Youth Diversion Programme

Accreditation of Evidence Informed Practise

Guidance Document

Submission and Support Materials

March 2025

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# What you will find in this document

This document contains everything that you will need to apply for accrediting evidence informed practise in your work. In it you will find answers to the following questions:

* What does it mean to be evidence-informed?
* What does accreditation mean?
* How and why did the accreditation initiative come about?
* What is the accreditation process?
* What is the role of a Community Based Organisation?
* What is the role of a critical friend?
* How do I make a written submission?
* How will the written submission be assessed?
* What is involved in making a presentation to an accreditation panel?
* What happens if my submission is successful or unsuccessful?
* What support materials are available?
* What key terms are associated with the accreditation process?

The document is written for Youth Justice Practitioners. Over time, as the accreditation process becomes established, the language will change to include the wider youth justice field.

# Background to the accreditation process

While the need for evidence-informed public services is now widely accepted in Ireland, there is no standard or universally agreed definition of what it means to be evidence-informed. It is in this context that in 2024, a subgroup of the Youth Diversion Project Advisory Committee (YDPAC) was formed to consider the feasibility of accrediting examples of evidence-informed practise in Youth Diversion Projects. Ireland has recently participated in a European working group commissioned by the European Union Crime Prevention Network. A paper ratified by this network entitled ‘Towards Evidence-Based Crime Prevention in the EU’ ([EUCPN, 2021](https://eucpn.org/sites/default/files/document/files/Adopted_EBA%20Strategy_0.pdf)), contains the following criteria for recognising higher standards of evidence in crime prevention work:

* There is a clear description of the crime problem(s) the activity wishes to address.
* There is a clear description of the way in which the intervention addresses the identified problem(s) and why it is expected to be effective.
* There should be a robust and positive outcome evaluation, or at least strong indications of theoretical plausibility.
* There is sufficient information available about the nature of the intervention, its original context, and the implementation of the activities to help practitioners select, replicate, or innovate from it.

The YDPAC subgroup decided to build on the EUCPN criteria in developing a prototype accreditation process that could be tested for feasibility. While the process was to be robust and rigorous, the design was also intended to be efficient, user-friendly, low on bureaucracy, transparent, and achievable within existing or minimal additional resources. Once accredited, examples of evidence-informed practise could be passed on to the EUCPN and disseminated to the wider field in Ireland.

# The process of accreditation

The process begins when you identify a practise example that could be suitable for accreditation. Initially you will need to discuss your ideas and intentions with management in your own Community Based Organisation, where this applies. Assuming approval, the CBO will have an important quality assurance role in helping you to develop the submission. As indicated above, you may also wish to avail yourself of advice from a critical friend.

**Written submission**

After being signed off by the Community Based Organisation, if applicable, you will put in a written submission to a specially convened accreditation panel. The panel will consider the written submission according to criteria elaborated from the EUCPN working group paper referred to earlier in this document. Assuming sufficient evidence of an evidence informed approach, you will be invited to present the proposal to the panel. Alternatively, the panel may wish to suggest that you amend the proposal to make a resubmission.

**Panel Presentation**

The purpose of the presentation will be to tease out issues and go over questions that the panel members will have prepared in advance. A central focus will be on **the potential value to other projects**. For example, what are the active mechanisms in the practise that are transferrable and can be shared? What could others learn that could be adapted to their own project’s needs and context? There will be two panels per year, normally May and October, with two submissions considered by each panel. Successful submissions will be accredited as exemplars of evidence informed practise.

**The Award**

Accreditation amounts to a public recognition for your work. It means that you will have met a high threshold in demonstrating an evidence-informed approach to practise. The purpose of the award is to recognise and celebrate this achievement.

**Post Accreditation**

Following accreditation, and if you are interested, support could be offered through REPPP to write up the exemplar suitable for academic or other types of audience. The write up could be passed on to the EUCPN, as a promising example of Irish youth justice practise. If agreeable to yourselves, you could be invited present the example in a special session of the annual Youth Diversion Programme conference. You may also be involved in disseminating the learning to other projects. The YDCAP and REPPP will also ensure that learning is disseminated throughout the YDP.

Figure 1 below outlines the full accreditation process; from initial thinking at project level about submitting an example of evidence-informed practise, to accreditation and eventual dissemination to the wider field.

Figure 1: Outline of the accreditation process

If appropriate, Project invited to write up the submission and/or present at the annual GYP meeting.

Written submission made to Accreditation Panel.

Invitation to present is issued.

Panel presentation held.

Panel considers written submission according to the adapted EUCPN criteria.

Project identifies a practise example that could be suitable for accreditation.

Project discusses the intention to submit within its wider organisation.

Community Based Organisation considers the proposal and supports the project in developing a submission.

With CBO approval the project decides to proceed.

Project works up the submission taking advice from the CBO and/or a critical friend.

Panel suggests resubmission with reasons given.

Project decides not to resubmit.

Project resubmits.

Following the presentation, the Panel decides to (a) accredit, (b) to accredit with amendments.

Community Based Organisation signs off the submission.

Following accreditation, the Panel may forward the work to the EUCPN.

Dissemination to the field and possible presentation at the YDP conference.

# Key terms used in this document

## Being ‘evidence-informed’

It is widely accepted that practise is more effective and durable when it is underpinned by robust evidence. In this case, it is useful to make a distinction between evidence-based and evidence-informed approaches. The term ‘**evidence-based**’ is used to describe a programme that has consistently been shown to produce positive results by independent research studies that have been conducted to a high degree of social scientific rigour. An evidence-based approach to designing and delivering services involves delivering programmes that have been proven to work. These programmes have been manualised, so that the underpinning theory is clear and precise steps to implementation can be followed. High ‘fidelity’ to the original programme is required.

In contrast, the accreditation process uses the term ‘**evidence-informed**’ to describe decision-making about practise, policy and/or commissioning, which is based on the integration of experience, judgement and expertise with the best available research ([Nutley et al, 2007](https://www.waterstones.com/book/using-evidence/sandra-m-nutley/isabel-walter/9781861346643)). This approach involves:

* Drawing information gleaned from research and other sources such as evaluation, monitoring, practise wisdom, policy, theory, and consultations with users and experts.
* Weighing the reliability and relevance of the sources.
* Synthesising the messages from the sources and interpreting their meaning.
* Linking research with practise and policy in a continuous cycle of ‘plan-do-review-plan’ for service improvement.

Just to reiterate, the evidence comes from a variety of sources such as practise wisdom or consultation, with no primacy given to any one source.

## The meaning of accreditation

Quite simply, accreditation in this document refers to a formal recognition of evidence-informed practise. The term does not apply more broadly to organisations, agencies, or projects, or to the Youth Diversion Programme. The recognition comes from a specially convened group of representatives from the youth justice field, who will meet as a panel to assess your submission. It will be **a recognition of achievement at a point in time rather than accreditation for a set period**.

The submission is in two parts. First, you will make a **written submission** using the dedicated form in this document. If the panel decides that there is sufficient evidence of evidence informed practise, you will then be invited to make a **presentation**. What is required in the written submission and the panel presentation, is fully explained later in this document.

## The role of a Community Based Organisation

There is an important pre-application role for Community Based Organisations. The accreditation process requires that Projects will need submissions to be signed off, where appropriate, by the organisation concerned. This means management scrutiny by the CBO, as CBOs will want to ensure that submissions reflect internal standards. The broader role of the CBO is to support projects in thinking about and preparing their submission. Following accreditation, the CBO also has an important role in helping projects to sustain the practise, and in dissemination of any learning throughout the wider organisation.

## The role of a ‘critical friend’

The accreditation panel suggests applicants make use of a critical friend to advise on what needs to be included or emphasised in a submission. A critical friend provides support like a mentor or coach. This is someone who has the expertise to know what evidence-informed practise looks like and be familiar enough with design issues to be able to contribute to assessment. A critical friend can offer an independent and objective view in addition to having relevant knowledge and expertise. For example, a critical friend may be familiar with using logic models, or understands the uses of evidence, or provide access to research, or can advise on appropriate language, or all these things. CBOs might have the capacity to provide a critical friend. If not, it could be someone external to the organisation, such as a trusted trainer, consultant, senior practitioner or academic, that you know or have worked with.

## The meaning of monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring processes, such as keeping project records and monthly reports, help to keep the work on track or to make necessary adjustments in a timely fashion. Evaluation considers the results of the work, and how those results were obtained. For the purposes of the accreditation process, we are taking a broad view of evaluation. Evaluation in this sense draws selectively from a wide a range of measures common to youth justice practise such as keeping logbooks, using report forms to collect data, referring to routine feedback to management, using validated rating scales or other instruments such as the Outcomes Star, or using creative methods such as drama, artwork, and collages, to obtain the views of participants.

If a formal evaluation has been carried out, that would be welcome, but **a formal evaluation is not necessary to demonstrate an evidence-informed approach**. Any practise that claims to be evidence-informed, however, would show how the findings from internal monitoring and evaluation processes feed into the work and inform changes and future direction. Both monitoring and evaluation are essential for learning and development purposes.

# Making a written submission

It is widely accepted that there are many ways to engage young people in learning and development, and projects have flexibility in terms of how they achieve outcomes. **Submissions for accreditation will focus on a discreet strand of work, a specific initiative, or an intervention, but not the whole work of your project or agency.** The submission must describe the processes and methods of engagement with young people and the impact of the intervention in terms of gains, benefits, and learning and development. Of interest is the ability to customise the work to meet the specific needs of young people in each context.

The key question for the panel would be ‘**Is there sufficient evidence that this intervention, or practise, did have a positive impact?**’

Overall, submissions must provide sufficient information about the intervention, its original context, and its implementation, to help other practitioners to select actions or activities, to replicate processes, or to innovate, as appropriate

To make your submission please use the Template for the Written Submission, which you will find on page 9, but which is also provided as a separate document. The template is designed to ensure that you provide sufficient information about the nature of the intervention for the panel to come to an informed decision. It requires you to set out an underlying rationale for the work and what you hoped to achieve. In effect, it should help you to express a clear theory of change.

A ‘theory of change’ articulates the key ideas guiding the programme or intervention, including its understanding of the issue or problem, the goals it is seeking, the specific objectives to be pursued, and the activities that are intended to lead to desired outcomes. Verifying the theory of change, and paying attention to other factors that may influence the outcomes, provides reasonable evidence about the contribution being made by the intervention ([Mayne, 2008](https://cgspace.cgiar.org/bitstream/handle/10568/70124/ILAC_Brief16_Contribution_Analysis.pdf)).

A logic model is a graphic representation of the theory of change, showing the intended relationships between inputs, results, and outcome. Apart from a completed logic model, the template will be the only other document to be considered. However, you may wish to provide supporting materials where these help the panel better to understand the nature of the work.

## Assessment of the written submission

Panel members will assess your submission against the following criteria.

|  |
| --- |
| * The submission clearly describes the crime problem(s) being addressed. * The submission links the work to aspects of crime in localities such as trespass, anti-social behaviour, or break-ins, while focussing attention on the underlying risk factors that affect young peoples’ behaviour (see Appendix 1) These include but are not limited to:   Difficulty controlling behaviour  Disruptive classroom behaviour  Some delinquent friends  Chronic drug use  Anti-social/pro-criminal attitudes  Inflated self-esteem  Limited organised activities   * The submission describes how the work addressed the identified problem(s) and why it was expected to be effective. * The submission is clear about the evidence informing plans and activities. * The submission explains the processes of engagement and how these met the specific needs of young people in each context. * The submission describes how the work was monitored and evaluated. * The results of the evaluation show a plausible link between the practices and the outcomes for young people, such as learning and development, or a positive change in circumstances. * The submission shows how the results of monitoring and evaluation fed back into and informed the ongoing work. |

## Template for the written submission

Please read the notes before putting your answers into the template document.

**Step 1**. In no more than 100 words, please describe your intervention/initiative.

This should include the name, its beginnings, development, and status. It may also outline costs, if appropriate, numbers involved and staffing commitments. Where partners are involved, these should also be mentioned. Where it fits within organisational priorities, and in the broader policy context, must also be described.

**Step 2**. In no more than 300 words, please describe the crime problem(s) addressed and the associated underlying risk factors being addressed.

While linking the work to aspects of crime in localities, such as trespass, anti-social behaviour, or break-ins, the submission must draw attention to the underlying risk factors that affect young peoples’ behaviour. Please refer to Appendix 1: YLS/CMI 2.0 Risk/Need Areas for these factors. In demonstrating an evidence-informed approach submissions will include purpose, intended outcomes, and how activities lead to those outcomes.

**Step 3**. In no more than 300 words, please describe how the work intended to address the problem(s) and why it was expected to be effective (theory of change). The written submission must be accompanied by logic model.

A logic model is an adaptable tool that describes the theory of change underpinning an intervention, a programme, or a policy. It explains how input x can lead to outcome y, by way of activity z. It allows the user to systematically work through the connections and components of an intervention or process. Typically, logic models appear in graphical form on a single page.

* Needs addressed (needs analysis)
* Main ways in which the needs were addressed (objectives)
* Resources available to support the work (inputs)
* Activities that came from deploying those resources (outputs)
* The results of the activities (outcomes)
* How information about progress and results was gathered (monitoring and evaluation)
* Information that supports the needs analysis, choice of objectives, selection of activities, and likelihood of results (evidence).

As presented in Figure 2 below, the key components of a logic model include:

Figure 2: Key components of a logic model

**Needs**

**Monitoring and evaluation**

**Outcomes**

**Outputs**

**Inputs**

**n**

**Outcomes**

**Evidence**

**s**

**Outputs**

**Outputs**

**Inputs**

**Inputs**

**Objectives**

**Objectives**

**Evidence**

Further guidance about theories of change and logic models can be found in Appendix 2.

**Step 4**. In no more than 300 words, please discuss the evidence that informed your plans and activities.

Drawing selectively from a range of sources improves decision-making. These sources include:

* Practise wisdom, which can often be accessed in manuals, guides to good practise, codes of ethics, standards, and so on.
* Independent research that is relevant to an area or topic, which can be accessed in journals or through using search engines.
* Consultation with young people, other professionals, or experts, which can help to establish the nature or extent of the need, issue, or opportunity, what is to be done in response, how things are going, and what were the results.
* Theory in the form of key concepts such as ‘empowerment’, ‘participation’, or ‘bottom-up approach’, or as contained in bodies of knowledge such as psychology, formal or informal education, or community development, which can help to broaden understanding and test assumptions and habitual ways of thinking.
* Monitoring through routine data collection processes, and evaluations through assessing results and outcomes, which can provide a quick route to learning about how best to deal with similar or identical problems and issues. If an external assessment has been made, for example, through a formal inspection, then this information is also available.
* Grey literature, which contains unpublished sources, government reports, materials and resources that offer valuable information about experience in different parts of the world, or about practises, strategies, tools, and materials that have been found to be useful.
* Needs analysis, which is about drawing from local data and information to get a deeper understanding of the problem or issue. A good needs analysis is a necessary foundation for effective work.

While all such sources have merit, it is more significant how these can be triangulated, to borrow a term from research, which simply means using multiple methods or data sources to develop a comprehensive understanding of something. If research is proposing one thing, and this is confirmed by consultation, practise wisdom, and other sources, there is an extremely strong case for the work.

Appendix 3 provides a tool for putting the best available information at the heart of decision-making ([Bamber et al, 2012](https://strathprints.strath.ac.uk/42027/1/JYW_10_2012_Mackie_McGinley.pdf)).

**Step 5**. In no more than 300 words, please explain the processes of engagement and how these met the specific needs of young people in each context.

It is widely accepted that there are many ways to engage young people in learning and development, and projects have flexibility in terms of how to achieve outcomes. This step is about describing and explaining the methods, and processes involved in the work. You might refer to a specific approach or to a combination of activities, such as:

* One-to-one work, coaching, and mentoring
* Work with groups and group work, including teambuilding
* Experiential learning
* Non-formal learning
* Work and training
* Opportunities and supports through other services, in other settings
* Formal education activities

The issue here is about the choices made in terms of methodology, what evidence supported their use, and how these choices responded effectively to the needs, interests, or circumstances of the young people.

**Step 6**. In no more than 300 words, show how the results of monitoring and evaluation demonstrate how young people were supported to learn and develop in addition to how any other outcomes were achieved.

A wide range of methods can support monitoring and evaluation activities, with informal and spontaneous approaches at one end, and formal, planned, and systematic approaches at the other. The former is characterised by the methods that non-formal educators use naturally in their work, including experiential learning and creative methods. These typical methods include young people being encouraged to tell their stories through, art, videos, or performance, keep diaries, or to complete personal development plans and records. The latter occurs when providers use universally accepted standardised measures such as the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. In addition, providers might use event evaluation feedback forms, online staff surveys, and session evaluation forms. These methods typically include:

* Questionnaires
* Interviews
* Case studies
* Personal development plans
* Logbooks
* Report forms collecting data
* Routine feedback to management
* Validated rating scales
* Drama, artwork, collages
* Instruments such as Outcomes Star

Further guidance illustrating how the above types of measures can be used to assess outcomes, can be found in Appendix 4.

Outcomes are the changes for service users or other targets of change that happen because of an intervention or service provided. Sometimes there can be positive or negative unintended outcomes from engaging in youth justice provision or receiving a service, and these can be as informative as the planned outcomes. Depending on the nature of the intervention, outcomes occur at the level of the individual service user, the family, specific groups, communities, or the organisations themselves. Some larger programmes may result in changes at policy level. Outcomes for individuals are often conceptualised as follows:

* ‘Soft’ or proximal outcomes refer to changes in feelings, thinking and attitudes.
* ‘Hard’ outcomes refer to changes in behaviours, attainment, or status.

**Step 7**. In no more than 300 words, explain how the results of evaluation fed back into and informed the ongoing work. (see note 5)

The inclusion of outcomes, and the insistence on evaluation activities means that your submission must feature a completed cycle of work. Being evidence-informed means drawing conclusions from evaluation that feed into and improve ongoing and future work. The results of monitoring and evaluation provide essential information about outcomes and what did or didn’t lead to them. The information contributes to a growing evidence base, which is critical in terms of making claims for the work. This aspect is crucial in terms of being able to share practises and approaches with confidence. The role of learning from experience through monitoring and evaluation is depicted graphically in Appendix 5.

**Finally**, you will be asked to include the name and contact details of the person in your organisation who has signed off your submission.

# Presenting to the accreditation panel

There is no pass or fail mark associated with the presentation, because the panel will already have decided that the submission has merit based on the written application. The purpose of the presentation is to explore strengths and weaknesses, with a view to improving the case for the submission. Consequently, you must draw explicitly from the written submission. An important focus on the presentation will be: **How can the processes or the practises be used or adapted by other projects or practitioners and why would this be valuable to others**? The presentation should address this question directly.

Where weaknesses or gaps are observed, panel members will provide any necessary guidance on how to address these. The guidance will help to improve the practise under consideration. The presentation is designed to be interactive, informative, and developmental. While the panel will focus on the specifics of the written submission, in general what the panel will be looking for is summarised in the questions set out below (page 14).

There is no template for the presentation, as participants are free to choose the means best suited to making their case. While PowerPoint slides are useful, they are not required. If used, however, participants should favour images and avoid large blocks of text.

Panels will involve up to 5 members who represent the broad field of Youth Justice. Each panel will consider up to 2 submissions at one sitting, with 2 hours devoted to each submission. The format will be as follows:

Introductions and welcome (10 minutes)

Oral presentation to the panel (20 minutes)

Discussion with the panel (45 minutes)

Panel member discussion (30 minutes)

Initial feedback from the panel Chair (15 minutes)

While you can decide on who attends and makes the presentation, this need not involve more than three people. The panel chair will collate and coordinate the written feedback and communicate the findings to you in due course. It is suggested that the critical friend looks over and advises projects on their presentation.

## Questions for the presentation

In drawing from the written submission, panel members are likely to focus on the following types of questions. You might use these questions as a checklist in anticipation of the presentation. Don’t be put off by the formality of the language! Just think about the essence of the question.

|  |
| --- |
| 1. Have a variety of people (beneficiaries, colleagues, peers, residents, been involved in developing the logic model, e.g., specifying needs, outputs, outcomes, and impacts? 2. Does the needs analysis refer to appropriate data, and clearly identify needs, issues, or problems in relation to a specific target group. 3. Is there a clear indication as to how (each of) the needs, issues or problems will be addressed (objectives). 4. Is there evidence for the choice of objectives or strategies leading to change and development? 5. Are available resources specified and quantified, and, where appropriate, linked to objectives? 6. Are the target participants are described sufficiently and quantified (e.g., 100 pupils from 5 rural secondary schools)? 7. Are the events, products, or services listed described as outputs in numbers (e.g., 30 young people will participate in at least 3 sessions, or the programme will be distributed to at least 12 agencies), and where appropriate linked to objectives? 8. Is the duration and intensity of the intervention appropriate for the type of participant (e.g., higher-risk participants warrant longer and higher intensities)? 9. Are the activities and outcomes achievable given the resources specified? 10. Do the outcomes reflect reasonable, linked, and progressive steps that participants can make toward longer-term results. 11. Do the outcomes address changes in awareness, attitudes, perceptions, knowledge, skills, and/ or behaviour of young people? 12. Are the outcomes realistic in relation to the proposed activities, and does it seem reasonable to hold the project accountable for the outcomes specified? 13. Are the outcomes described as change statements (e.g., things increase, decrease, or stay the same)? 14. Can the outcomes be measured, at least in principle? 15. What use has been made of data from monitoring activities? 16. What evaluation methods have been adopted and what has been learned or established from the evaluation? 17. Is the data sufficiently strong to back up any claims made about change and development. |

# Appendix 1: YLS/CMI 2.0 Risk/Need Areas

**Dynamic Risk Factors**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *Family Circumstances/Parenting*:   * Inadequate supervision * Difficulty controlling behaviour * Inappropriate discipline * Inconsistent parenting * Poor relationship/ father-youth * Poor relationship/ mother-youth | *Education/Employment*:   * Disruptive classroom behaviour * Disruptive schoolyard behaviour * Low achievement * Problems with peers * Problems with teachers * Truancy * Unemployed/not seeking employment |
| *Peer Relations*:   * Some delinquent acquaintances * Some delinquent friends * No/few positive acquaintances * No/few positive friends | *Substance Abuse*:   * Occasional drug use * Chronic drug use * Substance use interferes with functioning * Substance use linked with offences |
| *Attitudes/ Orientation*:   * Anti-social/pro-criminal attitudes * Not seeking help * Actively rejecting help * Defies authority * Callous, little concern for others | *Personality/Behaviour*:   * Inflated self-esteem * Physically aggressive * Tantrums * Short attention span * Poor frustration tolerance * Inadequate guilt feelings * Verbally aggressive |
| *Leisure/Recreation*:   * Limited organised activities * Could make better use of time * No personal interests |  |

# Appendix 2: Theory of change and logic models

Logic models graphically express the essential elements in any systematic attempt to organise resources around achieving goals and objectives. A model can be used internally, for example as a tool for monitoring and evaluating the work, and externally as a way of summarising the overall purpose and activities of an organisation to outsiders.

It is important to note that a logic model is not reality – it is a statement of intent. Implementation will throw up all manner of challenges and unanticipated problems, and so flexibility is crucial as is the capacity to think on one’s feet and make changes to the plans where necessary. However, too many changes, especially if these are reactive, can undermine the value of the logic model in the first place. So, a complex logic model is perhaps best seen as a high-level statement which may require a separate implementation plan. Changes that are needed during implementation do not necessarily require changes to the overall logic of the model.

Logic modelling is a way of expressing a theory of change, wherein particular programmes or interventions should be determined with reference to a clearly articulated description of the expected mechanisms of change. Your theory of change clarifies the various inputs, outputs and activities, and outcomes that the practise or intervention hopes to achieve and how these are conceptually and practically linked. Providing the elements of a logic model is agreed by all stakeholders, it can then be a useful tool for monitoring programme progress over time.

Figure 3 below, sets out typical elements in a logic model. This figure includes monitoring and evaluating, and evidence, to remind readers of the importance of these elements for planning and practise improvement purposes. There may be more elements in this figure than you are used to, but this is to ensure that supporting evidence, and monitoring and evaluation activities are included.

Figure 3: Typical elements in a sample logic model

**Evidence** informs all aspects of the logic model:

Taking ideas from research, grey literature, practise wisdom, policy, and consultation processes, to inform understandings of problems, situations, and issues, as well as ideas about work that can enable desired outcomes.

**Needs** analysis includes populations and target groups, problems and causes, situations and issues, strengths, weaknesses, and gaps in provision. Factors informing the analysis, include policy, legislation, funding, politics, rights, and local conditions.

**Inputs** enable outputs:

Staffing and skills

Volunteers

Funding

Buildings

Technology

Partners

Strategies

Values: such as respect, honesty, empowerment, accountability, participation

**Outputs** are key areas of work that enable desired outcomes:

* Who, what where, when, and how.
* Targets for numbers, and frequency of activities.
* Assessment and Case Planning based on standardised tools.
* Evidence-based interventions with young people and families.
* Restorative practises.

**Outcomes** are cumulative changes. In the short to medium term these changes involve, gains in knowledge, skills or awareness, and other benefits regarding:

Peer relations.

Family circumstances

Parenting

Education

Employment

Leisure

Recreation

Substance use

Personality and behaviour

Attitudes and orientation

**Implementation**

**Resources Activities**

**Objectives** express the main ways to achieve outcomes, such as:

* Work in partnership with An Garda Síochána to identify youth crime trends and emerging needs and respond effectively
* Use a collaborative approach to support progression pathways, referrals, and signposting.
* Model and promote prosocial behaviour.
* Identify and build on strengths of participants.

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**Monitoring and Evaluation**

Monitoring provides performance feedback and evaluation provides evidence about implementation and results to inform analysis, planning, and future implementation.

Targets or indicators provide signs of progress or achievement and may derive from standards and benchmarks.

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# Appendix 3: Sources of evidence

Figure 4 below depicts various sources of evidence in the form different types of data, information, and accumulated learning, that can contribute to better understanding and resolution of practise problems, and their related issues and contexts. The premise is that drawing judiciously from a range of sources improves decision-making. It is not expected that all sources will be utilised as research, for example, may simply not be available. The point is to use what can be accessed to improve analysis and decision-making about what stands the best chance of making a difference.

Figure 4: A circle of evidence

**Practise**

**Wisdom**

**Policy**

**Theory**

**Independent Evaluation**

**Research and grey literature**

**Consultation**

**Monitoring and Evaluation**

**Problem**

**Needs Analysis**

These sources can be briefly explained as follows.

* Practise wisdom, which can often be accessed in manuals, guides to good practise, codes of ethics, standards, and so on.
* Independent research that is relevant to an area or topic, which can be accessed in journals or through using search engines.
* Consultation with young people, other professionals, or experts, which can help to establish the nature or extent of the need, issue, or opportunity, what is to be done in response, how things are going, and what were the results.
* Theory in the form of key concepts such as ‘empowerment’, ‘participation’, or ‘bottom-up approach’, or as contained in bodies of knowledge such as psychology, formal or informal education, or community development, which can help to broaden understanding and test assumptions and habitual ways of thinking.
* Monitoring through routine data collection processes, and evaluations through assessing results and outcomes, which can provide a quick route to learning about how best to deal with similar or identical problems and issues. If an external assessment has been made, for example, through a formal inspection, then this information is also available.
* Grey literature, which contains unpublished sources, government reports, materials and resources that offer valuable information about experience in different parts of the world, or about practises, strategies, tools, and materials that have been found to be useful.
* Needs analysis, which is about drawing from local data and information to get a deeper understanding of the problem or issue. A good needs analysis is necessary foundation for effective work

# Appendix 4: Monitoring and evaluation

**Monitoring**

Often, the terms monitoring and evaluation are used interchangeably. While there are some similarities between the two, they are two discrete if complementary activities. Monitoring involves the routine collection of information about a programme or service. However, monitoring is not just about collecting numbers, for example the number of counselling sessions delivered, or the number of attendees at workshops. Monitoring can be a self-motivating process where workers can keep track of variations in service user attendance, response rates to information collecting exercises and staff turnover and utilise this to make amendments to service delivery and programme plans. An effective monitoring system can make the evaluative process easier and produce more robust results.

**Evaluation**

Evaluation is a step forward from monitoring as it periodically investigates and measures how and why certain outcomes were (or were not) achieved. According to Noble et al (2022), measuring means using data and evidence, both quantitative and qualitative, to see if your project or service has made a difference in people’s lives.

**Linking outcomes to measures**

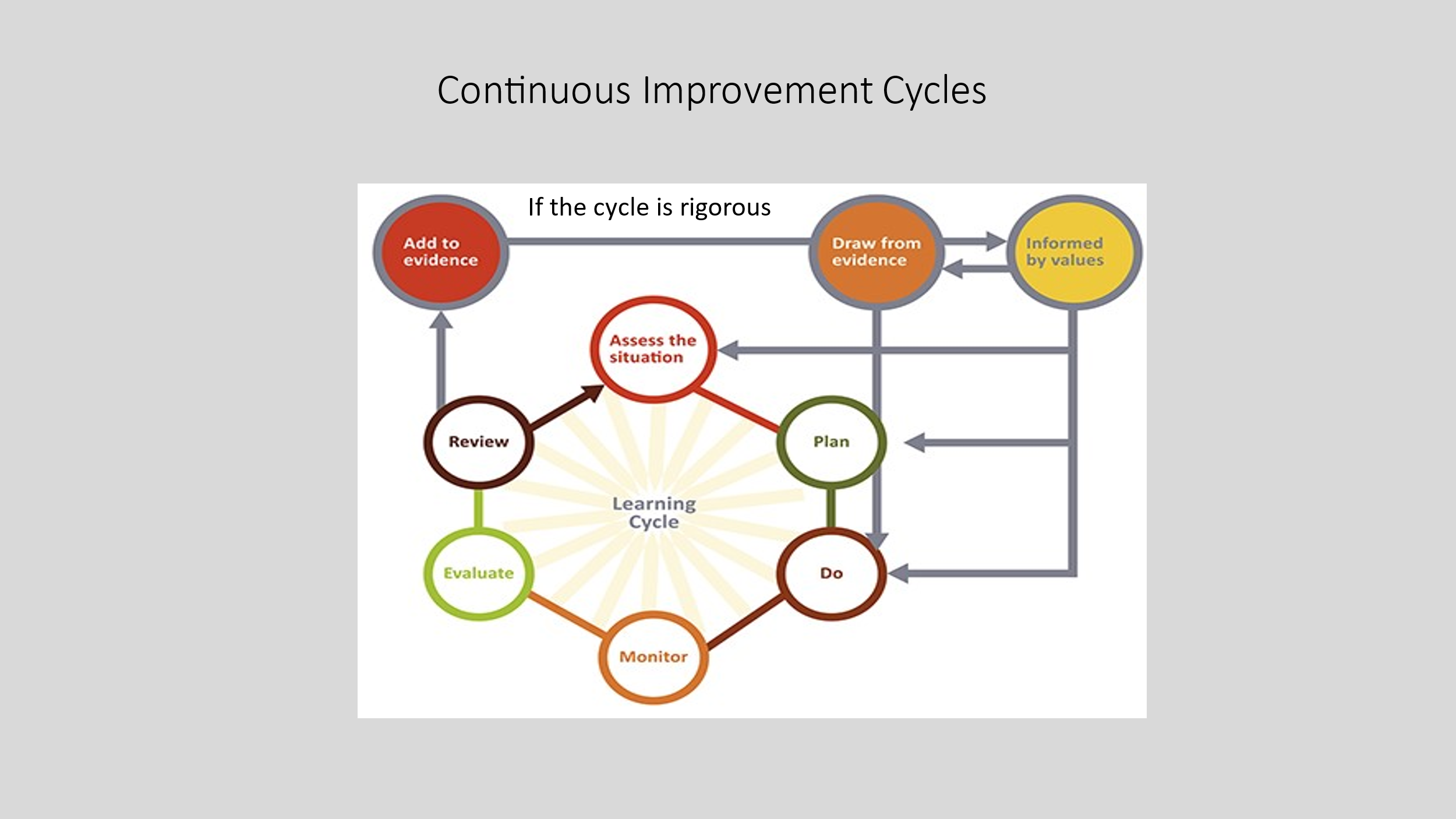
Figure 5 below illustrates how different methods of measurement might be used for monitoring progress or evaluating outcomes. The diagram is arranged in four quadrants, with each of four outcome areas (blue shading) broken down into more specific aspects (green shading) and linked to common ways of measuring these aspects (beige shading).  For example, regarding Personal Development, more specific aspects might include Relationships, Self-management, or Personal Qualities. In the case of personal qualities, an improvement in self-efficacy would be an indicator of learning and development. One way of measuring this improvement might be to use a validated scale such as the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, or something similar such as the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire. It would be equally valuable to use a creative and user-friendly method such as making a collage, or socio-drama (yellow shading). The main point here is the thoughtful use of **measures that are appropriate to the context and purpose of the work**.

Figure 5: Linking outcomes to measures

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Creative, interactive, and informal methods | Case study | Validated Scale | Interview | Focus Group | Creative, interactive, and informal methods |
| **Relationships**  Communication skills  Empathy  Open to other’s ideas and opinions | **Personal qualities**  Emotional Intelligence  Resilience and determination | **Activity**  Positive use of leisure time | **Attitude**  Relations with authority  Aggression |
| Self-rating Scale | **Self-management**  Problem solving  Sense of self-efficacy  Self-regulation | **Personal development** | **Prosocial**  **behaviour** | **Behaviour**  Substance abuse | Observation |
| Testimonials | **Community**  Sense of belonging and connection to community | **Connection** | **Education and**  **Employment** | **Aspiration**  Open to opportunities:  education  training  work | Personal Development Plan |
| Creative, interactive, and informal methods | **Peers**  Relationships with  peers | **Family**  Parenting and family functioning | **Performance**  Seeking, accepting help  Perseverance  Open to learning | **Achievement**  Qualifications  Work experience  Building CV | Creative, interactive, and informal methods |
| Instrument  E.g. Outcome Star | Questionnaire  ‘Before and after’ | Project records | Portfolio |

Evaluation is not an end. As Figure 6 shows, its purpose is to inform a continuous cycle of action, reflection, and development. In terms of demonstrating an evidence-informed approach, it should be clear how the data from monitoring and the results of evaluation, have enabled adjustments to the work, and have informed future planning. The results of evaluation, therefore, contribute to a cycle of continuous improvement.

Figure 6: Action, reflection, and development



# References and links

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Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire. Link [here](https://www.sdqinfo.org/a0.html)