

What does success look like and how might we measure it?

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The Challenge

"Evaluation approaches and methodologies must be tailored to the complexity of the task in hand. An asset-based approach to public health assumes certain system complexities that make more traditional evaluative methods... less helpful and sometimes inappropriate.

Moreover, in developing action from evidence, we need to know much more than just 'what works' – or even 'what works, for who, where, and in what circumstances'.

We also need to 'know about' – to understand the nature, formation, natural history, interrelations and dynamics of social problems and social accomplishments. We need to 'know why' – to be able to link the values that underpin actions to the formation of policies, strategies and support mechanisms. And we need practical 'know-how' – the pragmatic knowledge about how to go about getting things done."

Huw Davies, Professor of Health Care Policy and Management, University of St Andrews



Evaluation

- To evaluate health asset based activities requires a new approach. Instead of studying patterns of illness, we need ways of understanding patterns of health and the impact of assets and protective factors.
- Methods that seek to understand the effects of context, the mechanisms which link assets to change and the complexities of neighbourhoods and networks are consistent with the asset approaches.
- The participation of those whose assets and capacities are being supported will be a vital part of local reflective practice.



Design

Before setting out on designing an evaluation exercise, practitioners need to ask themselves:

- What is the context – who is the audience, what resources can be spared?
- What is the purpose – is it to improve an existing model of practice, is it to make an assessment whether the project worked, or is it to contribute to the development of innovation?
- Does the scale and nature of the evaluation reflect the scale and nature of the project? Will it deal with the complexity of the change processes?
- What are the appropriate methods given the purpose? Surveys are expensive, but by using questions that have been used before, you save time and gain comparability. Participative methods such as storytelling or community events are more inclusive but they need a robust framework for systematic analysis if they are to influence decision-makers.



Two questions to ask:

- Does it work?
- &
- Is it worth it?



Does it work?

There is a spectrum of models for answering questions about impact, ranging from high level national data sets to methods that ask about local and individual impacts:

- Taking the temperature of local communities
 - The Well-being and Resilience Measure (WARM)
- Measuring mental wellbeing
 - Mental well-being impact assessment; a toolkit
 - Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS)
 - North West Mental Well-being Survey 2009
- Measuring community empowerment
 - The Toronto Indicators of Community Capacity
- The 'Outcomes Star'



Is it worth it?

There is a small field of methods for establishing cost effectiveness which in time will generate evidence about work that aims to strengthen both social and psychosocial assets:

- A business case for community development
 - The Health Empowerment Leverage Project (HELP)
- Evidence for the economic benefits of capacity building
 - The Building Community Capacity for Putting People First Project
- Cost effectiveness of promoting mental wellbeing
 - The All Wales Mental Health Promotion Network
- Social Return on Investment (SROI)



Your stories?

- Can you tell a story of a time when you made a positive change to improve your own health and wellbeing?
- What do you believe is now the single most important thing that positively influences your own health and wellbeing?
- Now turning to your work; can you tell a story of how you involved others as equal partners in bringing about real and sustainable change?
- Imagine your community, your friends, your family, your colleagues and the wider community telling stories about how you have worked together as equal partners to achieve your dreams of a healthy community.

What would these stories be?


