of the survey means issues can't be explored in depth.
- **An internet-based questionnaire**
Quicker than paper questionnaires for managing the responses, but they exclude people who do not have access to computers and people tend to hurry internet surveys so the responses may be of a lower quality.
- **Focus groups**
Are a good way of getting people together to discuss their own experience or explore a topic in depth, but they can be time consuming for participants. Local Trust have a guide on how to run a focus group on their website.
- **Case studies**
Is a spotlight on one person or organisation/project and a way of bringing stories of change to life and offering a more in-depth picture. Building case studies requires time and commitment from people involved and you need to consider carefully what message you are trying to get across. Local Trust have guidance on how to write a case study.
- **In-depth interviews**
Will take time to plan and run, but offer the opportunity to go more in depth into people's responses.
- **Evaluation workshops and review meetings**
These workshops will need good preparation, but offer a good way to get lots of people involved. Local Trust offer guidance on how to get people involved in carrying out research.
- **Photographs**
Can be a very visual way of demonstrating change, e.g. before and after shots – remember to get permission from people in the photos.

Reflections and next steps

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WHAT NEXT?

Look at the information you already have (from doing your profile, public consultations etc). Based on that, and the changes you want to measure:

- Identify where the gaps are (if you haven't done this before, there maybe quite a few!)
- Make a plan for action setting out what you will measure, who you will ask, when, who will be involved etc
- The attached questionnaire is an example to trial out asking questions - you don't need to ask them all, just pick the sections that are relevant
- Ask your Rep or Local Trust about resources, training or partner support offers that can help your partnership with measuring change

ASK THE GROUP

How are we going to ensure that the gaps in our information are addressed?

How are we going to act on them, and by when?



This is one of a series of DIY tools created for the 150 communities taking part in the Big Local programme. Find out more at www.localtrust.org.uk

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