YOUNGMINDS Amplified

Evaluating Participation: A guide for professionals

About this guide

This toolkit was created as part of the Amplified project run by YoungMinds and commissioned by NHS England. Amplified is a programme that aims to support the participation of children, young people and their families at every level of the mental health system.

We support providers and commissioners to excel in participation by showcasing good practice across the system and promoting access to resources that support in four areas:

- Promoting and championing participation
- Strategic participation of children, young people and their families
- Promoting young people's access to, and their voice within, services
- Supporting the collaboration of young people and their families in care and treatment

YOUNGMINDS Amplified

Published by YoungMinds, 2020

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Introduction

The ultimate purpose of participation is to improve the quality of services received by those who use them, but how do we know if we are achieving the outcomes intended? By evaluating participation activities, we find out how effective they are in making a difference to the lives and experiences of young people.

Sharing the impact of their contribution means young people and carers are more likely to continue engaging in participation activities. It also gives participants the opportunity to reflect on any achievements and skills developed; further ensuring involvement is meaningful and worthwhile. If we evaluate involvement work to show it has made a positive difference, we equip ourselves with evidence to support the case for participation. This demonstrates to managers and commissioners that investing time and resources in user involvement is an effective way to develop services and influence governance. The more evidence we gather about what works, the more successful participation activities can be and the greater impact we create for young people.

This guide will lead you through the key stages of planning and conducting your evaluation, highlighting the areas you need to consider during the process and providing templates to use in a practical setting. It will help you develop an evaluation plan either using a simple logic model or creating a theory of change to identify the outcomes you want to achieve and the activities that contribute to these. It explains what tools might be useful and how you can involve young people and carers.

The more evidence we gather about what works, the more successful participation activities can be and the greater impact we create for young people

Evaluating participation projects means looking at it in different ways, from monitoring activities and outputs, to measuring its outcomes for participants, beneficiaries and the organisation and/or the community/society as a whole. Knowing what you want to measure will help you to think about the types of data that will best help you illustrate this and when each method is most useful. You might also want to review the quality of your participation project and explore the experience of participants to understand where it was successful and where there could be room for improvement.

We hope the tools and guidance provided in this document help mental health professionals feel better equipped to evaluate participation work, reflect on the findings and use these to improve the experience for young people and carers.

Acknowledgements

This toolkit was developed as part of the Amplified Trailblazers project in response to feedback from professionals who were finding it difficult to evaluate participation activities.

Organisations applied for support to design and test an evaluation framework, and those who were successful received support from the Amplified team. This publication shares the learning gathered during this process, with the aim of facilitating good evaluation practice and creating a culture of continuous improvement in the mental health sector. We would like to thank all the Trailblazer organisations for their hard work and commitment.

Note: for the sake of brevity, this toolkit refers to children and young people as “young people” and parents and carers as “carers”.

Why should we evaluate?

At YoungMinds, we define participation in mental health as:

'Young people taking an active role in: caring for their own mental health, decision-making about the mental healthcare they receive and shaping the services they use and communities they live in. Participation creates change to make the experiences of young people better and takes place through young people working as equals with adults and with each other.'

Carers play a huge role in supporting young people and have their own experiences of engaging with youth mental health services so it is important that they are given opportunities to participate and have their voices heard too. This is especially relevant when it comes to areas which directly relate to carer involvement including support, information and care planning.

Evaluating participation is the process of finding out what influence our activities have had on improving the experience of young people and carers who come into contact with services. Using this definition, we can evaluate everything about how we involve them, from decision making about individual treatment, to collective participation within a mental health service or commissioning process.

We evaluate our participation activities to:

1. Learn, improve and develop the service

If we believe that participation is the best approach for working with young people around their mental health, and want commissioners and service managers to invest time and resources in it, we need to prove that it really does make a positive difference. Evaluation increases our confidence in the evidence that participation leads to meaningful improvement in services and better outcomes for young people.

2. Demonstrate accountability

Evaluating our activities allows us to understand if the activities are being delivered as intended and having the required effect, meaning we can demonstrate accountability to commissioners of services. This allows us to ensure our participation is as effective as possible and test out new ways of doing things.

3. Help ensure participants' involvement is worthwhile

Evaluating participation gives those involved a chance to give feedback about their experiences and demonstrate how their involvement affects change which benefits people in similar circumstances.

Learn, improve and develop the service

Demonstrate accountability

Ensure participants' involvement is worthwhile

Formative evaluation

It is a good idea to embed ongoing evaluation processes into your participation activities from the start, allowing you to make improvements and celebrate successes as you go along, rather than waiting until the end. This is called 'formative evaluation.'

When we evaluate participation, we need to consider:

- **The process:** what participation activities happened, and what quality were they? Who was involved and at what level? Was it ethical and meaningful?
- **The outcomes:** the difference participation has made to young people, our service/organisation, the beneficiaries of the services, and the wider children and young people's mental health system.

Evaluating the process and outcomes of our participation activities enables us to demonstrate the relationship between using participatory processes and positive changes. If we only evaluate one or the other, we cannot show this link.

How can we involve young people and carers in developing an evaluation plan?

Participatory evaluation means involving the intended beneficiaries of an activity in evaluating that activity. The benefits of using this method of evaluation are:

- **It closes the feedback loop – participants evaluate the outcomes of work they, or their peers, have been involved in**
- **It helps make sure evaluation tools are right for the groups they are used with e.g. young people and/or carers**
- **It can help professionals develop their skills in participation**
- **It allows participants to learn new skills and increase their influence**
- **It helps make sure that the things that are important to the relevant groups are being evaluated**
- **It brings another perspective when it comes to reviewing the evaluation data and might show ideas that professionals alone would have missed**
- **It also helps to validate assumptions, findings and conclusions drawn.**

Participatory evaluation is not just about collecting evaluation information from participants; it is co-producing the whole evaluation cycle alongside them.

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Levels of participation

When thinking about how to involve young people and carers in the evaluation of your project it may be useful to think about the NHS England Levels of Participation[1] (adapted from Arnstein's ladder of participation[2]). In this table, the top levels represent participation that is more meaningful and the lower levels represent less meaningful participation:

Level	Participant's involvement
Devolving	• Participants lead the evaluation in the context of fully youth-led interventions with support from professionals.
Collaborating	• Participants work in partnership with professionals to co-produce outcomes and the evaluation approach. • Participants are involved in both data collection and reviewing the findings e.g. via peer research/peer evaluation. • Participants are involved in the analysis of evaluation data and in decisions about the meaning of findings, the recommendations and what actions to be taken.
Involving	• Participants co-design the aspects of evaluation that specifically affect other young people and/or carers (for example, co-designing evaluation tools) and may be involved in some data collection and creating youth-friendly reports. • Professionals are the overall decision-makers who determine the meaning of findings and actions taken as a result.
Consulting	• Participants are able to share views on what outcomes they think an activity or project should deliver but professionals decide the outcomes. • Participants are able to submit ideas on actions but professionals make decisions.
Informing	• Participants are informed about why they are being asked to submit evaluation data and are able to complete professional designed feedback processes/measures. • Participants are informed about what actions will be taken in response to the evaluation findings.

For project evaluation to be truly participatory, young people and/or carers need to be involved at each stage of the evaluation cycle from planning to review and dissemination. It is important to carefully consider in advance the suitability of young people's involvement at different stages, and the ethics of this (see ethics section).

1 NHS England. Transforming Participation in Health and Care: 'The NHS Belongs to Us All'. Leeds: NHS England; 2013.

2 Arnstein, Sherry R.(1969) 'A Ladder Of Citizen Participation', Journal of the American Planning Association, 35: 4, 216 — 224

In some instances, it might not be possible for participants to set the direction for the evaluation because this will be set from the 'outside' of the project (for example, by policy or standards or sometimes by funders and commissioners).

The table below suggests how young people and carers could be involved at each stage of the evaluation cycle.

Stage	Participant's involvement
Stage 1: PLAN	1. Deciding what outcomes will be evaluated (what do we want to achieve?) 2. Deciding what measures to use (what information will we collect to tell us if we have achieved it?) 3. Designing evaluation methods and tools (how will we get this information from children and young people?)
Stage 2: DO	4. Collecting evaluation data from their peers (young people deliver evaluation activities to their peers) 5. Analysing and interpreting evaluation data (what information do we have and what does it mean?)
Stage 3: ASSESS	6. Reporting on evaluation data (how do we communicate best to others what we have found out?)
Stage 4: REVIEW	7. Deciding what actions to take based on the evaluation data

You may need to consider that participants could be in a difficult position if they are evaluating projects that they themselves, or their peers, have designed. This 'dual role' (as evaluator and evaluated) should be discussed. To avoid bias, it might be agreed that people who were not involved in earlier phases of the project are the ones best placed do some aspects of evaluation. The findings could be considered alongside feedback from the participants who helped to design and implement the project, facilitating greater objectivity and gaining a more comprehensive view of the project.

Case study: Camden Youth Offending Service

About

Camden Youth Offending Service (YOS) is a multi-agency team. In addition to Youth Offending Service workers, it includes representatives from the police, probation, education and health.

The aim of the team is to work with young people and families to address factors that lead to offending behaviour in children and young people aged 10 – 17.

Co-created Participation Outcomes

1. The quality of support provided to young people by YOS is improved.
2. Young people have improved social and emotional, individual or personal outcomes because of participation.

Hopes for being involved

Camden YOS applied to Amplified with the ambition to design and test an evaluation framework for their participation work.

What we did

In a series of workshops facilitated by YoungMinds, Camden YOS professionals and young people discussed the value of evaluating participation and how best to approach measuring participation in their service. Together, they mapped their current participation activities against Arnstein's Ladder of Participation and co-created a vision and set of values and goals for their participation work. This contributed to the development of a theory of change and logic model used as a basis for measurement and the development of an evaluation framework. This framework was presented to the Youth Board and is now being implemented.

In their own words:

"I enjoyed the experience and opportunity to have a voice on behalf of those that don't."

Rosa, Peer Advocate

The cycle of evaluation

Whatever the scale of the participation activity or project you want to evaluate, there are some common steps you can follow to develop your monitoring and evaluation plan.

Evaluation should be an ongoing process with the actions taken as a result of reviewing the findings facilitating continued improvement and better performance. A useful model for this can be found in **Inspiring Impact: The Code of Good Impact Practice**.

The cycle of impact practice

Source: Inspiring Impact: The Code of Good Impact Practice. June 2013. NCVO: London.

Step 1: PLAN

Form your monitoring and evaluation (M&E) group, which should include young people, and carers where appropriate. Members of the group will need induction and training. You will also need to map out the different individuals and groups who need to have a say in what and how you evaluate. Different stakeholders will not necessarily be involved in all stages of the evaluation cycle. One way of categorising stakeholders is by using the following groups:

- **Informed:** who needs to see the monitoring and evaluation plan, results and final report? These will not necessarily be actively involved in shaping the evaluation or delivering it.
- **Consulted:** who needs to have a say on the evaluation questions, but will not be actively involved in delivering the evaluation?
- **Involved:** who will have a say on the evaluation questions and take an active role in delivering the evaluation? This group should involve children and young people.

The M&E group needs to develop the evaluation framework. This should set out:

- The evaluation questions and aims
- Any ethical issues and how they have been addressed
- The activities and outcomes you seek to achieve
- What data will be collected and by whom

The group needs to agree the measures and tools used to monitor and measure the outcomes. There are a number of tools available to assist you in the process and we will discuss these later on in the toolkit. Some are designed for the planning stage, while others measure specific outcomes and 'distance travelled' and therefore require baseline (pre) data collection and systems for follow-up (post). It is important to carefully consider in advance the evaluation questions, and the types of data that will best validate arguments and generate new ideas or learning, as this will influence the most suitable tools and methods for the job. Similarly, it is important to recognise the flaws and merits of different approaches as some tools may be more suitable in different contexts. Some pre-existing tools cannot be adapted and need to be used in a specific format to protect the integrity of the measure, while others may be developed or adapted for use with specific groups of children and young people. Where qualitative methods are going to be used (e.g. interviews and focus groups), the key questions for these need to be generated, alongside a plan for how the data will be analysed. If young people deliver peer evaluation activities, training must be provided around the specific methods they will use.

Questions and aims

Ethical issues

Activities and outcomes

Data collection

Step 2: DO

Once you have decided what methods of data collection are best suited to your project, and decided what level of evidence you need to prove the impact of your participation work, both process and outcome data should be collected and analysed as set out in the evaluation plan. Participants involved in data collection need to be trained and supported to do so. Consideration should be given to ensuring people are not placed in situations where they feel unsupported, for example, interviewing vulnerable children in the absence of a trusted adult, or carrying out an interview on a sensitive or emotive topic which might cause distress without appropriate provisions in place

Participants should also be involved in the process of analysing the data. Quantitative data is generally used to aggregate results and may need to be analysed using statistical tests, depending on what you are using the data to demonstrate. Qualitative data can yield rich and essential depth of understanding but will need to be transcribed and have thematic or semantic analysis applied to it. Ensure you have the right skills within the M&E group to complete these tasks.

Step 3: ASSESS

The M&E group will need to develop an account of the evaluation to explain the findings to others. They will need to think about how to present this. Some data may need to be reported in different formats for different stakeholders. A funder might require information reported using a specific form, or as a formal written report, whereas young people who take part in the evaluation should have the results presented back to them in a number of different formats and a way that is accessible. A young person friendly version could use creative formats like an animation, infographics, and data visualisation, and the language must be clear and free from jargon.

Step 4: REVIEW

The M&E group should come together to decide what actions they think should be taken as a result of the evaluation. If the project is continuing, there may be improvements and changes made to future work. If the evaluation is a final report at the end of the project, there could be important lessons to apply to future projects.

The group may need to present their findings or recommendations to a board, or group of commissioners. If this is the case, it will be valuable to have young people and/or carers involved in this too.

Where possible participants should be given the opportunity to see the process right through to the end, including having the opportunity to be part of any event which is arranged to promote or disseminate the results of the evaluation.

Any lessons learned from the project should be shared with everyone who might find them useful. This will include the stakeholders involved in your evaluation, and potentially other groups who do similar work and might benefit from the information and recommendations. Generally, evaluation findings and actions should be published and promoted as widely as possible to ensure they have the maximum impact.

Any lessons learned from the project should be shared with everyone who might find them useful

Developing an evaluation plan for participation

As previously stated, process and outcomes are the two key elements of an evaluation plan of participation activities. Within each of these, there are different aspects you can explore to give you the most comprehensive picture of success and effectiveness.

Process	• Activities • Quality of participation • Level of participation
Outcomes	• Outcomes for participants • Outcomes for services and organisations • Outcomes for the children and young people who access services • Outcomes for the system overall

Activities are what you have delivered within the participation process, including types of activity, amount of sessions and number of participants involved.

Outcomes are the changes that have occurred through participation because of the activities that have taken place.

Before you start thinking about the details of your evaluation plan, you will need to define the ultimate goal you want to achieve and the steps you intend to take to get there. We will discuss two potential ways to explore and define the desired impact of your project.

A **Logic Model** is the simplest way to explore how your inputs create the outcomes you want to see. A programme logic model provides an overview and picture of a project, programme or organisation.[3] It links outcomes (both short and long-term outcomes sometimes referred to as intermediate) with activities and inputs.

A **Theory of Change** captures the causal model of an organisation's work, and the links between its activities and the outcomes it seeks to achieve.[4] It requires us to ask difficult questions of ourselves around what we are here to do and what we are not, and arguably offers a more complex look at how different elements of the project interact to bring about the desired change, and the assumptions and evidence that underpin this change.

3 W.K Kellogg Foundation (2004) 'Using Logic Models to Bring Together Planning, Evaluation and Action: Logic Model Development Guide. Michigan, US.

4 New Philanthropy Capital (2014) 'Creating Your Theory of Change: NPC's Practical Guide'. London

Logic model

A basic logic model involves identifying the inputs, activities and measures of success for a project, and then identifying how they help to achieve your outcomes and ultimate goal.

Inputs	Activities	Measures of success	Outcomes	Ultimate goal
Resources you need for the project to happen. These might include funding, staff time or materials	Actions you intend to take as part of your project e.g. creating materials or training	Products or services that would be delivered as a result of the activities you are planning	The intended effects of your project. These can be for the short, medium and long term	The long-term change resulting from the outcomes

Once you have developed the model, you can use this as a basis and framework for measurement (the evaluation plan), and decide how you are going to measure each of these factors and how you will know if your project has been successful.

Theory of change

Theory of change builds on the idea behind a logic model but reflects the more complex, real world nature of the interactions between activities and outcomes. It also encourages examination of the assumptions and evidence that underlie the links.

Co-creating a theory of change is a good first step to developing your evaluation plan and an easy way to involve young people, carers and staff. A good theory of change should involve and consult with people at all levels including funders and commissioners of services (where possible). Mapping out the change you want to make, and the activities that work towards this, can be a useful in generating a shared understanding of the project or programme.

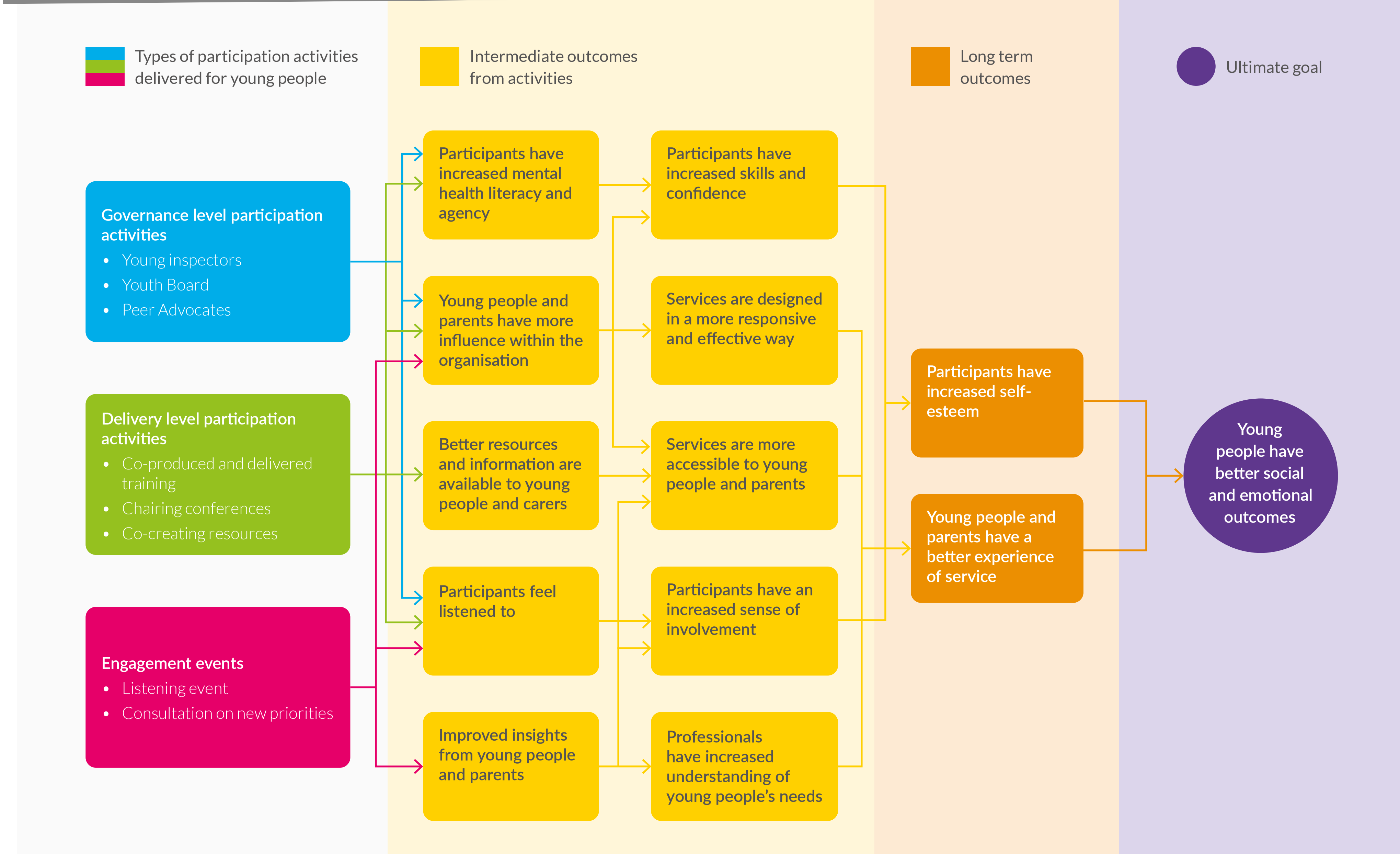
There are a number of different ways to create your own theory of change. The steps taken to develop a theory of change are as follows:

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5
Start at the end What is our final goal? This may be about creating improved services that reflect young people's needs or ensuring that young people are more empowered to take an active role in their care	**Map the outcomes** How do we get there? What has to happen to achieve it?	**Which activities create the outcomes?** What do you do?	**What are our assumptions?** What factors are critical to success?	**Linking the stages back together.** Does it all make sense?

Example theory of change

On the next page there is an example theory of change for participation. The blue, green and red boxes show three different types of participation activities which an organisation might organise. As you can see from the arrows, different types of activities can have different combinations of intermediate outcomes (in the yellow boxes). Intermediate outcomes can lead to a smaller number of more defined longer term outcomes, which then contribute to the achievement of your ultimate goal of better social and emotional outcome for young people (purple box). For simplicity the assumptions have been removed in this example.

Example participation theory of change



Developing your own theory of change

Developing a theory of change is a good way to develop your evaluation plan as it helps you to plan the steps towards achieving your participation aims. There is lots of useful information online about developing a theory of change, including Nesta's **Guidance for Developing a Theory of Change for Your Programme**. The basic steps are:

Step 1: Ultimate goal

Identify the overall aim you want your participation activities to achieve for children and young people? You would usually pick one or two of these.

Example ultimate goals could include:

- Young people are more involved in the decisions affecting their mental health care
- Young people's mental health services are improved
- Young people have improved mental health outcomes

Step 2: Outcomes

What are all the changes that will be achieved for young people and carers on the way to achieving the ultimate goal of your project? These need to be measurable and should refer to change language such as more of, less of, increased, reduced or improved and enhanced. At YoungMinds we adopt an asset based approach starting with what children and young people can do, as opposed to what they cannot. We therefore use positive change language.

Example outcomes could include:

- Increase of young people and carers' influence within the organisation or setting.
- Safeguarding and support protocols are implemented to enable the safe participation of young people with a range of needs.

Step 3: Activities

What are the participation activities that will be delivered with young people and/or carers?

Example activities could include:

- Participation groups
- Young people and carers involved in recruitment
- Young people co-deliver staff participation training

Step 1
Ultimate goal

Step 2
Outcomes

Step 3
Activities

Step 4
Showing the links

Step 5
Examing assumptions

Step 4: Showing the links

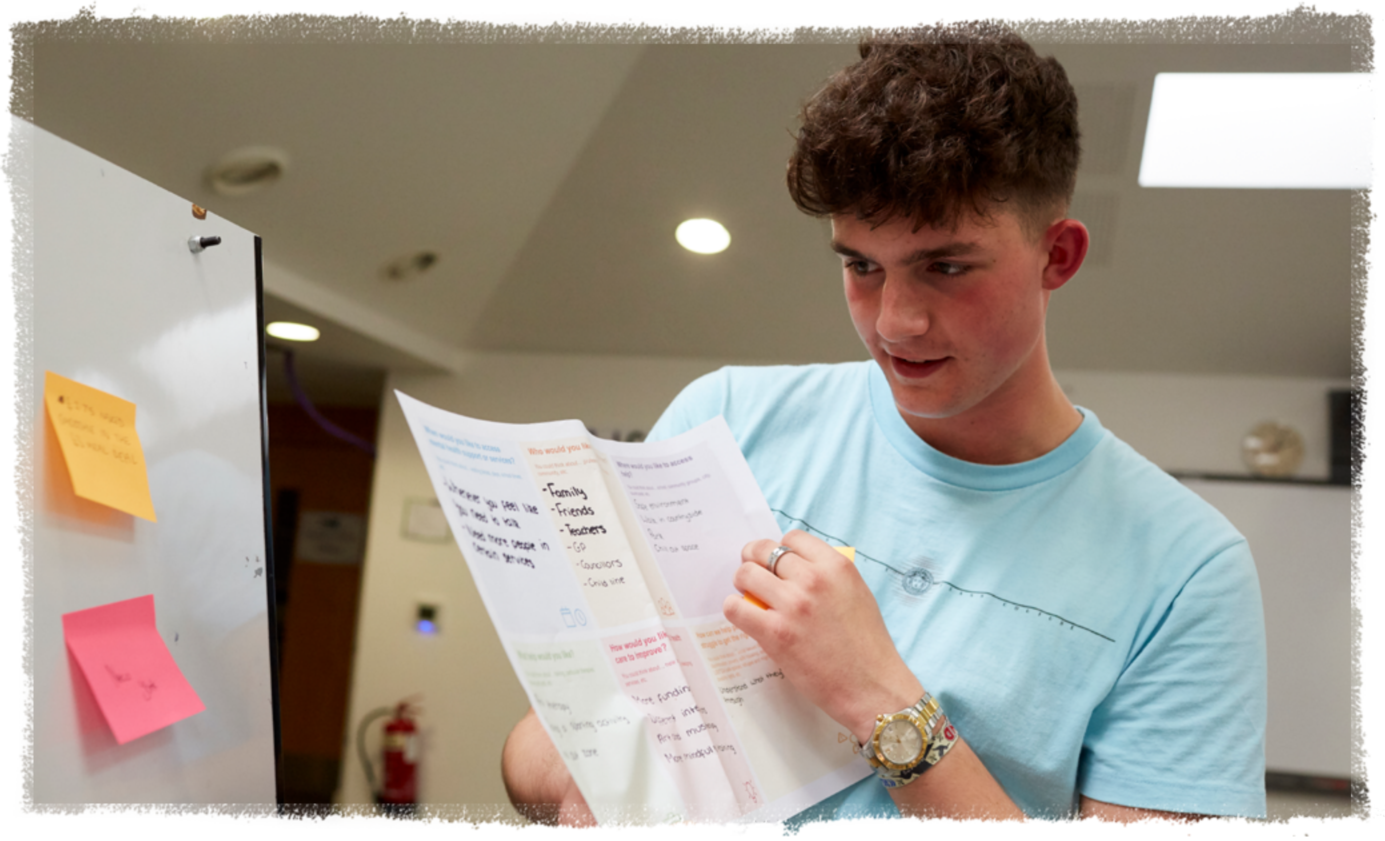
Use arrows to show the link between activities, intermediate outcomes and your ultimate goal.

Step 5: Examining your assumptions

This is about looking at what you are assuming will happen, or be in place, in order to make sure your activities achieve your outcomes.

For example, if your first activity is that young people attend a training day, you will be assuming that young people will:

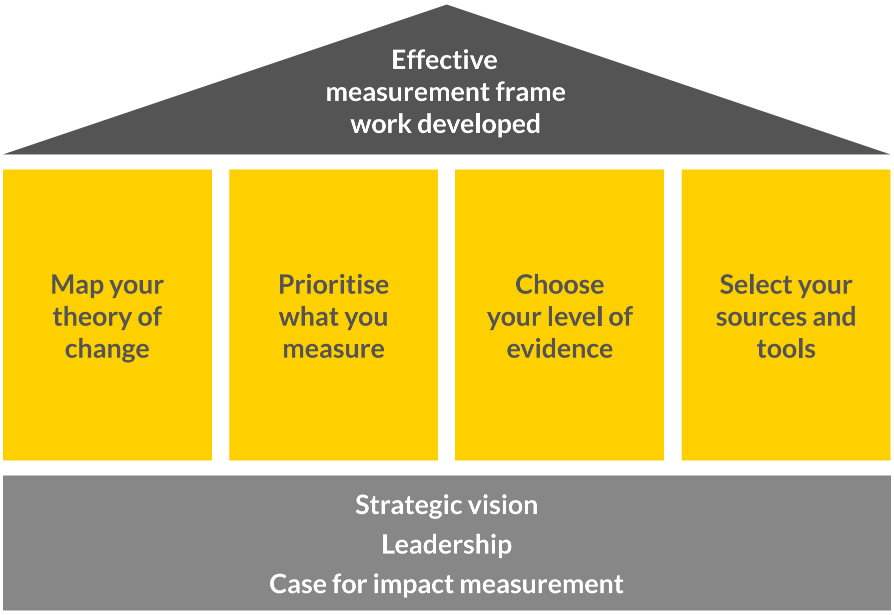
- Be able to hear about the opportunity
- Be sufficiently motivated to take part in it
- Be supported and adequately reimbursed for attending e.g. through covering costs of travel and subsistence.



Creating your evaluation plan

The elements identified when creating a theory of change (activities, outcomes and ultimate goal) are considered when developing an evaluation plan. There is an example on page 23. A completed evaluation plan will detail what you will measure for each 'box' on your theory of change (though not all the boxes ought to be measured). It is important to prioritise what you want to measure on the theory of change to ensure the evaluation is proportionate.

NPC's 'four-pillar' approach highlights the important steps taken when developing an evaluation framework. This extends, but is not limited to: (1) Mapping your theory of change; (2) Prioritising what you measure; (3) Choosing your level of evidence; and, (4) Selecting you data sources and tools.[5]



Your evaluation plan will centre around the outcomes you have identified as part of your theory of change. It is also useful to record information about process, such as the activities you have run, who attended them and what level of participation was involved in each stage, but trying to put them all on the same plan may become too complicated.

Like in your theory of change, you may find it useful to divide the outcomes on your evaluation plan into intermediate and long-term outcomes. Your shortest-term outcomes are usually the immediate consequences of the activities you run. You can then measure if these intermediate outcomes lead to the longer-term changes you want to achieve. Your ultimate goal does not have an outcome measure.

5 New Philanthropy Capital (2014) 'Building Your Measurement Framework: NPC's Four Pillar Approach. London.

Example evaluation Plan

Using our example theory of change on page 18, we can begin transferring some of our outcomes onto the evaluation plan on the next page. We can start with the intermediate outcomes that are a direct measure of our activities. If we were planning to develop some resources which were co-produced with young people and parents and carers, we would hope that the outcome of this was that there was an improvement in the quality of resources available.

We could measure this by using our existing Experience of Service questionnaire, which asks about the relevance and accessibility of the information provided. As a result, we have a baseline measure and can set a target for how much we would like this number to increase after new resources are created.

We need to define time scales for our data collection, as well as decide who is responsible for collecting and analysing the data. The other columns in the plan encourage consideration of any ethical issues raised by our outcome measures, and keep service user-led evaluation at the heart of our plan.

You can work through the other outcomes you want to measure in a similar way. It is worth noting that this is only one way of setting out an evaluation plan. You might decide that a different layout works better for your project, depending on what it is you want to measure.

Measures of success

When you are developing your measures of success you need to ask yourself what will be delivered as a result of your participation activities? How will you know you are achieving your outcomes? This could include increased skills or the creation of more accessible resources.

Tips for developing measures of success:

- To evaluate process, include how many sessions of an activity happened or how many people attended.
- Aim to set at least two measures for each outcome.
- Use neutral language e.g. ‘level of’, ‘type of’ or ‘how often’.
- Draw on existing data wherever available.
- Combine numbers (quantitative data) and descriptions or narrative (qualitative data) to give you a fuller picture of what has changed.

Example evaluation plan

Outcomes	Measures of Success	How we will collect this? (tools/ methods)	Ethical considerations	Who will collect this?	When will we collect this?	Was this evaluation user led? How?	Baseline	Target
Intermediate Outcomes								
Better resources and information are available to young people and carers	% increase of CYP and P&C's who report information is relevant and accessible **after resources are co-produced**	Experience of service questionnaire	Data protection	CYPMH Service	October - December	CYP analysis of data	47% report information is relevant and accessible **before resources are co-produced**	80% report information is relevant and accessible **after resources are co-produced**
Participants feel listened to	% of people who report feeling listened to **after the engagement event**	Engagement event feedback questionnaire	Informed consent and data protection	CYP's	Event in April	CYP designed feedback form	N/A	75% report feeling listened to in event feedback
Services are more accessible to young people and parents	% of CYP and P&C's who feel service meets their needs	Experience of service questionnaire	Data protection	CYPMH Service	After 5 sessions, or at the end of period of care if less than 5 weeks	No	N/A	80% of respondents feel service meets their needs
Long Term Outcomes								
Participants have increased self-esteem	Increase in participants ratings of their self-esteem	Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale	Informed consent and data protection	Participation lead	At the start and end of the project	No, as the CYP involved in the project	To be measured at start of project	Increase in self-esteem from baseline measure

Participation evaluation methods and tools

Once the outcomes and measures of success are agreed in an evaluation plan, the next step involves exploring the measurement options. It is likely that you will need more than one type of measure or metric to ensure you are measuring all the different effects of a participation programme.

When collecting data to use in your evaluation you need to ensure you look at:

- **Process** – what happened?
- **Outcomes** – what effect did it have?

You can then measure the outcomes in terms of the difference (if any) it has made to:

- **Participants** – the young people and/or carers who take part in participation activities.
- **Beneficiaries** – the young people, and carers who engage with the outputs of participation such as a co-produced intervention, policy or resource but don't participate in creating them.
- **The organisation and staff**

There are some common research methods that are often useful in capturing information about your participation activities which is useful for your evaluation. The most useful of these are explored in more detail below:

Questionnaires

Why this method: Questionnaires give a quantified overview of progress. A questionnaire can also help to measure improvement in specific outcomes areas with pre and post activity assessments across two or more time points (where possible).

Things to consider: It is important to ensure all participants agree what they want to measure and decide a tool with your support. This facilitates better engagement and may help to bolster response rates. It is also important to remember that some young people will already use assessments of this nature as part of intervention programmes, and may well refuse to answer the same kind of questions again, which they are well within their right to do as they withhold the right to withdraw from the evaluation at any stage.

You can also develop questionnaires with participants, training and supporting them to decide what they want to ask and how best to ask it. This might include drawing on a range of measures from different recognised surveys to make single questionnaire that measures the things you want to measure.

Peer interviews

Why this method: Interviews are a great way to find out what benefits participation has offered a young person or carer, and allow them to articulate outcomes using their own words. It also helps to provide illustrative quotes to evidence the quantitative findings. It might throw up some unexpected benefits that a survey would not usually capture, although this is easily avoided in surveys which include a selection of both open and closed questions (closed questions to aggregate data for statistical purposes and open to glean essential depth of understanding with respect to feelings and experiences reported by young people). Hearing participants describe the meaning in their involvement, and to describe their 'narrative' and personal 'story' and journey can be very powerful for funders and colleagues.

Things to consider: Young people and carers can be trained to conduct peer interviews. This could even include the use of more innovative methods such as short live Q&As (Questions and Answers) in real-time captured on apps like WhatsApp or Skype. Some young people might feel comfortable writing answers to questions, as opposed to taking part in an interview.

Case studies (example template in appendix)

Why this method: Case studies are a great way to bring the process, experience and outcomes of participation on an individual to life. Funders of participation projects sometimes request these as a way to help them better understand the outcomes for participants.

Things to consider: There are many ways to generate and structure a case study including in written format, or created in a film or photo story. It can be useful to have a template which the young person can complete (ensuring professionals are on hand to respond to any questions the young people might have), or, with their agreement, create it using completed feedback forms, alongside their application form and any other tools, like a Participation Journey.

Qualitative and quantitative tools

As in other types of research, information collected for use in evaluation can be quantitative or qualitative. Each method of data collection can bring different insight to your evaluation and usually the best understanding is achieved through a combination of both types of data – a mixed methods approach.

Quantitative measures are useful for...

- Measuring what happened e.g. how many people did what kind of activities?
- Measuring concepts that can be clearly defined.
- Comparing results to measure differences between groups or changes in people's knowledge or behaviour over time.
- Generalising results from a smaller representative group to a larger population.

Qualitative measures are useful for....

- Finding out 'why' something happened or the meaning it had for different groups.
- Exploring things that are less defined, and creating a more detailed picture.
- Building on quantitative data to gain a more in-depth picture of a case or process.

The following table contains examples of different qualitative and quantitative measures that might be useful at various points in your evaluation. If participants are conducting the evaluation, it is important to offer training in the research methods used.

Quantitative	Qualitative
Pre and post knowledge tests Measuring people's knowledge of specific topics before and after an intervention (e.g. their knowledge of where to find information on mental health, or how commissioning works etc.)	**Focus groups** Facilitated small group discussions that can be notated, recorded or filmed. These work best in small groups, usually of up to 8 people and strong facilitation is essential in setting ground rules and ensuring everyone is able to speak.
Participant questionnaires Self-completed questionnaires that can measure people's knowledge, attitudes, and other self-reported behaviours. These can also be used to show change over time with baseline (pre) data and systems for follow-up (post).	**Phone and face-to-face interviews** One to one discussions that can be structured, semi-structured or unstructured depending on the balance of open and closed questions. Ask participants for their preference on how the interview takes place. While it can be easier to build rapport face to face, some young people may feel more able to speak freely over the phone.
Face to face or phone surveys Questionnaires conducted by an interviewee. These tend to use close-ended answers and follow a specific structured question schedule.	**Logs and journals** Participants keep a journal or diary (online or paper) of their experiences. Responses can be in text or pictorial form. Using structured topics or giving a suggested word count can help ensure information captured is focussed and easier to analyse. This can be a valuable way to realise unintended outcomes of the intervention. Participants should be able to keep their log as a record of their involvement.
Observation against a checklist Observing a person performing a task or observing a situation/setting against pre-defined checklist to score how far it meets the criteria.	**Journey mapping** Map the core stages of a young person or carers' journey through the project or service. This can be used to pin point positive and negative aspects of an individuals' experience or can be used as a baseline and follow up measure.
Document review Review of documents like a written workbook prepared by a young person or a policy against pre-defined criteria to generate a score of how far it meets the criteria.	
Data and social monitoring Collecting information against pre-defined categories (e.g. numbers of participants and demographic data, number of activities young people who complete the programme over time.)	

Choosing your tools – things to consider

There are countless tools available online to monitor and evaluate participation. Some are independently validated meaning they have been tested over many years and in many different contexts and settings facilitating more valid and robust findings. Others require payment or permission to use. A good source of information on tools to use with children and young people is the Child Outcomes Research Consortium (CORC) website, which has a library of outcome and experience measures, many of which are relatively simple and free to use.

There may be particular outcomes to capture for which there is no existing tool. In this case, adapt or co-produce a tool with young people, although this approach arguably produces a weaker level of evidence and makes it more difficult to generate comparative data (with national or local studies), thus more difficult to contextualise the findings and address questions pertaining to the counterfactual.

Young people and carers consistently tell us that whilst they understand the need for outcome and service experience measures, the process of eliciting information can feel irrelevant or mundane and, at times, upsetting or even demotivating. Keep in mind the following criteria when deciding which tools you are going to use:

1. **Experience of participants:** what will this tool be like for children and young people/parents and carers to use? What is the length and will it take long to complete? Is it easy to understand? Does it feel informal or clinical? Does it frame the question in a positive or negative way?

2. **Staff capacity:** how long will it take to set up and use? Is it practical for those staff who will be using it? Is training needed to use it?

3. **Ease of analysis:** once we collect data from this tool, how easy will it be for us to make sense of it, explain it to participants and colleagues, and most importantly, meaningfully utilise the data it collects to inform decision-making?

4. **Cost of use and permission:** do we have to pay to use this tool and is it a one-off payment or an on-going subscription? Do we require permission to use the tool from its author(s)?

5. **Credibility for funders:** will funders be satisfied with this? Do they have any requirements regarding the type of data you collect?

6. **Validity with stakeholders:** with whom will you share this evaluation? What data are they likely to find useful?

It is important that you involve participants – whether children and young people or parents and carers – in selecting the tools used to measure evaluation. You might decide to hold a workshop to consider the above criteria together. Colleagues might also have useful input; many clinicians will be currently involved in research or have research training so they might be able to give you advice on what tools would be good to use and the best ways to use them.

It is important that you involve participants... in selecting the tools used to measure evaluation.

Evaluating process

Monitoring participation activity and outputs

The basic information you need to collect information about the process of your project is what happened and when. Without this, it will be difficult to measure what effect participation work has had.

It is important to include the following information:

1. **Individuals involved:** the young people and/or parents and carers that take part.
2. **Demographics**: who are the individuals taking part? – age, gender, ethnicity etc.
3. **Engagement and retention**: what individuals take part in what activities, over what time, who completed the activity and who might have dropped out?
4. **Decisions and actions**: what was decided because of the participation and actions taken.
5. **Outputs:** what were the activities or things produced because of participation.

If you do not already have your own processes for recording this, you could create a basic **participation log** like the one below:

Date	Activity	Who was involved?	What was decided?	What are the next actions?	When will this be completed?

Assessing the level of participation in your project

While looking at the process of carrying out participation, it is important to assess the degree to which young people and/or parents and carers were able to make a meaningful contribution to it:

- **The stage and focus of participation:** when did participants get involved? What ideas did they contribute?
- **The level of participation:** how much influence did participants have at each stage?
- **The inclusivity:** what groups of participants was the project relevant to? From those, which groups were actually involved – or not?

If you do not already have your own processes for recording this, you could create a basic participation log like the one below:

Participation activity description	*Recruiting the new Assistant Psychologist*			
	Plan	**Do**	**Assess**	**Review**
Level of participation	*Involved*	*Consult*	*Involved*	*Consult*
Decisions and activities we were involved in	*Writing interview questions*	*Interviewing the candidates* *Scoring them* *Deciding who to appoint*	*We gave feedback on the experience and how it could be better and asked for the scoring sheet to be clearer*	
Decisions and activities we were not involved in	*Writing the role description* *Shortlisting*	*Our scoring was advisory only*		*The process to involve us in recruitment was re-written by the staff without us and the staff re-made the scoring sheet without us*

Measuring the experience of participants

You may want to ask participants about the experience of being part of the project. This can provide additional insights that can help with planning and recruiting for future projects, as well as ensuring quality participation and meaningful improvement in services. Feedback could be requested at regular intervals throughout the duration of the project, for example, after meetings or particular participation activities. Alternatively, feedback can be summarised at the end of the project as a reflective piece of work. Evaluation can be both formative and summative.

Formative evaluation monitors progress at regular intervals providing information and data to reflect on how effectively the participation programme is being implemented, and checks assumptions behind project design and planning allowing adjustments along the way. It can also build trust between the organisation and participants by showing that you care about gathering a range of perspectives and are willing to act on feedback.

Summative evaluation provides an overview or summary and evidence related to how far the project outcomes are met, the impact it has made, and its sustainability. Asking at the end allows participants the opportunity to assess the project as whole and consider its overall impact. It is a good idea to embed a combination of both **formative** and **summative** work.

To further assess quality you could consult with the group about what a good meeting looks like. This has the benefit of allowing you to adapt future events to incorporate this, while basing any evaluation of how it went on criteria the participants care about. It is important to decide whether you want to use individual or group feedback methods, as there is potential for both benefits and limitations from each approach.

	Individual feedback	Group feedback
Benefits	• Can be anonymous which may make people feel more able to share their honest opinions. • Often easier to analyse and quick administer. • Young people are more likely to be able to get involved in designing the tools and analysing the results.	• There are many different methods, which can be more fun for those involved. • Can provoke conversation which can be captured as qualitative data. • Allows for more holistic view of the experience and allows facilitator to ask questions to get more information.
Limitations	• Information you receive may be limited or lacking enough depth to fully understand people's experience. • Can be inaccessible to some people if not adequately supported or adapted.	• Can be dominated by participants that are more assertive, unless well facilitated. • There is a risk of 'groupthink' and participants imitating one another's responses, so this works best in groups with an established dynamic.

One option is to provide participants with a simple feedback form, such as the example on pages 47–48, which could be used at the end of a project. It is relatively simple to administer and allows participants to give honest, anonymous feedback, especially if they are shy or anxious to speak in a face-to-face conversation or group dynamic. However, there are limitations to the depth of knowledge gleaned from using a feedback form and you may want to consider using a mixed method approach involving a combination of both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies, such as feedback forms, followed by semi-structured interviews or other methods to expand, corroborate, compliment and supplement the findings.

Evaluation of projects can be led either by the staff who facilitated them or by peers of the participants. The benefit of it being led by staff is that it provides a platform for staff and participants to talk about the experience together. This can help staff build a clear picture of what worked well and where opportunities are for improvement. It also supports trust between staff and participants by showing that staff are willing to listen to feedback, including negative feedback, and work together to find ways to do things better. However, there are also counter benefits if the practitioner leading the evaluation is not the same as the individual who led the project because participants might be more honest when speaking to a more neutral person especially if they have something negative to say about the member of staff themselves.

If you have a few groups of participants, they could evaluate one another's experiences of the projects. An example of this might be an organisation where there are 'Experts by Experience' on a board and a separate group of participants who attend a participation forum.

Tools for measuring the experience as you go

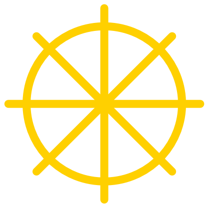
Feedback forms

Short forms of usually up to 5 questions that can use words/and or pictures enabling participants to give feedback on an activity that has just happened (e.g. workshop or meeting or a project overall)

Evaluation wheel

Draw a circle and divide it into equal 'slices' with lines. With the group, decide what your 'success criteria' for the session or meeting will be and label each slice with one of the criteria.

At the end of the session, ask participants to draw the circle and criteria on paper and mark on each line their view of the session – a mark closer to the centre is a higher mark and far out near the edge of the circle is a low mark.



Post-it notes

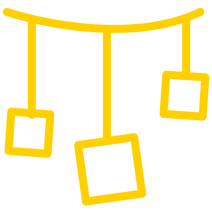
Give each participant the same number of post-it notes- usually 3-5. Agree what the group will put on each post-it for example,

1. Something they really enjoyed;
2. Something they learnt in the meeting;
3. Something they would change next time. Participants can read them aloud. This can also be a great activity for large groups if participants are reluctant to speak

Washing lines

Tie a piece of string across the room and explain one end is 'high' and the other 'low' and the rest of the string is points between them.

Read out statements about the meeting and ask participants to move along the string to indicate their opinion.



Evaluating outcomes

Measuring the outcomes for participants

Being part of a participation project can make a difference to the participants by increasing their skills, confidence and/or knowledge with respect to participation and mental health. Capturing these benefits and others will be an important part of understanding the overall impact, or effect, of the project. Impact is a difficult concept to measure so when we refer to it in this form, we are referring to the changes we see relating to outcomes, rather than the completion of a more formal impact study, which often includes a higher level of research design to attribute causation.

How you measure your outcomes will depend on which ones you choose when you develop your theory of change/logic model and evaluation plan at the outset. However, it is useful to include measures that allow participants to define the outcomes for themselves (and the ones that are important to them), not just those set by the evaluation framework. It enables young people to explore the ways through which the project has had an influence on them. You may discover unexpected effects – sometimes referred to as 'unintended outcomes' – not considered when developing the initial plan.

Suggested tools and methods

Below are some examples of ways you could record the outcomes that being part of a project has had on an individual. Where possible, a template is included in the appendix as an example.

Skills/Goal tracker

Why this method: It allows participants to identify for themselves what skills they want to develop. They can then chart their progress towards them, showing how they have developed over the progression of the project.

Things to consider: Useful in mixed groups where young people are likely to have different motivations for engagement, different skills levels and different aspirations. It also encourages participants to be aspirational and think about what they want from participation, such as more formal development opportunities like accredited training. If you are going to employ this tool, it might be beneficial to use the Goals Based Outcomes measure as a template. Although the measure is designed to be used in working towards therapeutic goals, it could also be applicable to participation goals.

Participant journeys (example template on page 45)

Why this method: Participant Journeys are a simple way to retrospectively review the whole experience of participation from when a participant joined, the key activities they have participated in, their feelings about each and the benefits gained from participating.

Things to consider: Journeys can be created in a workshop with multiple participants, either at the end of a specific project or to review their participation over a set period such as a year or the past six months.

Photo story

Why this method: Creating photo stories alongside participants can be a creative way to explore the effects of participation on them. This might better suit young people who don't feel comfortable with written forms or verbal feedback.

Things to consider: A simple approach to photo stories is to provide young people with a short list of intended outcomes of participation such as skills, confidence and new friends. Then you can ask them, over an agreed period, to capture one or more photos that shows how they feel their involvement has affected them with regards to each topic on the list. They can also write or say (record) a simple sentence to go with each photo.

Participatory photography and films

Why this method: Groups of participants can also create films or photos together that summarise the effects of participation. It provides a means of communicating a range of outcomes and allows the participant to express feelings in a creative and accessible way that might feel less intimidating. It can also be a more effective means of communicating the findings to a wide range of stakeholders, including staff, parents and funders.

Things to consider: This could be a great way to capture the outcomes of a long-term project. The process of making a group film or photo story can help everyone close to the project by working together in a structured way. Many film companies will provide pro bono or reduced cost work for organisations working with young people. There are also many free film-editing platforms available: young people in your group may have the skills themselves or might want to develop the skills as they make the film. Creating the film or photo story should happen alongside workshops where young people review what the impact of participation has been for them collectively and decide how best to capture that. This can be a brilliant piece of work to share at an event or to submit to funders alongside written project reports.

Measuring the outcomes for beneficiaries

The ultimate purpose of participation is to improve the quality of service received by those who use them. It can be challenging to evaluate the outcomes of participation for this group because it can be difficult to claim you know exactly why they happened or that the changes were down to the impact of participation within the organisation (attribution).

For example, you could run a project to improve transitions for young people from child to adult services by co-producing a new transitions policy and passport with a small group of service users with the aim that they feel more involved, supported and prepared for transitions. However, it could be claimed that a new policy and passport created without participation – or no new policy and passport at all, could have led to the same outcomes. The challenge is how to demonstrate the direct influence of your project, and the role of participation within this. It is not practical (and sometime not ethical) to run a scientific experiment which definitively identifies the influence of your project so you may need to conduct your evaluation but accept your result may not be perfect. Conducting before, after measures and using a mix of quantitative and qualitative data to get a more comprehensive picture of what changes have occurred, and why might help to address this limitation.

One common method of measurement is to use the Experience of Service Questionnaire (ESQ, formerly CHI-ESQ). Another patient reported experience measure (PREM) tool is CollaboRATE, which assesses three core aspects of Shared Decision Making during a clinic visit. Whatever measurement tool you use, keep in mind what it will be like for your service users to complete it.

Suggested tools

Experience of service questionnaire

Why this method: Many children and young people's mental health services use the experience of service questionnaire designed for therapeutic settings. The tool contains many of the measures of improvement you might want to make through participation, such as young people finding the service accessible and feeling listened to by staff.

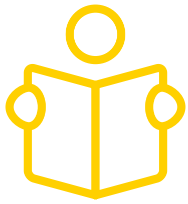
Things to consider: If your organisation already uses the ESQ, it can be useful to link information from this into your Participation Evaluation Plan and pick some indicators that are in the ESQ.

Feedback review and complaints monitoring

Why this method: Involving young people and carers in designing and improving services should help organisations better meet the needs of these groups. These positive changes should be reflected in the feedback and the number of complaints received. Monitoring the topic and frequency of negative feedback and complaints about that issue after the project could be one way to see if it has made any difference for wider groups of carers and young people engaging with the organisation.

Things to consider: If poor feedback or complaints is received in a particular part of the organisation, this could be a great area to focus a participation project allowing us to monitor changes over time.

You're Welcome/15 Steps tools



Why this method: There are some tools out there which allow young people and/or carers to assess services on the basis of how accessible and youth-friendly they are. Two common ones in health services are You're Welcome and 15 Steps. Both can be accessed free on the NHS England website.

Things to consider: Using tools like this with carers and young people can be a good way to see how suitable a service is for them and can elicit how any changes initiated by participation have influenced the service experience for wider groups.

Peer interviews and focus groups

Why this method: Participants who have been involved in service improvement and design projects can conduct evaluation activities with beneficiaries to gather their views and see what influence any changes have had on them. This could take the form of young people and/or parents and carers conducting quick surveys or feedback forms, or longer interviews and focus groups with other service users and parents and carers to see what they think of co-produced resources or re-designed or improved aspects of the service.

Things to consider: It is important to ensure that a range of perspectives are included and where possible to include young people who may have opted out of the process or found it difficult to participate.

Measuring the outcomes for an organisation

Introducing ideas around participation into an organisation can feel like a big change. Some people do not see the benefits of involving young people and carers in the design and delivery of services, and others may feel that it is a good idea but lack the confidence to implement it. Once staff start using participation methods, participation can be incorporated into many different areas of the organisation including commissioning, governance, production of accessible information and service improvement.

One way to evaluate whether your project has had an influence is to measure whether it has led to a change in attitudes towards participation. Staff knowledge of participation methods and confidence in implementing participation projects could be key metrics to consider. You could measure this using a simple feedback questionnaire, delivered after a training session or completion of a project. You can find an example of this in the appendix, or you could create your own. Equally, to get a more comprehensive picture of the ways that attitudes within the organisation have changed you may wish to conduct a qualitative measure such as a focus group or interview to understand more.

Measuring the extent participation is embedded in the culture of the organisation

The best way to assess the degree to which participation is embedded in the culture of your organisation is to assess yourself against a set of best practice standards. Your organisation may already measure itself on standards that are not specific to participation but include an element of parent and carer participation, such as QNCC and QNIC. Reviewing what standards and audits you already achieve is a good place to start.

- **Amplified Participation Audit** – Amplified has created a participation audit, which can evaluate the areas of participation your organisation is meeting and identifying areas for improvement.
- **Hear by Right** – A free resource for self-assessment against a set of standards based around developing participation practices.
- **Collaboratively reviewing your organisation's own values and standards**. Many organisations have co-produced their own participation values or pledges allowing you to review at regular intervals. You could involve young people and carers in assessing how far they feel these are being met and use this as the basis for a discussion about what's going well and what could be improved.

Young people and carers as participants in the evaluation process

How can you introduce evaluation processes to participants?

Evaluation is about giving people a voice. As it enables their views and experiences to help shape how things are done, it should be explained positively to them. Here are some quick tips on speaking about evaluation with young people:

- **Be clear** about your reasons for collecting evaluation information
- **Be positive** about how and why their responses will be useful.
- **Thank them** in advance for their time and acknowledge how valuable their views are.
- **Offer to talk** about any questions or concerns with any person who wants this, and provide contact details for anyone who would prefer to speak to someone else.
- **Encourage** people to be honest, explaining that hearing direct views helps to improve services and future participation activities.
- **Value** their contribution, however big or small, even if it is difficult it is to hear. Think about the motivation behind participants' involvement and avoid responding defensively to criticism. You may want to think about who is best placed to facilitate these discussions.

Ethical considerations around involving young people and carers in evaluation

Evaluation is essentially a type of research. This means that the same ethical considerations need to be taken into account when conducting evaluations as when designing qualitative or quantitative research with young people. Key ethical considerations in this context are that participants:

- Know what the evaluation is for and how the information they decide to share will be used and who will see it.
- Understand what taking part will involve for them. What will they need to do and how will the information will be recorded? Will someone take notes, will they do a form themselves, will it be audio-recorded?
- Know who is doing the evaluation and how to contact them afterwards.
- Know how they will receive an evaluation report and any updates on actions taken as a result of the evaluation.
- Understand that taking part in the evaluation is voluntary and they do not have to share any information and can withdraw at any time.

Informed consent

It is the role of those involved in the project to help participants make informed decisions about getting involved in evaluation. Informed consent is a voluntary agreement to take part, where the person agreeing to participate understands the purpose of the research and any possible risks. Informed consent is not just a case of people agreeing to get involved in research before it starts. It is an ongoing process that needs to be established at every stage of the evaluation.

Research has found that people as young as eight can consent to participate in research if details about the benefits and risks, confidentiality, and anonymity are explained clearly in a supportive, non-coercive environment . When asking young people for informed consent, there are a few things we should keep in mind:

- Have we obtained written consent or an agreement?
- Have young people been given the option to withdraw from participation at any time?
- Where and how have young people been asked for consent (e.g. at school)? We need to make sure that young people do not feel like they have to give consent.

To help young people give fully informed consent, it is a good idea to adapt any written materials to fit the reading age of the young people involved. Any information provided should be accessible and engaging. It might help to involve young people in the development of any written documentation, especially if you are preparing them for different reading ages. Accessible information should also be available for people with disabilities, as well as those those with English as a second language.

Where peer evaluators are involved, ethical considerations should be included in their training, and they should have the opportunity to practice explaining the evaluation and consent process to their peers. Peer evaluators should always be prepared and supported. This might include having staff observe them take participants through the consent process, or support from staff in delivering this part of the evaluation session.

Parental consent

It will usually be necessary to get parental consent for young people under the age of 16 to be involved in research and evaluation. In some cases, this might be needed for people aged 16-18, too. This means that some young people's involvement will need to be negotiated with their guardians.

Guardians should also be informed of the purpose and process of being involved in the evaluation. It is important to be prepared for any tensions that might arise if young people want to get involved in research but their guardians say no. Similarly, some guardians might not give permission for their child to participate in research carried out in a specific context or about certain subject matter. Other guardians might pressure their child to get involved in research and evaluation, despite the young person showing a lack of interest. Young people under the age of 16 need to have a chance to discuss and consent to their involvement, even if parental consent has already been given.

Every situation will be different, but it might be useful for your team to plan how you aim to manage these tensions in advance. Even if children and young people have given consent to participate in the project, they still need to give specific consent to participate in the evaluation that demonstrates they have understood all the above. You can do this by giving an information and consent form that a staff member should talk through with them, offering the chance to ask any questions.

Confidentiality

During the informed consent process, it is important to tell people how you will protect the confidentiality of the data you collect and let them know who might have access to the data. Confidentiality is:

- About identifiable data. (Any information that can be used to distinguish one person from another)
- An agreement about who has access to identifiable data.

Some people who get involved with research and evaluation want to stay anonymous, while others might want to be identified and have their contribution recognised. The best way to find out how someone feels about confidentiality is to ask them. It is important to obtain written consent if a person wants to waive their right to confidentiality.

The most common way to maintain confidentiality is through anonymisation, or the use of pseudonyms (a name used instead of the person's real name). If using pseudonyms, you might want to encourage young people to choose their own pseudonyms. Some young people have very distinctive stories, which mean that other ways to ensure anonymity may need to be explored, such as:

- changing their age or gender in a case study.
- 'separating out' the person's story and spreading it across two or three different people's stories.

Breaking confidentiality

During the consent process, it is important to explain to young people that if they say something that raises concerns about their own, or someone else's safety, their confidentiality will need to be breached.

There are usually strong ethical guidelines in place which tell us how to respond in the more obvious cases of young people sharing information about their lives which could potentially put others or themselves at risk (e.g. disclosing drug use, abuse or self-harm).

In other cases, we must make difficult decisions about what action to take – if any – about information that is disclosed (e.g. if it should stay confidential or be shared, and if so with who). Before any involvement work starts, researchers should agree on a plan addressing how any safeguarding issues will be dealt with.

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

During your evaluation you are going to be collecting and processing personal information so it is important that you are compliant with rules around data protection. As some of it will relate to an individual's health it will be classed as Special Category data. Participants will need to freely give active permission for their data to be processed. The purpose of collecting and processing the data they provide needs to be set out in a document which they can tick and sign to record their agreement. Data can only be processed for the reasons set out in the document and must be stored securely. Participants must be aware that they are able to withdraw their consent at any time and the organisation needs to have the ability to act on this quickly if required.

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Reporting your evaluation

Once you have developed your evaluation plan, decided on your tools and collected your data and analysed your findings you will need to bring all of this information together into a report. The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) has some good guidance to help you think through the steps involved in this.

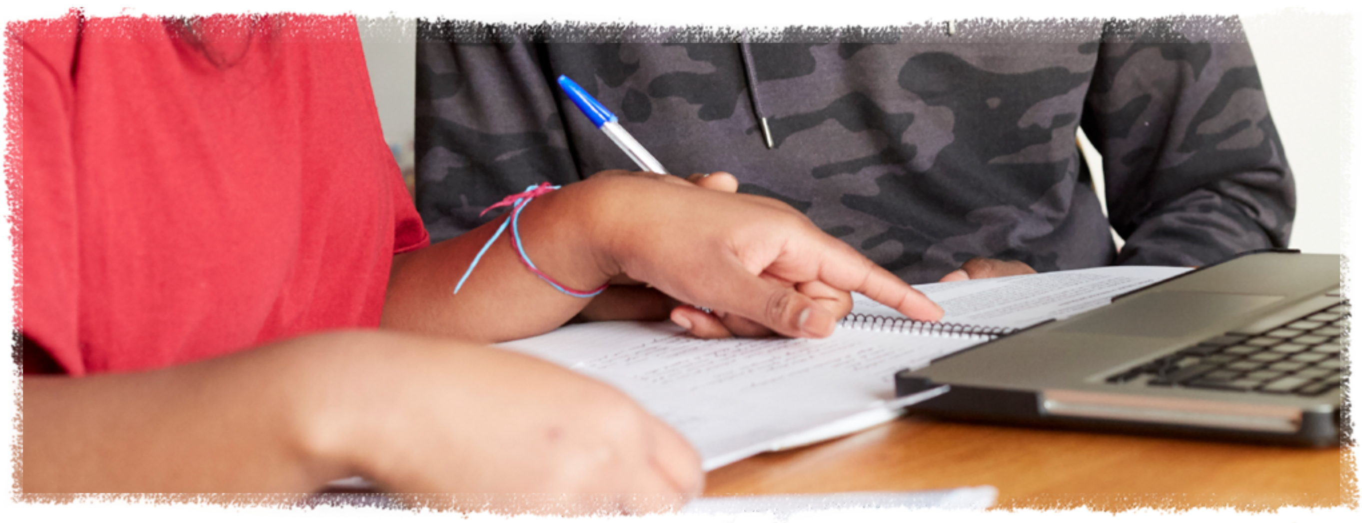
As well as setting out your methods and findings, it will be important to think about next steps and how you will use your findings going forwards. This could be a collaborative process which continues to involve your participants. What do they see as the priorities for the future and what ideas do they have around implement changes?

The findings from the evaluation should be promoted to the widest possible audience. This should include commissioners, service managers and staff as well as young people and carers. If funders or other stakeholders require a specific format for their report which means it is not accessible to all these groups, think about producing a young person friendly version so the people the report is about can access its findings. Having young people involved in deciding how best to communicate their findings to their peers means you are more likely to reach those who benefit most from the findings.

You might also want to consider organising an event to communicate your findings to young people and carers. This could be used as a useful listening exercise to hear further feedback on the report and discuss ways to move forward. Even if feedback is negative or hard to hear, all information is useful in ensuring people feel listened to and improving the experience of the people who access your service.

Using the evidence and any additional feedback to plan your next steps ensures that your evaluation is purposeful and that you continue to use evidence and the direct experience of young people and carers to shape the design and implementation of services.

Using evidence to plan your next steps ensures that you continue to use evidence and the direct experience of young people and carers to shape the design and implementation of services



Useful tools

Useful resource: Template participant journey

Participant:

Project:

Expectations / goals: What were the participants hopes or expectations before starting the project?

Timeline:

Start

Finish

Activities: What were the main stages of the project?

The journey:

What happened?

Reflections:

How does the participant feel about the project overall? What did it mean to them? Did it meet their expectations?

Skills gained:

What did the participant learn? What can they do now that they couldn't do before?

Useful resource: template participant case study

Participant:

Age:

Date became involved:

About

3-5 pieces of information that would give someone reading the case study, for example a funder, a sense of who the participant is. You should write this with the participant and it might include things about their family, education and aspirations for the future, why they were using the service, their hobbies or pets etc.

Hopes for being involved

With the participant capture 2 or 3 things that explain why they were motived to participate such as their own goals for development or goals to change things for others etc. It can be useful to look back at their original application together if they completed one.

Activities

A simple bullet point list of the activities the participant has been involved in during the period you are covering in your evaluation. If you have a Participation Log that would help complete this section. It should include training and any routine activities, like coming to the participation group, as well as any one off activities like sitting on a recruitment panel.

Impact

List here any information about the impact of participation that has been captured for example through a survey or another method. It can be simple bullet points but remember to make clear what you measured.

In their own words...

With the participant capture 2 or 3 things that explain why they were motived to participate such as their own goals for development or goals to change things for others etc. It can be useful to look back at their original application together if they completed one.

Useful resource: Participant project feedback form 1/2

Your name:

Project name:

When you joined:	Today's date:

About your experience	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Not sure
I got the practical info about the project meetings (e.g. what time and where) in enough time before each meeting to feel prepared						
I got enough info about the purpose and content of any meetings beforehand to know what to expect and what my role would be						
It was always clear what decisions in the project young people could and couldn't influence, and why						
I always received feedback within a couple of days of meetings with clear info about the final decisions made at the meeting and the actions being taken as a result						
The way the project was run allowed all young people involved to have an equal say in it						
Adults and young people involved in the project had equal influence on it						
In between project meetings I felt informed and involved						
I received enough support before meetings						
I received enough support during meetings						
I always received any travel or other expenses in good time						
I feel that my contribution to this project was valued and appreciated						

Continued over...

Useful resource: Participant project feedback form 2/2

What difference did the project make?	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Not sure
I believe this project will make a positive difference around young people's mental health						
I have learnt more about young people's mental health and/or topics related to this such as participation in this area by being involved in this project						
Through this project I have developed skills that will be useful in other parts of my life in this project						
As a result of being part of this project, I am more likely to take up other opportunities (like volunteering and participation) to have a say around mental health						
I have been introduced to information and resources on this project (e.g. about mental health, volunteering etc.) that will be useful in other parts of my life						
Being part of this project has met my hopes and expectations						

Final thoughts!

What has been the biggest benefit for you personally in taking part in this project?

What have been the best parts of being involved in this project?

If we did a project like this again, is there anything we should change?

Useful resource: Staff project feedback form

Your name (optional):

Your role (optional):

Today's date:

About your experience	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Not sure
Young people's participation in mental health services is important for service development						
Parent and carer participation in mental health is important for service development						
I am confident in being a part of a project that involves young people and carer's participation						
I have the resources to be part of a project that involves young people and carer's participation						
I feel supported by leadership to use participation in my work						
There are opportunities for young people and carers to be involved in the organisation						
Participation is embedded in the culture of the organisation						

What has been the most important message or learning point for you from this project?

What about this project worked really well?

If we did a project like this again for others, is there anything you would change about how it's run?

Glossary

Activities The actions, tasks and events a project or organisation carries out to create its outputs and outcomes, and achieve its aims

Assumptions In a theory of change, the processes that are expected to occur to ensure activities translate into outcomes

Attribution The extent to which an observed change is caused by an intervention or action

Beneficiary Those who may not directly be involved in a project but will may experience value from its effects

Case study The story of a particular intervention or persons experience within a project

Co-produce Professionals and young people or carers sharing power and responsibilities around designing, planning and delivering support or resources

Commissioning The process of planning, agreeing and monitoring services

Evaluation Using information from monitoring and elsewhere to judge the performance of an organisation or project

Evaluation plan The proposed details of evaluation including what will be measured, how and when

Indicator Well-defined information which shows whether or not something is happening

Intermediate outcomes Shorter-term changes that happen as steps on the way to other outcomes and which contribute to longer-term impact

Logic model A simpler version of a theory of change that lists activities, outcomes and ultimate goal

Mechanism The process through which your activities and outcomes will cause the outcomes and impact you want to see

Measures of success How to measure the success of your participation activities in relation to your outcomes.

Overall aim Describes the purpose of the organisation including the difference that an organisation wants to make

Outcomes The changes, benefits, learning or other effects that result from what the project or organisation does, offers or provides

Outputs Products, services or facilities that result from an organisation's or project's activities. For example, workshops, leaflets, case work sessions

Participation In the context of healthcare, individual participation refers to people's involvement in decisions about their own health and public participation relates to people's involvement in the design and delivery of the health services they use

Participation objectives The changes you want participation to achieve within your organisation

Participatory evaluation Evaluation of a project conducted with young people and/or parents and carers involved in the data collection and analysis

Peer evaluation Evaluation conducted by individuals in a similar position to those who would use or benefit from the service

Qualitative Non-numeric methods of data collection and analysis

Quantitative Numeric methods of data collection and analysis

Stakeholders The people or groups who have an interest in the activities of an organisation. This can include services users, families, commissioners, staff, volunteers, trustees, funders, investors, supporters or members

Theory of change A process for thinking about an organisation or project's 'story,' logically linking target group, activities, outcomes and ultimate goal. It encourages people to consider how change happens in the short, medium and long term to achieve the intended impact

Tools Any instrument used to measure an outcome or concept including questionnaires, surveys or scales

About Amplifed

This toolkit was created as part of the Amplified project run by YoungMinds and commissioned by NHS England. Amplified is a programme that aims to support the participation of children, young people and their families at every level of the mental health system. We support providers and commissioners to excel in participation by showcasing good practice across the system and promoting access to resources that support in four areas:

- Promoting and championing participation
- Strategic participation of children, young people and their families
- Promoting young people's access to and their voice within services
- Supporting the collaboration of young people and their families in care and treatment.

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Registered charity number: 1016968

Company limited by guarantee number: 02780643