

VCS Health and Wellbeing

Factsheet 2: Improving Health and Wellbeing

After reading this you should be able to define how your work is making a difference to people's health and wellbeing and be ready to plan for it.

Making a difference

Voluntary and community organisations exist to make a difference. They do not exist to only make money or keep people in jobs or do the state's job for it. These differences can also be called outcomes or impacts. Outcomes and impacts are different to inputs and outputs:

- **Inputs**-these are the resources (e.g. staff, time, money, premises) that you use in your work
- **Outputs**-these are the services you deliver (e.g. 100 clients seen, 2 booklets produced, 1000 hours open, 8 volunteers recruited)
- **Outcomes**-all the changes and differences brought about by the work done, negative as well as positive
- **Impact**-sometimes used interchangeably with outcomes but often used to describe longer term changes, not always directly as a result of your work, as opposed to outcomes which may be the more directly linked changes

Outcomes can be changes in individuals, families, groups of people, communities, organisations, the environment, etc. These changes may be the long term eventual one you want, or could be the changes you will see along the way. For example the final outcome may be people living longer but the outcomes on the way to achieving this might be:

- Doing 15 minutes more exercise per week
- Stopping smoking for 12 months
- Feeling more confident

Although we have said that outcomes are changes, some outcomes might actually maintain the status quo by preventing a situation getting worse, e.g. people's health

does not get worse. So although there might not be a change from the current position there is evidence that without your activity there would have been a change for the worse.

What difference do you make?

If you plan to make a difference to health and wellbeing you will first need to define clearly what health and wellbeing means to your organisation, and how you can tell that good health and wellbeing has been achieved. (See Factsheet 1)

Think about your target audience/user/ clients/ participants (from now on we will use the term 'users') and consider as many of the questions as you can below (as an example we have used a mental health charity):

1. Clearly define who your users are.
E.g. *Any mind works with young people who are overly stressed by exams*
2. What should be their ideal state of health and wellbeing? What indicators would tell you they were there? NB think about your users collectively not individually when defining their ideal state.
E.g. *they should be able to cope with the pressure of exam work, feel confident they can do the best they can and balance revision with non-revision work*
3. What is their actual state of health and wellbeing?
E.g. *the young people question their ability to pass the exams and so feel reluctant to revise. They become depressed resulting in a low mood, engagement with others, unhealthy eating and low exercise. They may even feel suicidal.*



4. How far from your ideal is it?
E.g. the young people are much more depressed than their peers, more likely to be on medication and to attempt suicide. They may also do worse in their exams
5. Why is there a gap?
E.g. They lack self confidence, accurate self assessment and study skills. Also mentoring and listening ear support to help them in a crisis and longer term.
6. What needs to happen to narrow that gap? (Is there any evidence?)
E.g. supplementary and independent service to schools and offers fairly long term and focussed practical/emotional support.
7. What has to change (any evidence?) in terms of the:
 - Individual i.e. behaviour, knowledge, confidence, attitude
 - Environment i.e. access to facilities/ services, housing, income, community.
 E.g. students need to learn coping strategies to revise/take exams and have an ear to bend when the pressure increases.
8. Which changes can you help with?
E.g. Anymind can provide individual study skills and emotional strategy support, as well as one to one mentors. It cannot deal with those with suicidal thoughts
9. What activities/services can you provide that will bring about the changes to narrow the gap in your users' health and wellbeing? (Again any evidence that your activities or services will help?).
E.g. Anymind will identify young people at risk (from schools, CAMHS. Parents and self referral) and provide an individualised set of support to include:
 - small groups, one to one study skills learning
 - a mentor/counselling to support the

young person during their time on the programme

- sessions to develop self confidence, coping and resilience
- sessions to improve self evaluation of performance
- encouragement/support of healthy eating, socialisation and exercise
- referrals to other mental health services as appropriate.

Planning tools

There are a number of useful generic tools around to help you think through defining your outcomes, how your activities contribute to these changes and possible ways of measuring them. The most common are:

- Planning triangle (see Factsheet 3b)
- Logic model (see Factsheet 3c)
- Theory of change (see Factsheet 3c)

There is a useful publication from the Outcome Indicators Project which provides a template for health risk reduction programmes with suggested activities, outcomes and measures (see More Information below)

Five Ways to Wellbeing

In 2008 the new economics foundation was commissioned by the government to devise a simple system of messages and actions that people could take to improve their mental wellbeing based on research evidence of what works. As a result they devised the **Five Ways to Wellbeing**.

Local voluntary and community groups say that using the Five Ways to describe, and plan, how they contribute to wellbeing is very useful. For more information see Fact sheet 3a. Five Ways is also a useful measurement tool (see Factsheets 4 and 5 for some advice on measurement and tools).

More Information

- For more information on outcome Indicators Project see: www.urban.org/policy-centers/cross-center-initiatives/performance-management-measurement/projects/nonprofit-organizations/projects-focused-nonprofit-organizations/outcome-indicators-project
- This and other Factsheets are available from Bournemouth CVS (01202 466120) or at www.bournemouthcvs.org.uk/healthandwellbeing.asp