Evaluation Support Guide 2.3
Using Visual Approaches to Evaluate your Project

Evaluation can help you to work out what difference you are making through your services or activities. **Evaluation Support Guide 1.1** helps you to clarify your aims, outcomes and activities and **Support Guide 2.1** helps you to use indicators to measure your progress.

This guide covers some visual approaches you can use to collect information for evaluation: **relationship maps**, **service use maps**, **lifelines, body maps** and **evaluation wheels** and gives advice on how to use them. You can find out more about other methods of collecting information in **Support Guides 2.2** *Interviews and Questionnaires* and **2.4** *Technology*.

The methods in this guide are just some that can be used for evaluation from a set of approaches known as **participatory appraisal**. They are useful tools to use when working with people who do not like completing forms (such as questionnaires) and when you want to understand the more complex views of your service users.

Evaluation often works best when you can build evaluation into what you do, rather than adding it on at the end. There is no 'one way' to evaluate your work. You can be creative and choose the approach that seems to fit best to your context and what you do.

Relationship maps

Relationship maps (also known as social network maps) help you to understand your service users' friendship networks and relationships. They are useful if your outcomes are about building or improving relationships, making friends or building support networks.

Step 1 is to find out the relationships each user has when they first come to the service (the **baseline**). In a one-to-one meeting, or in a group setting, you give your service user a relationship map and some sticky stars (or dots or a pen). The **X** in the centre of the circle represents the service user and he or she places the stars in one of the concentric circles around the **X**. The closer the service user places the star to the **X**, the closer the relationship. There is an example on the next page.

At the start of the project
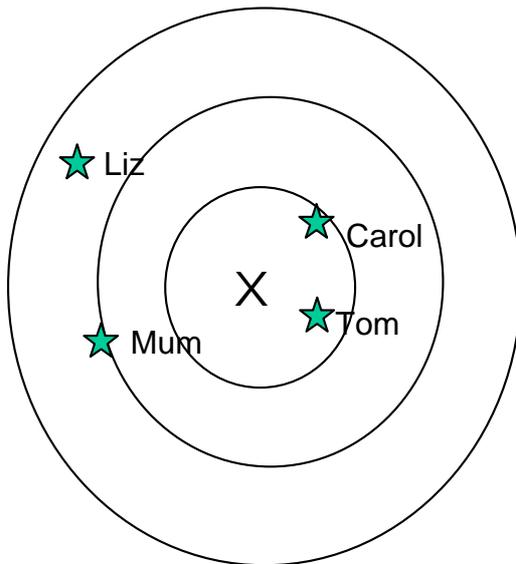
You then ask the service user to tell you who the stars on their map represent. You can ask questions about the map, such as:

- Are you happy with this situation?
- If not, how do you want this to change?
- Are there any relationships that you would like to be different?

When you have discussed the baseline map, you can put it in the service user's file for use at a later date.

At an appropriate time after the service user has been attending the service, you can ask them to complete the process again.

At the end of the project
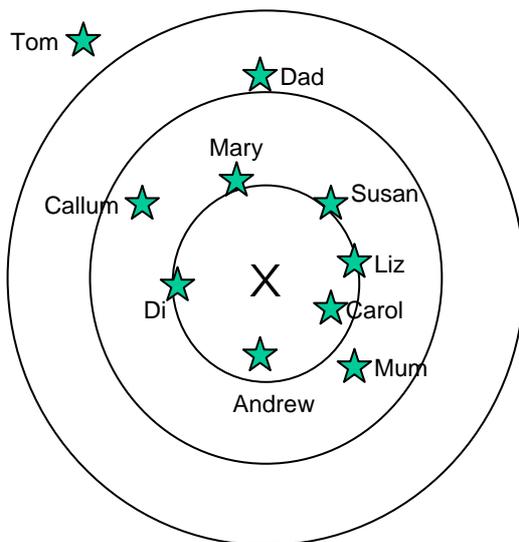
You can then place the baseline map beside the new map and ask:

- Who are the new people on the map?
- Has the service helped you to meet new people?
- What is the reason that some people (for example Tom) have moved to a different circle?
- Are you happy with the changes?
- How is your life different now?

You can analyse relationship maps quantitatively (by giving values for stars in different circles). For example in the baseline there are 3 stars in the centre circle (3 x 3 points), 1 in the middle circle (1 x 2 points) and 1 in the outer circle (1 x 1 point), giving a score of 12. The follow-up map has a score of 21. Information collected in this way can provide before and after material which you can use in an evaluation.

Service use maps

Service use maps help you understand how people use services. Service users use maps to show which services they currently use, for example council services or voluntary organisations. The service map can take many forms.
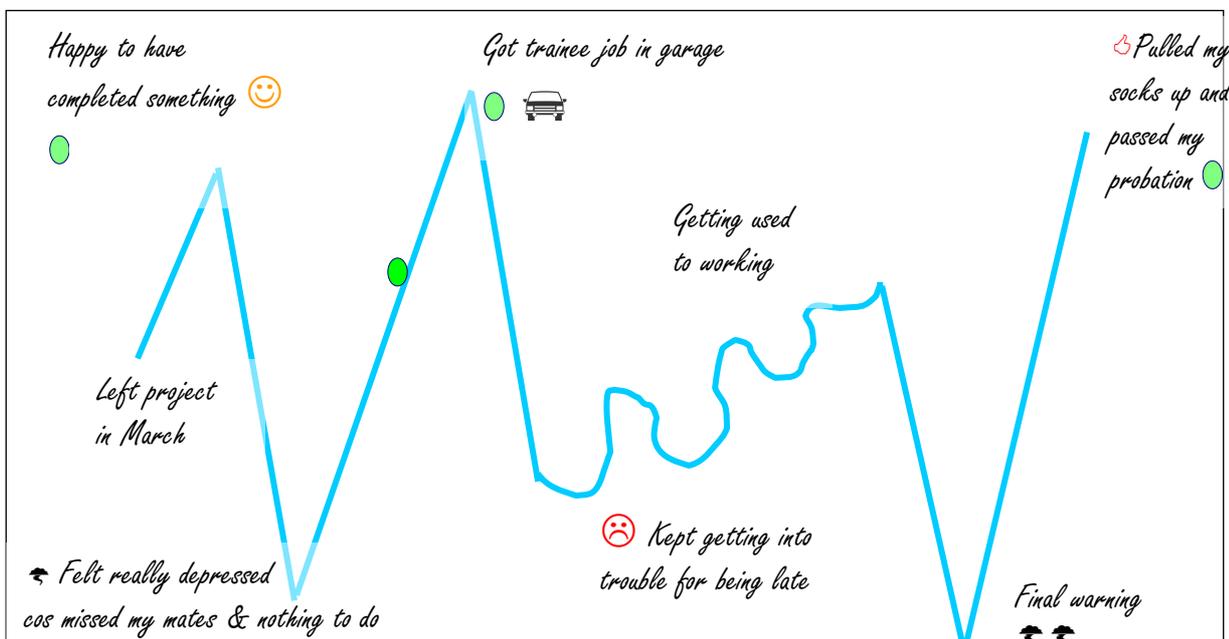
You can use **circle maps** as above. In this case, the service user writes the names of services they use a lot in the centre circle, services they use less often in the middle circle and services that they have heard of but never used in the outer circle. You can ask questions about the map and you can compare the baseline circle map with a circle map completed at a later date.

Or you can use an **area map**. You can use actual maps or ask people to draw their own maps. They then place sticky dots on the map at the places they go to use services. You can carry out a further mapping exercise 6 months later to see if they now access more services than they did before. It is useful to ask people to draw their own maps as they show their feelings about the area in the way they draw it. Also these maps can be reproduced in reports. Official maps are copyrighted and cannot be reproduced without permission.

Lifelines

Lifelines or timelines help you to understand what happens in a service user's life. They can help you understand key events in their life before they came to your project. Or you can use them as a follow-up tool to find out what happens to your service users in the months after they leave your project.

Example: *Jumpstart to Employment* wanted to find out how their clients had got on since leaving the programme. They did not just want to find out whether they had a job or not. They also wanted to know which aspects of their programme had been most useful in helping the young people to stay focused and positive about their employment and their future. So they brought the 12 clients back together for a meeting 3 months after they had left the project. They used lifelines to find out what had happened since the young people left the project. A service user called Mark produced the lifeline below.

Happy to have completed something ☺

Got trainee job in garage

☝ Pulled my socks up and passed my probation

Getting used to working

Left project in March

☹ Kept getting into trouble for being late

☘ Felt really depressed cos missed my mates & nothing to do

Final warning

This is what the participants did to produce the lifeline:

1. Each person in the group drew their lifeline on a piece of flip chart paper, showing the highs and lows that they experienced since leaving the project.

2. They explained the causes of the highs and lows using symbols or words. They used sticky green dots to show when they were helped by things they had learned on the programme.

3. Each person presented their chart to the group. Then the other group members asked questions. The project worker also asked questions and took notes of the conversation.

When Mark presented his lifeline (see above) he revealed that he had a history of never finishing anything. The first thing he gained from the project (shown by ●) was completing the course and receiving the completion certificate. The second ● relates to Mark realising that he had choices and could choose to do nothing or become proactive. He contacted some of the friends he met on the course and one of them told him about a job opportunity at the garage where he was working. The third ● relates to the fact that the course helped him to get the job because he had work experience and a CV from his time on the project. The final ● relates to Mark remembering he had learned at the project that he was the driver of his own life and that he could make the most of opportunities or let them slip by. In the end, he decided not to let this job opportunity slip by and became more serious about his work. Soon after, he passed his probationary period.

The above paragraph is a **case study** that shows some of the outcomes of this project. Case studies can be valuable in evaluation, see **Evaluation Support Guide 3.2** *Writing Case Studies*.
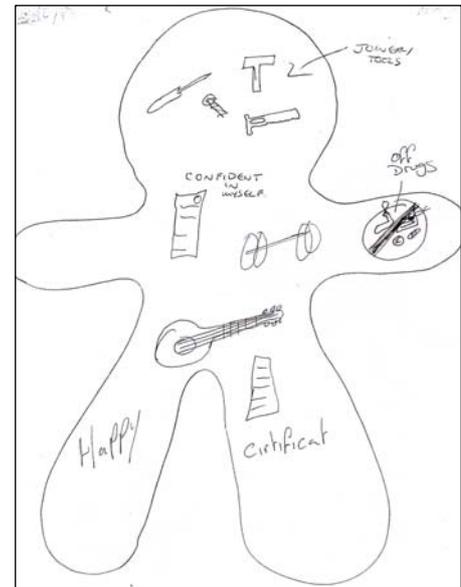
Body maps

Body maps can help you to understand how people feel about themselves, for example **body image** or **self esteem**. There are two types of body maps. One type uses a **pre-drawn** body outline on a sheet of paper. The other type, a **life-sized** body, involves service users lying on a large sheet of paper and having someone else draw round their body. The service user writes or draws key features about him / herself on the map. When the service user has completed their body map you can ask them about what the words or drawings mean. You can do this at an early stage of receiving a service, once trust has been established, and then again at a later date and compare the two maps.

> **Example**: One of the aims of the *Dumfries Young People's Mentoring Network* project is to improve the self-esteem of the young people it supports. They do this by providing trained adult volunteer mentors to work with young people regularly. They use body maps to explore how young people feel about themselves, like the following example.

The body map at the start of the project shows that the young person is angry and that their self-image is focused on their substance misuse.
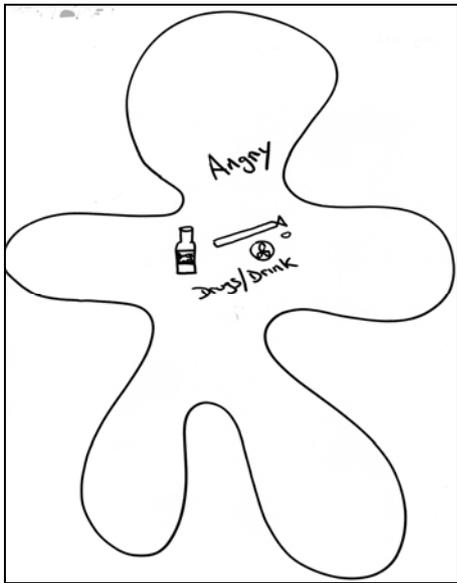
At the start of the project

At the end of the project

The body map at the end of the project shows that the young person is now happier, has stopped using drugs and has taken up constructive activities including learning a trade (joinery tools), physical exercise (weight training) and playing a musical instrument (guitar). It also shows that the young person is proud of the certificates they have earned and that they are 'more confident'. You can place the body maps side by side and ask questions about the differences between the maps and what helped to make the difference. You can write up the discussion of these differences for your evaluation.
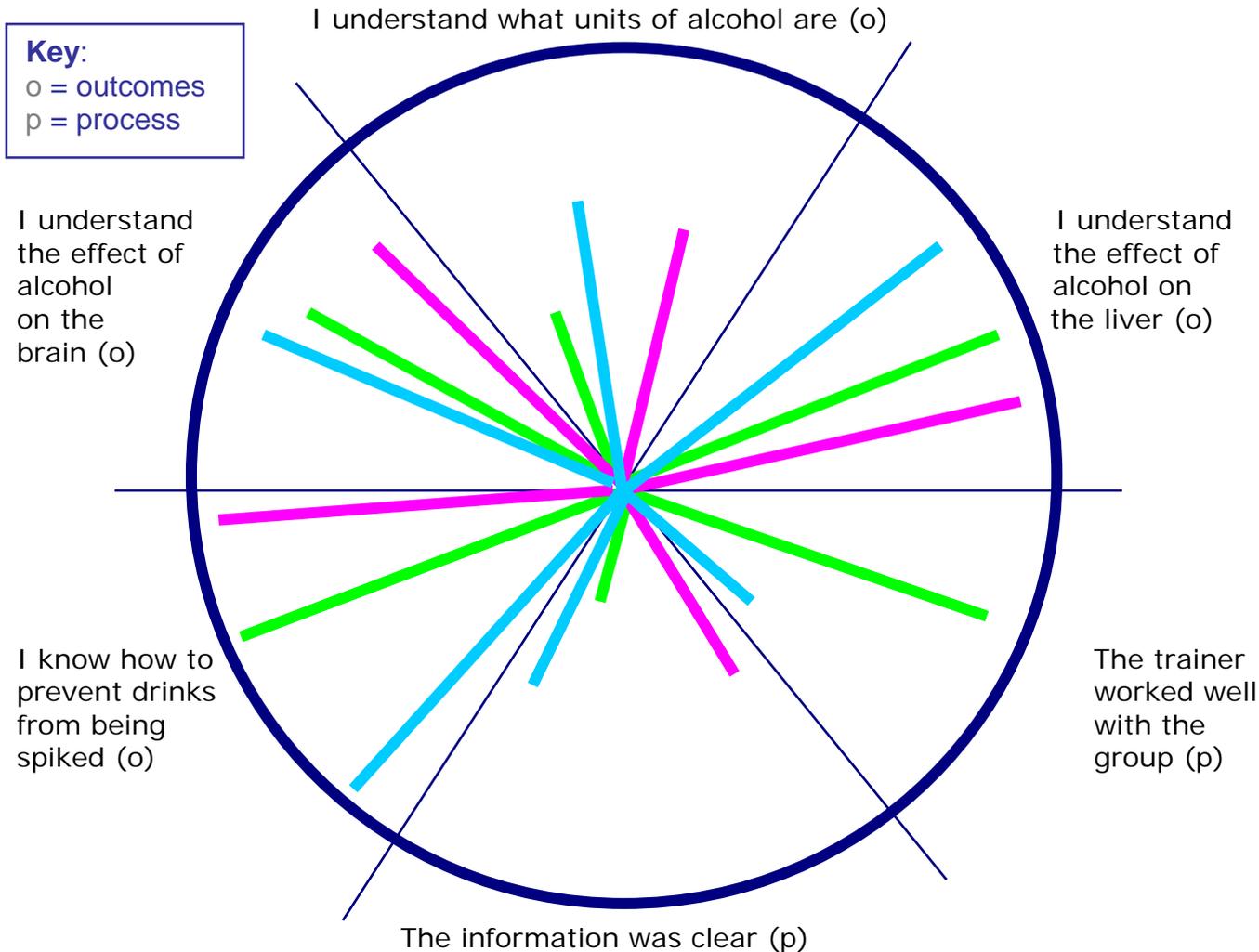
Evaluation Wheel

An evaluation wheel shows service users' opinions of a service. It can be completed in a group or individually. Divide the wheel into segments (usually 6 or 8). Label each segment with a part of the service to be evaluated. Service users show how they feel about the service by drawing a line (like a spoke of a wheel) in each segment from the centre to the rim. The closer the line is to the rim, the happier the person is with that part of the service.

The facilitator should explain how to complete the evaluation wheel and then go out of the room. The group can then complete the wheel with a degree of confidentiality. When the facilitator comes back into the room, the group can discuss the results of the evaluation wheel. The facilitator can discuss the service with participants to explore how to improve the service.

An evaluation wheel is not a precise tool, and so should not be analysed by measuring the length of the spokes to produce quantitative data.

Example: *Falkirk Education on Alcohol and Respect (FEAR)* aims to increase awareness of the dangers of alcohol and encourage the sensible use of alcohol among young people. They run workshops in schools and youth clubs. At the end of each workshop, they want to know what the young people thought of the training. So they use an evaluation wheel. Each user is represented by a different colour in the wheel. Some segments of the wheel refer to outcomes, others refer to process, such as how the trainer worked.

Key:
o = outcomes
p = process

I understand what units of alcohol are (o)

I understand the effect of alcohol on the brain (o)

I understand the effect of alcohol on the liver (o)

I know how to prevent drinks from being spiked (o)

The trainer worked well with the group (p)

The information was clear (p)

Using maps, wheels and lifelines in reports

You can take digital photographs of relationship maps, area maps, body maps, evaluation wheels and lifelines to use (with the permission of the participants) in an evaluation report to show how well you have achieved your outcomes.

What next?

Now that you have all this information, you need to know what it means, so that you can use it to evaluate your work. For more information see **Support Guide 3.1**: *Analysing Information for Evaluation*.

This guide was developed for Evaluation Support Scotland by **Mark Bitel** at Partners in Evaluation Scotland with funding from the Scottish Executive. Revised July 2009.

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