

Checking the accuracy of monitoring data

Missing data

Monitoring data should be regularly screened to identify patterns of missing data. This process can help to identify problems that are often easily resolved; for example, if particular staff are not routinely collecting certain information additional support/training can be provided, or if data is missing as questions are not acceptable or easily answered by clients, more appropriate/alternative measures can be developed.

Ensuring consistency

To ensure the validity and comparability of monitoring data, forms should be brief, unambiguous, and response formats standardized. If complete data is not routinely returned, consider organizing training and developing a protocol with clear instructions for staff involved in data collection.

Monitoring service performance: a best practice checklist

Identify service outcomes and performance indicators to be monitored.

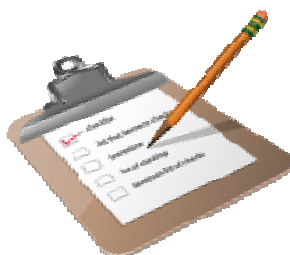
Map indicators and outcomes to validated measurement tools.

Review and update existing monitoring practices.

- ⇒ Are the most appropriate and valid measures being used?
- ⇒ Are all important outcomes being routinely measured?
- ⇒ Is anyone responsible for maintaining and monitoring the service database

Are data collection methods standardised across staff?

Do patterns of missing data exist?



Monitoring service performance

A best practice short-guide to monitoring public health services



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Why is monitoring important?

Monitoring service performance allows us to;

- i) check that services are reaching the people for whom they are intended.
- ii) explore patterns of service use.
- iii) check that services are delivering what was intended.
- iv) monitor service outcomes.

Monitoring allows informed decisions to be made about how services can be improved, and helps commissioners to justify continued investment.

How is monitoring different to evaluation?

Monitoring involves capturing routine data to facilitate an accurate assessment about service performance, matched against standard outcomes over time. Evaluation represents a deeper form of analysis, for example, exploring whether a service is performing as intended, and is sufficient to bring about meaningful improvements to health.

What information should I monitor?

Key monitoring questions are:

- i) How many?** Quantify the activity of the service. For example;
 - ⇒ the number of people using the service.
 - ⇒ the number of sessions/courses/clinics delivered.
 - ⇒ the number of people trained.
 - ⇒ the number of campaigns delivered, or information disseminated.
- ii) How well received?** Assess uptake and acceptability. For example;
 - ⇒ Level of service use (referral rate, uptake, completion rates),
 - ⇒ Client satisfaction,
 - ⇒ Satisfaction with training delivered.
- iii) What effect?** Monitor services outcomes. For example, does the service change;
 - ⇒ Primary health outcomes (e.g. weight loss, fitness, smoking rates),
 - ⇒ Secondary outcomes (e.g., motivation, confidence, self-esteem, wellbeing).

Choosing appropriate outcome measures

Choosing a reliable outcome measure is important in ensuring that your findings are valid. Where possible, use measures that are;

- i) Validated** - measures that have been demonstrated to be reliable and accurate by wider research.
- ii) Objective** - measures taken by staff (i.e., weight and height) rather than self-report.

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 contact the Active Lifestyles and Healthy Improvement Team on 01225 396429