



The future for outcomes

A practical guide to measuring outcomes for young people





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- representing and advocating for local government and making the case for greater devolution
- helping councils tackle their challenges and take advantage of new opportunities to deliver better value for money services.

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We also work with the individual political parties through the Political Group Offices.

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And project facilitators:

Louise Aitkin and Wendy Flint – Associate Consultants of the National Youth Agency and Bethia McNeil and John Loder from The Young Foundation.

Foreword: Fiona Blacke

Services for young people are under threat. This is not scaremongering, it's a sad fact. Local authorities are having to deliver services under challenging financial constraints. The budget cuts imposed on councils by central government mean that now more than ever we need to be able to prove the value of personal and social development in improving the lives of children and young people.

Some will say that 'we know good youth work when we see it' and we do, but do funders and commissioners? That is why we believe that this work, funded by the Local Government Association and part of our 'Routes to Success' programme is so timely and important.

The arguments in our sector about levels of evidence, have long existed. Can we afford to continue to debate these? or should we be taking a more constructive approach and try to help the sector in demonstrating the great work that they do.

This report sets out not only the rationale for why we need to show the difference that we make but sets out a process by which we can do this. It draws on the work of a number of councils within our local authority support programme as well as our programme of work with the Young Foundation with the development of a 'calculator' to inform investment. We believe that this document not only moves the debate forward but also provides a 'roadmap' with step by step processes that you could consider when thinking about how to evidence the value of your work.



Fiona Blacke

Executive Summary

This document brings together recent developments around outcomes based work with young people. Commissioned by the Local Government Association, what follows is a discussion of the concepts, illustrated by findings from the pilots, and a step-by-step approach to designing an evaluation framework that focuses on outcomes.

We advocate 12 principles to underpin your approach:

- Know the end result you want to achieve
- Define your audience – be clear about the types and nature of information they require
- Decide what standard of evidence you want or need to achieve
- Ensure a framework includes both qualitative and quantitative evidence
- Produce information that will be used and can be analysed
- Include data managers or commissioners from the outset
- Consider the views of your main stakeholders – workers, young people and volunteers to produce something that is realistic and achievable
- Ensure a common language and approach to defining outcomes across your organisation/amongst partners
- Identify strategic leadership and capacity
- Integrate outcomes-based approaches into your work
- Re-shape existing resources
- Identify any additional resources to implement approaches

And suggest a journey towards effective measurement that requires you to consider:

- Your audience and what they want to know
- How to go about selecting a balanced portfolio of outcomes
- The practicality, validity and reliability of the measure you choose and;
- The methodology you will adopt

It is timely and, we believe, imperative for the sector to get to grips with effective evaluation that can highlight the many benefits of good youth work. Our approach to work with young people is unique, it gets results, we need to engage fully with demonstrating those outcomes and proving beyond doubt that 'youth work works'.

Introduction

Improving outcomes for young people is at the heart of youth work practice and the range of young people's services. Developing effective tools to measure outcomes for young people creates challenges due to the complex nature of the changes we are trying to capture and quantify. In this publication we:

- outline the importance of designing provision to improve outcomes for young people
- draw on recent research which demonstrates the importance of measuring both short and longer term outcomes
- set out a framework to support decision making on how and when to evaluate improved outcomes for young people and offer a step-by-step approach to local implementation
- include experiences of local authority and voluntary sector groups that have trialled these approaches as they make progress in measuring outcomes for young people
- pose a series of questions that you should consider when adopting an evaluation framework

The challenges inherent in measuring outcomes prompted the Department for Education to commission the Young Foundation (as part of the Catalyst Consortium) to develop an outcomes framework for young people's services; this was published in 2012¹. The Outcomes Framework aims to address the challenges inherent in measuring outcomes for young people and usefully distinguishes between two types of outcomes:

- Intrinsic: which are valued by and relate to individuals
- Extrinsic: which can be measured and valued by other people

Within services for young people there is widespread use of measurement tools and processes to demonstrate extrinsic outcomes. These are often indicators that can be measured and validated externally, for example:

- Improvements in literacy and numeracy
- Gaining a level 1 or 2 qualification/attainment
- Reduction in offending behaviour

The practice of youth work is about education, based on a theory of experiential and informal learning. Youth work has an overt focus on improving outcomes and engages with young people to facilitate positive change in their behaviour, attitudes and circumstances. However, demonstrating the direct impact of work is not straightforward; it is more difficult to evidence the direct link between the activities, process or programme that young people have participated in and the longer term extrinsic outcome.

The Outcomes Framework outlines a model of seven interlinked clusters of social and emotional capabilities which are at the heart of youth work

Co-production refers to a collaborative process often involving young people and communities in the design and delivery of services.

Previous practice in relation to identifying outcomes for young people has focused on recording their progress and development.

Outcome measures require a more rigorous approach, using proven and reliable methods for gathering and presenting evidence.

practice. Presented as **capability clusters** (see page 8); they focus on individual outcomes for young people which evidence has demonstrated have a strong relationship to the achievement of longer term positive outcomes. It is possible to demonstrate the contribution of youth work to these longer term goals by measuring specific changes in programme participants' behaviour, knowledge, skills, status and level of functioning in relation to the capability clusters.

Context

The revised Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities on Services and Activities to improve young people's well-being² outlines the Government expectation that local authorities will secure a local offer to improve young people's well-being and personal and social development assessed by positive trends in both qualitative and quantitative data.

In the current financial climate, government has imposed a 28 per cent cut on local authority grants over the spending review period with further cuts recently announced. Consequently the need to demonstrate the difference that services and projects make to the lives of young people is becoming ever more important. The introduction of results based payments in the youth sector, such as the Youth Contract and the Troubled Families Programme and the increased use of commissioning in services for young people provide further imperatives for developing robust approaches to the measurement of outcomes for young people. **Co-production** is becoming increasingly significant and the involvement of communities and young people in the design and delivery of services create new opportunities to mould and shape services focused on the best use of resources to achieve optimum value and results.

The collection of evidence and development of outcome **measures** is required across all services and projects that are working with young people; this includes commissioned providers, local authority provision, statutory partners, communities and young people. We need information that can demonstrate not only what activities have been undertaken; but, more importantly, the difference that activity has made to the outcomes for young people.

Outcomes

What are they and why do they matter?

Developing a common language, which is widely used and understood, is essential to ensuring that the contribution of youth work to the

improvements in outcomes for young people is recognised and valued.

Terminology around outcomes is used inconsistently and can be confusing; here we refer to outcomes as the 'The changes resulting from your organisation's activities'³, which includes both the planned and unplanned outcomes that 'happen as a result of your work'⁴.

- **Inputs** are the resources used by or dedicated to a programme or piece of work. For example, money, staff time, facilities, equipment and supplies, volunteer time.
- **Outputs** are the direct products of activities and may include types, levels and targets of services delivered by the programme. Almost always numerical; for example, the number of leaflets distributed, how many sex education sessions were offered, how many young people attended, how many young people achieved accreditation for their work, etc.
- **Outcomes** are the answer to the "So what?" question: "So what difference does it all make?" Outcomes may relate to behaviour, skills, knowledge, attitudes, values, condition, or other attributes. As outcomes relate to significant changes for young people, they tend to be achieved over months or years.
- **Impact** is the effect of a project or programme at a higher or broader level in the longer term, after a range of outcomes has been achieved.⁵

The outcomes that 'happen as a result of your work' can have an impact on the young people involved, the organisations they are working with and the communities in which they live.

The terms 'outcome' and 'impact' are sometimes used interchangeably when talking about the results a programme may have. We consider 'impact' as something that occurs 'longer term'; this is often expressed as long term goals for young people, such as getting a job, not becoming involved in the criminal justice system and moving towards positive parenting. Indicators of movement towards those goals would be for example, a reduction in the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs), reducing numbers of first time entrants to the youth justice system and reducing teenage pregnancy rates.

For some young people, and particularly for groups of vulnerable or disadvantaged young people, progress towards positive outcomes that are recognised by society may be slow; outcomes such as gaining a job with training, not being a teenage parent, or avoiding contact with the criminal justice system often extend beyond the period of time that a young person will be engaged with services or projects. Therefore, it's vital for those service providers to focus their evidence gathering on outcomes allied to a shorter timescale.

The diagram overpage illustrates potential outputs, outcomes and impact that could accrue over time when working with young people who are not in education, employment or training. The intrinsic outcomes identified for young people relate to their personal learning and development;

gains in confidence, skills and knowledge. The extrinsic outcomes potentially show up as a reduction in the NEET statistics. Longer term it's possible to identify significant impact for both individual and society when young people become employed.

For example:

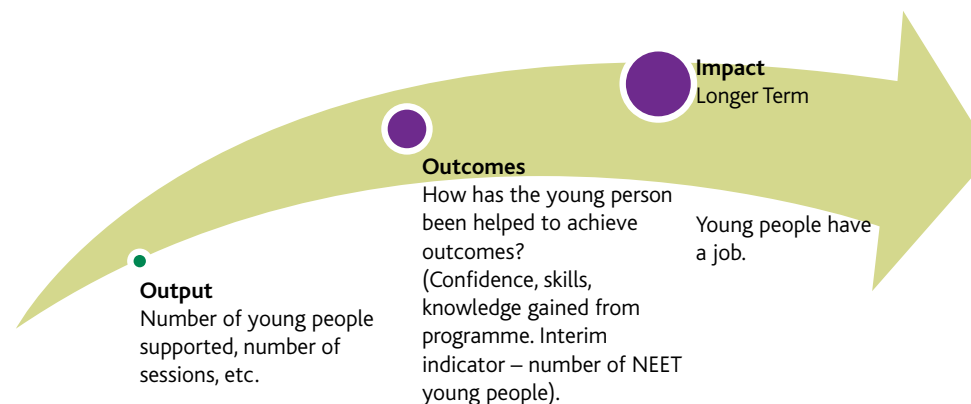


Diagram reproduced from *Producing an Outcomes-based Specification*, Part 5: *A Practical Guide to Commissioning Services for Young People*, NYA January 2012.

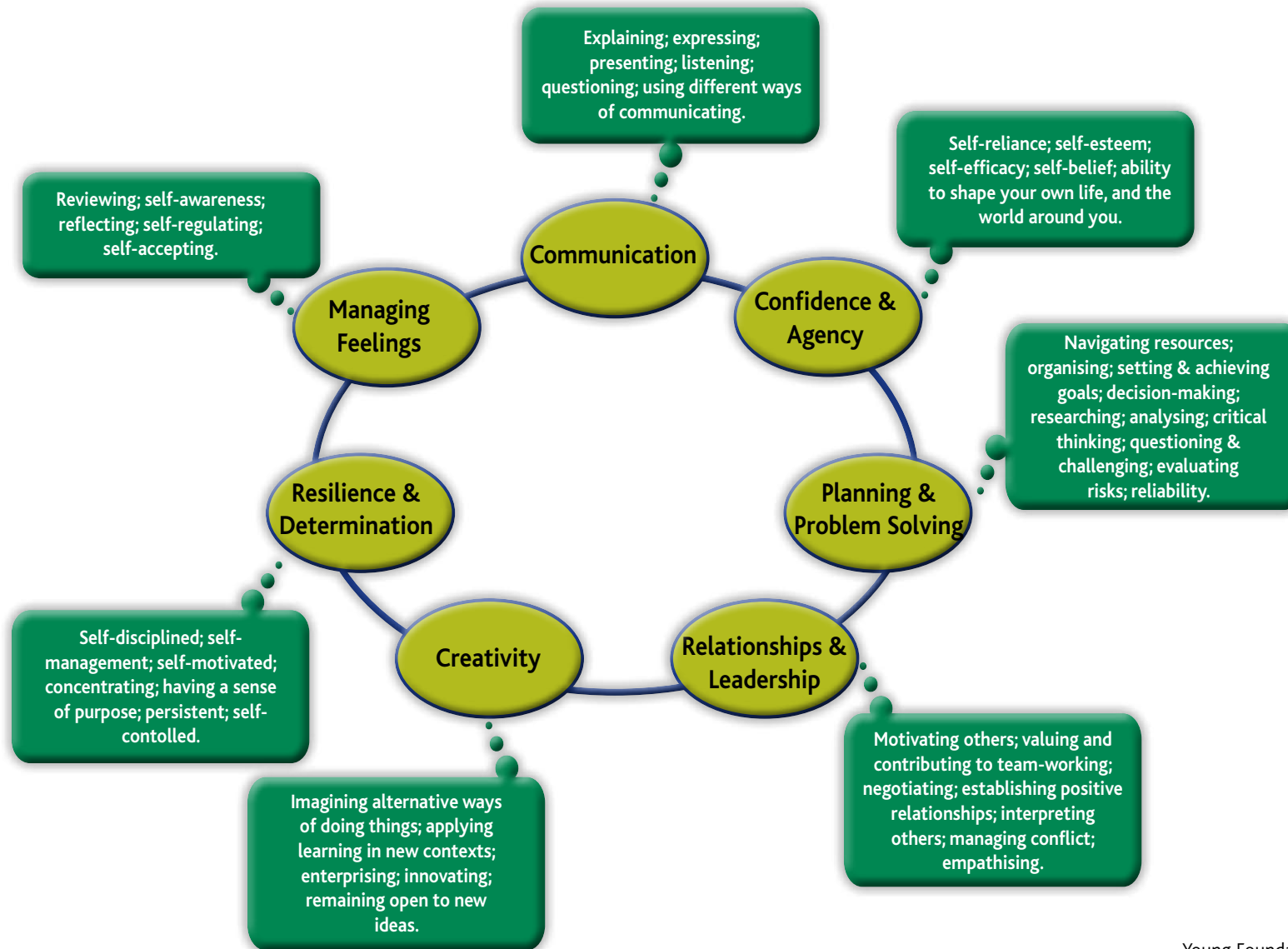
Capability clusters

The capability clusters (see Introduction on pages 5 and 6) illustrate the range of personal, social and emotional capabilities that are the focus of youth work practice. Research identified by the Young Foundation⁶ leads the way for youth work to claim significant influence on young people's future positive outcomes when they have been involved in programmes of learning with us.

In Solihull the youth service developed a system of baseline assessments which are completed at the start of work with young people and are then reviewed with workers to identify progress. The assessment documents are held in individual files for young people. A working group met to consider how this system could be adapted to meet the challenges of producing reliable and valid data to evidence improving outcomes for young people.

With the involvement of the data manager, the baseline data recording sheet has been amended to ensure that workers and young people focus on changes in the capability areas and identify on a closed scale their starting and review point. The numbers within the scale have been linked to a spread sheet to ensure that all changes identified by staff and young people can be collated and a numerical value attached. This approach is currently being piloted.

Clusters of capabilities



As part of the Routes to Success programme, NYA, funded by the Local Government Association has supported a number of local authorities to explore use of the capability clusters; evaluating them in relation to their own priorities and practice. Workers and managers have found the capability clusters useful to underpin curriculum development, and programme planning, and to support evaluation and measurement of outcomes. In some areas they have kept the clusters as presented in the framework, in others they have tailored them to reflect local priorities and some have included extrinsic as well as intrinsic outcomes. The chart below provides some examples of how the Young Foundation model has been adapted; you will see that there are some common factors emerging. In common with a number of authorities and organisations, Reading and Oxfordshire adapted the clusters in consultation with workers and young people.

Capability clusters – Comparison of terms		
Young Foundation cluster	Reading	Oxfordshire
Resilience and Determination	Aspirations	Aspirations
Confidence and Agency	Confidence	Confidence
Creativity	Creativity	Education and Work
Communication	Communication	Communication
Relationships and Leadership	Participation	Making a Difference
Planning and Problem Solving	Planning & Problem Solving	Choices & Behaviour
Managing Feelings	Well-Being	

Similar development work has been undertaken with voluntary sector colleagues, led by the Young Foundation and funded by Catalyst, and learning from that programme is integrated in this document.

London Youth is a network of over 400 youth organisations serving young people across London. They run a range of contemporary programmes and activities, covering for example youth action, youth leadership, sports development, and employability and two outdoor learning residential centres. The organisation felt that what they were previously evaluating was often determined by what funders were requesting rather than being based on clarity about the benefits their programmes could bring to young people.

In February this year teams completed top line thinking about their work for the next 3 years. Teams were asked to use their knowledge and expertise to develop outcomes appropriate to the programmes they run. The outcomes use “change language” about the impact of the programme on young people. A Theory of Change process has helped the organisation understand what they want to achieve, whether this is something they can reasonably offer, and be more reflective as an organisation and push practice.

Developing an evaluation strategy

Our approach is informed by a widely used model for the evaluation of training and learning, developed by Kirkpatrick and published in 1994⁷. Typically an evaluation strategy will require information about both outputs and outcomes; and can be developed across a whole service, organisation or at a project level. The aim is to ensure that there is a consistent focus on the outcomes that young people will achieve, with the tools in place to enable workers to evaluate with young people the extent to which they are making progress.

Whilst Kirkpatrick's model was originally developed for the purpose of evaluating the impact of training, it provides a useful scaffold on which to build an evaluation strategy for youth work interventions. This model can be used to identify the intended outcomes from any programme and to support decision making about how those outcomes will be assessed and measured.

The table below briefly describes the 4 levels (more detailed descriptions follow) and provides examples of evidence relating to output and outcome evidence/data taken from the work of the voluntary and statutory providers involved in the pilot projects.

Kirkpatrick Level	Description	Output evidence (examples)	Outcome Evidence (examples)
1	Reaction of young person – what they thought and felt about the programme/activity/session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Numbers attending Demographics of young people Types of sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Happy sheets Comments wall User satisfaction surveys Session evaluation sheets Feedback forums Consultations Youth inspection (peers)

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Kirkpatrick Level	Description	Output evidence (examples)	Outcome Evidence (examples)
2	<p>Learning – the resulting increase in knowledge or capability</p>	<p>Numbers of accredited awards at level 1, 2 and 3</p> <p>Distribution of information (CCard)</p> <p>Number of sessions delivered</p> <p>Types of sessions delivered</p> <p>Numbers and demographics of young people attending</p>	<p>Pre and post learning questionnaire</p> <p>Qualifications and awards: Youth Achievement Awards, D of E, Youth Leadership Awards, Social Enterprise Qualification</p> <p>Local awards</p> <p>Baseline assessments</p>
3	<p>Behaviour – the extent of behaviour and capability improvement; application/ implementation of learning</p>	<p>% Improved outcomes at Common Assessment Framework (CAF) review</p> <p>% Programmes completed</p> <p>Number of referrals to and from targeted services</p> <p>Number of youth related ASB reports</p>	<p>Outcomes Stars</p> <p>Rickter Scale</p> <p>National Philanthropy Capital well-being measure</p> <p>Assessment, Planning, Intervention and Review (APIR) CAF, ONSET (Young Offenders Assessment)</p> <p>Stakeholder feedback – parents, schools</p> <p>Case studies</p>

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Kirkpatrick Level	Description	Output evidence (examples)	Outcome Evidence (examples)
4	Impact – long term, what's changed?	% 16-19 years volunteering % 19 year olds achieve level 2 quals % 11-15s misusing drugs/ alcohol Conceptions per 1000 of 15-17s % 16-17s EET Number of first time entrants to youth justice system Number of young people with ASBOS Referrals for child protection	Longitudinal studies Control groups comparison study Programme evaluation (internal) C4EO Submission for validation

Level 1

Identifying gains at level 1, is essentially the extent to which young people have engaged, found the methods and setting appropriate; whether they are satisfied with the service they receive and whether it offers what they want or need. So the measurement required is around a basic 'satisfaction' type indication from young people and this can be a 'snapshot' style assessment.

Level 2

The aim here is to measure the direct learning from a programme or intervention. This will include open access work as well as targeted work. This requires a before and after 'test' (pre and post questionnaire) to establish what knowledge, skill development or attitudinal change was intended and to then measure the extent to which it was achieved. Assessment can be used for individuals, group learning and development and snapshot assessments can work well at this level. In open access settings with larger numbers of young people attending it may be appropriate to consider sampling. Accredited learning and achievement of qualifications is also well suited to this level of information gathering and should form an integral part of the evaluation framework

Level 3

The application of knowledge gained and the demonstration of behavioural or attitudinal change is required at this level. This requires contact over a longer time span and the ability to assess behaviour after initial work has taken place. Snapshot assessments are not suitable for this kind of evaluation; rather they should be more subtle and on-going.

Level 4

For the majority of youth work organisations performance indicators are used to evidence the longer timer impact of work on young people. These are often 'high level', area, or local authority wide statistics; for commissioned organisations these are annual business performance against the stated mission or aim of the organisation. External evaluation or research could be considered at this level to assess the effectiveness of approaches and methods used. The use of control group studies and longitudinal studies would also be valid options here.

In Oxfordshire Early Intervention Managers and staff used the Kirkpatrick model to identify the outcomes they currently measure at each of the four Levels. They found that they already have a good range of evaluation tools that will provide both qualitative and quantitative data at levels 1, 2 and 4. Using this framework they identified gaps in their system of evaluation at level 3 – demonstrating outcomes for behavioural change.

It was felt to be important to use externally validated tools to build practice and provide a robust evidence base in this area of work. The settings in which the 'tools' should be used included: in one to one work, small group and open access youth work sessions, including the National Citizen Service programme. As the next step they consulted the Outcomes Framework Matrix of Tools to see which measurement tools could identify behavioural change and could be used in the settings described.

From the measurement tools that have been designed with this purpose and setting in mind, they chose to pilot the use of the Youth Star in Open Access settings; and the NPC well-being Measure for the National Citizen Programme.

Questions to consider:

What do you need to evaluate and at what level?

Will you measure the outcomes for all young people involved in a particular project or provision – is that possible/desirable?

Would a sampling approach be helpful?

What evaluation techniques are already in use and what do we need to find or develop?

Financial considerations – What about the money?

Many services make claims about the level of saving that accrues from their work. The majority use numerical evidence based on **'hard outcomes'** as it is acknowledged that the outcomes relating to personal, social and emotional development are inherently hard to measure. We have made progress; the LGA funded partnership working between the NYA and Young Foundation to investigate the potential for costing the savings made through youth work and other informal approaches. For many organisations and local authorities this is focused on youth work, in others it encompasses a range of early intervention approaches across diverse service providers. Our recent pilot work with Norfolk and Staffordshire County Councils focused on youth work.

Our work has furthered understanding about the kind of **metrics** we need to use and how we might go about this in ways that can support reasonable discussion about the financial benefits of informal work with young people. As part of this work we have developed a mechanism, a 'calculator' that can provide information about the savings that could be expected to emerge. The 'calculator' aims to identify the cost saving that can be returned to the public purse by undertaking informal education work with young people.

Hard outcomes: "are the clearly definable and quantifiable results that show the progress a participant has made towards achieving desirable outcomes by participating in a project (e.g. obtaining a qualification, getting a job etc.). Hard outcomes are usually straightforward both to identify and to measure." (Lloyd and O'Sullivan, 2003)

Metrics: a system or standard of measurement; a method of measuring something

Data: facts and statistics collected together for reference or analysis

But, it is only as good as the information that is put into it and the vast majority of practitioners have a long way to go on their evidence gathering journey.

For further discussion around generating and gathering good **data**, see *The Calculator in Practice*, a publication describing work on the 'informing investment' strand of the outcomes project.

Where to next? – A balanced approach

Rationale

The practice of youth work is about education, based on a theory of experiential and informal learning. Youth work has an overt focus on improving outcomes and engages with young people to facilitate positive change in their behaviour, attitudes and circumstances often dealing with issues related to deep-rooted social, emotional and family concerns. Put simply, we know that by developing personal, social and emotional capabilities we can enhance young people's future life chances. The evidence base for this is described in the Young Foundation publication and continues to grow apace as more attention is focused on the importance of these capabilities.

"The data gives a good picture of the 'here and now' and enhances the story of how young people are making progress"

12 top tips – principles of developing a balanced approach to outcomes

We propose an approach to developing your own framework of outcomes for young people that is based on the ideas and concepts discussed above and a series of principles set out below:

"Encourage people to see this as a never ending journey – don't rush the process as it will take you longer in the long term, but evidence the journey well"⁸

- Know the end result you want to achieve
- Define your audience – be clear about the types and nature of information they require

- Decide what standard of evidence you want or need to achieve
- Ensure a framework includes both qualitative and quantitative evidence
- Produce information that will be used and can be analysed
- Include data managers or commissioners from the outset
- Consider the views of your main stakeholders – workers, young people and volunteers to produce something that is realistic and achievable
- Ensure a common language and approach to defining outcomes across your organisation/amongst partners
- Identify strategic leadership and capacity
- Integrate outcomes-based approaches into your work
- Re-shape existing resources
- Identify any additional resources to implement approaches

The **Brathay Trust** works primarily with young people aged 10-25 and delivers a range of residential, outdoor and community based youth work, working across Windermere and Bradford. The organisation realised that they did not centrally and uniformly collect data around the impact of their work and, in response, started to develop practitioner lead evaluation tools, and also created a data storing system called IYSS.

They now have a suite of creative tools and processes for outcome measurement that enhance the youth work process. Staff feel that they are all “speaking the same language” and are able to articulate the work they do and why they do it, thereby increasing confidence in what they do. Brathay’s journey brought together both practice development and the creation of evidentiary tools, using a theory of change process to develop their outcomes to bring these aspects together coherently.

Step-by-step – towards effective measurement

Once you have considered the principles and are clear about what you want to achieve we advocate following the step-by-step approach below.

Proper measurement requires:

- An understanding of the audience for the evidence
- A clear and balanced portfolio of outcomes

- Practical and valid metrics which capture those outcomes
- An appropriate methodology for evidence gathering which strikes the right balance between rigour and practicality

Let's look at the key questions and issues in relation to each of these steps:

Understanding the audience

Clarity about who you are seeking evidence for and for what purpose is fundamental to making decisions about what data and information you will gather...Have we chosen outcomes that fit with key local plans? Different audiences will be interested in different outcomes and will require evidence with varying degrees of robustness. Commonly there are these audiences to think about and you will have others to add to the list:

- Elected members
- Young people
- Central government
- Colleagues in other services, organisations and departments
- The general public
- Commissioners

It is also important to remember that the audience for your data may not themselves be clear about exactly what they want to know; engage in dialogue with them to help promote a better understanding of measurement in the sector.

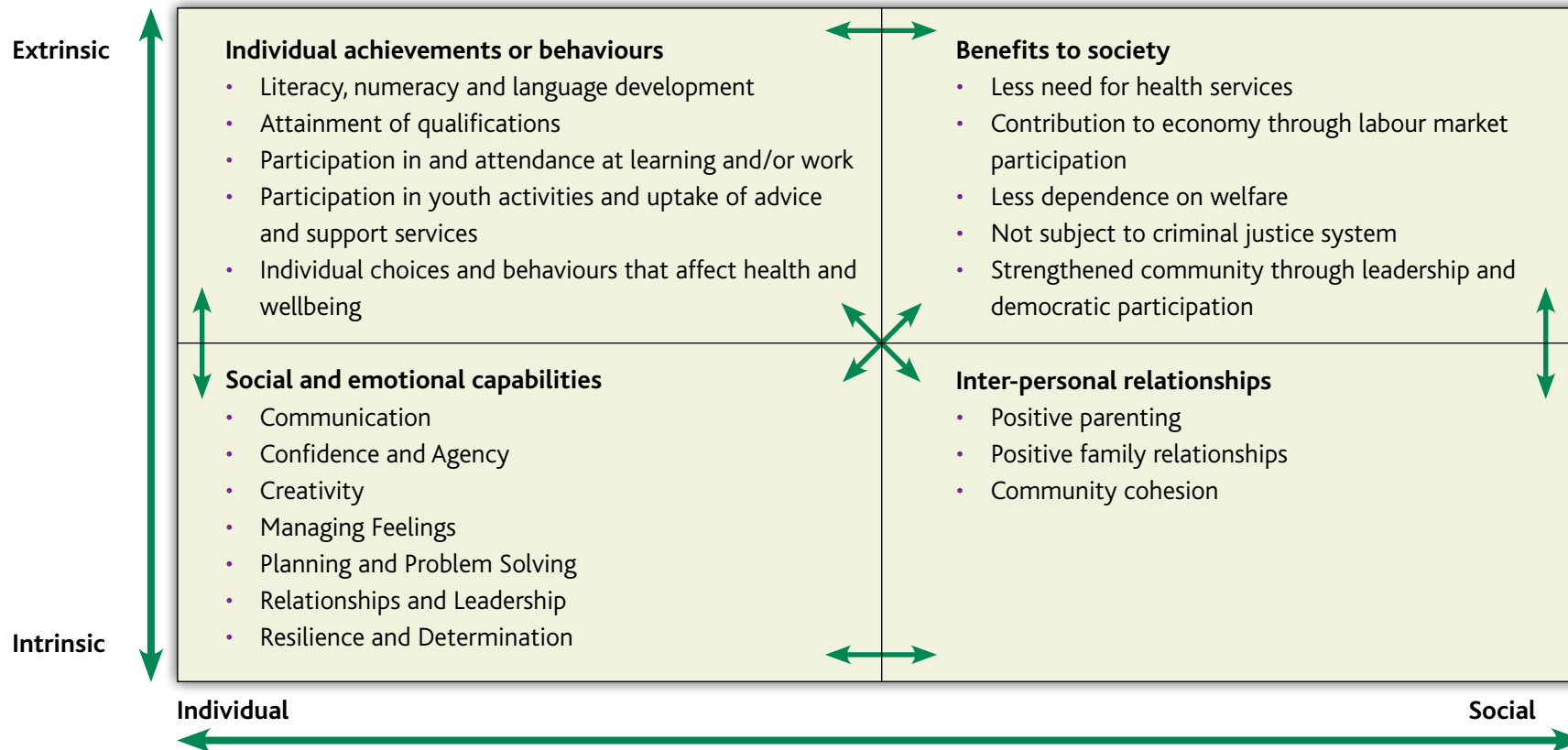
Who is your audience?

What do they want to know about?

Can the information you intend to gather be used for multiple audiences?

Selecting a balanced portfolio of outcomes

Earlier in the document we talked about intrinsic and extrinsic outcomes and how they are interlinked to produce benefits for the individual and benefits for society. The 4 quadrants below illustrate that linkage and can support your decision-making about selecting a balance of measures. Your outcomes may have a much greater focus on one of the quadrants but being able to describe what you do in terms of benefits across the grid will strengthen your evidence base.



What are the outcomes that are relevant to the work you are doing?

Have you chosen outcomes that your audience care about?

Can you identify outcomes relevant to your work from each of the 4 quadrants?

Young Foundation – A Framework of Outcomes for Young People, 2012.

Practical, valid and reliable measures

Having selected the outcomes to be measured we need to find metrics that will allow us to put a number to those outcomes. The metrics chosen should have two important qualities; they should be:

- Valid – correspond to the outcome we are trying to impact on
- Reliable – measure this outcome consistently and accurately

This is relatively straightforward when it comes to school attendance or exam results, more challenging for measurements of confidence and resilience, and genuinely difficult for issues such as community cohesion and positive parenting.

When choosing which measurement approach to use with young people, it is essential to be clear about the change you are trying to measure and ensure your 'tool' will provide that information. It is neither possible nor desirable to have a single assessment tool or process; consider the setting and be realistic about the amount of information you need. It is important to only collect information that can and will be analysed. These key questions will help you to make informed choices when choosing measurement tools or processes to use directly with young people:

- Will it provide reasonably accurate information?
- Is it accessible and user friendly?
- Does it support practice – promoting reflection and improvement?
- Can it be integrated into practice?
- Is it robust enough/reasonably reliable?
- Is the cost of evaluation proportionate to programme costs?
- Does it tell a story overall – with data supporting a narrative about how impact and outcomes are achieved?
- Does it produce information that will be used and can be analysed?

There is a range of validated measures available that can be used to gauge development in social and emotional capabilities, for example those tools identified in the Young Foundation Outcomes Framework. There has been positive feedback from a range of staff who are using externally validated tools; they also raise some considerations to ensure that new approaches to assessment and evaluation are integrated into systems and practice. The Outcome Stars available from Triangle Consulting have been widely used in pilot projects in both statutory and voluntary sectors. Colleagues have advised

“There needs to be a defined process in place to ensure workers use the Star(s) as part of the programme planning cycle. This could be linked into existing information on programme planning, with clear guidance that workers must then analyse the findings and plan programme content and activities to address the needs identified”

“Introducing the Star has opened up conversations with young people. It seems to give them permission to talk about issues that they may not have otherwise raised and speeds up the youth work process”

Where standard metrics are not available it is legitimate to choose **proxy measures** (which may need to be approved locally), for example, if you are looking for ways of measuring young people’s engagement and participation it may be appropriate to collect information about the numbers of young people involved in volunteering locally and how much time they spend doing these activities.

“Is it *good enough* to provide us with some relevant and reliable data?” is a useful question to pose when deciding on proxy measures.

Identifying levels of anti-social behaviour can be done using police statistics which may not be as accurate as you would wish as there is a degree of underreporting, but it is good enough. Information drawn from publically available data is reliable, although there may be a time lag in reporting. again, it is *good enough* to use available stats for teenage pregnancy, or looked after children for example.

It is true to say that many of the tools in use across the sector were designed to promote discussion and structured conversations with young people rather than as measurement tools. Young people can give widely differing ‘scores’ (opinions) which makes the results unreliable in robust measurement terms although they remain excellent tools for supporting practice. Local authorities and organisations involved in our projects have chosen to pilot a range of validated tools currently available and in some cases to design their own. Designing tools for local use can support the journey to measurement but requires considerable work to make them valid and reliable in statistical terms.

In Reading, Integrated Youth Development Service staff and managers (including substance misuse workers, sexual health workers, youth workers, participation workers and targeted youth workers) came together to consider the ways in which they collect qualitative data on outcomes for young people at each level of the framework.

The team agreed that to improve consistency across their service and to be able to produce a more robust evidence base of the difference their work is making to young people, it would be useful to have a suite of standardised measurement tools that all workers would use at each of the Kirkpatrick levels 1-3. Based on the locally adapted capability clusters a ‘What’s changed?’ tool was developed to be used with all young people annually to gain their feedback; ‘What have I learned?’ was developed to capture learning gained in short learning programmes and ‘Teen Star’ is to be trialled in one to one work to support and measure behavioural change.

Proxy measures are used when a direct measure is not available; they provide information about what you are seeking to measure. You may need more than one proxy measure to provide adequate information

Have you identified tools that will measure the change you are seeking information about? – the list of questions in the paragraphs above will help you here.

Are they reasonably accurate, reasonably reliable and practical?

Choosing an appropriate methodology

Putting together a methodology for measurement requires 3 key decisions:

- **How often and over what period of time will you measure?**
- **Who or what are you measuring – everyone or is a sampling approach more appropriate?**
- **Where can you identify something to compare your measurement to?**

Having a comparison is a fundamental for the majority of metrics the sector might use. To be valid the comparator must be fair, that is; as near as possible we must seek to measure like with like. Our comparisons will normally be one of three kinds:

1. Before and after – Measuring something for an individual or group before and after an intervention
2. Geographic – Measuring relative to a similar area.
3. Control – Measuring relative to a similar group of individuals who do not receive the intervention. (This group many have to be specially constructed.)

The sector is new to the demands of statistical measurement and should continue to build the evidence-base relating to the benefits of informal work with young people. For now it is *good enough* for sector professionals to use their best efforts to find fair comparisons, together with a narrative explanation of the choices and decisions they have made.

Data colleagues may ask about sources of bias in the measurement process . . . there are 4 major sources that we should consider when deciding if our comparison is fair. We should have an explanation of our thinking in relation to each of these:

- **Selection** – Why have we chosen this area or group of individuals? Are we sure that they are not significantly different from the group being measured? (for example; age, sex, socioeconomic and educational background would all be relevant here)
- **Maturation** – Young people mature over time, and certain outcomes may improve for them as a matter of course. Why do we think the 'issue' wouldn't have just improved as the young person matured?
- **Statistical regression** – There is a tendency for individuals with exceptionally poor outcomes to improve over time simply due to the ending of a run of poor luck and human adaptability. For example, if a service is offered to individuals at a point of crisis, some improvement

could be expected without any intervention.

- **Drop outs** – It is rare for every individual who starts an intervention to complete it. Sometimes those for whom the intervention works well will continue, but those for whom it works badly will leave. Only measuring results for those who complete the intervention will exaggerate the average result.

Explanations need to be reasonable but they don't have to be complex; they can be based on experience and 'common understanding' within the sector and/or may make reference to research or learning from other sources.

Will the tools/measures you have chosen provide information to support claims that it was your intervention that 'made the difference'?

Have you considered the 4 main sources of bias and can make a reasonable case taking these things into account?

The **British Red Cross** are a volunteer-led humanitarian organisation that helps people in crisis, whoever and wherever they are. Their work ranges from hour-long educational classes and assemblies in school, to longer term 6 week programmes. Although not a youth work organisation, they run a wide range of programmes across schools and with youth groups working with young people aged five to 25.

Over the last two years they have been developing an outcomes framework for Humanitarian Education that will sit alongside an organisation-wide evaluation framework, which covers the full range of work they do across the range of ages. They created an "outcomes group" working with 60 colleagues across the organisation, with a mix of managers, practitioners and volunteers. This group they developed four key outcomes for their children and young people:

- They are more likely to cope in a crisis
- They are more likely to have positive interactions with others
- They have a greater understanding of how people are affected in a crisis
- They are more likely to respond in a crisis

Their advice would be...keep the output simple, it may not be perfect but road test any framework in practice and build and develop as you learn.

Notes

- 1 Young Foundation – A Framework of Outcomes for Young People. 2012.
- 2 Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities on Services and Activities to improve young people' Well-being Section 507B of the Education and Inspections' Act 2006, Department for Education June 2012
- 3 Charities Evaluation Service
- 4 Cuppitt, S & Ellis, J. (2003) Monitoring and Evaluation. London: Charities Evaluation Service
- 5 Cuppitt, S and Ellis, J. (2007) Your Project and its Outcomes. London. Charities Evaluation Service.
- 6 Young Foundation. A Framework of Outcomes for Young People . 2012
- 7 Kirkpatrick, 'Evaluating Training Programmes' University of Wisconsin 1994.
- 8 Development Officer – British Red Cross



About the National Youth Agency

The National Youth Agency works in partnership with a wide range of public, private and voluntary sector organisations to support and improve services for young people. Our particular focus is on youth work and we believe strongly that by investing in young people's personal and social development, young people are better able to live more active and fulfilling lives.

Working with young people, we advocate for more youth-friendly services and policies. We have four themes:

- Developing quality standards in work with young people
- Supporting services for young people
- Developing the youth workforce
- Promoting positive public perceptions of young people.

We deliver our work through training and consultancy, campaigning, publishing and online communications. Through our activities we want to ensure that young people have a strong voice and positive influence in our society.

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