

Enhancing Quality

Consider how you can reduce bias:

- ⇒ How were participants selected (are they representative of all clients)?
- ⇒ If using comparison groups; do groups differ in relation to underlying characteristics (such as age, socioeconomic status, or motivation) which could impact upon outcomes?
- ⇒ Were all data collected in a routine and standardised manner?
Developing a protocol to ensure that all data collectors are doing the same can help with this.

Consider methodological assumptions:

- ⇒ Findings of qualitative research (such as interviews and focus groups) are not generalizable to wider audiences. Instead they give a snapshot insight into views and experiences.
- ⇒ How far you can generalise from quantitative methods will depend on how representative the sample is in relation to the target population and whether the data collected is of a high quality (e.g. little missing data, valid measures, appropriate analysis).

These factors will impact on the conclusions that you can make about the data.

Evaluating a new intervention: a best practice checklist

Before you invest time and resources evaluating be confident that you know how the intervention is being delivered and are familiar with existing evidence.

Spend time considering your outcomes. What are you hoping to change and how could this be collected objectively? Consider what other people may have done to evaluate similar interventions.

Choose an appropriate research design. Make sure you are familiar with its assumptions and limitations.

Develop a research protocol which standardises how the evaluation would run. Be clear about who is involved, timeframes, patient selection and planned data analysis.

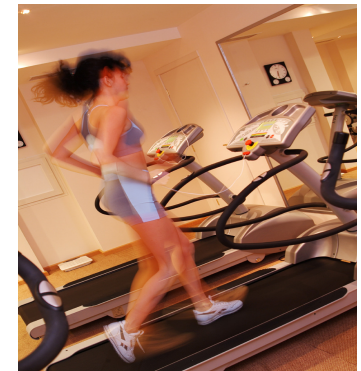


Bath & North East
Somerset Council



Evaluating a new intervention

A best practice short-guide to evaluating a new intervention



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Bath & North East Somerset

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Before you evaluate

An intervention can be a service or a health campaign which is aiming to change behaviour or increase awareness.

Before you evaluate, check the following to ensure that your findings will be valid :-

- ⇒ Has the intervention been piloted to resolve teething problems?
 - ◆ if not, resolve these first.
- ⇒ Is the intervention being delivered in a standardised manner (i.e., are all patients getting the same treatment?)
 - ◆ If not, consider staff training/ revising protocols so findings are comparable and meaningful.
- ⇒ Have you identified objective or valid measures for main and secondary outcomes?
 - ◆ Without these, you can't be sure, what you have reliably measured.
- ⇒ Have you assessed the resources (time, money and expertise) you will need to conduct a meaningful evaluation?
 - ◆ If not, identify additional support before you start.

TABLE 1:	
Process	Description
Interviews or focus groups	Used to explore service user (or staff) experiences of accessing (or delivering) interventions.
Observations	Used to assess whether the intervention is delivered consistently by all staff, and as intended by the protocol.
Outcome	
Randomized controlled trial (RCT)	Considered gold standard evidence, but difficult to conduct in practice. Provides information of client outcomes, controlling for what happens over time if no support is received. Time consuming and may require specialist expertise.
Prospective (or retrospective) cohort study	Involves observing the impact of the intervention on a cohort of service users over time. Can be done retrospectively using existing monitoring data (if available) or prospectively (easier to ensure all data is collected).
Controlled before/after study	Compares pre- and post-data of people using a service (or exposed to a health campaign, policy change etc). More informative if compared with a 'control group' of matched participants who did not receive the intervention.

How do I evaluate?

Table 1 contains a summary of evaluation methods and their purpose.

Process evaluation: to explore how an intervention is delivered in practice, and how it works.

- ⇒ Useful if unsure whether the intervention is being delivered as intended.
- ⇒ Can help to avoid wasting resources evaluating an intervention that first needs additional staff training or updating.
- ⇒ Useful to identify how an intervention works (i.e., what aspects clients find most important).

Outcome evaluation: to establish whether an intervention works.

- ⇒ Useful to see what changes, how much

This short best practice guide is bought to you by the University of Bath in collaboration with Bath & North East Somerset Council.

For more information about conducting focus groups and interviews please see