Toolkit for Demonstrating the Impact of Independent Advocacy

"Not everything that can be counted counts and not everything that counts can be counted"

Scottish
Independent
Advocacy
Alliance

Contents

Section 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

This toolkit has been developed by the Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance (SIAA) to support independent advocacy organisations across Scotland to demonstrate the impact of the work that they do.

The toolkit is divided into two sections:

- The first section explains in detail the context around demonstrating impact, clarifying *why* it is important for independent advocacy organisations, and how it can be done
- The second section provides you with a range of different practical tools and resources that can help your organisation begin – or develop – the work it does to demonstrate impact.

It is suggested that you read through the first section in its entirety, as it will enable you to understand, and use, the Resources section more effectively.

This toolkit is intended to support you and your colleagues to gather evidence of the positive differences that independent advocacy makes to the individuals, and groups, with whom you work; as simply as possible.

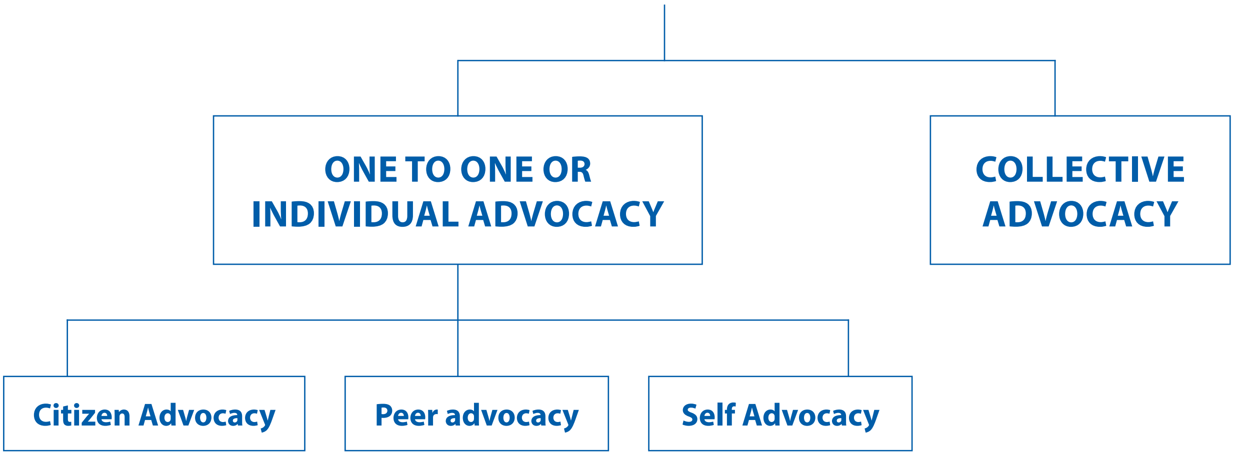
The toolkit was shaped through a range of engagements and research methods, including:

- conversations with independent advocacy organisations across Scotland
- a focus group with collective advocacy members
- conversations with SIAA staff
- desk-based research.

1.2 Who is the toolkit for?

The toolkit has been developed and designed so that it is relevant to both **individual** and **collective** advocacy.

Different Types of Independent Advocacy



The toolkit is primarily aimed at:

- **Managers** and **senior staff** working in independent advocacy organisations who have a leadership role in designing and delivering work to demonstrate impact, as well as cascading the knowledge and relevant processes throughout the organisation

However, it will also be a valuable resource for:

- Other **staff** and **volunteers** working in independent advocacy organisations (including **Board Members**) who have an interest in demonstrating impact and/or will be involved in gathering, analysing and utilising evidence
- **Commissioners** and **funders** involved in enduring the provision of independent advocacy. The toolkit will support them to develop evaluation frameworks (e.g.in contracts and service level agreements) that ask *meaningful* questions in *appropriate* ways and demonstrate the impact of independent advocacy. This will, in turn, ensure value for money, robust quality assurance mechanisms and the ongoing enhancement of independent advocacy services.

SIAA is producing a separate resource for commissioners and funders of independent advocacy, that will be linked to this toolkit.

1.3 Defining 'demonstrating impact': outputs v. outcomes

While those who work within independent advocacy organisations – and the many people who receive support from their services – are very clear that their work makes a positive difference, this perception is often based on informal impressions and lacks a robust evidence base.

However, this is no longer sufficient. The context in which independent advocacy services are now being funded and assessed necessitates that they can clearly and systematically provide evidence of the difference that they make – in other words, that they can actually 'demonstrate impact'.

This toolkit focuses on building your organisational capacity to demonstrate impact by explaining in a step-by-step way how to measure, and report on, outcomes.

The difference between outcomes and outputs is a key concept, explained below. A more detailed explanation of these terms can be found on page 4 of the toolkit.

Historically, many organisations were only required to report on the activities that had been delivered with their funding – their **outputs**. *For example*, the number of people receiving advocacy or hours of advocacy support provided.

Now, the increased focus on demonstrating impact means that this level of reporting is no longer enough.

As well as describing their outputs, independent advocacy organisations must also describe and evidence the *difference* that has been made by these outputs – their **outcomes**.

We know there is huge variance between the information that independent advocacy organisations already gather, as sometimes they are asked to provide different information to different funders. We envisage the information gathered using this toolkit will be useful to all funders and commissioners.

It is hoped that this toolkit will support the movement in Scotland to be confident to gather evidence of the difference independent advocacy organisations are making to people's lives, and understand how using evidence to demonstrate impact can be used for a range of purposes.

Gathering clear, structured feedback about services enables providers to develop them in ways which enhance their effectiveness and accessibility. The learning that comes from this type of evaluation can also help identify and promote models of best practice, as well as enable providers to identify trends, key issues and gaps in provision which can inform policy development and service provision more widely.

1.4 Demonstrating impact: National outcomes and organisational outcomes

This toolkit can support you to measure and report on both Independent Advocacy National Outcomes and individual organisational outcomes.

SIAA expects all members to measure and report on Independent Advocacy National Outcomes. Individual members may or may not choose to extend this work to include also measuring and reporting on organisational outcomes. These different types of outcomes are explained in more detail below.

1.4.1 Independent Advocacy National Outcomes

One of the struggles, nationally and beyond, in demonstrating the impact of independent advocacy is that providers do not have agreed, common outcomes towards which they are all working.

The research we conducted when developing this toolkit with SIAA members showed that several independent advocacy organisations are very rigorous in collecting evidence of their outcomes and the difference they are making – but that these are not necessarily the *same* outcomes.

This is a collective issue for independent advocacy organisations in Scotland, that makes the SIAA's work at a national level, to promote, support and defend independent advocacy and positively influence policy, more challenging. We believe that our members have a profoundly positive impact, but trusting in this fact is not enough – we need to be able to demonstrate it with evidence.

To address this problem, SIAA underwent a period of consultation with members throughout 2019 in order to agree three **Independent Advocacy National Outcomes**:

Independent Advocacy National Outcome 1

Independent advocacy enables people to be better informed about their rights, as well as understanding their needs and wishes and the choices they have. It increases their agency and power to choose their own actions freely, as much as possible.

Independent Advocacy National Outcome 2

Independent advocacy supports people to recognise, understand and challenge power imbalances that influence their lives. It enables them to challenge these imbalances, in order to try and realise their rights, needs and wishes.

When someone is unable to take personal action, their advocacy worker will ensure that their rights are upheld.

Independent Advocacy National Outcome 3

Independent advocacy supports people to know that their voices have been heard and their needs and wishes understood.

The expectation is that members will now start collecting evidence to demonstrate how they are delivering the three Independent Advocacy National Outcomes.

This toolkit provides you with all the information and resources you need to build the organisational confidence and capacity to do this.

Having a robust, Scotland-wide evidence-base will significantly strengthen the work we are able to do at a national level to influence policy and extend access to independent advocacy to the people who need it. This will make Scotland the first country to collect national data on the outcomes achieved through independent advocacy.

1.4.2 Organisational Outcomes

In addition to the three Independent Advocacy National Outcomes, this pack will also support you to gather evidence and report on any additional organisational outcomes that you feel are important, or that your commissioners/funders require you to evidence.

The toolkit provides information and a range of tools and approaches for gathering, analysing and reporting on reliable evidence of the wide-ranging impacts of independent advocacy services. Doing so will contribute to the development and sustainability of these critical services, as well as improve understanding at all levels of the types of support that people across Scotland need and benefit from.

> *"It is important to remember that independent advocacy highlights opportunities, supports people to be more aware of opportunities, choices and their rights, enabling them to make more informed decisions and to become more influential as agents of change. Through broadening horizons and widening understanding of options, independent advocacy enables people to educate themselves and be more active citizens."*
>
> **Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance**

Section 2: Why evidence the outcomes your service contributes to?

2.1 The benefits of gathering evidence

Most independent advocacy providers will have been required to undertake some form of monitoring and/or evaluation of all or part of their service delivery at some stage. For many, it is experienced as a 'needs must' activity undertaken for the benefit of a funder, rather than valuable activity for the organisation itself.

In this section, we use the term 'evaluating' to mean gathering evidence of the difference that a service makes – the *outcomes* it contributes to. We talk about *contributing* to *outcomes* because outcomes are co-created with the advocacy partner, or members of a collective advocacy group and, to a degree, with the organisation or professional who holds the power to engage, or not, with the advocacy process.

Internal benefits for the organisation

Gathering evidence of the outcomes that an independent advocacy organisation is contributing to has a range of benefits for organisations, and the people accessing independent advocacy. Organisations that integrate this type of 'evaluation' as a regular part of practice can then develop ways to use what they learn from this feedback to;

- enhance practice,
- inform new service development,
- motivate and affirm staff, and
- foster a climate of critical and constructive thinking –
- all of which contribute to improved services for people accessing independent advocacy.

Wider Benefits

In addition to such internal organisational benefits, providers that measure, analyse and evaluate outcomes area also able to use their evidence to:

- influence local and national policy, and service provision
- communicate more clearly, and authoritatively, with potential advocacy partners, other professionals and the media about the value of independent advocacy to individuals and wider society
- have a realistic understanding of what the organisation is achieving with people who are seeking advocacy support – and the adjustments that could be made to strengthen practice
- be clear about what they are 'bringing to the table' when speaking with potential partner organisations, as well as those in which it is delivering independent advocacy
- notice trends, so that they can be addressed proactively

A further, and often unconsidered, benefit of evaluation is that it enhances accountability;

- to ourselves as workers,
- for our use of public money,
- and most importantly to the people being supported.

By critically examining the effects of an advocacy intervention on those accessing it – in the interest of providing the most effective, efficient, accessible and person-centred organisation we can – we are making ourselves accountable to our key stakeholders. This increases our ability to create truly 'transparent' organisations.

The resources in this toolkit are intended to inspire organisations to gather, and make use of, information from advocacy partners or collective advocacy members about their experiences of independent advocacy. This, in turn will help organisations to make informed decisions about service development to better support the people accessing independent advocacy.

2.1 How to use this toolkit

This toolkit offers a range of flexible tools and approaches – *resources* – which are intended to enable services to adopt a realistic and appropriate framework for evaluation in their organisation.

The focus of the tools and approaches within this toolkit is primarily on outcomes – or whether or not the service is *making the difference* it aspires to.

There will also be some examples of tools that help us learn about how well our *processes* are working (which helps us understand if there are certain groups, or individuals with particular circumstances, for whom our processes need to be adjusted in order to achieve the desired outcome.)

Some of the independent advocacy organisations we spoke with when researching this toolkit are currently asking questions on evaluation forms like *'Did your advocacy partner explain their role?'*, and *'Was the service easy to use?'* These are good examples of questions that will help us understand how well our *processes* are delivering for us – but they don't tell us about the differences that advocacy is making – or *outcomes*.

Whether your organisation is new to gathering evidence of the differences that its services make, or seeking to refresh approaches it is already using, our recommendation is that having a read through the pack in its entirety will ensure that you get the most from it. We will be clarifying important terms, providing useful examples and top tips – as well as providing tools and approaches, in the Resources section (**Page 31**), that you might use.

While it is most often managers or senior staff who have responsibility for organisational 'monitoring and evaluation', there is much to be gained from promoting these strands of work as a shared responsibility amongst all staff and volunteers. Creating a culture in which enquiry, critical thinking and using evidence to inform practice and development will strengthen any organisation; as well as result in improved service delivery for those accessing independent advocacy.

While this toolkit offers guidance, tools and approaches, it is important that each organisation discusses and clarifies the parameters of their approach to monitoring and evaluation – as there is not 'one size that fits all.' While the principles and practices will be similar, the scope, depth and ways that evidence is used are likely to vary.

For instance – all advocacy providers are likely to make clear that participation in evaluation is *never a requirement*, and that *people always have a choice*. However, it is unlikely that all will use electronic tools to gather evidence…but some will. Similarly, it is unlikely that all will highlight evaluation in their written materials, so that partners are aware that they will be invited to participate…but some will.

These decisions, and resulting protocols, are decisions for each independent advocacy provider to make. This toolkit is designed to be a support for *thinking* about how an organisation will gather evidence of the outcomes it contributes to (does evaluation) – as well as planning for how they will *do it*.

Section 3:
What Are Outcomes?

While many organisations have grown used to reporting on activity in terms of *outputs*, in recent years we have increasingly been asked to provide reports of the *outcomes* we are achieving with people accessing independent advocacy. This has taken on increased significance in relation to the Scottish Government's move to working in a more outcome-focused way.

Outcomes are the changes your organisation makes to the lives of the people it works with. Outcome statements often include words that indicate a change or difference e.g. increase, reduce, expand, enable, improve, sustain.

Outcomes may be things like knowing that one's wishes have been understood, having a decision made by an agency successfully overturned, or feeling safer in one's home.

Outcomes can be short- or long-term. A service deciding to change the way that it is offered as a result of collective advocacy might be considered a short-term outcome – while the service actually being offered in a different way could be considered a longer-term outcome to continue working towards. For individuals, understanding their rights is likely to be a short-term outcome – working to ensure that their rights are upheld is a longer-term one.

Outputs are the things you do and activities you undertake to achieve your outcomes. They often start with words that indicate activity e.g. deliver, offer, provide, facilitate, create.

When organisations describe the services they offer – providing independent advocacy support, giving information, attend meetings – they are describing *outputs*.

***Outputs* are what we do, and *outcomes* are the differences that occur because of what we do.**

While the SIAA expects that its members collect evidence in relation to the three Independent Advocacy National Outcomes highlighted in the introduction, so that it can use Scotland-wide evidence to strengthen its work on a national basis, it is likely that individual independent advocacy organisations will have additional outcomes that they need, or wish, to evidence.

The following is a sample of some of the wide-ranging outcomes currently being evidenced by independent advocacy services in Scotland:

- Advocacy makes people feel like what they have to say is important
- Young person/child spoke at a meeting/children's hearing
- People are informed of their rights
- People are enabled to have a voice
- Changes/improvements to culture, and practices that are discriminatory
- Improved confidence, personal autonomy and resilience
- Reduced harm and exploitation

There is a wide variety amongst these outcomes – which is absolutely fine. What matters is that independent advocacy organisations are clear about *the differences that they believe will be made because of their outputs*. Once they are clear about these differences, they can create strong *outcome statements* (the three Independent Advocacy National Outcomes are examples of this, as are the examples above).

Once the outcomes statements have been agreed within the independent advocacy organisation, thought can be given to how to go about gathering evidence to demonstrate that they are being achieved.

Section 4: How Will We Know We Are Making A Difference? Understanding Outcomes and Outcome Indicators

Once an independent advocacy organisation is clear about the difference it is seeking to make (*outcomes*), and the activities it will deliver for the purpose of making such a difference (*outputs*), it is time to think about the evidence that will demonstrate success – or ***outcome indicators***.

Each outcome will probably have a range of potential 'indicators'.

For instance, many independent advocacy organisations support people to participate more in situations that affect their lives (***outcome***) – through providing individual and collective advocacy (***outputs***).

In addition to answering 'yes' on an evaluation form that asks whether or not people believe that advocacy resulted in them participating more in situations that affect their lives, an advocate might hear someone describe:

- An improved relationship with their health/care provider
- Feeling more confident, generally, to raise concerns when they have them
- Using more assertive behaviour with family or friends

All of these statements are legitimate 'evidence' that someone is participating more in situations that affect their lives. When we spend time deepening our understanding of the outcomes we are working to achieve with people, it is much easier to gather evidence – conditions and behaviours – because we are noticing it. This will be a useful point for managers/senior staff to emphasise when supporting staff to notice and collect evidence. During our research with SIAA members whilst developing this toolkit, we heard that becoming aware of the 'informal' feedback that is being offered can become a real motivator for staff and volunteers.

When establishing outcome indicators, it can be useful to ask questions such as:

- What could success look like?
- What types of things might be happening for a person if this was true?
- How have other people described this to us?
- What kind of changes would we expect a person to describe to us that would suggest they have… (achieved stated outcome) …

If your organisation is struggling to set indicators it may be because you are being over-ambitious in what you are wanting to achieve, or you are aware that outcomes will be difficult to measure – *e.g. advocacy partners will develop their confidence*.

The process of setting indicators often helps an organisation to be realistic about what outcomes it is working to achieve – and support all staff/volunteers to have a shared sense of purpose. Below is an example of a framework that helps to clearly identify indicators, using the Independent Advocacy National Outcomes.

What is the difference we want to make? (*outcome*)	What do we believe will indicate success? (*indicators*)
Independent Advocacy National Outcome 1 Independent advocacy enables people to be better informed about their rights, as well as understanding their needs and wishes and the choices they have. It increases their agency and power to choose their own actions freely, as much as possible.	◗ People are having conversations about their options ◗ People are talking about their rights ◗ People are able to describe what they want to happen ◗ People are clear about the plans they have for the future
Independent Advocacy National Outcome 2 Independent advocacy supports people to recognise, understand and challenge power imbalances that influence their lives. It enables them to challenge these imbalances, in order to try and realise their rights, needs and wishes. When someone is unable to take personal action, their advocacy worker will ensure that their rights are upheld.	◗ People are able to tell a clear story of what they want, and why they want it ◗ People are able to actively engage in conversations in which they had previously felt powerless, or hopeless ◗ People believe that everything possible has been done in pursuit of their desired outcomes ◗ Decisions are taken which reflect the full rights of a person who is unable to act on their own behalf
Independent Advocacy National Outcome 3 Independent advocacy supports people to know that their voices have been heard and their needs and wishes understood.	◗ The professional(s) with whom a meeting, with advocacy support is happening, accurately reflects that they have understood what it is that person wishes to happen ◗ Active consideration is given to the true wishes of a collective advocacy group, by the professional(s)/others in a meeting

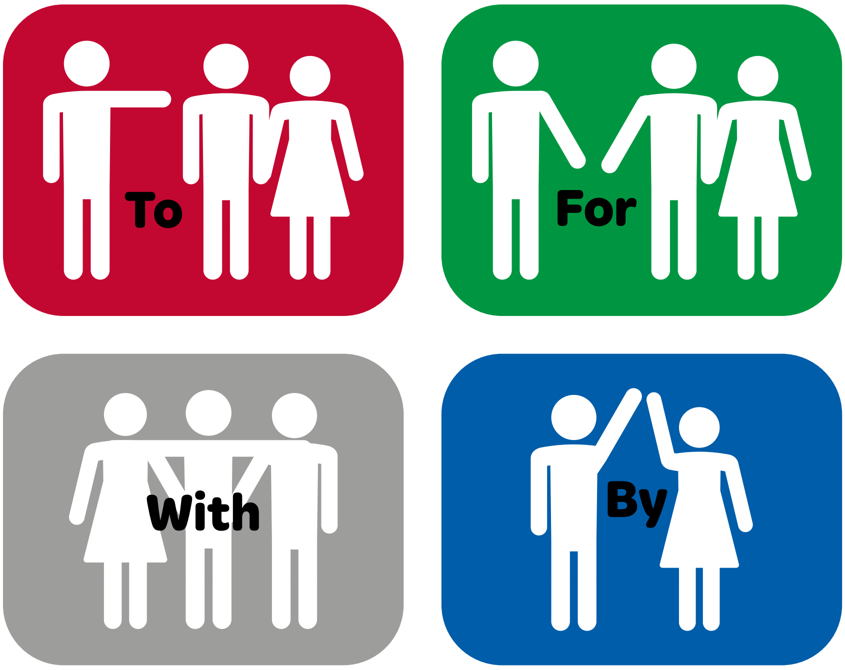
While people using independent advocacy organisations generally come with a specific purpose in mind around which they are seeking advocacy support (and which generally aligns to one of the national outcomes), they may have some additional personal outcomes such as developing their confidence to speak in official meetings, being clear about what they want – and asking for it, or managing their emotions more effectively in official settings.

Some of the tools in the Resources section make it easy for advocacy partners/ collective advocacy members to identify their own outcomes to work toward, in addition to those that the organisation is seeking to evidence. How, when and why you might do this will be explored further in the Resources section of the toolkit.

"When we write our outcomes, we should include the "who" in the outcome. For example, "care experienced young people have more positive life chances". That way we know who we intend to make a difference with and for, and who we should ask for feedback from when measuring the outcome.

Indeed, the people the outcomes are for should really be involved in writing them in the first place. And people should be at the heart of measuring the outcomes approach. They – not (just) the stats – tell us whether activities are making a difference and why. That in turn means that the outcomes approach requires a rich tapestry of evidence – research, practitioner experience, lived-experience evidence; a mix of stats and stories"

Steven Marwick, CEO, Evaluation Support Scotland (2019)



Section 5: What counts as evidence?

5.1 Qualitative and quantitative evidence

There are two main types of evidence – qualitative evidence is descriptive (e.g. case studies) and quantitative evidence is numerical (e.g. statistics). These are explained in more detail below.

For independent advocacy services, the most engaging evidence to collect as evidence that outcomes are being achieved will be ***qualitative*** – most often relating to changes in thinking, behaviours and feelings.

Qualitative evidence is what we hear when people tell their stories – beyond 'yes and no' descriptions of whether or not intended outcomes have been achieved.

Consider, for a moment, all of the ways in which people's lives have changed as a result of their wishes being heard and understood. Each of those stories is providing qualitative evidence that this important outcome has been achieved. That type of evidence is rich, and varied.

However, ***quantitative*** evidence is also useful when demonstrating that we are achieving outcomes. Questionnaires that ask whether or not someone believes an outcome has been achieved can be used to produce quantitative evidence. When we report this type of evidence, we generally do so numerically. For example:

'85% of people who received advocacy report that they were supported to put their point of views across'. Or, '95% of people who received advocacy report that they have gained in understanding of their rights.'

Evidence which can be collected in relation to outputs is also likely to be quantitative – relating to numbers – a number of advocacy hours, the number of advocacy partners in particular age or post-code categories, the number of information sessions delivered, etc.

Quantitative and qualitative evidence have the most impact when they are used together. For example:

"In 2019, we delivered 2,465 hours of advocacy support to 237 individuals, 93% of whom reported that their voices were heard, and their wishes understood. They told us that:

'Having the support is invaluable to me because I don't think I could have gone to my DWP assessment on my own.'

'My advocate expressed my views at tribunal on my behalf'

'With support I was able to attend meetings regarding my daughter. I was confident to put my views across and I now have contact again.'

'I was able to have my views on where I live communicated through my advocate'

Many organisations are used to combining quantitative and qualitative data in the form of case studies. These are useful in many different contexts – for funders, for people considering accessing advocacy support, in annual reports, and when promoting the importance of independent advocacy generally.

Deciding on what evidence to gather, as well as how and when to gather it, are important decisions to make. Developing a framework for your organisation to work within can support all staff to work consistently and effectively in relation to how they are involving people who have received a service to 'evaluate' it – to tell the service whether or not, and potentially how (processes), it is achieving its intended outcomes.

5.2 What counts as evidence?

When we think about evaluation, most of us think of direct feedback mechanisms – responses on questionnaires, particular tools or interviews – as providing the evidence we need.

People tend to identify these sorts of formal evidence because it is common to think of 'monitoring and evaluation' as a set of tasks which are additional to our actual jobs. However, while these structured feedback mechanisms are very good ways of collecting evidence, they can be resource-intensive and require significant planning and work.

It is therefore useful for independent advocacy workers to think of evaluation not as a discrete function that sits outside their normal jobs, but as something that is embedded in and integrated throughout their day-to-day practices and working lives. This will, in turn, help them to consider all the *other* forms of evidence that already exist – and which they will naturally come across in their interactions with advocacy partners and/or collective advocacy members – which they are not noticing and recording as evidence of successfully delivered outcomes because they don't know they 'count' as evidence.

Some examples of these sorts of evidence sources include:

- Notes, phone and email thank you messages
- Stories that we are told by people using independent advocacy services about ways in which they believe that their experience of advocacy is impacting on other areas of their lives. For instance, they might feel more able to speak up for themselves, or ask for what they want in settings that are additional to the one in which they are working with an independent advocate.
- Comments that friends, relatives and other professionals make about a change they notice in the person receiving independent advocacy support
- Positive changes in an advocacy partner's appearance, body language or behaviour

When we are all clear about the outcomes we are trying to achieve, and what some of their **indicators** might be, it becomes significantly easier to notice the relevant bits of evidence.

While getting direct feedback from someone who has accessed independent advocacy is the most important source of evidence, observations from others are also valid sources of information. It might not be possible to get feedback from the advocacy partner, when providing non instructed advocacy and therefore it is important to gather feedback from others involved in the situation, such as unpaid carers.

What we see and hear, as well as what others (family, friends, other professionals) tell us about changes they have noticed is all data. All, useful evidence.

Throughout this toolkit, you will notice a theme – that recording evidence should, as much as possible, be integrated into existing systems and practices, rather than something additional that workers and volunteers need to make significant extra time for.

Once you are clear about the outcomes you want to be able demonstrate, and have thought about the types of evidence that you might see or hear that would show/tell you they are being achieved – you can decide how to collect, record and store it.

Section 6: Collecting evidence: What, when, how and where

The approach to collecting and reporting on evidence which is outlined in this toolkit is intended to be flexible, so that independent advocacy organisations can create what they need. Some organisations will want to keep things as simple as possible by focusing only on what they are required to demonstrate, some will want to learn as much as they can…and everything in between.

6.1 What evidence to collect

There are two kinds of evidence which can be useful to collect – and some which is often required by funders and commissioners.

- *that which relates to **the difference the organisation is making***
- *that which relates to **how it goes about making that difference***

The first is evidence which relates to **outcomes** – the difference the organisation is making to the people receiving its services. This is the type of evidence that funders often require.

Through gathering, and thinking about, this type of evidence, you will get clearer about outcome indicators; what you see and hear that tells you an outcome has been achieved.

The second, is evidence to show that the organisation is functioning in the most effective and efficient way possible. This kind of evidence relates to **processes** – how the organisation delivers what it sets out to achieve.

In practice it is useful to gather both outcome and process data at the same time, where possible – both to save time and to avoid over consulting people.

Most of the independent advocacy organisations we spoke with are already gathering this type of evidence, in relation to service quality and how it is delivered. For example, they are asking questions such as:

- *Did your advocacy worker listen to the things you had to say?*
- *Did your advocacy worker explain their role, and how they could help?*
- *Did you find our service was easy to use?*
- *Are you clear about how to make a complaint, if you are unhappy with our service?*

These types of questions do not tell us whether or not we have delivered the outcome we are working toward – but they can potentially give us a lot of useful information about how to deliver our best for people who are seeking advocacy support.

Questions about processes are useful and particularly important if something about the service changes – such as opening times, or the services that are available – so that we can learn about the affect this change is having.

This type of question might also be asked only for a period of time, in specific circumstances, or of certain people (specific segments of the client group who would be most affected by a change, etc.) when we are trying to better understand something about our service.

For example, if we are trying to improve the experience of being on a waiting list, we might ask only people who are waiting about their ideas for improving this experience.

The best way to decide on the type of evidence or data you need to gather is to refer back to your **outcomes and outcome indicators**. These will give you clear guidance as to the kind of information you need to collect. The Resources section of this pack will be useful for determining how often you collect it, and by what means.

Qualitative or quantitative data?

Remember that you want to collect both *qualitative* (usually relating to thinking and feeling) and *quantitative* (things we can count) evidence.

Stories and quotes are *qualitative* evidence.

Self-assessment 'rating scales' like Outcome Stars are very useful for providing *quantitative* evidence e.g. *'When asked to rate 'do you feel that the services you are engaged with understand your wishes?' at their intake appointment, 15 people who scored themselves 4 (or less) out of 10 were scoring 7/8 out of 10, at the end of their advocacy support.'*

Closed questions also provide good quantitative evidence. Closed questions are those which require a 'yes' or 'no' answer. Open questions often start with *how, who or why* and require a more detailed answer. These are the type of questions where a text box, or space to write, is offered.

For example:

'Do you think you benefited from advocacy?' Yes/No –provides evidence that enables the organisation to make statements like *'97% of people asked reported that they have benefitted from advocacy.'*

These can be paired with an 'open' question providing qualitative evidence

'If you answered 'yes', what difference do you think independent advocacy has made to you?'

***Make it Easy*: Thinking about the evidence that you need to collect, craft a small set of questions that you believe will provide it *(remember to only collect what you need!)* Make these a blend of open and closed questions, ideally that can be included in the same form, on-line questionnaire, phone call or focus group interview *(all methods that are detailed in the Resources section)*.**

6.2 When to collect evidence

There is no 'right' time to collect evidence, but there are useful things to keep in mind when you are considering when might be the best time(s) to do so.

In order to assess whether a change has happened – in other words, whether independent advocacy support has made a difference – it is advisable to start by collecting information from the advocacy partner/group member at an early stage.

This is because, in order to measure the distance travelled accurately, you need to know where the journey began. This information is often referred to as **'baseline information',** or simply a ***'baseline'***.

You don't need to start collecting evidence the first time you meet the advocacy partner – in fact, the majority of independent advocacy providers we consulted with commented that trying to gather information in a first meeting frequently feels like the wrong thing to do. Most of them, however, reported that they start to gather baseline evidence within the first three visits, once the relationship feels established enough to ask someone to engage in this way.

Having an organisational policy that this type of information will be gathered **within the first three meetings** provides enough flexibility for independent advocates to decide when it is best to start the process based on their professional judgements within each individual independent advocacy relationship. In some cases, this might happen naturally within the first meeting, whilst for others it might make sense to wait until the relationship has settled down.

The baseline information collected needs to relate to the improvements your independent advocacy organisation is trying to make, which is likely to go beyond the types of questions that you ask a person at the point of offering advocacy. However, it is possible to include some of the key questions as part of an initial interview, if you judge it appropriate to do so.

A number of the tools contained in the Resources section are useful for collecting baseline information. There are several examples of rating scales that make this very easy and are all useful tools for collecting information at the beginning, and then again at stages throughout a person's independent advocacy journey so that changes can be measured.

Asking some questions at the end of an advocacy partnership or life of a collective advocacy group is essential – and this is what we found that most services are doing consistently. The weakness of this approach is that once the situation has been resolved the advocacy partner doesn't want to think about the difficulties they previously faced and has moved on with their lives. Also sending out printed forms for advocacy partners to complete may present problems for those with literacy issues and might not be an accessible format for everyone. Some advocacy partners might need the help of an independent advocate to complete the form itself. Unsurprisingly, most organisations reported pretty poor returns when they send out printed forms – generally less than 20%.

Therefore, it is important to consider the method of collecting feedback and having a minimum return rate in mind. The other disadvantage to asking for feedback only at the end of the relationship or intervention is that if the advocacy partner's desired outcome is not achieved that might cloud the way they feel about the way the advocacy was delivered. It is perfectly possible for an effective independent advocate to follow all the principles of independent advocacy and the code of best practice and still not achieve the desired outcome of the group or individual being supported. It might be difficult to separate the disappointment with the outcome from the process, which may have been 'by the book'.

Comparing baseline evidence with that which is reported at the end allows us to measure progress and to report confidently on the difference that independent advocacy makes. Again, tools like the various rating scales, which include some that are picture based, in the Resources section make it easy to compare 'before and after advocacy'.

Many of the independent advocacy organisations that we spoke with during our research are only seeking to gather data at the start and the end of the advocacy process, as a way of evidencing that key outcomes have been achieved. *This is absolutely good enough!*

6.3 How to collect evidence

In the Resources section, there are useful tools and other ideas for collecting evidence, including a number of 'rating scales'. Because scales – which come in a variety of forms – make measuring progress so straightforward, they are worth a specific mention in this section of the toolkit.

A 'rating scale' is used to respond to a statement by selecting a point, often on a numerical scale, that one believes best represents their position in relation to the statement. For example:

'I am confident that my wishes have been understood'
1 (not at all) 2 (unsure) 3 (somewhat confident) 4 (fully confident).

As well as being uncomplicated to use, rating scales are also useful as a consistent means of gathering the same evidence from an individual or group over time. There are examples of different rating scales of the Resources section of this toolkit.

Rating scales are useful because:

- They provide a clear 'baseline' to measure against – at any future stage
- They can relate directly to service outcomes
- They can be used with some flexibility – as each advocacy relationship is unique
- They can be used to establish an individual's own goals/aspirations *(in addition to those the service is seeking to measure)*
- They have potential to strengthen people's personal resilience, as they reveal 'real data' that reflects progress across time
- Funders often like them because they can provide a 'snapshot' of a service – charts and graphs representing grouped feedback, along with quotes, are ideal for sharing both quantitative and qualitative evidence.

It is important to explain to staff and volunteers to be confident about *why* information is being collected, and *how* the information will be used. When they are clear, they are able to confidently explain this to those who are being asked to share their information.

It should also be made very clear to advocacy partners and collective advocacy members that this information is in NO WAY intended as a means of comparing one person's progress with another's.

As mentioned earlier, it is important that every person understands that while the independent advocacy organisation needs and values this information, the advocacy partner/group member is not obliged to provide it – it is done so voluntarily, for the purpose of developing and sustaining the service.

To maximise the flexibility of this toolkit, and in acknowledgement of the fact there can be no 'one size fits all' approach, a range of tools and approaches for gathering evidence are explored in the Resources section. It is advisable to spend some time talking them through as a team, exploring questions like:

- **What looks like it would work well with most of the people who use our services? (with a view to agreeing a small number of possibilities, so there is choice)**
- **Are there any that we think are definitely not the tools for us to use? Why?**

It will also be important to discuss the methods which may be most appropriate for different types of clients, at different stages of a partnership or collective group, and in particular settings.

For instance – what might be the best method for people with literacy issues or with specific communication needs? Children and young people? Those who use English as a second or third language? The best methods in 1:1 versus group settings?

The best approach for your independent advocacy organisation will be made, and customised, by staff using it and talking together about it over time. Organisations will get the most benefit from gathering and using evidence if diverse perspectives are brought to bear on the process of drawing conclusions from the evidence collected. Staff, volunteers, and advocacy partners/collective members will bring different perspectives on what the evidence is saying.

Staff will need to feel confident in their ability to select appropriate tools and to introduce the evaluation tool being used, and its purpose, to the people they are working with. To generate this confidence, and ensure consistency of approach across the organisation, it is recommended that an appropriate level of training is offered to all staff; and that it is something that staff continue to talk about and work on clarifying together over time. There is more information about this in the Resources section.

Most of the independent advocacy organisations we visited told us that gathering evidence in a systematic way feels clumsy, and even uncomfortable, to begin with… but, critically, they said it gets much easier with practice. It may be a big learning curve for staff – or not. It is useful to think together about how to weave it into the 'usual' way of working as much as possible; and avoid making it yet another thing to do!

The key is to gather only the information you are going to use, and to record evidence as you go along.

It is useful to ask advocacy partners and collective members what questions *they* think the service should be asking, and *when* they want to be asked. They bring an important perspective on what your organisation needs to better understand, in order to achieve its potential for all involved.

There is no 'best way' to collect evidence. Because independent advocacy services are different, just like each person, it is for each organisation to decide when and how to gather evidence. This toolkit should provide everything a service needs to get started, or to refine and develop its current approach.

6.4 Where to collect evidence from

As mentioned earlier, you are likely to be seeing and hearing all sorts of evidence all the time…just not identifying it as such.

Once you have chosen your outcomes and their indicators, you are much more likely to become aware of the many ways in which evidence is regularly made available to you.

Evidence can be gathered from:

- Advocacy partners, collective advocacy members – and also those who support them (family/friends)
- Paid and unpaid staff
- Other professionals who are linked to the organisation (likely to be referrers, but might be other partner organisations or others that a partner, or collective group member, gives permission to contact for feedback.)

Most of these people are easily approached with a request for evidence – in paper/electronic form, through a phone interview, or focus group (all detailed in the Resources section.) As already mentioned, it is also likely that they are – inadvertently – offering 'evidence' already.

The trick is to notice, and record, it!

In the case of thank you notes/emails, it is *clear* that they are evidence.

When you hear someone comment about a difference in themselves or you observe changes in their behaviour or appearance, that you believe may indicate that an 'outcome' has been achieved its always important to have a conversation with the person to check and confirm what you have noticed.

That might sound something like this –

'Joe, I hear you describing that you are being more assertive with your CPN, asking for what you need. It sounds like she is really hearing what you are wanting to happen. Does it seem like that to you?

Evidence of outcome: *People know that their voice has been heard, and their wishes understood*.

Additionally, we might have agreed indicators that can be observed – such as a change in behaviour or appearance. If we notice a change in our advocacy partner or member, it is a good excuse to start a conversation about it – *do they have any sense that it is related to advocacy?*

If the answer confirms that what has been heard or observed reflects an *outcome being achieved*, then the next thing to do is to *ask for permission to record it – as evidence*.

Remember that you may need to explain why the organisation needs evidence, and how it will likely be used.

Storing evaluation/outcome information

It is important to strike a balance between respecting individual wishes, maintaining confidentiality, being clear about data protection, and being able to demonstrate the impact of your service.

Independent Advocacy Organisations will now be working with administrative systems that are GDPR compliant, and this type of data should be considered within that framework. If this an area that you require help to think through, these websites may be useful – **https://gdpr.eu/** and **https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation**

This toolkit has been designed to enable all independent advocacy organisations in Scotland to be confident in gathering evidence of their impact in relation to the three Independent Advocacy National Outcomes – and whatever else they deem important, or useful, to understand in more depth.

At the end of the pack is a list of other useful links and resources to look at, if your service is curious about becoming event more sophisticated in how it gathers and uses evidence.

Resources

This section of the toolkit offers a range of tools for gathering evidence, and some thoughts on ways in which this evidence can be used to strengthen independent advocacy organisations.

Everyone who is asked to complete a questionnaire, or other tool, should understand why they are being asked for their opinions *(why the organisation is collecting the information)*, and what handing over their information will mean *(how it will be used)*.

They should also be clear that – while the organisation values the information – they are under no obligation to share it.

How do I choose which tool to use?

This section of the toolkit offers a range of tools for gathering evidence, and pointers for thinking about using them. It is worth taking the time to have a look through the entire Resources section as an introduction, to familiarise yourself with what is here.

The table below matches the national outcomes, and some of their indicators, with potential tools for gathering the evidence. It shows that a single method, like a questionnaire or interview, can be used to gather information relating to a range of outcomes.

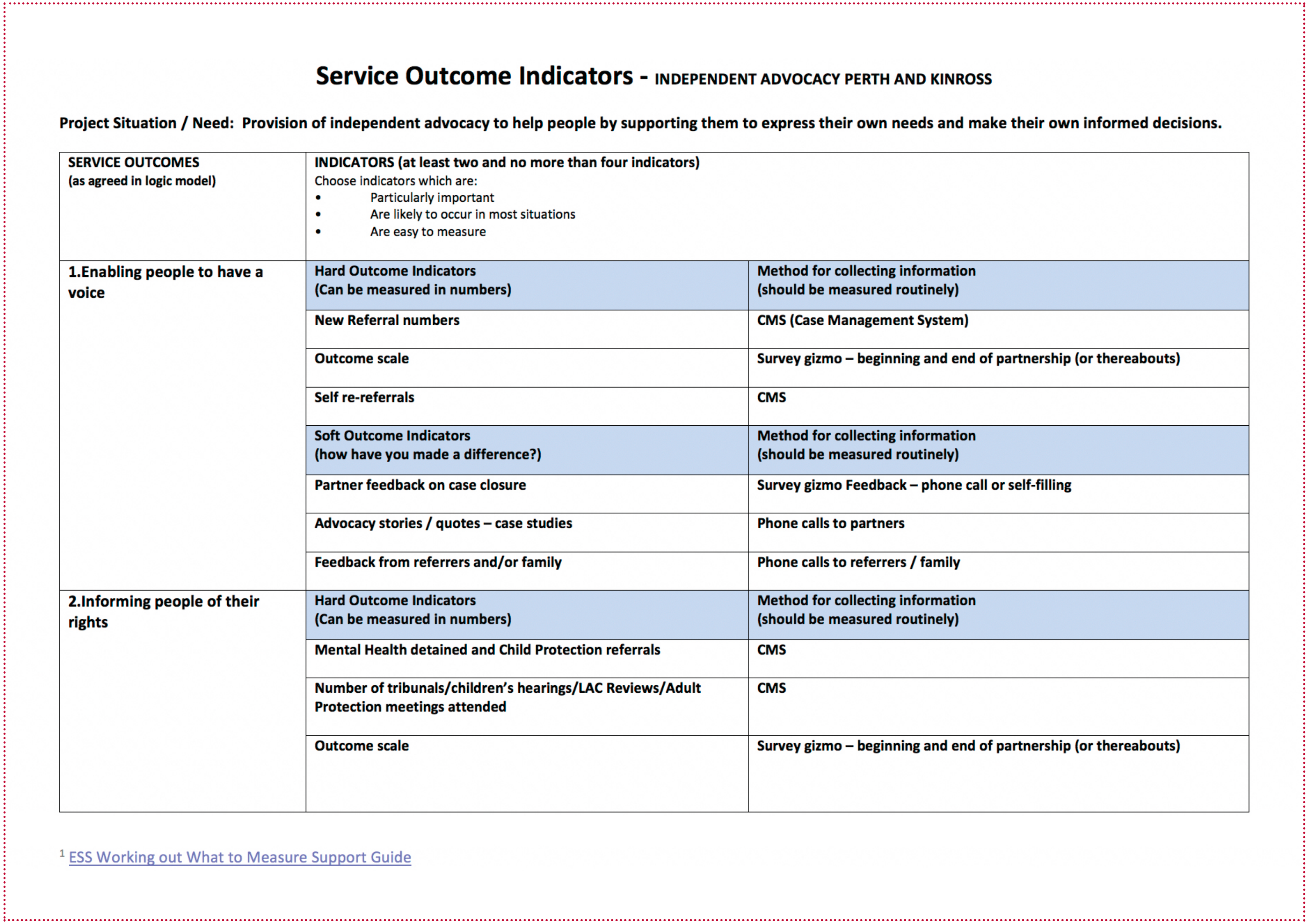
This simple table shows an advocacy worker or volunteer exactly what they need to remember, in order to gather evidence.

Independent Advocacy National *Outcomes*	**What do we believe will indicate success? *Indicators***	**What *methods* could be used to gather the information?**
Independent advocacy enables people to be better informed about their rights, as well as understanding their needs and wishes and the choices they have. It increases their agency and power to choose their own actions freely, as much as possible.	◗ People are having conversations about their options ◗ People are talking about their rights ◗ People are able to describe what they want to happen ◗ People are clear about the plans they have for the future	◗ questionnaires ◗ self-rating scales ◗ 1:1 interviews ◗ focus groups ◗ informal feedback ◗ observation ◗ case notes

Independent Advocacy National *Outcomes*	**What do we believe will indicate success? *Indicators***	**What *methods* could be used to gather the information?**
Independent advocacy supports people to recognise, understand and challenge power imbalances that influence their lives. It enables them to challenge these imbalances, in order to try and realise their rights, needs and wishes. When someone is unable to take personal action, their advocacy worker will ensure that their rights are upheld.	◗ People are able to tell a clear story of what they want, and why they want it ◗ People talk confidently about their rights ◗ People are able to actively engage in conversations in which they had previously felt powerless, or hopeless ◗ People believe that everything possible has been done in pursuit of their desired outcomes ◗ Decisions are taken which reflect the full rights of a person who is unable to act on their own behalf	◗ Questionnaires ◗ self-rating scales ◗ 1:1 interviews ◗ focus groups ◗ informal feedback ◗ observation ◗ case notes

Independent Advocacy National *Outcomes*	**What do we believe will indicate success? *Indicators***	**What *methods* could be used to gather the information?**
Independent advocacy supports people to know that their voices have been heard and their needs and wishes understood	◗ The professional(s) with whom a meeting, with advocacy support is happening, accurately reflects that they have understood what it is that a person, or group, wishes to happen ◗ Active consideration is given to the true wishes of a collective advocacy group, by the professional(s)/ others in a meeting	◗ Questionnaires ◗ 1:1 interviews ◗ focus groups ◗ informal feedback ◗ observation ◗ feedback ◗ case notes

Here is another example of a similar table from Independent Advocacy Perth and Kinross.



Service Outcome Indicators - INDEPENDENT ADVOCACY PERTH AND KINROSS

Project Situation / Need: Provision of independent advocacy to help people by supporting them to express their own needs and make their own informed decisions.

SERVICE OUTCOMES **(as agreed in logic model)**	**INDICATORS (at least two and no more than four indicators)** Choose indicators which are: • Particularly important • Are likely to occur in most situations • Are easy to measure	
1.Enabling people to have a voice	**Hard Outcome Indicators (Can be measured in numbers)**	**Method for collecting information (should be measured routinely)**
	New Referral numbers	**CMS (Case Management System)**
	Outcome scale	**Survey gizmo – beginning and end of partnership (or thereabouts)**
	Self re-referrals	**CMS**
	Soft Outcome Indicators (how have you made a difference?)	**Method for collecting information (should be measured routinely)**
	Partner feedback on case closure	**Survey gizmo Feedback – phone call or self-filling**
	Advocacy stories / quotes – case studies	**Phone calls to partners**
	Feedback from referrers and/or family	**Phone calls to referrers / family**
2.Informing people of their rights	**Hard Outcome Indicators (Can be measured in numbers)**	**Method for collecting information (should be measured routinely)**
	Mental Health detained and Child Protection referrals	**CMS**
	Number of tribunals/children's hearings/LAC Reviews/Adult Protection meetings attended	**CMS**
	Outcome scale	**Survey gizmo – beginning and end of partnership (or thereabouts)**

[1] ESS Working out What to Measure Support Guide

Once you know what you are trying to measure (outcomes), you are able to select the best tool to use for gathering evidence.

The tools and approaches included here have been selected for their flexibility – they can be used to gather a vast range of information/evidence, from a range of stakeholder groups.

As mentioned in the previous section of the toolkit, there are a variety of ways of gathering evidence. Much of it can be done as part of day-to-day work practice, and some of it will require additional effort.

Methods for gathering evidence are wide-ranging, and should be selected in relation to the capacity of your organisation to undertake them, as well as the needs and preferences of the people you are working with. The simpler it can be made, the more likely it is to happen!

Once I have a tool, who do I use it with?

As mentioned in the previous section of the toolkit, there are other useful 'sources of evidence' in addition to the advocacy partner/collective group member. Friends and family, other professionals, the advocacy worker or volunteer, and other collective group members are all good sources to consider.

The tools in this section are flexible, and can be used with most people. In addition to the table at the beginning of this section related to choosing tools, each example in the toolkit clearly indicates who it is recommended for use with – advocacy partners, family members, advocacy staff/volunteers, and other professionals.

When you know what you what you are trying to measure (outcomes), you can then think about who the potential sources of evidence are – in addition to the advocacy partner or collective group member. You will need to be sure to ask the right questions of the right people – so creating a questionnaire, or other tool, with each different audience in mind is essential. What can you learn from family members? What might you learn from other professionals who signpost people to your organisation – or those who experience the impact of advocacy, through their experience of your work?

While there is some information you will want to gather consistently from certain groups, such as advocacy partners/collective members, there may be other information that you choose to gather from a 'sample' of people who have received advocacy – or are otherwise connected to the process, such as other professionals.

For instance, a 'sample' of people might be selected for more in-depth analysis, for 1:1 interviews, or to act as a focus group.

Sampling is often done in one of three ways:

- Randomly – for instance, choosing every 10th person on the database
- Deliberately – choosing individuals who represent a range of characteristics e.g. issue with which they require advocacy, geographical location, age, length of time a service was provided, etc.
- Voluntarily – where you issue an open invitation for anyone who is interested to join a focus group, have a telephone interview, or complete a questionnaire.

Once again, it will be for the independent advocacy organisation to decide how much, or how little, it has the capacity to do. We hope that, for all of you, there will be tools in the following section that can strengthen your efforts.

Tools for collecting evidence of independent advocacy's impact

1. Questionnaires

Recommended for use with: Anyone

We heard that questionnaires are the most common tool that independent advocacy organisations use for collecting evidence; and that the return rate for paper-based questionnaires, and therefore the amount of *evidence actually gathered*, is – generally speaking – quite low.

We heard some providers are noticing they get a better response when they send an electronic survey link, or have the form available on the advocate's phone, or a tablet; so that it can be completed in person, rather than posted or emailed.

We also heard that some independent advocacy organisations have found that asking a partner to fill in a final questionnaire in the meeting BEFORE the final one appears to generate richer information than filling it in at the very last meeting. Reflections on *the experience of working with an advocate/collective advocacy group* are likely to be reported in greater detail when considered separately from any 'results' that have been achieved.

Questionnaires are a means of review, and are particularly useful when seeking to assess an independent advocacy organisation's processes. They can also be useful for evidencing outcomes, but can only do so when they use a combination of *open and closed questions* (see example questionnaires below.)

Asking for simple details like age range and postcode offers additional possibilities for generating quantitative data (things you can count)– as you can identify and report on findings for specific age categories, or people living in certain neighbourhoods.

For example *"80% of people between the ages 41-55 report that they are more confident to express their views in a range settings, as a result of independent advocacy – but that is reported to be true for only 67% of people between the ages of 16-25."*

While questionnaires are a useful and generally easy way to gather evidence, it is worth putting time into crafting the right questions for your independent advocacy organisation's needs. In addition to the outcomes you are trying to achieve, there may be specific things you want to understand better.

In this section, there are lists of useful questions to consider, for different stakeholder groups. Your questionnaire should contain the questions that you need answered, in order to give you the evidence you require – and any others that will support your organisation to learn about how it can deliver its best.

The first example questionnaire is based on one shared by Angus Independent Advocacy, intended for advocacy partners. Notice the blend of open and closed questions – enabling both quantitative and qualitative data to be gathered, and reported on. You will also notice that some questions relate to outcomes, and others to processes.

On this questionnaire, questions like *'what worked well'*, and *'what could have been better'* are asking about *processes*. The question about whether or not someone believes that independent advocacy enabled their voice to be heard more clearly, is a question about *outcomes*.

Questionnaire: Advocacy Partner

1. How would you rate the support you received from Angus Independent Advocacy, on a scale of 1(low) to 5 (high)?

   1 2 3 4 5

2. What worked well for you?

   ....

3. What could have worked better?

   ....

4. Please complete the following sentence:

   "Independent advocacy enabled me to …"

   ....

5. What do you believe *changed*, because of your advocacy support?

   ....

6. Do you believe that independent advocacy support enabled your views and wishes to be more clearly understood, than if you hadn't had independent advocacy support?

   Yes/No (please circle)

   Why? ....

7. Would you recommend Angus Independent Advocacy to a friend?

   Yes/No (please circle)

   Why? ....

8. Can you offer any other feedback, that might help us to improve?

   ....

9. Age range: 18-25 26-40 41-55 56-70 70+

10. Postcode: ....

The following questionnaire comes from Partners in Advocacy (Glasgow), designed for use with children. Respondents are given a sheet of red/amber/green face stickers, like the pictures at the top of the page, to place in the boxes as means of giving feedback on their experience of independent advocacy.

partners in advocacy

EVALUATION – HOW DID MY ADVOCACY WORKER DO?

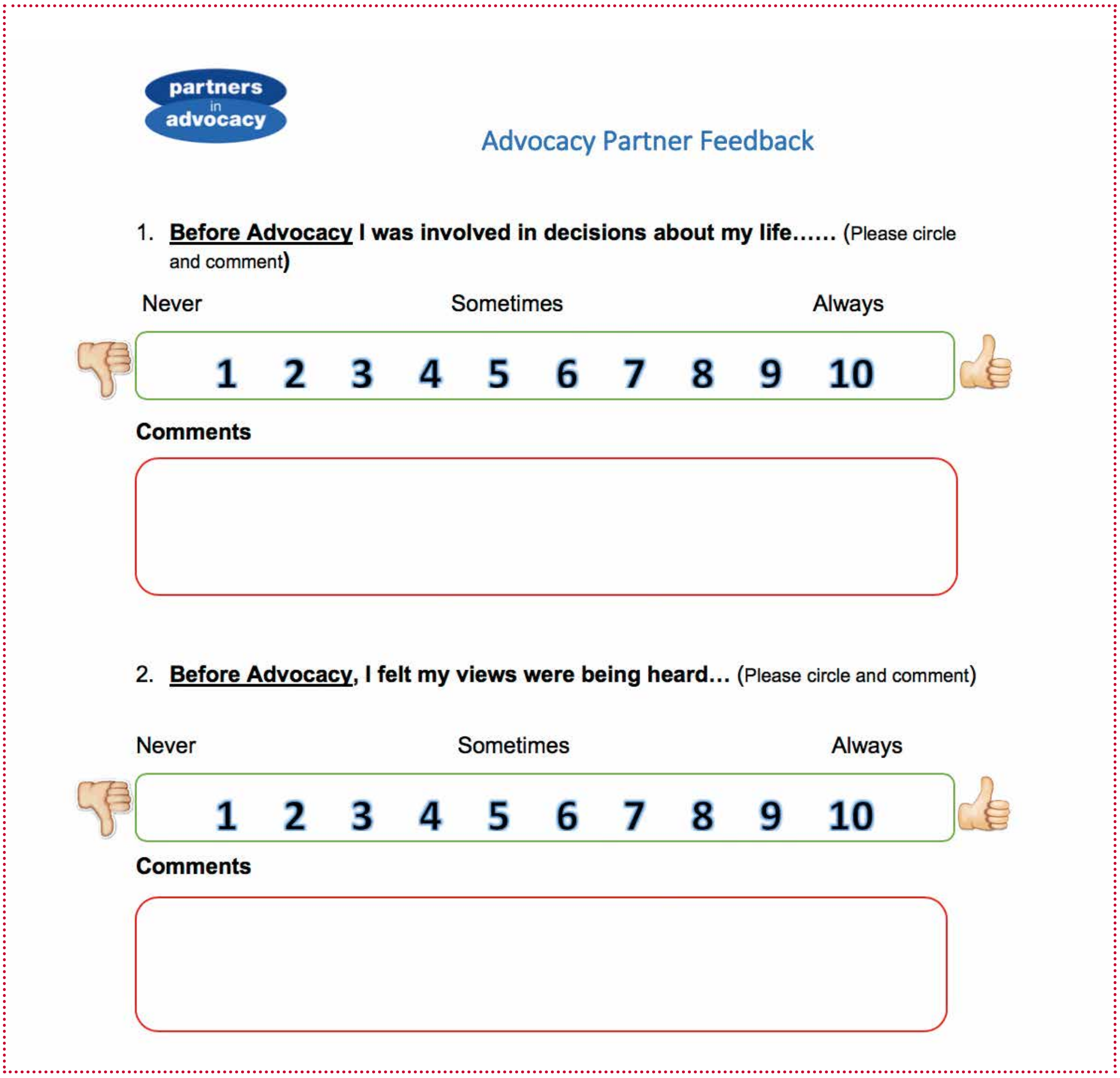
	QUESTION	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW	Tell us more if you want
YES NO MAYBE	Did your advocacy worker explain how they could help?				
	Did your advocacy worker listen to the things you had to say?				
	Did advocacy make you feel that the things you had to say were important?				
	Did having advocacy make a difference?				
	If you have anything else that you would like to tell us about your advocacy worker, you can write it here:				

You can put your name here if you want to: ___________________________

We have chosen to include the following questionnaire, also from Partners in Advocacy (Glasgow) – as it shows the potential to use one questionnaire to learn about a partner's experience both *before* and *after* experiencing independent advocacy.

While it is preferable to collect baseline information at the start, if that isn't possible – for whatever reason – it is worth asking a partner to reflect on their experience at the end of the partnership. Again, each independent advocacy organisation will need to make judgements about what is the best approach for its staff and client group.

The other possibility that it illustrates is that of embedding rating scales **(see page 50)** within questionnaires.



partners in advocacy

Advocacy Partner Feedback

1. **Before Advocacy I was involved in decisions about my life……** (Please circle and comment)

Never Sometimes Always

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Comments

2. **Before Advocacy, I felt my views were being heard…** (Please circle and comment)

Never Sometimes Always

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Comments

When visiting independent advocacy organisations, we were shown a range of questionnaires. Questionnaires can be any length, and presented in a range of styles. The important feature is, of course, *the questions*.

We have assembled a range of potential questions for different stakeholder groups – to inspire you to think about both open and closed questions that might be useful with different stakeholder groups. As advocacy partners are the focus of the examples provided, we have not included questions for them.

Questions for Collective Advocacy Members

One thing to keep in mind when measuring the impact of collective advocacy is that the outcomes are likely to be a mix of changes in the organisations or systems they are working to influence – and also changes for members, *individually*.

While collective advocacy groups in Scotland have some evidence of successfully influencing the way that services are offered, there is perhaps less recorded about how being a member of a collective advocacy group changes the individual members.

It is also likely that 'softer' impacts on services and the professionals who work in them go unrecorded. For example, changing attitudes to specific groups *(e.g. elderly people, people who hear voices, etc)*, thinking differently, and even using different behaviours. Again, only by asking for feedback will independent advocacy organisations understand the impacts they have, and outcomes they achieve. It may be worth collective advocacy groups looking at the questions suggested for other professionals **(see page 49)** for inspiration.

We held a small focus group **(a method that is discussed on page 46)** with people who have been involved in collective advocacy, asking about the impact for them, personally – and heard some very rich stories.

"[Collective advocacy] has made a huge, positive difference to me – to learn about myself, and others. We are all there for the same reason – which helps to build trust. Some of the barriers I might experience socially are gone – because we are all there for same reason."

"[Collective advocacy is] a reason to get out of bed – a big part of my recovery. Some structure, something to do – that also might help someone else. Small steps that have helped me get back on my feet."

"We have had similar experiences, so we feel more equal…power dynamics are different…. Taking action, rather than passively taking what you are given…that is motivating!"

"I have learned more compassion, and I want to model that for others…so people can recognise the value of it. Kindness to yourself, and mostly other people."

"Meeting real people, who are having real feelings…our current news is so terrible, that it is kind of dehumanising. Collective advocacy is the opposite."

Some of the outcomes described in these statements include, increased social confidence, a sense of empowerment, a positive impact on recovery and better self-care. Asking the right questions will make this evidence is available to organisations, to demonstrate some of the less obvious impacts of collective advocacy.

Useful questions for collective advocacy members

- What do you believe has changed, for you, as a result of being a collective advocacy member?
- Has being a collective advocacy member had an impact on other areas of your life? Y/N
  If yes, please describe.
- How is being a member of a collective advocacy group different, in your experience, from other groups you may be involved with?
- Has the experience of being part of a collective advocacy group resulted in your being more engaged in your community (joining other campaigns, being more aware of politics and power issues locally, etc.). Y/N
  If yes, please describe.
- Would you recommend joining a collective advocacy group to others? Y/N
  If yes, why?
- If you were invited to describe the value of collective advocacy to people who make decisions about whether or not to fund it, what would you want them to know?

Questions for Family and Friends

None of the independent advocacy organisations that we visited are routinely gathering feedback from family and friends of advocacy partners/collective group members. We understand that some may consider this an intrusion into the privacy of the partner/group member – and respect that this may be a principle that organisations are not willing to consider revisiting.

That said, there may be others – particularly those working with children and young people – who wish to consider this potential source of evidence.

One of the reasons it may be worth considering is that the people who are close to a partner/group member, but outside of their involvement with independent advocacy, offer a unique perspective on the difference that it can make.

It may well be that family/friends are a group that your organisations 'sample' on occasion, or you engage with intermittently – when opportunities arise, and it seems appropriate to ask the advocacy partner/collective member for permission to ask their family/friend for feedback. When asking permission, it is important to share the questions that you would like to ask. Remember to be clear about *why* the information is being gathered, and *how* it will be used.

Useful questions for family and friends

- How would you describe the impact of being involved with independent advocacy for your friend/family member?
- If they have spoken about the experience, what have they described?
- Do you notice any changes in their behaviour or attitude, that you believe is a result of being involved with independent advocacy?
- Would you encourage them to use independent advocacy again, in the future?
  Y/N
  Why?
- As a result of your friend/family members experience using independent advocacy, would you consider it for yourself in the future? Y/N
  Why?

Questions for other professionals, who have experienced the advocacy partnership/collective group

Professionals who have experienced the difference that independent advocacy can make are very useful to hear from. Their feedback on the impact that independent advocacy can demonstrate its influence on services, and the professionals who deliver them.

Engaging with independent advocacy might mean that professionals begin to think, and even act, in new ways – because advocacy has shown them a way of making decisions that can meaningfully involve the person/people who will be affected by them.

If you never ask, you will never know about this wider impact.

Like friends and families, other professionals may be a group that you 'sample', or engage with when an opportunity arises – because of the relationship built through advocacy.

Because the questions you are likely to ask are about their own experience of advocacy, it isn't necessary to ask a partner/collective group member's permission.

Useful questions for professionals

- Was working with advocacy involvement noticeably different to working without it? Y/N
  In what ways?

- Do you believe that advocacy had an effect on the choices that you were responsible for making, as a professional? Y/N
  In what ways?

- Have you discussed your experience of independent advocacy with other colleagues? Y/N
  If yes, what have you said about the experience?

- Has your experience of advocacy affected your thinking, or the behaviours that you use, as a professional? Y/N
  If yes, please explain.

- Would you be likely to recommend independent advocacy to someone in the future? Y/N
  If yes, to whom – and why?

Useful Technology

Most of the independent advocacy organisations we spoke with are using paper questionnaires, often delivered through the post, with enclosed return envelopes. Most of these get fairly poor returns – and have therefore spent money unnecessarily.

We heard from those organisations who are using technology, that they have a significantly higher return rate. This is particularly true when the advocate is able to offer the questionnaire in person, using their phone or a tablet. It is also possible to send a link via email to an online questionnaire – which we heard also gets better returns than paper sent through the post.

As has been said already in this toolkit, it is for each independent advocacy organisation to consider the options, and create an approach to gathering evidence that suits their client group, and their available resources.

An additional benefit of using technology is that the programmes produce a report on the data that is input – so no time is required for this important task. The programmes will produce a report on the data, which the organisation can then analyse, and easily include in any reports.

The two programmes that we heard being used by independent advocacy organisations – in addition to specific database/case management systems that they are using – are Survey Monkey **https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk** and Survey Gizmo **https://www.surveygizmo.com**.

Survey Monkey is a FREE tool, while Survey Gizmo subscription, and offers a special charity rate. It is capable of more sophisticated collection/reporting of data, and also is able to be integrated within other on-line organisational systems *(see website for further information)*.

While Survey Gizmo is a paid-for service, it might not cost an organisation too much more than it is spending on postage for evaluations already; though it is likely to produce much better returns on that investment.

Survey Gizmo, and Survey Monkey, are able to gather and report both quantitative and qualitative evidence, and both are relatively easy to use.

2. Individual Interviews

Recommended for use with: Anyone

Interviews are an excellent way to gather evidence from the full range of sources mentioned in the section on questionnaires. In one sense, they are simply an alternative method for completing a questionnaire – with the advantage of being able to ask supplementary questions.

An interview presents an opportunity to gather a range of information – evidence of impact/outcomes, specific feedback on the way the service was delivered, ideas about how service delivery could be improved as well as specifics about methods or interventions that someone believes were important for them.

All of the questions suggested in the previous section on questionnaires would also be good interview questions.

The main drawback of interviewing is that it is a time-consuming means of gathering evidence. For that reason, it is likely to be used to supplement evidence gathered more consistently, and by other means. It is likely that conducting interviews is something that an organisation uses more infrequently, to supplement routinely gathered evidence, or to answer specific questions more fully.

For instance, arranging telephone interviews with a small number of people whose advocacy partnerships/groups have closed, to hear about their experience in more depth than a written questionnaire allows. Or arranging a small number of interviews with people with a shared characteristic which is under-represented amongst advocacy partners, enabling the organisation to learn more about how to be more accessible to this section of the population.

Interviews can be done in person, or on the telephone – and you may get the best response if you offer people a choice. For a questionnaire that has between 5-8 questions, with a number of qualitative questions being asked *(hearing these stories is what makes interviewing worth the investment of time)*, you are probably asking people to participate in an interview that lasts 20-30 minutes.

You will want to think about how you will gather the evidence – make a record of the interview. Having a second person present to take a note is perhaps the easiest way to record an interview – or a voice recording. If you are making a voice recording, it is important to have clear permission from the person being interviewed, and assure them that the recording will be destroyed after it has been transcribed.

3. Focus groups

Recommended for use with: Anyone

Focus groups – or group interviews – offer something different to individual interviews, in that participants are often in conversation amongst themselves, so encouraged to think about different aspects of their independent advocacy experience than they might if only speaking to an interviewer.

The key is to invite/select people who have something in common – their advocacy issue or setting, a shared life feature or condition, etc. They need something that gives them a sense of connection – as well as making participants feel more at ease knowing that they have something in common, it also will help keep the conversation more focused than it might be otherwise.

How to run a focus group

Ideally there are 4-8 participants in a group – start with a small group, if it is your first time.

A focus group is not an ordinary conversation, as it follows a schedule of questions and is recorded in some way. Thought needs to be given to how the group will be recorded. The focus group can be voice recorded *(be sure to get permission from participants)* although it might be difficult to hear people talking over each other. It is hard to take notes and run a focus group at the same time – which makes the best option to have a second person who is taking a note of what people say. This could be a detailed note, or simply putting the main points on a flipchart.

Focus groups have the advantage that people who take part can listen and respond to each other as well as to the facilitator, meaning that the discussion can take new and interesting directions. People generally become quite energised when sharing their stories with one another, so the facilitator will want to be careful not to let things go too far off track.

It can be useful to send questions out to participants in advance, so they come with thoughts to share. Just as with a questionnaire, you can combine questions relating to the outcomes you need to evidence, and also to get feedback about participants' experience of your organisation, and its activities. There are a range of useful examples in the section on questionnaires **(page 43)**.

Focus groups can be carried out in a variety of settings, including the organisation's own premises or a local community venue. Ideally the area will be quiet, comfortable and reasonably private. Unless you are inviting other professionals, it is good practice to offer to cover travel expenses.

4. Rating Scales

Recommended for use with: Advocacy Partners and Collective Group Members

Rating scales were singled out for their usefulness in the first section of the toolkit, particularly for use with Advocacy Partners and Collective Group Members. What makes them particularly useful is the fact that they were created to 'measure' change in a systematic and clear way. This makes them useful both for the organisation's learning, and also enabling the partner/group member to reflect on, and thus deepen, their own understanding of what participating in independent advocacy means for them.

Another thing that is useful about rating scales is their inherent flexibility – they can function, and look like, whatever the organisation believes will best suit its purpose for collecting evidence.

They can be a traditional numerical scale, a selection of images, an abacus (wooden counting frame), a drawing of a pizza – for which toppings represent intended outcomes. Or a real pizza for which toppings represent intended outcomes!

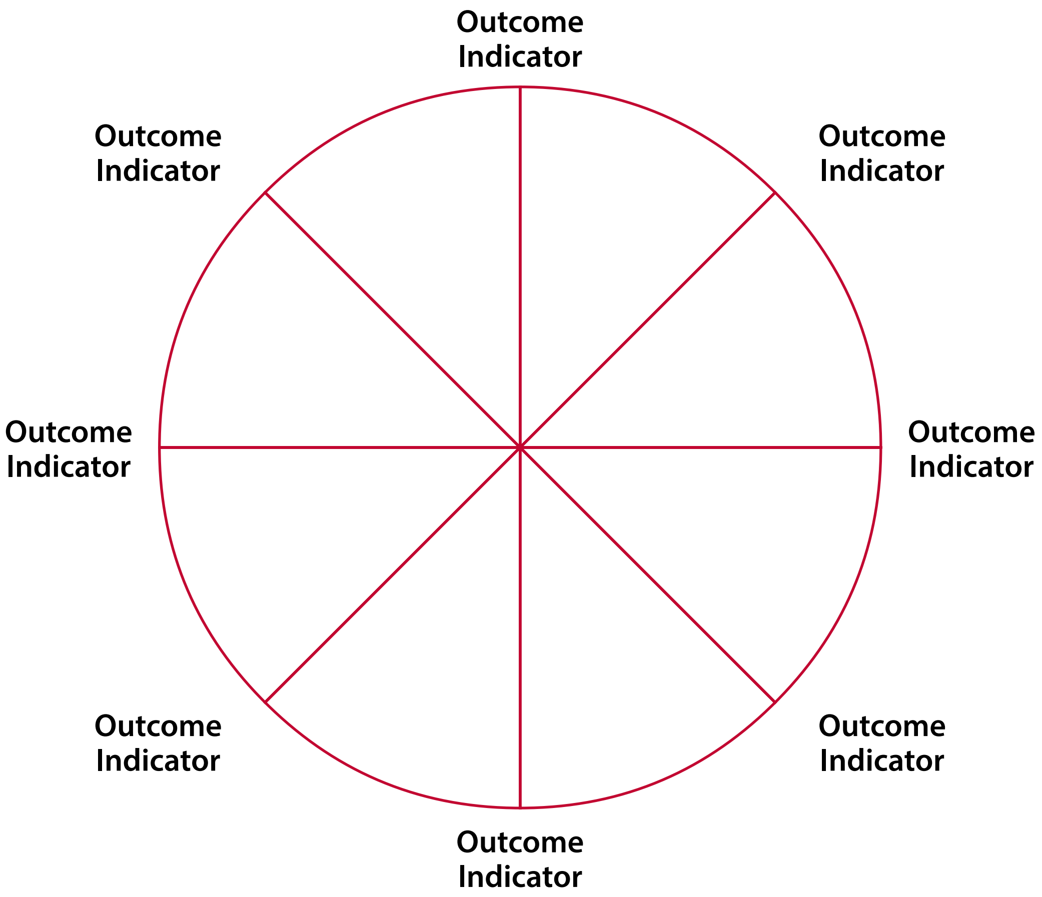
There are useful examples of paper-based scales available, and – on a paid for 'licensed' basis – including a range of support resources, at the social enterprise **http://www.outcomesstar.org.uk**.

We heard from a couple of the independent advocacy organisations that we visited, in preparation for writing this toolkit, that they are very pleased with what their use of the Outcomes Star – and that it is a worthwhile investment of just over £300 annually.

There is also a very good free resource available on the Evaluation Support Scotland website, called the Evaluation Wheel. This is, in essence, the same tool as an 'Outcomes star' – just visually different. The tool, and instructions for using it, can be found at **http://www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/resources/357**.

Here is another version of an Evaluation Wheel.

Evaluation Wheel



How to use the Evaluation Wheel

1. The wheel should relate to an outcome – for example self confidence. The wheel could be used to track progress in relation to a small number of outcomes; you want to have at least three indicators for each.
2. Each spoke should relate to an indicator of the agreed outcome. In other words things that can be considered evidence. The person themselves can decide on the indicators.
3. The person then marks where they are on the spoke, the closer to the centre, the lower their rating. This is the 'baseline'.
4. Revisit this exercise on a regular basis to see how the changes have happened.
5. You could photocopy the baseline onto acetate and lay it over a new wheel to show the change over time.
6. You could pull together the results from different people to form a collective profile of the project/organisational outcomes in a report.

While these wheels and the Outcomes Star look different, they are all simple 'rating scales':

- On which desired outcomes are identified (and placed on each 'spoke')
- On which an individual, or group, 'rate' themselves along a scale *(places a mark on a point on each spoke, in relation to where they believe they are at present, in relation to the corresponding outcome.)* It can be useful to ask the person doing the rating what that 'rate' indicates for them – why have they selected it? This is important information, as it tells you what the rating *actually* means.
- The wheel/star is intended to be revisited at different intervals – beginning and end, or other key stages – so that a measurement *(distance travelled)* can be established.
- One independent advocacy organisation we spoke with said they had identified that if they asked for an Outcome Star to be completed in week six, they often got 'false data' – as it was a common point for partner's optimism to dip. Organisations may initially wish to experiment with repeating the star/wheel (or other scales) at varying intervals – in order to identify the best times to use it.
- Whether or not the advocate/group members wish to offer an opportunity for partners/one another to reflect on what the evidence gathered means to the person who filled it in – to describe what it says to them about their own journey – is a decision for each organisation.

This is the only resource in the toolkit that has this potential in-built.

An alternative rating scale: Pizza

Recommended for use with: Children and young people, people with a learning disability

Some advocacy partners/groups might engage more readily with a rating scale that is presented as something more familiar, and thus easier to engage with.

This scale works well in various formats, so can be easily adapted to different environments.

There are some settings – youth centres, various residential settings, community centres – where it may be possible to make an actual pizza. Alternatively, it is just as effective to create a 'wipeable' pizza base that is laminated (or even draw one on a flipchart/white board!)

What turns a pizza into a rating scale is creating a code for the toppings. For instance, pepperoni = confident to express my opinions, mushrooms = confident that I can influence decisions being made about me, onions = I understand my rights, cheese = feel I have power, etc.

The amount of each topping that is put on the pizza reflects the 'rating' that the partner/group member is giving – making this type of scale slightly different. Rather than numbers on a scale signifying a position in relation to an outcome the amount of a representative topping signifies the position.

For instance – the 'baseline' pizza image might have very few toppings, or even none of certain toppings like cheese = *I feel I have power, or onions = I understand my rights*. Over time, the amount of toppings will likely increase. Therefore, it is still possible to make valid comparisons – noticing any increases.

Once a pizza has been completed, take a photo of it. This then becomes the record – against which future pizzas can be compared!

An alternative rating scale: Image-scale

Recommended for use with: Anyone

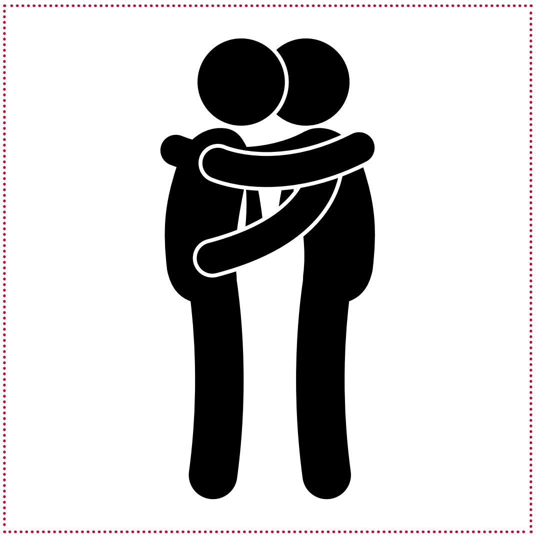
Some advocacy partners and group members might be more comfortable relating to images than words. For that reason, this image-scale tool is included.

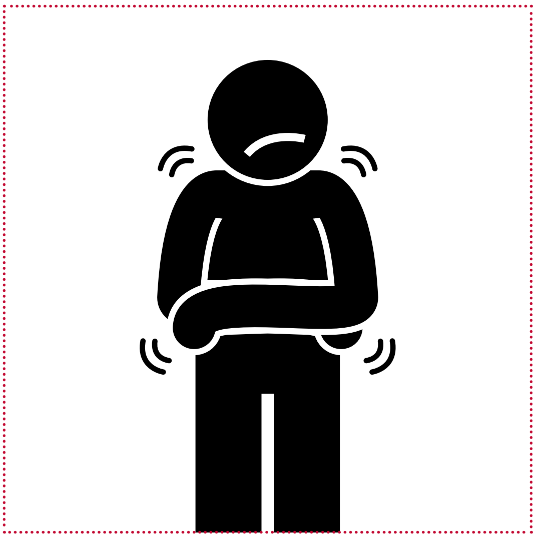
The images on the page depict people in a range of feeling states – which can be 'labelled' by the person who is using them as a rating scale. Like the evaluation wheel, start by being clear about the outcome you are asking them to 'rate' themselves in relation to – and then ask them to select an image that represents how they feel in relation to it.

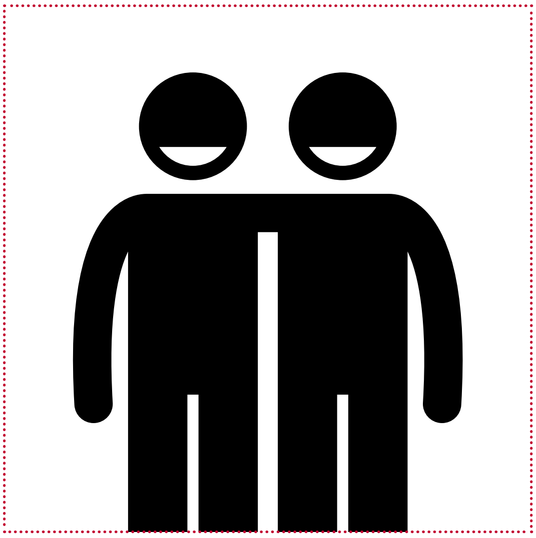
Ask them to describe what the image says to them – how would they describe the image? Let them know you will be taking brief notes about what they describe – which you will read back to them at the end, to be sure that they are happy with what you have recorded.

Just like the evaluation wheel/Outcome Star, this is a tool to revisit on occasion. When using ANY scale, you can ask people to say a bit about why they chose the point on the scale/image – what does it mean to them? This also means that you are collecting both qualitative and quantitative evidence, which you can report on.

Just like the other scales, you might use this to establish a 'rating' in relation to a number of outcomes – with the individual choosing a new image, and describing it, for each.







5. Hurrah Wall

For use with: Anyone

It was mentioned in the first section of this toolkit that there is likely to be a lot of evidence available throughout any given week that goes unrecorded, and perhaps even unrecognised, as *evidence*. This will most likely be thank you notes, text messages and emails.

Angus Independent Advocacy described the positive impacts that using a large white board in their reception area as a 'Hurrah Wall' has had for staff, and the organisation as a whole. Thank you notes and other forms of positive feedback are gathered and displayed on the wall – greeting everyone who comes through the door with evidence of the positive impact of independent advocacy in Angus.

In addition to offering a motivating reminder, every day, of the organisation's purpose and impact a Hurrah Wall is also excellent 'PR' – as most people sitting in the reception area will use the opportunity to look at it. This will include people who are considering using independent advocacy for the first time, current partners/group members, other professionals, and family/friends of partners.

It is good to clear the wall once a quarter, and at that time to consider the cards and notes as potential evidence of outcomes. Simply write each outcome on a sheet of paper, and put it on the floor – lined up in a row. Then read each note/card and – if appropriate – put it down beneath the outcome that you consider it to be evidence of.

There will be a number of things that won't actually be evidence of outcomes – simply notes of gratitude. That is fine – simply put the evidence you find in its appropriate column and then record it.

6. Observation, case notes and feedback

Apart from the Hurrah Wall, tools and approaches in this section of the toolkit are examples of how to structure requests for feedback, and methods for gathering it.

In addition to this type of evidence, advocates' own observations and case notes, as well as informal feedback provided by partners or group members, *are evidence*.

Generally speaking, it is best to consider observation and case notes as sources of evidence that substantiate – support the truth of – evidence provided by others, rather than as a primary source.

For instance, an **observation** that an advocacy partner appears to be using better self-care can be used to substantiate the partner's description of independent advocacy having a positive impact on their mental health.

The observation would not, on its own, constitute evidence of improved mental health – but it can be used to substantiate evidence that was provided by the advocacy partner/group member.

The same would be true for **case notes** – not to be considered a *primary source* of evidence, but a good secondary source which can be used to substantiate other evidence.

Informal **feedback** – that which hasn't been invited – from any of the stakeholder groups mentioned in this section of the toolkit can also be considered evidence. As described on **page 29** all that is required is to ask permission to write down what has been said, and label it evidence.

7. Reporting on your evidence

Often when you report your evidence you will be reporting to *funders* – but they are only one of your potential audiences.

Current and potential partners/collective group members, related organisations, your Board, potential volunteers, friends and family of partners and group members are *all* potentially interested in your evidence.

Annual reports, your website and social media, promotional materials, volunteer recruitment, funding applications and fundraising campaigns are all opportunities to use the evidence you have gathered.

Remember to include both quantitative and qualitative data when sharing your evidence – for all audiences. Present quantitative data through visual representations such as tables, pie charts or graphs – as they can depict a lot of data in a focused and clear style.

Qualitative data is best presented in quotes or case studies. When writing case studies, it is best to use people's own words as much as possible. Ideally, they might be asked to write it themselves, or with some support.

Funders often indicate what they would like to read in reports, and in some cases may have stipulated the use of specific reporting templates. If no reporting template has been provided, be sure to provide evidence which is directly related to the outcomes/measures that you detailed in your funding agreement.

Enjoy sharing the evidence you gather of your organisation's outcomes in as many ways, with as many audiences, as is useful.

The SIAA looks forward to the opportunity to share evidence of members achieving the national outcomes for independent advocacy in Scotland – and knowing that there is an evidence base for the difference that independent advocacy can make.

Glossary of terms

Output

Outputs are the things you do and activities you undertake to achieve your outcomes. These often contain action words like: *deliver, provide, facilitate, create*.

Outcome

Outcomes are the change or difference you want to make through the work you do. Outcomes should include change words like: *increase, decrease, reduce, improve*.

Impact

The longer-term difference or change that your organisation or project makes.

Outcome indicators

Indicators are the things you measure to tell you whether or not you're achieving your outcomes. Indicators may also be about measuring the steps along the way towards large or long-term outcomes.

Qualitative evidence

Qualitative evidence is numerical or statistical information: how much? How many?

Quantitative evidence

Quantitative evidence is descriptive information about people's experience, perceptions or feelings

Baseline information

Evidence you collect at, or before, the start of a project or intervention. Baseline information allows you to measure distance travelled or progress towards outcomes.

Useful links and resources

About models of advocacy and measuring their effectiveness

Social care institute for excellence (scie): Measuring the impact of mental health advocacy:
https://www.scie.org.uk/independent-mental-health-advocacy/measuring-effectiveness-and-commissioning/impact/

The Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (Iriss): Advocacy: Models and Effectiveness:
https://www.iriss.org.uk/resources/insights/advocacy-models-and-effectiveness
The Iriss website also has information on mental health, advocacy, and collaboration and involvement in social services.

National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi): Advocacy framework and outcomes toolkit:
https://www.ndti.org.uk/uploads/files/Advocacy_framework.pdf
https://www.ndti.org.uk/uploads/files/Advocacy_Outcomes_Toolkit.pdf

About evaluation in general

Evaluation Support Scotland (ESS) – evaluation resources and support for third sector organisations and funders:
http://www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk

The ESS website has an extensive resources section, with many concise, clear guides and very short videos. Some relevant examples are:

Setting outcomes:
http://www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/media/uploads/resources/ess_sg1a_-_setting_outcomes_(feb_2018).pdf

Outcomes explained video (just one minute long!):
http://www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/resources/446/

Defining indicators for your outcomes:
http://www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/media/uploads/resources/ess_sg1b_-_working_out_what_to_measure_(setting_indicators)_(feb_2018).pdf

Using qualitative information:
http://www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/media/uploads/resources/supportguide3.4qualyinfojul09.pdf

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www.siaa.org.uk

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