

What impact means to me? – Harriet Waugh, Scottish Government

I think that I'm going to be echoing a couple of points that have been mentioned so far, and that's actually really nice to hear given that we're coming from so many different places. As a policy officer within the Scottish Government, there's really two key things for me when it comes to thinking about actually what's the impact of research when it comes to working with the third sector. So these are: making the best use of that evidence for maximum impact, and also, closing the loop.

So in terms of the first point, of making the best case of that evidence, what this comes down to, for me, is basically valuing the time of others. And getting an understanding of the breadth of learning that can come from the work that you're looking at. I think that by sharing evidence when we can, we're able to increase the impact of that evidence in a huge way, that really shouldn't be underestimated. Whenever reading a report, a case study, an evaluation, I'm always thinking about actually how can that be applied in different ways, how can I take it outside of that specific subject matter, and how can I share that more broadly. As an example of this, at the start of the year, we did a bit of engagement around the new families and communities fund. And what came out of that I think, was, invaluable for the development of the fund, but there's also so many lessons that were really applicable to other policy areas. And I did feel a bit that colleagues were going to be finding it a bit boring, because I've kind of lost track of the number of times that I've taken my laptop and I've swung it around, and I've been in a meeting about something entirely different, and I've said, just take a couple of minutes to look at this, and I've shown them a picture of some of the lessons that came out. But actually looking back at it, people are really keen to hear that, and they really welcome taking the time to learn about that. I think that from that work we had some really clear key messages that were so clear about the impact of targeting resource towards evidence needs, what core funding is able to achieve, and just being able to share that more widely was really valuable.

With regard to closing the loop, again this comes back to valuing the input of others, and making sure that you take the time to acknowledge that. I've come about this partially through talking to other people about what they feel is important to them, and partially by reflecting myself about what matters to me when it comes to sharing my own learning. What I've come to realise is that when possible, reaching back to the people who contribute individually and let them know what came out of that is absolutely key to making them feel valued, and also to demonstrating the impact of their work. It's not always possible, and time can definitely work against you, but I think it's something that's always worth striving for.

I was a bit wary of sort of saying both of these things, because I felt that both of them might come across as quite common sense and quite simple. But then I reflected on what I was actually going to be talking about, and I realised that to be honest I quite like common sense, and I quite like simple. And also I think that no matter how simple they are it's worth keeping in mind so that when things get hectic we don't get lost, and remembering that if we do get lost, they're worth going back to.

I'm aware that my time is running quite short, I've been shown the sheet. So I just wanted to say very quickly that a few years back I was lucky enough to get training in children's rights from some children at a local primary school. And as part of that there's something that always stuck with me that I kind of kept referring back to. And it's a pledge that I put together, so I'd like to share that and also ask yourselves to think about what's important to you when valuing the research of others. So back then I wrote that: 'I will keep exploring, I'm going to keep asking questions, I'm going to keep listening, and I'm going to keep listening, and I'm going to make sure, whenever possible, that I act on what I learn.'