Evaluation can help you to work out what difference you are making through your services or activities. The changes or differences you hope to make are your **outcomes** (for more on this, see **Evaluation Support Guide 1.1**: *Clarifying your Aims, Outcomes and Activities*).

It is helpful to have information on the situation you are trying to change before you start (**baseline data**) so you can see what difference you have made. Indicators can help you to measure your progress. There are two basic types of indicators: **output indicators** and **outcome indicators**.

What are output indicators?

Output indicators help you to measure the progress that you have made in delivering your activities or services. When developing a project or a service you need to specify **how many** of each activity you hope to offer and to how many clients or users. These are also known as **output targets**.

Example: In its first year, *The Pollokshields Asian Women Elder's Project* plans to run:
- 6 information workshops to groups of 8 women (48 women in total)
- 100 individual advocacy sessions (to 60 women)
- weekly lunch and social club (50 sessions for up to 30 women per session)
- a peer-led telephone support service (for 30 women)

At key points during the delivery of your project (for example: quarterly, 6 monthly or annually) you need to assess how many of each of your activities you have delivered and compare these against your output indicators.

What are outcome indicators?

Outcome indicators are the things that help you to determine whether you have made the differences that you hope to make in the lives of the people that use your services (your outcomes).

Some outcomes are hard and can be measured in numbers. Hard outcomes usually have straightforward indicators. For example if your outcome is to increase employment, the indicator would be whether your user got a job. Some outcomes are soft and are more difficult to measure. With soft outcomes you need to set proxy indicators. These are things that might reasonably show that your outcome is happening. For example if the outcome is to increase young people's self confidence, an indicator might be whether a young person is able to participate in group activities or express their views clearly.

There are 3 types or levels of outcome indicator:

- **individual indicators** that help you to assess the progress of individuals you are working with

- **target** or **user group indicators** that help you to measure the progress of the group of people you are working with (as in the example used in this guide)

- **whole community** or **population indicators** that help you to measure things for the wider community or population (such as absence rates from school)

> Example: The overall aim of *The Pollokshields Asian Women Elders' Project* is to increase the quality of life for older women from South Asian communities. One of its outcomes is that older women will have better access to community health and social care services. Indicators for this outcome could be that:
> • older Asian women know what community health and social care services are available in the local area
> • older Asian women know how to access community health and social care services
> • older Asian women use community health and social care services

In the above example, notice that there is a progression through the indicators from awareness of services and how to access them, to actually using services.

How to develop indicators

You develop your indicators by visualising the differences you plan to make (your outcomes).

> **Example**: *The Pollokshields Asian Women Elders' Project* wants older women from South Asian communities to have better access to community health and social care services.
>
> What would it actually look like if older women from South Asian communities actually had better access to community health and social care services?
>
> Well ... first of all they would need to know what services were available ... then they would need to know how they can get access to them ... then they would use more services, then their health should improve.

You may find it useful to involve service users in developing indicators.

There are three easy steps to developing indicators:

1. For **each** outcome you need to ask yourself what it would look like if you had achieved it. Allow yourself to imagine all sorts of possibilities and come up with as many as you can think of in a list. These are your potential indicators.

2.   Choose from your list of potential indicators those that you think are the most appropriate indicators. You should choose no more than 2 or 3 of the potential indicators. Before you make your final selection, you should give some thought to the feasibility of measuring the indicators (as there is no point choosing ones that would be too difficult to measure). The ones that you choose will become your **key indicators.**

3.   It is a good idea to check out with other stakeholders (such as funders, partners and users) whether the key indicators that you have chosen are the most appropriate ones.

You may find that some of the indicators that you develop are relevant to more than one of your outcomes. These will be especially important to measure.

Using your indicators

The indicators that you select are the things that will help you to work out what information you need to collect.

For each outcome you need to develop at least two and no more than three indicators which you will measure as part of your evaluation. If you limit yourself to two or three indicators you will not have too many things to measure.

The next step is to decide exactly how you will measure the indicators. It can be a good idea to put your outcomes, indicators and methods into a grid (as shown on the next page). This will then become your **evaluation plan** or protocol. It is crucial to get an organisational commitment to the evaluation plan and to setting aside time to follow it.

Ideally you should measure your indicators at the start of your project or when you start working with a new service user (your baseline) and then again at appropriate points in your project. That way you can compare progress towards your planned outcomes over time in comparison to your starting point.

What next?

Choosing the right methods to collect information is important. You can find out more about information collection by reading **Evaluation Support Guides 2.2**: *Interviews and Questionnaires*; **2.3**: *Visual Approaches*; **2.4**: *Technology*. These guides also look at the methods in the example on the next page.

Example: The Pollokshields Asian Women Elders' Project

Outcome	Indicators	Method for collecting information
Older Asian women have better access to community health and social care services	• older Asian women know what community health & social care services are available in the local area • older Asian women know how to access community health & social care services • older Asian women receive more community health & social care services	• one-to-one mapping with the women to find out what services they know about at the start & end of the 1 year project • group interviews (focus groups) with the women • individual interviews with women • interview a range of health and social care providers to find out if uptake of services has increased
To reduce the isolation of Asian women elders	• older Asian women will independently attend more activities in the community • older Asian women have more contact with other Asian women	• register of attendance from the Asian Elders' Project drop-in centre • one-to-one mapping with the women to find out who they have regular contact with, and how often (at the start and end of the 1 year project)
To improve communication between Asian women elders and public service providers	• older Asian women know they can ask for interpreters when they attend appointments • older Asian women use interpreters more often • older Asian women have better relationships with health and social care providers and can understand the advice given by these providers	• group interviews (focus groups) with the women • group interviews (focus groups) with the women • group interviews (focus groups) with the women • interview health and social care providers to find out if mutual understanding has improved

If you need advice about evaluation, or would like a copy of this guide in large print, Braille or audio, please contact Evaluation Support Scotland on info@evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk or 0131 243 2770. For other Evaluation Support Guides please visit our website: www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk.