

A Practical Guide to Outcomes for Advice

Advice Services Alliance

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Why read this guide?

- 1.1** This guide is written for advice agency managers.
- 1.2** The guide will:
 - explore the benefits of outcome measurement
 - present a set of definitions for the terminology used to talk about outcomes
 - give tips on how to measure and present your outcomes
- 1.3** Collecting information about the outcomes of your work can help you:
 - improve your service to clients
 - understand how your service affects your clients' lives
 - boost staff morale
 - demonstrate how your work meets the objectives of existing and potential funders

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Why measure outcomes?

- 2.1 In recent years there has been an increasing interest across the voluntary sector in understanding the consequences of its work.
- 2.2 This is partly a result of the growing desire of funders to assess the difference their money is making to people's lives.
- 2.3 However, it has also been driven by a recognition within the sector that knowledge about outcomes can provide significant benefits for clients and staff.
- 2.4 So, whilst one of your reasons for measuring your outcomes may be to demonstrate the success of your work to funders, it should not be the only or even the principal motivation. There are considerable benefits to clients and staff and it is these that should drive your project.

How can measuring outcomes benefit your clients?

- 2.5 Measuring your outcomes will give you information about whether you are achieving your aims. It can let you know which aspects of your service are most beneficial and you can use this information to modify services or identify new services that will more readily achieve your aims.

2.6 In 2003 DIAL Waltham Forest (DIAL WF) commissioned research into the outcomes of their advice work.¹ The research looked into the practical gains of advice work (such as money and housing) as well as personal gains to clients. It found that DIAL WF clients had substantial practical and personal gains which had a positive effect on their quality of life, including health. All clients interviewed for the research talked about improvements to their ability to interact with and gain value from the world around them as a result of increased income, mobility and personal well-being.

2.7 The research also found that the way you provide services can be beneficial. It identified that clients valued the continuity of the advice given. One client commented:

"I like the fact that DIAL WF rang me from time to time to see how my case was progressing" ... "I feel like I have a friend who will look after me and fight for my rights."

2.8 This kind of feedback can provide you with information about how services you provide and the way you provide them affect people's lives. This information can help you to plan and develop your services. For example, if you know that clients value being contacted to see how their case is progressing, you can ensure that your staff continue to do this and that it is built into any services you develop.

1 Benson, A. and Waterhouse, P. (2003) *Hidden Benefits The value of DIAL advice work*

How can measuring outcomes benefit you and your staff?

2.9 When you give advice to clients, it is likely that you will be aware of at least some of the results of your work, for example, whether you obtained a welfare benefit for a client or got them re-housed. However, without doing further research, it is unlikely that you will know the effect that result had on the client's life.

2.10 If you carry out that research, the knowledge you gain can have a very positive effect on staff. One of the clients interviewed as part of the Dial Waltham Forest research commented:

*“Without DIAL WF I may have lost my children.
DIAL WF has improved my whole family life.
I can now look after them properly with the extra
money that I get now.”*

2.11 This kind of comment shows staff that the work they do can have very positive consequences for their clients. In a sector that does not pay well and where the work can be stressful, providing motivation and job satisfaction for your staff is essential. Such feedback can be a key contributor to this and is therefore worth investing in.

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Some definitions

- 3.1 ASA has devised the following set of definitions for some of the vocabulary used to talk about outcomes.
- 3.2 The definitions below draw on others developed in the voluntary sector² but we have specifically tailored them to advice work.
- 3.3 **AIMS** are what the agency intends to achieve. They are based on the needs of the agency's clients and are different for different agencies. The nature of the agency, for example, what its client group is or whether advice is its main function or a small part of an organisation offering other services, will determine which aims are emphasised.
- 3.4 Aims are likely to be changes but may also include maintenance of an existing situation. They may be determined by the agency itself and may sometimes be required by funders. For the purposes of this set of definitions, it is useful to group possible aims into categories:
 - *advice aims* are those relating to the specific advice needs of the client

2 Cupitt, S and Ellis, J (2003) *Your Project and its Outcomes*, Charities Evaluation Services, Community Fund

UK Voluntary Sector Research Group (2003) *Measuring Impact: Case-studies of Impact Assessment in Small and Medium Sized Voluntary Organisations*, NCVO, London

- *client aims* are those which relate to the wider aspects of the client's life eg physical and mental health
- *legal and policy aims* are those where the agency (or group of agencies) works to change legislation or local or national policy or ensure that it is correctly applied
- *community aims* are those that do not relate to an individual client who has received advice; rather they relate to groups of people and are measured on a community-wide basis

3.5 **INPUTS** are the resources that contribute to the work of the agency eg staff, premises, equipment.

3.6 **OUTPUTS** are the services that the agency delivers e.g. advice sessions, information leaflets, casework, advocacy and representation, social policy work.

3.7 **OUTCOMES** are the things that the agency achieves, as a result of pursuing its aims. Given that there are different categories of aims, there are different categories of outcomes:

Type of outcome	Examples
advice outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – got client attendance allowance – client recognised as a refugee
client outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – client has improved confidence – client in better health
legal and policy outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – change to local authority housing allocations policy – improved administration of Housing Benefit department – prevention of abuse of power by state, employers, landlords etc
community outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – less social exclusion – lower teenage pregnancy

3.8 ***OUTCOME INDICATORS*** are the things the agency measures to show whether or not it has achieved its outcomes. Outcomes and their indicators will vary depending on the nature of the agency’s aims. If an agency has the aim of “securing attendance allowance for clients”, the outcome indicator will be based on an analysis of the agency’s advice outcomes and may be simply a percentage such as “75% of clients assisted to claim attendance allowance were successful”.

3.9 Where the agency has the aim of “improving clients’ confidence”, devising outcome indicators may be more complicated; an agency could do it by sending out client feedback questionnaires or holding interviews

with clients at the end of a case. The results of these activities would be outcome indicators. Sections 5 and 6 below will look in more detail at devising outcome indicators.

3.10 ***IMPACT*** is everything that happens as a result of the work of the agency. It includes intended and unintended, negative and positive and long and short-term effects. Under this set of definitions, “impact” includes “outcomes”.

Other words used by funders

3.11 It may be that some of your funders use words that don’t appear in the above set of definitions. In most cases it is likely that they are simply using different words to describe the same things.

3.12 For example, the Big Lottery Fund (BLF) is introducing requirements for organisations to present project plans including targets and milestones. A milestone might be appointing a worker at the start of a project. According to the above set of definitions, this would be an input. A target could be to see 50 clients in the first six months of the project. According to the above set of definitions, this would be an output.

3.13 This guide will concentrate on measurement of outcomes but you will have to bear in mind that many funders will require reporting of your inputs and outputs as well and you must not neglect monitoring of these in favour of outcomes alone.

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A hypothetical case study

- 4.1 The example below is designed to illustrate how these definitions might work in a typical advice agency setting.
- 4.2 The Anytown Advice Agency runs daily generalist advice drop-in sessions. Its main areas of work are welfare benefits, debt and housing.

The case

- 4.3 The client is a single mother with three young children who is in receipt of income support. She has been living in private rented accommodation in the area for the last four months, having separated from her partner six months ago. She applied for housing benefit when she first moved in but so far has received nothing. She has called the housing benefits department on a number of occasions but has been told that her application is still being processed. About a month ago she received a call from her landlord saying he would evict her if he did not receive at least two months' rent in the next four weeks. The client went to the housing benefits department and explained the situation. They assured her they would deal with her claim but she has still received nothing from them.
- 4.4 This morning she received a notice seeking possession from her landlord. She is very distressed. She explains that she has found life very difficult since separating from her partner and that the uncertainty around her housing situation is keeping her awake at night.

Her children have just about coped with the separation and the move from their old home but she does not know how they will react if they have to move again.

- 4.5** The agency has dealt with a number of similar cases in the last year. Housing benefit administration in the area has gone from bad to worse and the agency has recently learned that two staff members have left the department and not been replaced.

The aims

- 4.6** When presented with a case such as this, there are a number of possible aims that the agency may have:
- 4.7** *Advice aims* – all agencies will aim to get housing benefit for the client and get the rent arrears paid off so that the client can remain in the property.
- 4.8** *Client aims* – some agencies may have the aim of ensuring peace of mind for the client and her children. Given the client's comments about sleeping difficulties, they may also aim to enable the client to sleep better so that she can cope with the recent major upheaval in her life.
- 4.9** *Legal and policy aims* – some agencies may decide to address the issue of maladministration in the housing benefits department; the agency may choose to take the case to the Local Government Ombudsman or arrange a meeting with the Director of Housing Benefits to discuss the problem. In this instance, the agency would have the aim of improving administration of the local Housing Benefits department.

4.10 *Community aims* – some agencies may take the view that ensuring that the client and her children can remain in their home will have an effect on the wider community. They may take the view that if they achieve the advice aims, they will also prevent the client becoming depressed and stop her children being taken into care. Therefore, one of their aims may be the reduction of social exclusion in the area.

Outcomes and impact

4.11 Some of these aims may seem far-fetched, particularly those that relate to the wider community. However, it will be for the individual agency to decide on the aims it thinks it can achieve and also the outcomes it thinks it can measure.

4.12 If an agency limits itself to the “advice aims” category, the task of measuring outcomes and demonstrating causation is relatively simple. In this example, it would have to show that the client got her housing benefit and was not evicted. However, the more categories of aims the agency takes on, the more difficult measurement of outcomes and demonstration of causation becomes; proving that a successful result in this case mitigated social exclusion would not be easy.

4.13 If an agency limits itself to “advice aims”, anything that results from the work of the agency that is not an “advice outcome” would be classed as “impact” under this set of definitions. It may be that lots of positive things happen that an agency has not intended and that it therefore decides to measure its impact, but by limiting its aims it will avoid committing itself to unrealistic outcomes that it cannot measure.

5

Demonstrating and measuring outcomes

- 5.1** The definitions set divides outcomes into four categories:
- advice outcomes
 - client outcomes
 - legal and policy outcomes
 - community outcomes
- 5.2** Client outcomes will be of most use to the largest number of agencies and this guide will concentrate on how to measure these. Funders generally want to know how your work affects your clients' lives and, as discussed above, having this information can be beneficial for staff and clients.
- 5.3** Before looking in detail at client outcomes, this section will look at the other categories of outcome.

Advice outcomes

- 5.4** An initial problem you may have to overcome when measuring advice outcomes is loss of contact with your clients. This is less likely where you have taken action on their behalf but it might be the case where you have given one-off advice.
- 5.5** You could ignore those cases and concentrate on the ones for which you do have outcomes. However, this

will not give an accurate picture of your agency's work and if your aim is to empower your clients to deal with their own problems, you will not know whether or not this has worked unless you measure your outcomes.

- 5.6** In order to deal with this you will have to follow up your clients to find out what happened after you advised them. This will involve contacting them by phone or letter so you should ensure you take the necessary details when you see them and get their consent for you to follow up their case.
- 5.7** If you send out a client satisfaction questionnaire, you could ask clients what happened after they got the advice. Alternatively if you are sending out a survey to find out about client outcomes, you could include questions about advice outcomes too. The example survey below at 9.1 asks the question, "do you have extra money available as a result of our services?" as well as asking about the clients' health and self-esteem.
- 5.8** Once you have advice outcomes for your cases, you have to decide how to classify them. You could choose to have outcomes specific to particular areas of law. For example, if you do housing work, you could include outcomes such as: client permanently housed, client temporarily housed or homelessness prevented.³
- 5.9** Another way of doing this is to categorise advice outcomes according to the different types of problem that clients present with. The National Homelessness Advice Service (NHAS) advice outcomes monitoring

3 Shelter (2004) HAC Statistics Sheet: Outcomes

pilot⁴ identified eight categories of problem including homelessness, possession summons and housing benefit. Each of these categories of problems had a number of potential outcomes for example the Housing Benefit (HB) category outcomes were: HB paid; HB claimed (or reclaimed) and acknowledged; HB claim unsuccessful; unknown; other.

- 5.10** Recording the problem as well as the outcome allows you to monitor what your service is achieving on particular issues. As the pilot report points out, this is essential for planning and development and can help you spot local policy issues.
- 5.11** If you work in more than one area of law, you could devise outcomes that are applicable to all areas such as: success, settled, lost, withdrawn by client.⁵ Whilst such outcomes have the drawback of not measuring what the client gets, they do give a general picture of what your agency is achieving.
- 5.12** You should draw up the classification scheme in consultation with your staff. This will help to ensure they feel the scheme is representative of the cases they deal with and that they are happy to use it. Once all your staff are recording their outcomes you can collate the information for the whole agency on a regular basis.
- 5.13** If your agency has a Legal Services Commission (LSC) contract, you will already be reporting your advice

4 National Homelessness Advice Service (2005) *Homelessness and Housing advice outcomes monitoring pilot Project Report*

5 Griffith, A. 1999 *10 Years of Casework at Luton Law Centre*

outcomes to them using the LSC outcome codes. As you have no choice about the codes it is unlikely that you will want to devise new ones and you will probably want to concentrate your efforts on client outcomes. However, if you don't have an LSC contract you may find their outcome codes a useful starting point when devising your own. They can be found on the LSC web site.⁶

- 5.14** If you have clients with entrenched problems whose cases don't resolve for a long time, you might want to consider having some way of recording interim outcomes. Housing advice cases can last for years and the NHAS pilot project report⁷ considers this issue. It gives an example of a client needing re-housing. The agency does not manage to achieve that outcome but does make improvements to the client's financial situation and to the client's quality of life, as a result of addressing his mobility and care needs.
- 5.15** It is important to make a note of these outcomes otherwise these cases will be recorded simply as "unsuccessful". This would not be a fair reflection of what had occurred.
- 5.16** These interim or alternative outcomes are generally more likely to relate to the effect you have had on the client's life and so you may have to measure them using client outcome methodology (see below).

⁶ http://www.legalservices.gov.uk/docs/forms/span_guidance_april_2005.pdf

⁷ See note 4 above

Legal and policy outcomes

- 5.17** It is very important to record these outcomes, however it is probably not necessary to devise a fixed method for measuring or demonstrating them. It is more likely that each one will have its own specific outcome indicator.
- 5.18** In fact, in many cases it is probably sufficient to record the outcome alone as this will also act as the outcome indicator. For example, if the work you do brings about a change in the law, the indicator will be the fact that the law has changed.
- 5.19** However, if you achieve a change in local procedure, such as a promise from the housing benefit office to deal with certain types of cases in a particular way, you should monitor over time whether the promise is being kept. If, after six months the Housing Benefit office is still doing what it said it would do and you have examples of cases that have been dealt with differently you can say that you have achieved an outcome.
- 5.20** Effecting changes to law and policy can take years. In the interim you may have no evidence to show that the work you're doing is having an effect. One way of dealing with this might be to record your outputs over the period. For example, you could record policy reports written and circulated, letters of complaint to local authorities, meetings attended and cases taken. In this way you will have a record of the work done on a particular issue. This is important as policy issues may be adversely affecting your advice outcomes. If this is the case you will want to show that you are doing something to address those issues.

Community outcomes

- 5.21** Community outcomes are broad changes that take place across large groups of people. Whilst many agencies probably feel that their work contributes to wider changes in the community it is unlikely that a single agency will have the resources to conduct the kind of research needed to measure these changes. It is also difficult to demonstrate a causal link between these kinds of changes and the work of any one agency.
- 5.22** However, to get an indication of change in your local area you could look at indicators of deprivation and social exclusion compiled by government agencies and other bodies. The web site www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination has information available about health, deprivation, education and housing for local areas. The Audit Commission area profiles web site www.areaprofiles.audit-commission.gov.uk provides a wide-ranging picture of quality of life and public services in a local area by bringing together information and assessments for every local authority area in England.
- 5.23** These web sites can also give you baseline data against which to measure local changes. If you keep a record of your outputs in specific areas and monitor changes that are taking place locally, you should be able to build up evidence of changes brought about by your agency's work.

6

Measuring client outcomes

- 6.1** There are a number of ways of measuring your outcomes and the method you use will affect how much it costs, the amount of time you have to put in, and the reliability of your results. You will also need to consider when and how many times you measure.
- 6.2** One way to assess your outcomes is to use a survey. It is relatively cheap and quick and the results are easy to collate and analyse.
- 6.3** The kind of questions you ask will affect the nature of the information you get: closed questions (to which the answer is yes or no) or multiple-choice questions limit the amount and type of information you can collect; open-ended questions enable you to gather more in-depth information. A combination of the two types of question in your survey could provide a balance of information that is easy to analyse and information that is more detailed and personal.
- 6.4** You also have to decide how the client will complete the survey. A self-administered, paper survey is cheap, easy to analyse and can be anonymous. However, clients may not be thorough when completing it and there is likely to be a high drop-out rate. You should also take into account the fact that some clients can't read or can't read in English. An alternative is to do the survey over the phone. This will allow you to clarify responses and may mean that you get a higher response rate. However, it will mean that your costs are higher.

- 6.5** Another method you might consider is face-to-face interviews at which you can ask clients open-ended questions. Alternatively, you could invite a small group of clients to attend a focus group to discuss their experiences of your agency. Collecting data in this way is likely to give you a much fuller picture of what you've achieved as well as more detailed information about your clients' lives. However, this approach is costly and is likely to be beyond the reach of most agencies.
- 6.6** An option for some agencies might be to carry out a paper or phone survey with a large number of clients and to follow this up with a handful of face-to-face interviews or one or two focus groups. This will give you some more detailed feedback without adding too much to the costs.

7

How and when should you survey?

Once only survey – after advice

7.1 One approach is to survey clients once only after the case is finished. A disadvantage of conducting only one survey is that you will not be able to demonstrate that change has taken place. However, because there is only one measurement, it is relatively cheap and simple.

Two surveys – before and after advice

7.2 Another approach is to survey both before and after the case is finished. You use the same survey and do it in the same way so that the results are comparable. This method is an improvement on only surveying after the advice is given as it may enable you to demonstrate that a change has occurred. However, it will not necessarily show that you were responsible for the change and it will be more expensive than conducting the survey once only.

Combined survey – after advice

7.3 One way of combining the two approaches is to take one measurement after the case is finished but to ask the client to remember what they were like before the advice and to rate the changes in themselves that have taken place. As you only carry out the measurement once, you reduce the burden on the client and the cost

of the evaluation but you get an indication of whether or not a change has occurred.

- 7.4** This last way of collecting information is probably the most useful for individual agencies as it is reasonably cheap and easy to administer and yet allows you to demonstrate that change has occurred.

Timing

- 7.5** Whichever method of collecting information you choose, you will need to decide how long after the case is closed you conduct the survey or interviews. You should do it soon enough after giving the advice for the experience to be fresh in the client's mind; leaving it too long may mean the experience is too remote and they do not respond. On the other hand, you must leave it long enough for the advice to have had an effect.
- 7.6** The decision you make about timing should take these factors into consideration. The period is likely to be different for different areas of law and different types of case. Therefore, you might have to experiment with different periods to see which works best for your agency.

8

Who should you survey?

- 8.1** The most straightforward option is to survey every client. However, if you have large numbers of clients you might decide to limit the number of people you survey. If so, you will need to consider how many clients you want to survey and how you will select them. You could select randomly or, if you have the information and resources, you could try to reflect the spread amongst your clients of age, ethnicity, gender, disability and location.

- 8.2** You might also want to do specific projects measuring outcomes for particular groups of clients. You may find that your work has different outcomes for different groups. Having such information could alert you to the different needs of different groups and could help you adapt your services accordingly.

9

What a questionnaire might look like

- 9.1** Bristol Debt Advice Centre provides independent advice on debt matters. In order to meet the requirements of the CLS Quality Mark, the Centre sends out an annual client feedback survey. Over the past five years the Centre has included questions on client outcomes in this survey. The survey (which is reproduced below) is a paper postal questionnaire that clients fill in themselves. Clients are asked to fill in the survey once only and to rate the difference the advice has made to their lives. Because the Centre already had to send out a client feedback survey, measuring outcomes in this way was not too costly. When BDAC sent out the survey in 2001–2 and 2002–3, the response rate was around 20%. In 2003–4 it was 10%.

Bristol Debt Advice Centre (BDAC) 2004 Client Outcomes Survey

- We contact all our clients between one and two years after completing work on their case to find out if our advice has improved their situation. This helps us to monitor and plan our services and the information is also used to support applications we make for the money we need to allow our free services to continue.
- Please will you help us by spending just a few minutes completing this short, anonymous, form? If you would like help completing it, please telephone us on 0117 954 3990 or call into our offices on any Monday, Tuesday or Thursday morning.

1 It is very useful to know what difference our advice has made. Please tick one of the boxes for each question to indicate any changes you feel have happened as a result of our services in the following areas.

	Improved	Not changed	Got worse
Your household budgeting has...			
Your ability to cope with your debts has...			
The money you have available for essential items (food, clothing, gas, electricity, and so on) has...			
Your ability to socialise has...			
Your self-esteem has...			
Your relationships have...			
Your health has...			
Your housing situation has...			
Your effectiveness at work (if working) has...			
or Your ability to secure work (if not working) has...			

2 Do you have extra money available as a result of our services?
 (for example from not having to pay as much for loan repayments, or because you are now receiving extra benefits)

YES NO

3 If YES, approximately how much extra in each week or month? £ _____ per week/month

4 What have you usually spent the extra money on? (Tick all that apply)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Your children | <input type="checkbox"/> Socialising |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clothes | <input type="checkbox"/> Food |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Savings | <input type="checkbox"/> Insurance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Holidays | <input type="checkbox"/> Household repairs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Others (please detail) _____ | |

5 Financial difficulties and health

Many of our clients have told us that their financial difficulties may have caused or have increased their health problems. If you feel your financial situation has affected you in this way, please tick the boxes below that are appropriate.

Since coming to us for advice, have your...

	Decreased	Not changed	Increased	Not applicable
Visits to the doctor...				
Illnesses in the year...				
Feelings of stress...				
Feelings of depression...				
Any other health problems (please give any details you are prepared to)...				

6 What has been the biggest change for you and your family as a result of our services?

7 Are there any other comments you would like to add?

If there are any other comments or suggestions you would like to make, please include these on a separate sheet.

This survey is anonymous, however if you would like to receive a copy of the survey results, we will need your contact details on the attached sheet.

Please return your completed form to the BDAC office in the reply paid envelope provided.

Thank you for taking time to complete this form.

What if you can't conduct a survey?

- 9.2** In some agencies, clients will not respond well to being surveyed. This is not likely to be a problem in a mainstream advice agency but may be the case where the advice service is a small element of the service provided by a community group.
- 9.3** In these circumstances, clients might find a questionnaire intrusive and not appropriate to the community group setting. One solution to this might be to capture comments from clients as they say them. If they tell you how your service has affected their lives, you should, if they agree, write the comments down and store them centrally.
- 9.4** Alternatively, you could put postcards in different places around your reception with the question “how has our service affected your life?” written on the top and invite your clients to fill them in if they feel they have something to say. Despite being less formal, this approach is likely to give you the kind of information you want to collect whilst being less off-putting than a full questionnaire.

10

Tailoring a questionnaire to your needs

- 10.1 BDAC specialises in giving debt advice and their questionnaire reflects this. If you give advice on other subjects you might want to include other questions that relate to that area. For example, if you do housing, you could ask your clients about whether they now have more space and how this has affected them.
- 10.2 It is important to involve your staff in devising the questions. They may have particular questions they want to ask their clients and they are likely to have an idea about the changes to clients' lives that have taken place.
- 10.3 As well as category specific questions, the questions on general life changes such as those relating to health, self-esteem and relationships, can be used by agencies giving advice in different categories.
- 10.4 If you work with a single client group or have particular outcomes that you need to demonstrate, you can include questions in your survey that reflect these.

Example: Every Child Matters

- 10.5 The government's outcomes framework for "Every Child Matters" published in December 2004 identifies 5 key outcomes for children and young people:
 - Be healthy
 - Stay safe

- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being

10.6 These categories are broken down into more specific outcomes. These could be used as the basis for survey questions to be completed by users of young people’s services.

10.7 For example, the “make a positive contribution” outcome contains the following:

- Children and young people develop self-confidence and successfully deal with significant life changes and challenges

This could become:

- *My self-confidence is better/no change/worse*
- *My ability to deal with challenges and change in my life is better/no change/worse*

10.8 The “achieve economic well-being” outcome contains the following:

- Children and young people engage in further education, employment or training on leaving school

This could become:

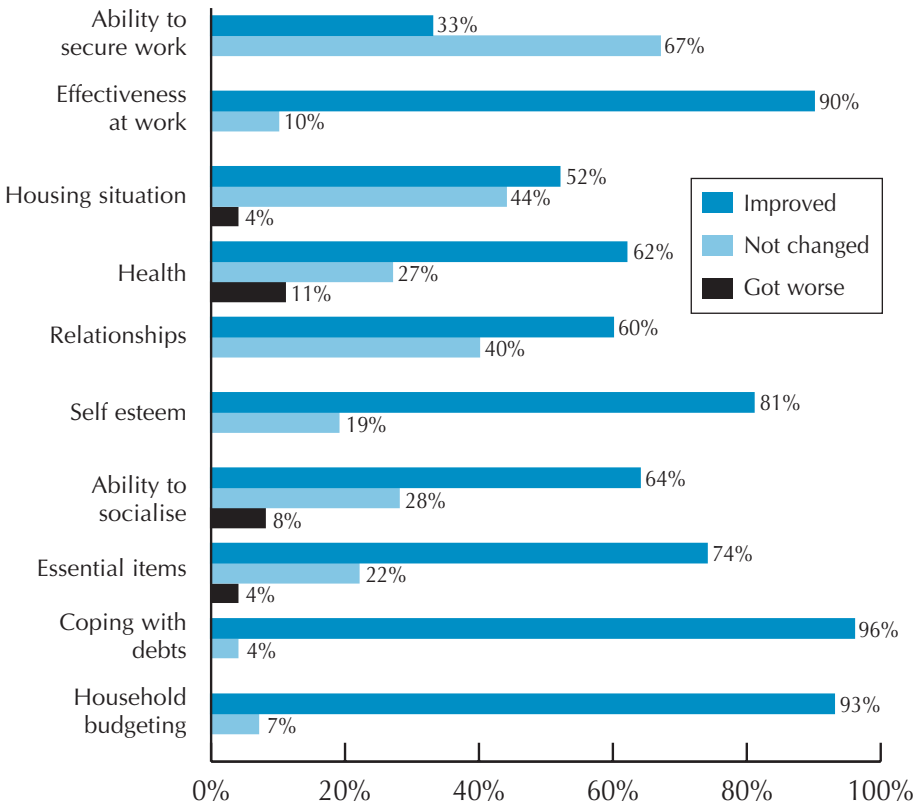
- *My ability to stay in education is better/ no change/worse*
- *My ability to seek employment/training is better/ no change/worse*

11

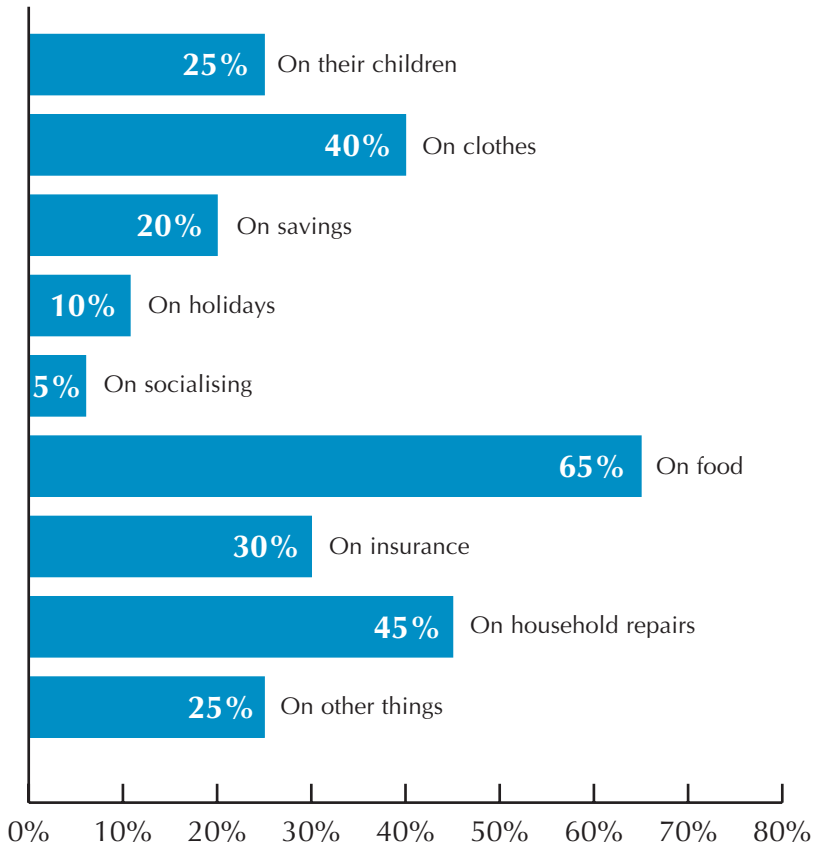
Interpreting and presenting the information you get

11.1 If you have used closed or multiple-choice questions, it will be relatively simple to add up scores and derive percentages. You could illustrate this information by using graphs or pie charts. For example, BDAC used the following graphs to illustrate their results:

2004 Outcomes survey results



Extra income from receiving advice



-
- 74% of clients said they had extra money available as a result of our service
 - On average, these clients had an extra £26 per week to spend on essential items
 - One client used their extra income to successfully pursue a vocational qualification, enabling them to secure paid employment.
-

- 11.2** If you have used open-ended questions in your survey or have conducted interviews, you will need to analyse the content of the responses and look for themes. This can be quite a time-consuming process but it is likely to provide you with more detailed insight into how your work has affected your clients' lives.
- 11.3** For example, DIAL WF grouped client comments into three categories: positive reports, no change and poor reports. They also grouped the comments by the type of outcome they related to: practical, health, quality of life and personal outcomes and put information about the number of comments they got in each category into a table.
- 11.4** They also used lots of direct quotes from clients. Whilst the table summarises the information in a quantitative format, the quotes give background and more personal information about clients' lives.

Caution

- 11.5** It will not always be the case that the link between the advice you give and the outcome you achieve is clear. Where you have taken action on behalf of a client or where a client tells you that your advice has changed their life in some way it will be relatively easy to make the link between your work and the outcomes achieved.
- 11.6** However, there can be a number of influences on a client's situation and on their general well-being and where the link between your work and the outcome is not so clear you should be cautious about claiming responsibility for it. It may be tempting to overstate the case, particularly to funders but this may have the effect of making you look less credible.

- 12.1** Measuring your outcomes costs money and takes time. Whilst it is beneficial to do it, the way you do it must be proportionate to your agency's resources. Your main role is service delivery and you cannot afford to divert valuable resources away from that.
- 12.2** However, it may be difficult to limit the resources you use for outcome measurement given that different funders have different requirements. Agencies might find themselves having to provide different information to different funders or the same information in different formats.
- 12.3** As outcome measurement is still relatively new, now is the time to discuss these issues with your funders to agree the kind of information you should provide. This should be determined not only by what the funder wants but also by what it is useful and reasonable for your agency to measure.
- 12.4** In particular, local authorities are starting to introduce outcome measures. If you are funded by a local authority, it is a good idea to be in contact with them so that you can influence discussions about what their outcome requirements should be and so that you can get an idea of what kind of reporting you will have to do in the future.

Cost

- 12.5** It is difficult to estimate the cost of a project for measuring your outcomes. If you choose to do a single paper questionnaire similar to that on pages 25–27, the paper, copying and postage costs are unlikely to come to more than £100–£200. If you decide to hold client interviews or focus groups, you will have to employ consultants to do the work. This will probably cost around £500–£1000.
- 12.6** You should also keep a record of all the staff time that goes into your outcomes project as this will add to its cost. If you apply for funding to cover your project you will need to make sure that all those costs are included.

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Written by Shanta Bhavnani

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Tel: 020 7378 6428
www.asauk.org.uk

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