



RESEARCH AND EVALUATION PROJECT GROUP MEETING

4.12.14 at London Funders

Participants

Nicole	Schmiedefeld	BBC Children in Need (Speaker)
Craig	Tomlinson	BBC Children in Need (Chair)
Oliver Sian	Davis	Big Lottery Fund
Samantha	Howe	Big Lottery Fund
Mary	Locke	Charity Bank
Peter	Argall	Comic Relief (Speaker)
Nissa	Ramsay	Comic Relief (Speaker)
Ian	Beason	Community Development Foundation
Tom	Hulme	Community Development Foundation
Alice	Dabrowska	The Cranfield Trust
Ruth	Lorimer	Cripplegate Foundation
Robert	Mee	London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Sam	Smallcombe	London Community Foundation
Alex	Van Vliet	New Philanthropy Capital
Kirsty	Gillan-Thomas	Paul Hamlyn Foundation
Hilda	Osazuwa	Peabody
Jake	Butterworth	Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea
Emma	Heel	Sported
Chris	Wignall	Sported
Sioned	Churchill	Trust for London
Nick	Wilsdon	Youth Music
Noah	Cantor	ZING

In attendance

Becky	Green	London Funders
David	Warner	London Funders

Apologies for absence were received Rebekah Ryder, Community Development Foundation; Anya Stern, London Community Foundation; Phil Sital-Singh, Media Trust; Premila Gilligan, Peabody; Georgie Parry-Crooke, Project Oracle; Kate Smith, Safer London Foundation; James Jobanputra, ZING.

Notes of the previous meeting on 18 September 2014 were accepted as an accurate record.

Craig welcomed everyone to the meeting, and introduced the session as an opportunity to look at emerging developments in the world of evaluation, learning & research.

Grantee reporting

Peter Argall and Nissa Ramsay, Comic Relief

Peter provided some background to the change of their reporting focus and explained the move from 7 focused programmes in the Comic Relief UK main fund, to 4 broader themes. It was agreed that the development of a new online application system with the potential for monitoring reports to be built in was a necessary step. In order to do this, an analysis of previous monitoring forms was required, and an attempt to categorise beneficiaries and present the results. One key finding revealed in this work was that forms needed to be more specific in beneficiary definitions and numbers. Therefore, three

categories of beneficiaries have been created: people benefiting directly, frontline workers benefiting and other people benefiting. More specific timeframes are also given which can make outputs clearer and is helpful in understanding where data comes from.

From this work, Comic Relief have now found that their funded projects are working with many more people than initially thought, the numbers provided are more realistic and accurate and clear links can be seen between direct beneficiaries and the project target group. This means that they can now fairly accurately predict how many people will be helped over the next three years and can project targets of people helped by 2020.

Comic Relief remain outcomes led in their reporting, and now ask for up to 5 outcomes and up to 3 indicators. By asking grantees to report against the outcomes as a whole, this allows them to better understand their overall achievements rather than specific measurement results, and grantees can tell it in their own way, presenting a different level of analysis. With the changes, the team will now be able to aggregate outcomes data without needing to do additional calculations from grantees reports against indicators. This is will be more accurate and take a lot less time. The qualitative part of the forms will remain and it is very important to use this information. In future, there are plans to use NVIVO to code key learning across groups of projects.

Although the monitoring forms are not yet online, the move for applications to go online has given a lot more insight to inform decisions of the shortlisting meeting and assessment panels. There are targets for geography, themes, organisation size etc and it is now easier to look at the applications and how this fits with the targets using maps (e.g. Excel power pivot maps). There are some resources available e.g. ESRC PHD interns can do some work.

Challenges include the demand for data, refining the collation and analysis as they can be very time consuming. To move from learning to data reporting required different skills sets, software, time and resources. Data is only part of the story and there is also a need for learning. It's important to work collaboratively with other colleagues to understand what is required and what is coming. There is a whole range of different functions and data needs, however colleagues value the data sets and no longer have to make assumptions.

Questions and discussion

- Youth Music gave an update on their own experiences. Increased data and analysis means that assumptions can be challenged, and there is the potential to make a big impact. There remains a lot of work that can be done in order to unpack the qualitative data.
- Comic Relief co-deliver their grantee training with the Charities Evaluation Services (CES) so theoretical and practical training is delivered at the same time with the same message. Several attendees commented on the need for training to be tailored to fully support grantees and the need for consistency of requirements from different grant makers. However all accepted how difficult it can be to change application and monitoring forms and Comic Relief noted that gaining even internal agreement had taken them a long time.
- When asked how much data is gained from the application form and how much from the monitoring forms, Nissa noted that the full reporting form is not yet online and so the process is not yet complete. However they have been doing a lot of data aggregation on outcome evaluation. There was consideration within the group as to who the best person is to define the project, whether this should be the grantee themselves, the grant maker or the evaluation team.

Comic Relief believed that the grantee knows the project best and so is in the best position to do this; however having clear and precise options is helpful to ensure people are working from the same definitions.

- It can be difficult to map organisations geographically as this can vary depending on if it's based on the location of delivery or the residence of the recipients. Also many organisations have a campaigning focus, or are based online where geographic location of the office is less relevant.

Analysing qualitative data

Nicole Schmiedefeld, BBC Children in Need

BBC Children in Need have entered into a collaborative relationship with Children's Society and NSPCC to bring data together and learn from each other's data. BBC Children in Need have large amounts of qualitative data available from 2,600 projects, and Nicole has been helping this journey of bringing this data to life. Their existing coding framework provided a starting point to begin to use analytical software NVIVO. Nicole outlined her experience in utilising reporting information from grantees who work with children with experience of neglect, and what learning was gained from this for BBC Children in Need.

The team made the initial decision as to whether to be led by their data or to come up with a framework, as this would influence the approach. It was decided that they would use their existing coding framework, followed by key questions:

- 1) What is the context in which neglect is occurring?
- 2) What is the impact of neglect on CYP?
- 3) What outcomes are achieved by our grantees to tackle the effects of neglect?
- 4) What are the interventions used to achieve the outcomes?

Within an 18 month period, 53 projects, supporting 5880 children and young people coded abuse/neglect, in 390 different records (the projects supported by BBC Children in Need are either targeted services or holistic). NVIVO helped to organise this information to allow it to be analysed, but it still required a lot of time and effort to go through each record. From this process, BBC Children in Need are now able to talk about the issues with confidence based on what grantees have told them. Their knowledge includes the context where abuse is found (e.g. lack of adequate parental care; parental substance abuse; poverty and deprivation), possible symptoms (e.g. low self-esteem; behavioural problems; anxiety and anger; isolation; vulnerable to exploitation) and the differences achieved by the project (e.g. understanding emotions; strong trusting relationships; taking care of themselves; coping with change and challenges). The topic of neglect is very complex and many projects work to rebuild trust and help to aspire to positive long terms goals.

Due to this work on qualitative research, BBC Children in Need has a more nuanced picture of how projects operate and what they offer, allowing them to better understand the world they are operating in and strengthen their position to speak about issues children and young people face. However, Nicole emphasized the importance of being very clear and strict about the size of data you are going to analyse before starting work. A framework should be in place, which you should stick to, however be open to explorations if something isn't what you expected. There should be check points in place to avoid biased coding.

With this methodology, the research and evaluation team can now respond to different questions from other teams and BBC Children in Need can speak with bigger authority about issues spoken about by different grantees. Neglect has been found to be present in so many other areas than initially thought and reveals case studies of children on the 'cusp' of neglect. This is interesting for partners NSPCC and the Children's Society as they don't have this audience of children who are not yet suffering from neglect, though may in the future. There is, though, some more distance to go before any of this information is able to directly influence decisions on how to fund.

Questions and discussion

- The journey taken by BBC Children in Need took Nicole 3 months from start to finish. However, once the system is in place it can be a lot quicker; a similar study can be done on a small level in one week.
- It is preferred when grantees use their own language and are more honest, rather than attempting to please the funder and use other language. Comic Relief agreed and found that having narrative questions didn't necessarily help and you just need to provide 1 or 2 opportunities to talk e.g. 'what have you learnt?' or 'give a case study'.
- The group discussed how qualitative data can often be seen as inferior to numbers and quantitative data and queried as to the internal response to this work and the findings. BBC Children in Need found a positive response as the organisation valued the depth of this information, and want to be better at what they are doing.
- This work can be done regionally/ geographically which could be helpful for location specific funders.
- It can be difficult with terminology to untangle all the details and unpick the content. However the framework was quite a loose framework which helped.
- There are alternatives to NVIVO. Some automate searching for words, or class themselves as 'story gathering', performing similar functions to NVIVO but are automated. Not many within the group had experience of these, and thought that this could still give a lot of depth and give a quicker signposting service. However, felt that part of the process is to get to know the data.
- BBC Children in Need confirmed that they are very happy to share data and do have future plans to relay their findings to grantees. Within the collaborative work with NSPCC and Children's Society, they will be bringing together their findings early in 2015 and intend to feedback to grantees.

Craig thanked the speakers for their presentations and the group for their contributions and comments. He noted that there were several opportunities for the future of the Research and Evaluation group. Regular sessions will continue, however there are also opportunities for the following:

- Sessions which are more hands on workshops e.g. a workshop on qualitative analysis, monitoring forms or theories of change
- A combination with other forums e.g. the London Funders children and young people group. This group is interesting as also is attended by some key providers, and the group have commissioned some research. There could be a good cross over space for conversation e.g. common understanding of language.
- ACF have a monitoring and evaluation group, and some work could be done with this group to encourage broader communication across organisations.

Attendees expressed that they would like the normal sessions to continue, but were happy to see adhoc other meetings or workshops in the future.

Next meeting

The next meeting will take place on 10th February 2015