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ETHICS & EVALUATION

UK Evaluation Society

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Contents

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Editorial – Bev Bishop

When we settled on the theme of 'ethics' for this edition of the Evaluator, we had no idea of the massive changes in all our lives that COVID-19 was going to throw up and the many ethical challenges that would result. UK Evaluation Society President Tim Chadborn has been particularly close to debates in his 'day job' role as Head of Behavioural Insights and Evaluation Lead at Public Health England and Expert Advisor to the Systems Unit in the Cabinet Office. He reflects here, in a personal capacity on the issues of inequality and ethics that the crisis has brought to the fore; as well as updating on what the UK Evaluation Society has been doing in the past year, and what we are doing to prepare for the future.

Helen Kara sets the context for the rest of the magazine with her summary of the key literature on ethics in (Euro-Western) evaluation, before drawing on principles of Indigenous research ethics could help to guide us.

Richard Gunton takes a slightly different approach when talking about the values of evaluation – and the concept of 'value' in terms of assessing worth – which is of course central to the evaluator's craft and values, in relation to ethics, before discussing how a participatory approach can bring a richness and depth to both kinds of 'value'.

Ethical relationships between evaluators, commissioners, practitioners and research and evaluation participants are at the heart of ethical practice. Helen Simons writes about the UK Evaluation Society's revised Guidelines for Good Practice in Evaluation and both the extensive consultation with these groups that went into the guidelines and the practical guidance they provide for each of these stakeholder groups.

Dr Tracey Wond examines evaluation use as an ethical dilemma for evaluators. Drawing upon theories of evaluation use/misuse she identifies four features prevalent within them – quality, informedness, intent and attempt at use – and encourages consideration of those features in our practice.

New technologies offer new possibilities for evaluators, as data can more easily be shared and matched. However this presents new ethical considerations. Simon Whitworth of the UK Statistics Authority writes about the ethical principles the Authority has developed to guide the use of data for research and statistical purposes, and draws our attention to a helpful self-assessment tool researchers and evaluators can use to assess ethical risk.

The social or health interventions that evaluations focus upon are often focussed upon vulnerable populations. Jessica Ozan explores the place and role of children in evaluation and the ethics requirements of engaging them in evaluation, while Ruth Aston details an evaluation case study that included co-design, and the rapid sharing of evidence with diverse school populations in Australia, describing how a disconnect between procedural and relational ethics was addressed.

There can be few areas where evaluation practice is more crucial than in exploring suicide prevention. Stephanie Aston discusses how the Samaritans have embedded an ethical approvals process into evaluation and ask why this is not standard procedure in third sector agencies.

Ethical discussion often (understandably) focus on evaluators' and commissioners' duties vis-à-vis research participants. However there is also a duty of care towards researchers. Andrea Williamson and Nicola Burns discuss the steps which can be taken to protect the emotional and physical safety of researchers and the risk factors to look out for.

When we started producing this edition of the Evaluator, of course we had no idea of the massive ethical and practical challenges COVID-19 would present to the practice of evaluation. Alison Higgins describes some of the emerging practice of government analysis commissioning and carrying out evaluation in this context, while Evaluation Support Scotland have kindly allowed us to reproduce their excellent advice to Third Sector organisations trying to 'evaluate at a distance' as well as some very useful links.

From the President: Evaluation and COVID-19

Evaluation is especially needed right now! This is a time of disruption but also transformation and innovation. Coronavirus has impacted all of us in all areas of our lives in an unprecedented way, highlighted wicked problems that we have known to exist for a long time, and likely stretched our evaluation capabilities in many areas. Our professionalism, ethics and integrity stand us in good stead to contribute to society with fairness and compassion but also energy and ambition. Our UK Evaluation Society provides us with intellectual stimulation, professional development and a community of practice. The more we contribute individually and together, the more benefit we will all gain because the value of the Society is in our members and our collective capability.

TIM CHADBORN – UK EVALUATION SOCIETY PRESIDENT

Coronavirus

How has it affected your work as an evaluator? From what I see, it has probably disrupted ongoing or planned evaluations and you have had to review your entire evaluation plan to see whether you can still answer the evaluation questions. Due to physical distancing, we can't work face-to-face and you have probably had to explore whether you can conduct your research methods online and the implications of that for bias, comparisons, ethics and costs. In many cases, the evaluation questions may no longer be relevant or there may be new priorities – but colleagues are not always sure what those are and the goalposts may keep changing.

But evaluators are good at observing change, understanding determinants of change and describing potential implications to inform decision-making. Evaluative thinking is, in part, an ongoing process of critical reflection, which enables us to assess our roles and the contribution we can make – the additionality we bring – and we can adapt accordingly.
And so, we adapt and innovate during times of change. In our methods, our processes, and our relationships and ways of working. Rapid action is key for an emergency response and many of us have designed, developed or processed an evaluation quicker than we might have thought possible before! And all while sitting at home in our offices, kitchens and bedrooms and learning how to use online videoconferencing platforms and new online tools, which can also bring new possibilities. There have been a mass of rapid evidence syntheses and online surveys and people are exploring new ways to collect, appraise and analyse data. Evaluators are less bound by geography when online and have been developing new working relationships and partnerships. We have prioritised speed in our need to explore and understand and so funds have been released, applications have been rapidly assessed, papers have been pre-printed and peer reviews have been turned around in days! Many people have thought – if this is possible now, could it be normal in the future?

UK Evaluation Society

What have we been evaluating?

So what have we been evaluating? Almost everything? I know that curating and coordinating the wealth of science and research that has been discharged is a huge job in itself!

Health has been at the forefront of all our minds like never before. But the public has also engaged widely in science and evidence, the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies has played a key role in government decision-making, and the government Chief Medical Officer and Chief Scientist have become household names. As well as the direct response to the coronavirus pandemic, evaluators in health are concerned about the wider health impacts such as fewer presentations to the

NHS, and reduced uptake of preventive interventions, through to end-of-life and palliative care. Then there is the wider impact of coronavirus on health and wellbeing such as exposure to poor air quality and our diet, physical activity and sedentary behaviour (particularly for those of us working from home?). Maybe more transformative over a longer period are the economic and societal changes that are resulting and how these impact on people across the life-course: the changes in the labour market and sustainability of different economic models; the effects and implications of increased unemployment; the break and diversity in formal education; our use of energy and the opportunity to mitigate our impact on climate change; and how we have adapted our social practices among friends and family. These cultural changes that have as yet unknown effects on our future.

Evaluation can help here. Evaluators can help to understand uncertainty and inform national policies and local initiatives to aid recovery and renewal – which will directly improve people's lives. As well as the surveys and evidence syntheses mentioned above, there will be many analyses of natural experiments of the shock to the systems of society, economics, international affairs, and health. There will be many case studies that help share the narrative and learning from localised initiatives. There will be many other evaluation types and approaches used and possibly new methods developed. There is greater recognition of the value of data and evaluation and we need to be establishing evaluation capability and monitoring, evaluation and learning programmes targeted at informing post-crisis recovery decisions to help minimise future impacts to these systems and maximise the likelihood of 'building back better'.

Inequalities

Inequalities have appropriately risen to the forefront of our minds and the top of the political agenda alongside mass mortality from coronavirus. One traumatising event catalysed this but many of us see or experience inequalities every day and there have been many other illegal and tragic events over the years that have come and gone without transformation of the system. The evaluative evidence is vital to confirm the pervasiveness of inequalities. For example, data show that excess mortality from coronavirus among black and minority ethnic people in the UK compared to white people is no different in magnitude to their excess mortality from many other health conditions. Evaluation should be at the forefront of our national response. We can synthesise the mass of existing evidence (including lived experiences) on inequalities, help develop a deeper and shared understanding of this wicked problem, bring together people around shared goals, develop Theories of Change to coalesce people about system changes that should deliver improvement, design approaches to determine whether these changes are working as expected and whether they have any unintended consequences and use the knowledge produced throughout these efforts to influence decisions across the system. The UK government's commitment to 'Levelling Up' is a great opportunity for evaluators to contribute to making a better world.

Ethics and integrity

This brings us to the ethics and integrity of evaluators. These are core to our profession and underpin the quality of the work we deliver. There can be tensions between our values, our resources, the demand for urgency in an emergency response, and the rights of collaborators and participants in our studies. There is often a challenge in disseminating evaluation findings in an influential format to have a positive impact on decision-making and contribute leadership for positive change while also providing impartial and objective evidence. It can be hard to manage relationships with decision-makers and develop the trust and confidence needed to communicate 'truth to power' while also seeking to be open and transparent. The integrity of scientists has been scrutinised during the response to coronavirus and the relationship between scientists and policy-makers has been tested. Evaluators must individually reflect on these challenges, promote our professional standards, and strive to adhere to them at all times.

Conclusion

These are unprecedented times, but evaluators are resilient and have great enthusiasm and energy. If we reflect and come together around shared aims, we can emerge unified and organised and fit for the future. Coronavirus has been disruptive but is driving innovation across society. Change was important, but some degree of transformation is now probably necessary. But resilience, energy and innovation also derive from remaining a broad church for multiple disciplines. The UK Evaluation Society will seek to grow the diversity in our membership, the value for our members and our impact in society. I feel the need for us to carefully steer ourselves though these challenging times if we are going to be ambitious and progress towards our vision but excited about our potential. As they say, 'be part of the change that you want to see in the world'.

The UK Evaluation Society: An update

Looking back, our key performance indicators for 2016-19 were focused on finance, membership, professional development, consultation and comms. With particular thanks to the Past President Julian Barr, co-Directors and active council members, there is much success to celebrate: our finances are in order though affected by coronavirus; our membership is stable; we have developed the Voluntary Evaluator Peer Review, Good Practice Guidelines, and Framework of Evaluation Capabilities for professional development; revamped our website (**https://www.evaluation.org.uk/**) and enhanced the frequency and quality of comms; developed links with civil service organisations and the third sector; grown more of a UK focus, less driven by international developments; improved the quality and number of conference abstracts and had more success with sponsorship; advised on the new version of Magenta Book, the UK government's guide to evaluation that has recently been published (**https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-magenta-book**); transitioned to a larger Council with more active members and a virtual assistant to support our activities; and listened to our members through a members survey.

Looking forward, although coronavirus disarrayed our plans for our annual conference in 2020, we are carrying over our theme and abstracts to 26/27 May 2021 in the Grand Connaught Rooms in London and we have great speakers already lined up (**https://www.evaluation.org.uk/event/annual-conference-2021/**). The society will be technologically adept with a fit-for-future website, membership platform, online banking, video-conferencing and online events, and digital management tools. Personalisation will be key to deliver value to our members and we have consulted widely and listened a lot. Now, we need to speed up action on our members views.

More than ever in these times, we need to belong, have a sense of purpose and connect with pride to our fellow members and societies. Members have told us they would love to have an enhanced sense of community and valuable content – we now have a highly relevant and digital newsletter in the Evaluator, we are developing interest groups such as 'Early Career Evaluators', and we are responding with a wealth of webinars, trainings, a journal club, and other events.

To manage the circumstances of coronavirus and plan carefully but with ambition for the future, we will develop an interim business plan for 2020 and a longer-term business plan by the end of 2020. We will build on our passion, focus on where we can excel, and be perceptive about our income. Though a more active Society requires more active management and direction, which requires more person-time and funds. We need to have sustainable finances and will develop a budget for 2020 and 2021. We will develop smarter governance and management with efficient and participatory processes. We will clarify our mission and offer, which will include professionalism, our community of good practice, and a valued member offer. Be a part of this! Council meetings are on 14th July and 13th October and Council elections will take place in autumn 2020!

"I feel the need for us to carefully steer ourselves though these challenging times if we are going to be ambitious and progress towards our vision "

The Evaluation Ethics Literature – Helen Kara

It continually astonishes me that whole books on evaluation research can be written with little or no mention of ethics. That has to change. We should also recognise that this is a Euro-Western phenomenon. The Indigenous research paradigm pre-dates the Euro-Western paradigm by tens of thousands of years, and Euro-Western evaluators could learn a lot from the Indigenous approach to research and evaluation ethics. This is becoming easier as Indigenous scholars, whose tradition is oral learning and history, have begun to produce written work which is more accessible for Euro-Westerners. And all of the Indigenous literature on evaluation I have read most certainly does include ethics.

Of course there are ethical guidelines for evaluation, produced by professional bodies, but guidelines alone are not enough. We also need to understand ethical theories and practice; we need access to case studies including ethical challenges and how they were addressed; we need ethical education in all our evaluation training and other professional development. And we need good literature covering all of this. We're not there yet, but we have some useful starting points.

First, a disclaimer: this is not an exhaustive list of all the literature on evaluation ethics – though that should be possible; there isn't much. However, the literature covered here does come from around the world (albeit only from that written in English), and all of it is potentially useful for evaluators. I know this literature because I wrote a chapter on evaluation ethics in my recent book Research Ethics in the Real World: Euro-Western and Indigenous Perspectives (Policy Press, 2018).

I'd like to introduce you to three books on evaluation ethics. They are all edited collections and we will meet them in chronological order. The first, published in 2008 by The Guilford Press in New York, is edited by Michael Morris: Evaluation Ethics for Best Practice: Cases and Commentaries. In fact the book is largely written by Morris but includes brief essays – the Commentaries of the title – by 13 other evaluators from the US and Canada. The book begins by introducing the ethics of evaluation, then has chapters on evaluation design, data collection, data analysis and interpretation, communicating results and using results. Each chapter has two 'scenarios' (aka case examples), two commentaries, and ends with 'questions to consider'. The book has a decent index, is easy to read and use, and is still highly relevant 12 years after publication. In summary, Morris suggests that a greater focus on social justice would help evaluators to recognise the ethical components of their work.

Evaluation for an Equitable Society, edited by Stewart Donaldson and Robert Picciotto, is part of the Evaluation and Society series edited by Jennifer Greene and Stewart Donaldson. It was published in 2016 by Information Age Publishing, Inc, in Charlottesville, New Jersey. Although the majority of contributors come from the US and Canada, this volume has a more global scope, with contributors also from Australasia and Europe. Chapter authors include eminent evaluators such as Jennifer Greene, Ernest House and Saville Kushner. The most obviously relevant chapter is by Michael Scriven, 'The Last Frontier Of Evaluation – Ethics', though all chapters address ethics in one way or another. Scrivens argues that evaluators should be altruistic; a virtue ethics position. Sadly the book has no index.

Evaluation for a Caring Society, edited by Merel Visse and Tineke Abma, was published in 2018, also by Information Age Publishing. It is in four parts: Theoretical Reflections on a Caring Society, Democratic Evaluation for a Caring Society, Ethics and Evaluation for a Caring Society, and Responsive Evaluation for a Caring Society. The first three each contain two chapters, the fourth contains four. Again, the third part may be the most relevant, though they all address ethics in a way. Sadly, again, the book has no index. (I do think academic publishers should include a professionally compiled index as a matter of course. It is so difficult to use books effectively without one.) Essentially, as the title and section headings suggest, this book aims to show that evaluation belongs, and can contribute, to a caring society.

There are also some journal articles on evaluation ethics. John Scougall, based in Australia, published a very useful article in 2006 in the Evaluation Journal of Australasia 6(2) pp 49-55 called 'Reconciling tensions between principles and practice in Indigenous evaluation'. Scougall demonstrates the importance of cultural sensitivity and cultural competence, and explains why and how to develop this in an evaluation

team. While his article is based on a single study and firmly rooted in Australian policy and practice, the points Scougall makes would be relevant for any evaluator working across cultures – which, let's face it, is most of us.

In 2007, the Journal of Multi Disciplinary Evaluation 4(8) pp 40-57 published an article by Jill Chouinard and Bradley Cousins hailing from Canada: 'Culturally Competent Evaluation for Aboriginal Communities: A Review of the Empirical Literature'. They assert that 'there is still much work to be done in terms of conducting empirical research that seriously attends to the challenges of culturally competent evaluation', (41) a claim I suspect would still stand good today. They found 15 relevant articles published from 1997-2006, all but three in the last five years of that decade, and offer their literature review as a starting point for empirical research.

A more recent article is by Michael Morris (remember him?) and is in New Directions for Evaluation 148 pp 31-42. The article is called 'Research on Evaluation Ethics: Reflections and an Agenda', and was published in 2015. Morris reviews literature from the major Euro-Western evaluation journals and calls for more research into how evaluators handle ethical problems. Morris also recommends the use of case studies, including different stakeholders' perspectives, to analyse complex ethical dilemmas in evaluation.

Another is by Chris Barnett and Laura Camfield from the UK, in Journal of Development Effectiveness 8(4) pp 528-534, called simply 'Ethics in evaluation'. They argue that evaluation research should take a different ethical approach from research more widely, by focusing on the well-being of all stakeholders (not only participants) and taking into account the duties of evaluation research to society as a whole. This is a values-based approach.

A useful book chapter came out in 2017, published by our old friends Information Age Publishing in a book called Continuing the Journey to Reposition Culture and Cultural Context in Evaluation Theory and Practice. This is edited by Stafford Hood, Rodney Hopson and Henry Frierson, and is another in the Evaluation and Society series. The book as a whole looks good (though guess what, it doesn't have an index, grrrr) but I've only read the chapter by Nicole Bowman, Carolee Dodge Francis and Monique Tyndall on 'Culturally Responsive Indigenous Evaluation: A Practical Approach for Evaluating Indigenous Projects in Tribal Reservation Contexts'. As with Scougall's article (above), this chapter uses a single case example to make some cogent points about historical context, power dynamics and the political, legal and cultural context for evaluation. Again these points are helpful for thinking about any evaluation where the evaluator(s) and evaluands come from different cultures.

Another relevant chapter from Evaluation for an Equitable Society is 'Confronting Capitalism: Evaluation that Fosters Social Equity' by Sandra Mathison. She takes a wider view of ethics, proposing that evaluators have a role in redressing inequality, and suggesting that we use a structural three-fold approach:

1. Evaluations should be independently funded,
2. Publicly available evaluation frameworks and resources should themselves be evaluated for effectiveness, and
3. An international academy of experienced evaluators should be set up to evaluate wide issues of social inequality.

These are certainly interesting ideas, though I find it hard to see how they can be put into practice.

Last year the American Journal of Evaluation published an article by Caitlin Mapitsa and Tara Ngwato: 'Rooting evaluation guidelines in relational ethics: lessons from Africa'. They suggest that rather than the knee-jerk approach to participants as vulnerable, evaluators should conduct an analysis of power relations within and between stakeholder groups to identify vulnerable stakeholders in the particular context of each evaluation.

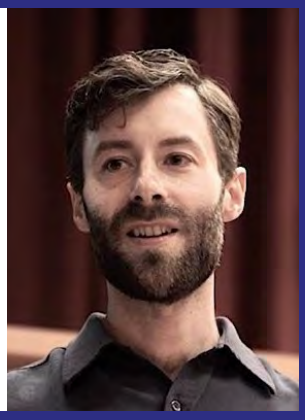
My own argument is that ethical issues arise at all stages of the evaluation process, and that evaluators need to be equipped to think and act ethically in response. This means there is a lot more to consider than is covered in the current literature on evaluation ethics. The four principles of Indigenous research ethics could help to guide us here. They are:

1. Relational accountability: evaluators are in relationship not only with other people but also with the land, ideas, animals, ancestors, the cosmos, and so on.
2. Communality of knowledge: knowledge exists within relationships and so belongs to everyone.
3. Reciprocity: relationships and interactions should be mutual and of mutual benefit – and of course this applies to the wide definition of relationships given above.
4. Benefit sharing: participants and communities should benefit from evaluation as much as evaluators and commissioners.

This holistic, egalitarian ethical approach could, I believe, help us further along the road towards truly ethical evaluation.

Values in Evaluation

RICHARD GUNTON
(UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER)



The little word 'value' sits nicely in the middle of 'evaluation', but its usage is often confused and confusing . Its entry takes up several inches in a good old-fashioned dictionary: mine lists six senses for the noun and two more for the verb – so wide is its range of meanings, spanning from numerical values to personal preferences. 'Ethics', by contrast, is simpler and easier to define: a wise choice for the theme of this issue of The Evaluator. So why write about values in evaluation rather than ethics in evaluation? And why risk asking a lecturer in statistics to write about this topic – someone who probably ponders the value of Y more often than the value of a good policy? Happily, despite my job title, I can say that my work actually spans this range – but more of that in closing.

I see value everywhere in evaluation because of an important connection between the objective and the subjective senses of the word 'value' – a connection that goes to the heart of what evaluation is about. Evaluation is ultimately about judgment: subjecting a policy, project or intervention to expert assessment of how well it did. Whether the evaluative criteria are taken to be those laid down in the project's objectives or to include wider considerations brought to bear by the evaluator, an overall summative evaluation involves judgment calls in describing, judging and trading off the strengths and weaknesses of an intervention. Observed states of affairs are confronted with evaluative criteria. In some cases this appears as stark as confronting numerical or tick-box performance values with the expert values of the evaluator: the objective meeting the subjective. Yet we know, of course, that those seemingly-objective performance scales have been set up according to someone's judgment of what ought to be assessed and how, while the evaluator's professional values are supposed to be ethical, not merely subjective opinion. Objectivity depends upon subjectivity, and vice versa. As everyone knows, even statistics can be pursued with an agenda.

Reflecting on values in evaluation, then, seems to me foundational for the science and art of evaluation. It can bring us to look into the chasm of that deep-seated dualism of our culture: that of objectivity vs. subjectivity, of science vs. freedom, of nature vs. nurture. Fortunately, however, our 'value' language has some further resources to offer at this juncture. The goal of an evaluation, of course, is an assessment of the value (not values) of an intervention: how good it is overall. In performing an evaluation, we integrate a plurality of objectives and data with ethical values to produce a singular (if sometimes prosaic) value judgment: "This is how good that intervention was, and here's how it could be improved next time." In ethical jargon, a person's held values help them to attribute value.

Evaluation is complex in that its singular conclusion is only reached at the end of a pluralistic journey. In particular, consideration of stakeholders brings a diversity of values into an evaluation. As stakeholders' values, or ethics, contribute to an evaluation, it can become pluralistic in a way that makes it fairer – and perhaps pushes interventions to be more effective, efficient, harmonious and generous as well as fair. But even at this point of pluralism, we implicitly appeal to objective standards of goodness, built into our language.

[1] Frankena 1967. Value and Valuation (www.encyclopedia.com/humanities/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/value-and-valuation)

It's a truism that efficiency is better than wastefulness, harmony better than chaos, fairness than injustice, generosity than stinginess. Then again, what if when designing a participatory evaluation, we find an option to increase fairness that is vastly more expensive, or that generosity to a group of marginalised stakeholders comes with some loss of fairness overall? Once again we are thrown back to the need for judgment (preferably involving participants, of course!): the subjective reappears in the midst of the objective. And in such dilemmas we also encounter another kind of pluralism: the plurality of kinds of goodness. Any one person can value a situation in a range of complementary ways: sensorially (is it comfortable?), cognitively (interesting?), socially (inviting?), aesthetically (beautiful?), and many more. At any given moment we are trading off diverse perceptions of goodness in deciding how to act, bringing our values to bear as we evaluate. At this point, the professional evaluator's role could be seen as that of a stakeholder writ large!

My current research aims to develop a pluralistic evaluation framework that brings both of these forms of pluralism – diverse stakeholders and diverse kinds of value – into focus alongside a third one, which is simply the plurality of sciences. The importance of basing evaluation on scientific studies of scenarios drawn from a range of appropriate disciplines is not controversial. The ethical challenge with this third pillar of pluralism lies rather in the ease with which the values (ethics) of scientists can be smuggled into our evaluation as if they were objective truths. We seem to know that biodiversity, carbon sequestration and economic growth are good almost in the same way that we know that harmony, justice and generosity are good, yet these concepts are multifaceted and often subject to contested definitions. Moreover, no scientific analysis can compare their relative value. How bad is biodiversity loss compared to climate change? How much economic growth should we trade off for certain benefits in biodiversity and greenhouse gas reductions? To be serious about stakeholders' values, we need ways of contextualising and debating the goods of such scientific concepts in particular situations and scenarios, and of allowing non-scientists to join conversations about their relative values. These problems are going to be tough, without simple or timeless answers. But the hope of my collaborators and me is that putting these issues on the table and offering a tractable framework for separating and discussing them will be a small step in a good direction. Appropriately enough, it is the multidisciplinary nature of the Centre for the Evaluation of Complexity Across the Nexus (CECAN) that first brought me into contact with evaluation issues, and funded the development of this pluralistic evaluation framework.

Meanwhile, I'm pleased that my university has a module called 'The Values of Nature', where some of the above issues have been thrashed around with thoughtful students and guest contributors. I suspect that 'value' will continue to be a slippery term, but we can at least distinguish the various meanings of that small word and justify their inclusion in the concept of evaluation. And let's not be ashamed to point out that ethics lies at the heart of evaluation.

	WHO?	WHAT?	HOW?
A complex situation has many aspects for identifying:	Stakeholders	Processes	Valuing

FIGURE 1: THE PLURALISTIC EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Towards Ethical Practice in Evaluation: Effective Relationships are the Key

HELEN SIMONS

Introduction

In 2018 the United Kingdom Evaluation Society (UKES) revised their set of Guidelines for Good Practice in Evaluation. These are designed to help commissioners, practitioners and participants, from their respective professional roles, collectively to establish good practice in the conduct of evaluation. The Guidelines can be downloaded on the UK Evaluation Society's website www.evaluation.org.uk under Professional Development.

This paper describes how these guidelines evolved through extensive discussion and reiteration and the assumptions on which they are based. It concludes by indicating that, while the production and existence of the guidelines are an important stage in the professionalization of evaluation, it is a further step to ensure that they are effectively used in practice to facilitate ethical evaluation. That depends upon people and commitment by all key stakeholders in any evaluation to endorse their 'active' use towards ethical evaluation practice.

Key Features in the UK Evaluation Society's Evaluation Guidelines

- grounded in practice: constructed from identifying issues encountered in the field and devising a statement that potentially leads to their resolution;
- presented in four separate sections: for evaluators, commissioners, and participants, whether external or internal to an institution, to highlight the role each has in contributing to quality evaluation;
- practical, stated as guidance for action, not as abstract statements;
- user-friendly and in an accessible A5 format;
- based upon democratic values and principles such as transparency, equity and diversity;
- educative, designed to promote understanding of evaluation and a dialogue between all those responsible for ensuring quality evaluation.

Evolution of the Guidelines for Good Practice in Evaluation

The Guidelines first evolved twenty years ago in the context of increasing awareness by evaluation societies internationally of the need for standards or guiding principles to enhance professionalism and professionalization of evaluation. This move was spearheaded by the initiative of the American/ Canadian Joint Committee for Standards in Educational Evaluation and, in particular, their Program Evaluation Standards, published in 1994. Other evaluation societies soon followed suit, several adapting the Joint Committee Standards.

The UK Evaluation Society Working Group on Ethics took a different approach. After examining all the existing sets of guidelines, standards and principles[i] the Group decided that, rather than adapt other countries' standards or guidelines, the Society would devise its own to offer more practical guidance in the field. Hence the title, Guidelines for Good Practice in Evaluation.

Reasons for the Focus on Good Practice

What lay behind this decision was the view of Council at that time that, as a relatively new Society (inaugurated in 1994), it was a little too early to incorporate evaluation activity in a code or standard of practice. It was, however, more in agreement with a guiding principles approach, such as that proposed by the American Evaluation Association (AEA). For an examination of the structure and content of different standards and guidelines, see Picciotto (2005).

It was also the view of the Ethics Working Group when they examined existing sets of standards that these were rather too abstract, slightly too prescriptive, had too many parameters presenting a false hope that all could be met, and did not always have an ethical component. In fact Newman and Brown noted of the Joint Committee Standards that 'the use of the word ethics is assiduously avoided ' (Newman and Brown (1996:21), though they acknowledged that some statements in the Propriety section might be considered ethical in nature. It seemed to the Ethics Working Group that existing standards were more focused on methodology, audit of the process and quality of the product of evaluation, a desirable goal in itself, but not what the Council was expecting from a Working Group on Ethics, which hopefully would offer guidance on how the evaluation was to be conducted in fair and just ways and how relationships (personal and power) would affect the outcomes. But the further consideration was that the group felt the need to produce a set of guidelines that suited the UK culture and the stage of its evaluation practice, thinking that this would have more traction for uptake.

Assumptions Underlying the UK Evaluation Society's Guidelines

Grounded in Practice

Underlying the practical approach to the guidelines taken by the Working Group were three assumptions. The first was the appreciation that sets of standards and principles, while helpful to a degree to guide action in the field, are abstract statements of intent: they do not necessarily address ethical practice. This is a more complex task requiring both interpretation of principles and sensitivity to a multitude of factors in the specific socio-political context. It seemed important to move closer to practice to consider what guidance would help ethical decision-making in the field. Starting from this assumption the convenors of the working group reflected on problems they had encountered in the field that would have benefited from guidelines had they existed at the time. The Guidelines that resulted went through several iterations over five years in small groups and at conferences and seminars and via the membership before being endorsed by Council in 2002 and printed in 2003.

Responsibility of All

The second assumption that underpinned the evolution of the Guidelines was the recognition that evaluation is not only the responsibility of an evaluator or an evaluation team. Evaluation is a social, political and ethical practice that requires a commitment from, and dialogue with, all parties to the evaluation: those who commission the evaluation, those who conduct it and those who participate. Each group has a role: the evaluators/s in ensuring they have an apt and rigorous methodology for the programme or policy they are evaluating and an ethic that ensures its quality and fairness; the commissioners in devising a brief that is appropriate and feasible, given the funding and timing;; participants to keep us honest and ensure that we do not misinterpret or misconstrue any data they offer. The institutional self-evaluation guidelines have a similar intent but rely on those within the institution keeping their colleagues accountable for the conduct of a fair and accurate evaluation.

Ethics Underpin all Statements

A third assumption was that as ethics pervade all our actions in evaluation, from design to conduct to reporting and communicating findings, there was no need to outline a separate code of ethics; ethics would underpin all statements in the guidelines. This decision was also influenced by the knowledge that many of the normal ethical protocols that facilitate sound evaluation and research, such as informed consent, respect for persons, and transparency in data collection and reporting, are outlined in other societies and organizations' ethical guidance. Instead of replicating such guidance, the Working Group decided to reference relevant existing ethical codes and principles and concentrate on devising practical statements for action.

Changes in the Revised Guidelines for Good Practice in Evaluation

In 2018, the Guidelines were restructured by a small working group after extensive consultation with members and Council via a survey and at the Annual Conference. This revision incorporated a number of changes identified by members and expanded a number of features. The practical emphasis is retained. But there are three major differences.

Incorporates New Issues

First the focus is extended to incorporate new approaches to evaluation and issues that had become salient in evaluation practice since the first iteration of the Guidelines. These include issues of equity and diversity. Social media was a further consideration but the Working Group decided that it was a little early to generate specific guidance on this issue as the regulatory frameworks for the use of data gathered in this way were still being developed. However guidance on the potential challenges of using social media in evaluation are referenced at the end of the current Guidelines.

Explicit Statement of Principles

Second, there is a further page outlining the principles on which the statements in the Guidelines are based. The principles were implicit in the 2003 version, many falling under the heading of democratic, but in the current edition they are spelled out with an outline of their meaning. The principles are: clarity, integrity, independence, accessibility trust, equity, transparency and diversity.

Restructured to Match Process of Evaluation

Third, the statements for each of the four groups have been restructured under three headings of principles, planning and conduct [of the evaluation] and reporting, communication and use. This structure in essence follows the process of evaluation from start to finish offering guidance for each stage. The principles provide the foundation for ethical practice so these come first with statements indicating how each group can incorporate these principles into their actions. So, for example, in the section for evaluators, the guidance starts by indicating that evaluators need to acknowledge the principles by adopting a code of ethics that treats all stakeholders equally and fairly. In the principles section for commissioners, statements indicate the need to ensure that the principles are adhered to in appropriate evaluation questions and methodology

In a similar vein, there are statements for each group on what to consider in planning and design, conducting the evaluation and reporting, communication and use. We purposely avoided using the word dissemination, as it is often viewed as the endpoint of evaluation on the assumption that the evaluation is complete and the responsibility to share with relevant audiences has been met. Well yes, to some extent it maybe. However what is required for evaluation to meet one of its major criteria, utility, is for the evaluation to be communicated, which is different, and also used, different again. The statements in the third area aspire to meet this criterion. Institutional self-evaluation deserves a special mention as many organizations conduct evaluation internally and specific guidance for internal evaluation does not always feature in documents on evaluation standards and principles. The principles are the same. But there are some specific features of an internal evaluation that differ from one conducted externally. These include the need to jointly plan with all colleagues, to gain their full involvement and to have procedures to manage difficult issues, such that all staff can continue to live professionally and personally with the consequences of what they find. It is often more problematic to share difficult issues in evaluation with colleagues internally than it is to share with an external evaluator. This needs to be managed sensitively (without harm to individuals within the institution), yet honestly to assure the public that the institution is fulfilling its function and has a reflective evaluative process in place to demonstrate how it can improve its policies and practice. In short there is a need for dual accountability - to colleagues, and to the wider public. The Guidelines show how this can be met.

Specific role for participants

Finally, a word about participants, (those who have given data and/or are involved in the conduct of the evaluation). This group rarely features, except indirectly or passively in many an ethical code with golden rule statements like 'do no harm', and in the adoption for customary ethical procedures like informed consent and, in the best practice, seeing how their data has been used. In the UK society guidelines participants are given active consideration and a specific role. For example, one statement says that they (i.e. participants) will have the opportunity to 'be engaged in the process of designing, collecting and analyzing data if appropriate, as in participatory evaluation, and with methods accessible to them', a second that they will have the opportunity 'to discuss with evaluators innovative ways of gathering and reporting data about them'.

The task now, as with all sets of guidelines, principles or standards, is to turn them into a living document by discussing them widely and drawing on them to conduct sound evaluation and resolve any problematic issues in the field.

Pause for Reflection: Towards Ethical Practice

The professionalization agenda of evaluation has accelerated over the past twenty five years and most evaluation societies now have guidelines for evaluation whether stated as standards, principles, or, in some instances, codes, which are more definitive. Whether these have led to ethical evaluations, however, is an open question. Such guidelines function to guide - that is the point - and they are important to keep in mind when designing and conducting the evaluation. But they do not and, cannot, guarantee ethical practice. This, in the final analysis, is dependent upon people (evaluators) interpreting the principles and guidelines fairly and making decisions, in the specific socio-political context, that are seen to be ethical by all concerned.

Effective Relationships are the Key

For this to be the case, the evaluation needs to have established effective ethical relationships in the field with all relevant stakeholders and participants guided by principles and procedures that all can trust. Setting the conditions for establishing such effective relationships is a fundamental pre-requisite for ethical practice.

Creating and maintaining effective ethical relationships is fundamental for another reason. Demonstrating the rigour of methodology and showing how conclusions are legitimately arrived at from the data is necessary to demonstrate the quality of an evaluation. However as Kirkhart (2013) reminds us, in repositioning the concept of validity, the 'truth' status of findings is also determined through the quality of the relationships we establish in the field with persons and context and the ethical decisions we make there.

Balancing Conflicting Principles

In the reality of evaluation practice and local politics, conflicts can arise between people or their perspectives on issues in the evaluation. It is not always clear how these should be resolved or which path of action to take, especially when a key participant insists or legitimately assumes that their view is the 'right' view in the context. And in their eyes it maybe. However another participant may also assume their perspective is 'true' and 'right'. And it may also be. This is what Russell (1993) has called a 'clash between right and right'. In such a situation, the evaluator has to decide what action to take and how to justify it, and by what ethical theories and principles. Guidelines are helpful to this end but cannot, of course, prescribe how such delicate issues need to be negotiated.

The quality of the relationships we establish in the field is critical here, as one or other person might be aggrieved that their perspective is ignored or given less space in preference to the other. The evaluator has to manage a delicate balance between the two and help all participants see and respect the 'other' in the situation. As House (1993) has pointed out:
Ethical principles are abstract, and it is not always obvious how they should be applied in given situations Some of the most intractable ethical problems arise from conflicts among principles and the necessity of trading off one against the other. The balancing of such principles in concrete situations is the ultimate ethical act (House, 1993; p.68).

Ethical Decison-making in Practice

The structure of the UK Evaluation Society Guidelines for Good Practice in Evaluation outlining the roles and responsibilities of four groups involved in a evaluation offers valuable guidance toward establishing ethical evaluation, especially as the intent is that they dialogue with each other to achieve good practice. This means respecting each others' views and difference. However it is up to the evaluator in situ on a case by case basis to make the actual ethical decisions which are fair to all. For this to be accepted and respected, effective relationships are key to ensuring ethical evaluation practice.

Notes

i There is no universal usage of the terms, standards, principles and guidelines, though it is possible to distinguish their difference by degree of specificity and purpose. For example standards are statements, often prescriptive, to reflect model behaviour and aspiration for quality evaluation; principles are general statements embodying ethical precepts, with a degree of openness for interpretation; guidelines are specific statements to guide action.

ii The convenors of the UK Evaluation Society's Working Group on Ethics andwho prepared the final revised guidelines were
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[1] The convenors of the UK Evaluation Society's Working Group on Ethics and who prepared the final guidelines were Helen Simons and Georgie Parry-Crooke.

"It is often more problematic to share difficult issues in evaluation with colleagues internally than it is to share with an external evaluator."

Evaluation mis-use, under-use and non-use: Our perpetual ethical challenge

TRACEY WOND

Introduction

That evaluations are not-used, under-used, or mis-used is an ethical dilemma for evaluators and the wider public and charity sector, not least because it brings into question the use of public and donor funds.

These 'issues of use' have plagued evaluation theory and practice for over six decades (see for instance Leviton and Hughes, 1981; Hird, 2000; Chelimsky, 2008). Indeed, countless national and international evaluation conferences have made evaluation use/mis-use their central theme.

In this article, I want to visit previous articulations of evaluation mis-use and emphasise four features common across various use/misuse types. These four features may be worthwhile for evaluators and commissioners to consider when commissioning, delivering, managing, reporting and using evaluations.

Articulations of evaluation use/misuse

The contributions of Alkin (1990), Christie and Alkin (1999) and Patton (2015) are particularly noteworthy in identifying types of evaluation use/mis-use. They differentiate between various scenarios where evaluations are used, not-used, mis-used and abused – summarised in Table 1.

ISSUE	DEFINITION	SOURCE
Use	A quality evaluation used appropriately	Alkin (1990, 293) Christie and Alkin (1999, 7)
Mis-use	A quality evaluation knowingly used purposefully or inappropriately.	Alkin (1990, 293) Christie and Alkin (1999, 7)
Mistaken use	A poor quality (mis)evaluation used unknowingly by the user.	Christie and Alkin (1999, 7)
Abuse	'Blatant' non-use of a quality evaluation.	Alkin (1990, 293)
Non-use	A quality evaluation that is unknowingly/ unintentionally not used.	Alkin (1990, 293)
Mis-evaluation	'Inappropriate acts of an evaluator'	Patton (2015, 130)
Over-use	Over emphasis of evaluation.	Patton (2015, 143)
Justified non-use	Poor quality (mis) evaluation acknowledged and not used as a result.	Alkin (1990, 293)

TABLE 1: INTEGRATED SUMMARY OF EVALUATION MIS-USE THEORIES (SOURCE: AUTHORS OWN)

COMMISSIONERS/USERS (DEMAND-SIDE)	EVALUATORS (SUPPLY-SIDE)			
		Able/equipped to deliver quality evaluations.	Able/supported to communicate limitations (culture, skills).	
	Ensuring scoped/agreed evaluation is appropriate.	**Evaluation Quality**	**Informedness**	Ensuring commissioners and users are aware of limitations.
	Limiting potential for undue influence by stakeholders	**Intent**	**Attempt at use**	Supporting use of evaluations as intended.
		Advocating benevolent evaluation use/limiting malevolent use.	Enhancing the usability of evaluations. Limiting poor quality evaluations.	

FIGURE 1: FOUR FEATURES OF USE/MISUSE (SOURCE: AUTHORS OWN

There are four features of these types of use/mis-use that I want to draw attention to and explore:

- **Quality:** The varying quality of evaluations emerge from these types of evaluation use/mis-use – with both poor-quality and quality evaluations capable of suffering from issues of use. For instance, a quality evaluation used inappropriately could constitute mis-use. A poor evaluation used without knowledge that it is poor could constitute mistaken use.
- **Informedness:** The varying evaluation mis-use types depend on a user knowing whether an evaluation is quality or not – let's term this 'informedness'. An evaluation user would need to be informed or know that an evaluation was poor quality in order to decide not to use it (justified non-use).
- **Intent:** The evaluation mis-use types indicate varying levels of intent to use evaluation in a particular way (or not). For instance, 'mis-use', suggests that evaluation users knowingly/malevolently use evaluation inappropriately, whereas 'mistaken use' suggests evaluation can be used accidentally.
- **Attempt at use:** In the case of a quality evaluation, the difference between 'abuse' and 'use' is whether attempts are made to actually use the evaluation. This places an 'attempt at use' as an important element in differentiating the two.

These features resonate with my experiences of doing evaluation and undertaking research into evaluation practice. My PhD research in 2007 explored the challenges of doing evaluation and in 2017 I engaged in further interviews with 19 practising evaluators in the UK to explore issues of use. Challenges to the integrity of evaluation practice featured heavily in these interviews: being asked to sugar-coat reports, dampen down negative findings, and please funders in order to secure future work (quality), acknowledgement of data being mis-quoted or mis-used by commissioners and other users(intent/attempt at use), and evaluations proceeding despite evaluators not content that they were scoped correctly (informedness).

Towards a framework of use

The four features of use/misuse identified through this article could serve as a useful prompt to evaluators. Prompting us to consider how we protect, mitigate, communicate, and practice evaluation in such a way that we can assure quality, intent, informedness and attempts at using evaluation remain healthy and benevolent.

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Bio

Dr Tracey Wond is Treasurer of the UK Evaluation Society. Her PhD (2007-2012) explored challenges to evaluation practice and this has remained the focus of her research since. Tracey's evaluation experience has mainly been in enterprise settings, where she has worked as an Evaluation Officer for a local authority, as well as leading REF research impact exercises and evaluator development in university settings.

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Data sharing, evaluation and ethics

SIMON WHITWORTH
DATA GOVERNANCE, LEGISLATION AND POLICY, 89UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

The UK Statistics Authority (UKSA) was established through the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007. This established the Authority as an independent body at arm's length from the Government and gives the Authority the statutory objective of promoting and safeguarding the production and publication of official statistics that 'serve the public good'. The UKSA's current strategy focuses on making better use of administrative and commercial data to improve the statistics that we produce and enable us to produce more frequent and accurate statistics.

The Digital Economy Act 2017 (DEA) provides the legal framework to do this. The Statistics Strand of the DEA gives ONS, the UK Statistics Authority's executive office, a right of access to data for statistical and research purposes and enables secure data shares with Devolved Administrations to support their statistical needs from devolution. The research strand of the DEA also provides exciting opportunities for the wider research community as it provides a statutory framework permitting public authorities to share de-identified information with accredited researchers for the purposes of accredited research. Under this gateway, data is processed, linked and matched by DEA accredited processors and de-identified data is made available to accredited researchers in accredited secure access environments. Outputs will be disclosure controlled before release from the accredited environment to minimise the risk that anyone will be re-identified from the outputs released from the secure environment. The UKSA is the statutory body responsible for accrediting researchers, processors and research projects who use the Research Strand of the DEA. At the time of writing, 31 research project applications and 3,030 researchers have been accredited by the UK Statistics Authority under the DEA. This gateway is currently being used to evaluate the impact of the immigration white paper on the NI economy and evaluating the Energy Entrepreneurs Fund.

"This helps to reduce any potential harm to all individuals involved in the research and helps maintain public acceptability around the use of data for research and statistical purposes."

In maximising the research and statistical uses of these new opportunities, it is important that consideration is not just given to what research we could do but also to what research we should do to ensure that we use data in ethically appropriate ways which are for the public good. This helps to reduce any potential harm to all individuals involved in the research and helps maintain public acceptability around the use of data for research and statistical purposes. In this way, considering the ethics of our research is an important enabler in mobilising the power of data to improve the research and statistics that we produce.

To consider the ethics of the use of data for research and statistical purposes, the UK Statistics Authority has developed a number of ethical principles which are presented below:

1. The use of data has clear benefits for users and serves the public good.
2. The data subject's identity (whether person or organisation) is protected, information is kept confidential and secure.
3. The risks and limits of new technologies are considered and there is sufficient human oversight so that methods employed are consistent with recognised standards of integrity and quality.
4. Data used and methods employed are consistent with legal requirements.
5. The views of the public are considered in light of the data used and the perceived benefits of the research.
6. The access, use and sharing of data is transparent, and is communicated clearly and accessibly to the public.

However, having ethical principles isn't enough, in it-self, as we want to make sure the principles are used and have impact on research and statistical production. To empower researchers to do this we have developed a **self-assessment tool** that researchers can use to self-assess their research against the ethical principles. To support the use of the self-assessment tool the UK Statistics Authority provide expert user support, ethics training and online guidance. Researchers assess and score their research against 22 items grouped against six ethical principles and get an ethical risk score for the research project based on an average of the researcher's self-assessment scores. Tolerances that cannot be exceeded have been built into the tool to prevent unacceptably high ethical risk scores on one or two items being averaged out by low scores on the other items. Weightings are also applied to the overall ethical risk score to reflect that certain methods and types of data (such as data on vulnerable groups or health data) are particularly ethically risky. These weightings are kept under continuous review to reflect methodological developments and wider contextual changes.

Once the tool has been completed it provides an average ethical risk score for the research project and a suggested course of action. The researcher works with the UKSA's ethics user support team to review the self-assessment, identify areas of ethical risk and identify possible mitigations. Those projects that are considered most ethically risky are taken to the National Statistician's Data Ethics Advisory Committee (NSDEC) so that they can benefit from the independent advice and scrutiny that the Committee can offer.

NSDEC has been established to provide independent and transparent advice to the National Statistician that the collection, access, use and sharing of data. for research and statistical purposes, is ethical and for the public good. It consists of experts from academia and the commercial sector in data ethics, data law and research and statistics. It also includes a lay member to provide a valuable non-expert view and representatives from several government departments. The majority independent membership ensures that the Committee provides impartial and credible advice and external perspectives and challenge to uses of data for research and statistical purposes.

The UK Statistics Authority's ethics framework has been widely across Government, academia and the commercial sector and has helped researchers to thoroughly and efficiently consider the ethics of their use data to ensure they are keeping the right side of the ethical line and are producing research and statistics for the public good.

Engaging children in evaluations: ethical challenges and considerations

JESSICA OZAN
THE PLACE AND ROLE OF CHILDREN IN EVALUATIONS

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) stipulated that children (defined as human beings under the age of 18) had the right to participate in decisions that concerned them. Around the same time as the convention was introduced, a new paradigm emerged in sociology of 'childhood', recognising that children are active agents in their own lives, their families, and their communities (Prout and James, 2015). Slowly, perceptions of children have shifted from children as objects, to subjects, to actors. This has been mirrored in research practice, where children were initially considered as incompetent and vulnerable subjects of studies, but are now becoming increasingly involved as active participants. Participatory Action Research and Youth Participatory Action Research have done a lot as approaches to involve children at different stages of the research process, including as co-researchers. Such approaches are constantly progressing and considering new methods such as arts or music to support meaningful engagement. Why is it then that very few evaluations actively engage children, especially compared to other fields in social sciences?

A great array of social programmes and policies target children. In fact, some of the first evaluations conducted in the US (e.g., the "Eight Year Study" of progressive education undertaken by Ralph Tyler in the 1940s or the "Great Society" policies initiated in the 1960s) used experimental designs to evaluate programmes and policies targeting children. Such designs, however, often use proxies (e.g., school performance data) to measure the effect of the programme and do not engage children. It was the development of the field and the emergence of non-experimental approaches that begun to support a slow shift towards engaging children as participants in evaluations. The current state of the art has brought this participation further and includes attempts to give children a more active role. Some organisations and government Departments, for instance, are now specifically encouraging the active participation of children in evaluations, including to even the degree of them becoming peer-researchers.

There are three broad levels of participation that are relevant to evaluations involving children: consultation, collaboration, and child-led (Lansdown, 2011). Most evaluations will engage children in consultative way, to capture their views and opinions of a programme or policy. Some will work with children collaboratively. For instance, some of the recent work undertaken by the Policy Evaluation and Research Unit where I work engaged vulnerable children and young people in co-designing questionnaires. Finally, more rarely, evaluations can be child-led. This is where children are given the power to make decisions about the evaluation and how it is delivered; it often involves a peer-researcher component (see for instance the work undertaken by Peace Players in youth-led evaluation).

Given this relatively new focus on child participation, there is an urgent need for evaluators to start engaging with the tools that are already available to them (see Hart 1992 or Shier 2001 for conceptual frameworks of participation and Lansdown 2011 for a child participation framework) and start reflecting on the ethical implications associated with meaningfully engaging children in evaluations.

"...evaluations can be child-led. This is where children are given the power to make decisions about the evaluation and how it is delivered"

Here, I will outline some of the 'ethics requirements' associated with engaging children and young people in evaluations and consider what can support 'ethical engagement'. Those two terms should not be used interchangeably.

Ethics requirements

Engaging children in evaluations requires evaluators to comply with a number of ethics requirements. Those working in universities, and perhaps others, will have been through numerous ethics committees to gain ethical approval for each of their research or evaluation projects. Such bodies pay particular attention to research and evaluation conducted with children up to the age of 16, as they are considered a vulnerable group. They ensure that the project does no harm, and that the methods and information provided is adapted to the cognitive abilities of participants.

If the research falls under the umbrella of social care, evaluators need to apply for Research Governance approval from local authorities. Each local authority has a Research Governance Framework that ensures that the research is of quality, does not duplicate or overburden participants, and protects the rights of those involved. From experience, the application process varies greatly between local authorities, making the task quite complex and time consuming in the case of multi-site evaluations. Some local authorities make a distinction between research and evaluation, exempting evaluations from the process. However, this is not the case everywhere. Those ethics requirements are to some extent barriers to children participating in evaluations where the results may impact their lives, as adults get to decide for them whether they can or cannot participate.. But let's keep that debate for another day.

Once evaluators have secured approval from the various ethics committees and/or research governance bodies, they can seek parental consent (for participation of children up to the age of 16). Only then should they ask children if they would like to participate in the study.

Ethical engagement

There is a difference between ethics requirements and ethical engagement. Complying with regulation does not necessarily mean being ethical. Indeed, there is no legal requirement to gain children's consent before engaging them in research. Yet, it is an important step that is quintessential to good practice and ethical engagement. Lansdown (2011) identifies nine basic components for effective and ethical participation They include being transparent and informative, voluntary, respectful, relevant, facilitated with a child-friendly environment and methodological approach, inclusive, supported by training, safe and sensitive to risk, and accountable.

Gaining children's consent speaks to several of these components. It is however important to highlight that consent secured from participants can be quite different to informed consent. Children (and adults!) can sign a form without having read all of it. This is especially the case when the form is provided by a trusted adult such as a teacher or a parent, who often act as gatekeepers. Evaluators need to go beyond regulations to ensure the ethical participation of children in their work. This goes through securing informed consent.

Informed consent is "a fundamental ethical and legal tenet that require[s] three conditions for any valid intervention (…): That the participant (1) is provided with sufficient information to make an informed choice, (2) gives consent voluntarily, and (3) is competent to make a decision about involvement." (Ruiz-Casarez and Oates, 2018, p.1145-1146). This precept becomes more complex when working with children as the information provided to ensure that their choice is informed needs to be adapted to their cognitive abilities. It is the role of the evaluator to offer clear and accessible information to participants according to their age and abilities. For a child to provide their informed consent, they need to understand what they are getting involved in. This means, they need to have a clear understanding of what an evaluation does, what is expected from them, and how their input will be used. It is important to provide them with sufficient information regarding key concepts such as confidentiality and its limit if issues of safeguarding arise, as well as their right to withdraw at any time during the process. It is very possible to explain complex concepts in a child-friendly language. For instance, confidentiality can be explained as: "What you tell me will stay between us. I will only talk to other adults if I think that you are in danger".

Whilst adult consent forms can quickly become lengthy and wordy to cover information regarding data protection, this does not need to be the case for children's consent forms. Once parental consent is secured, there is no legal obligation to obtain the child's personal consent. This means that the consent forms can move away from the information provided to adults (i.e. GDPR requirements around who is the data processor and data controller) and focus on what is important to children. The consent form needs to be short, easily accessible, and informative. Young people involved in the co-production of a consent form for one of my research projects further indicated that consent forms should not contain any jargon (e.g., 'evaluation', 'confidentiality'), fit on one page, use bullet points rather than full sentences, and be colourful. Some of the participants in that same group had admitted to not reading past the first paragraph before signing the form (which was highly troubling to hear). This is an indication of how important it is for the documents to be child friendly.

FIGURE 1: PATHWAY TO CHILDREN'S PERSONAL CONSENT

It is also important that children have the opportunity to sign a personal consent form. This is often not something they have done before and supports a distinction between the tools used in the evaluation (e.g., interview, questionnaire) and the tests or exams they are accustomed to. A final important point about consent is that children's personal consent must supersede parental consent. This should also be made clear to them as it will make them feel empowered. Meaningful engagement is particularly critical for evaluations as children must feel at ease and sufficiently empowered to potentially criticise the programme or policy. Evaluators, who are often used to managing power relationships with commissioners or stakeholders, need to consider how they can come across as an authoritative figure when engaging children. We need to acknowledge this and use our skills and competencies to support a shift in power balance that will enable them to express their views and increase data quality down the line.

Still, today there remains a tendency amongst evaluators to think about child participants, and engagements with them, in terms of numbers. We need to shift this focus to ensure that the work we do with them is ethical (i.e. supports informed consent) and meaningful. Engaging children in evaluations is not a question of good practice; it is complying with their right to be involved in decisions that concern them.

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Are Ethics Procedures Keeping Pace with Complex Evaluation Designs? Lessons from Participatory Evaluations

RUTH ASTON

Disentangling 'ethics' from any aspect of evaluation practice seems a futile exercise. Ethics considerations need to be in place, from the scoping, design and conduct of the evaluation, and even beyond the evaluation (Rallis & Rossman, 2010).

It is becoming more common as an evaluator to read a request for a program or policy evaluation that involves a vulnerable population, where a commissioner explicitly requests for the evaluation to be co-designed, generate real-time evidence; and involve a partnership between the evaluator and the commissioner. Evaluations that include these features and involve vulnerable populations can present particular procedural ethics challenges. It is worth noting the distinction made here between procedural and relational ethics, the latter in short, understood "…as an action ethic that is placed within the interpersonal relationship…" (Upasen, 2017: 2). It is embedded within the interaction between the evaluator and all stakeholders involved in the evaluation. Whereas, procedural ethics is the "…norms, standards and procedures related to the ethical planning and conduct of research…" (Hunt & Godard, 2013: 719).

Drawing on an evaluation case study that included co-design, and the rapid sharing of evidence with vulnerable populations in Australia, an example of how a disconnect between procedural and relational ethics was addressed is detailed below.

CASE EXAMPLE: Evaluations of multi-initiative, school improvement policies

Several reforms as part of a 10-year policy strategy covering a series of ambitious large-scale school and system reforms aimed to increase access to quality education for every child, including a specific focus on reducing socioeconomic disparities in learning outcomes among young people, were the subject of these evaluations.

The three evaluations, each with different design components and timelines, had very similar procedural ethics challenges all associated with the participatory nature of the evaluations, particularly the highly collaborative relationship between the evaluator and the commissioner.

In one of the evaluations, a component of the design involved building an online monitoring data collection portal through a co-design process, where the commissioner and the program participants (who would ultimately enter data into this portal) were involved in the development. In this stage of the evaluation, the collaborative relationship was essential to the design of a useful, valid and relevant monitoring portal. As a consequence of the involvement of the commissioner and program participants in the design of the portal, ethical concerns were raised about the independence and objectivity of the evaluation, and importantly whether participants who had been involved in the development of the portal, would feel obliged to consent to participate. This was the coupled with the complexity that all of the potential participants were employees of the commissioner.

In order to address these concerns raised by the Human Research Ethics Committee (ethical review board in Australia), and conduct the evaluation in adherence to relevant ethical requirements, the evaluation team needed to explain and apply relational ethics into procedural ethics, to manage perceived threats to independence, and ensure the informed consent process was not compromised but instead negotiated through a trusting and respectful relationship between the 'evaluator' and 'participant'.

The evaluation team addressed this through applying the following practices in the design and conduct of the evaluation;

1. Developing specific principles for how the evaluation would be conducted, and an explanatory statement (describing practices) for how each principle would be applied,
2. Engaging regularly in reflective practice to reflect and monitor how well the evaluation and evaluation team is adhering to the principles,
3. Actively encouraging accountability to these principles,
4. Applying for ethical approval for each phase of the evaluation, including, if necessary, engagement or co-design that might occur prior to data collection, and
5. Adopting an ongoing consent process, where consent is revisited with participants regularly, prior to and post participating in the evaluation.

However, practicing evaluation ethically and with integrity goes further than just procedural and relational ethics. It also includes instrumental ethics such as caring reflexivity (Rallis & Rossman, 2010). Reflexivity, a heightened sense of self-awareness, and an understanding of how the actions of an individual evaluator can influence the way one thinks about and interacts with evaluation participants, particularly when the evaluator is not a member of the community to which the participants belong, is mutually beneficial. Not only is the evaluator more likely to practice ethically and with integrity, the output of the evaluation is likely to be a more accurate and reliable judgement based on the values of the intended key stakeholders, because those values will be better understood (Hassall, 2020; Hall, Ahn & Greene, 2012).

As we face one of the greatest challenges in recent times, and one that connects us globally like little has before, I cannot think of a more important time for our profession to consider the importance of reflexivity along with procedural and relational ethics, as a tenet of ethical evaluation practice that can support societal progress.

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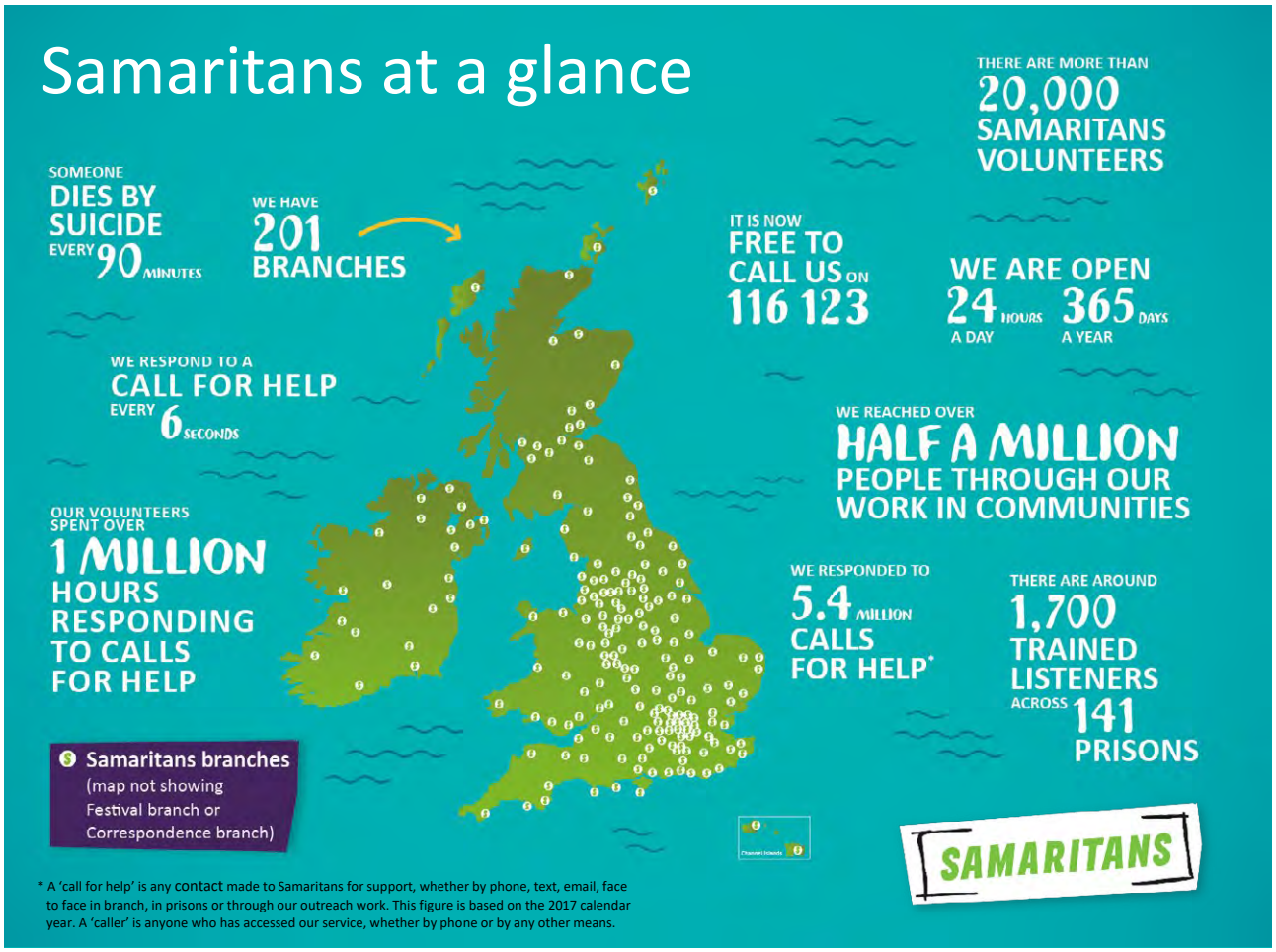
I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land upon which I work, live and learn, the Wurundjeri people. I pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging of the Kulinnation.

Samaritans Approach to Ethics in Evaluation

STEPHANIE ASTON
SENIOR RESEARCH & EVALUATION MANAGER
AT SAMARITANS

Samaritans vision is that fewer people die by suicide. In 2018, 6,859 people took their own lives in the UK and Republic of Ireland. Suicide is the biggest killer of men under the age of fifty, women aged 20-34 and people under 35. Suicide is an inequality issue, and the result of the interaction of multiple psychological, social, economic and demographic factors. It can affect people from all walks of life, and the impact on individuals, families and communities is devastating.



Every six seconds Samaritans responds to a call for help from some of the most vulnerable people in society. When people contact Samaritans for emotional support, they often mention several concerns. In 2018, some of the primary concerns raised related to isolation and loneliness, family, mental health or illness, physical health or illness, and relationship problems.

Evaluation in Samaritans

A key part of Samaritans strategy (2015-21) is improving how we collect and use evidence. Service development, campaigns, and activities are informed by credible evidence, to help us plan how to deliver and develop services and identify areas of good practice and areas where support is needed. Gathering evidence of impact or testing a new service requires the involvement of those with experience of using Samaritans services, and/or lived experience of distress and suicidality. This requires Samaritans to have a strict internal ethics process in place to ensure we adhere to the highest ethical standards while conducting an evaluation.

Evaluation and ethics

The question often raised in Samaritans is 'why is it not standard practice for independent evaluation consultants or agencies to require ethical approval for projects they undertake in the charity sector?' Is this based on a cultural acceptance within the charity sector or the field of evaluation, or is it due to limited access to ethical processes and committees? Either way, as a profession we need to ask ourselves, 'how can we ensure evaluations are carried out ethically in the charity sector?'

Based on our commitment to high ethical standards, we govern and assess research and evaluation in the same way, using our ethics process for both research and evaluation projects.

Samaritans ethics process

All evaluations at Samaritans (whether conducted in house or externally commissioned) must:

- **Adhere to Samaritans Research Ethics Policy:** All Samaritans' Research and Evaluation work is governed by our Research Ethics Policy. Though there are other external guidelines and policies available (e.g. UKES, BPS, SRA), we wrote our own policy in an accessible manner to enable all staff and volunteers to understand how ethics applies to research and evaluation.
- **Gain ethical approval from Samaritans Research Ethics Board (SREB) or an external Ethics Committee:** Samaritans has established its own voluntary Research Ethics Board, that consists of suicide research experts and lay members. Staff conducting internal evaluations will seek advice and guidance from SREB to ensure work is adhering to ethical standards. External evaluation consultants or agencies that do not have access to an ethics committee are also required to seek advice and guidance from SREB. However, evaluators in academia are required to gain ethical approval from their university ethics committee and are not required to seek additional advice or guidance from SREB.

Important considerations for embedding an ethics process into a service-based organisation

Though it is without doubt that an ethics process results in projects adhering to high ethical standards, and thus ensuring as far as possible the safety of staff, volunteers and participants, there are important considerations, including;

- **Level of staff experience in ethics:** Staff working in service development and leading evaluations will have varying levels of experience of working with external evaluators, but limited experience, if any, of ethics. It is important that they have the support and guidance from those with experience of ethics to help them through the process, enabling them to develop their own knowledge and skills over time.
- **Embedding ethics into the organisation:** As the ethics process requires time to complete the required stages (e.g. application, submission, review, revisions) it is important to build it into project planning, and allow a realistic amount of time for the ethics process to be carried out. It is also crucial that staff understand why it is important to conduct an evaluation ethically, and the benefits of an ethics process to the project, staff and participants.
- **Engaging evaluation agencies in ethics:** Even evaluators who might be more familiar with ethics may not expect to go through an ethics process when working with certain sectors. Therefore, when commissioning an evaluation, include information in the brief and invitation to tender outlining that the ethics process is a requirement and that ethical approval will be needed before the evaluation proceeds.

As evaluators, we must question whether our ethical processes are sufficient for our area of work. If they are not, we must work towards improving them to ensure the safety of staff, volunteers, and participants, and those people who use our services. Samaritans supports some of the most vulnerable people in society, and it is through our ethics process that we can feel confident that our evaluation work is conducted within high ethical standards.

The ethics of researchers' physical and emotional safety

ANDREA E WILLIAMSON[1] AND
NICOLA BURNS[2]

Researcher wellbeing is an essential component of the conduct of research, and much attention is paid to the physical health and safety aspects of the science laboratory setting. However less comprehensively considered is physical and emotional safety when researchers are conducting research with people within organisations; sometimes in unpredictable settings; and sometimes when participants' behaviours or what they tell, is challenging or upsetting.

The need for research safety protocols is acknowledged and there is increasing recognition of the significant ethical considerations within a research and evaluation environment. Complex evaluations depend upon strong multi-disciplinary teams. However, when setting up an evaluation how much attention is paid to the diverse perspectives this might bring to safety considerations? The disciplinary background of the researcher is key; are they from a positivist background where emotions are not acknowledged within the research process; or from an interpretive one where they are an essential articulated component? Of course, each team member also brings their own life experience, perspective and psychological profile to the research. How can that be recognised and taken account of?

In what ways can different disciplinary approaches to ethical questions in the field help evaluators to understand different aspects of the evaluation programme and matters which may arise? For example, evaluation often takes place within a social context and often requires working with groups who have an active interest in the success of the work- it may have funding implications or change the direction of a programme(1). Who are included and excluded from evaluation? Over the course of the evaluation process a number of different groups may be engaged with; researchers build professional relationships; and may develop a commitment to the programme being evaluated. As such the evaluation team may be required to navigate complex political environments and power relations which may impact on the emotional health of the team.

Power relations within the team should be considered too- do all members of the team feel they are able to share concerns about evaluation design and response as the evaluation proceeds? Do all team members feel supported to seek help if required?

It is vital to ensure regular opportunities for discussing researcher safety are incorporated into research project management. Utilise the team's strengths- who is the best person to lead on this? Are there other members of the team who could be supported to develop their skill set in this area? Have you considered in advance which wider support might be needed if necessary?

As an example of what teams may articulate and agree to reduce uncertainty about what to do when challenging circumstances arise; here is an example of safety boundaries and triggers for action used in our research when visiting participants' homes:

TRIGGERS for action

Consider these as threats to physical safety zones emotional safety zones:

- The participant or others in the house are intoxicated with alcohol or street drugs to a degree that the interview cannot be conducted meaningfully or with the risk that the following are more likely to occur.
- Actual or perceived threats of physical violence directed against researcher, accompanier or other persons present in the house by participant or person in house.
- Sexually inappropriate verbalisation that persists such that the researcher or accompanier feels threatened.
- Sexually inappropriate behaviour directed against researcher, accompanier or other persons present in the house by participant or person in house.
- Other concerns, such as the production or presence of an object that is perceived by the researcher or accompanier to be a weapon that may be used against them.(2)

The Social Research Association provides useful guidance about safety and what to consider when setting up and running a research project(3). Barnett and Camfield highlight that ethics in evaluation can move beyond a simple approach of 'do no harm' which seeks to minimise risk, to a more nuanced ethical strategy which seeks to recognise and take account of the perspectives of the diverse members of the team, and those in the programme(1). In our experience this is attention and effort well spent; research team members remain committed, supported and safe in their workplace and the quality of research output is enhanced.

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Adaptation of Evaluation in a COVID-19 World: Challenges and Opportunities for Government Analysts

ALISON HIGGINS

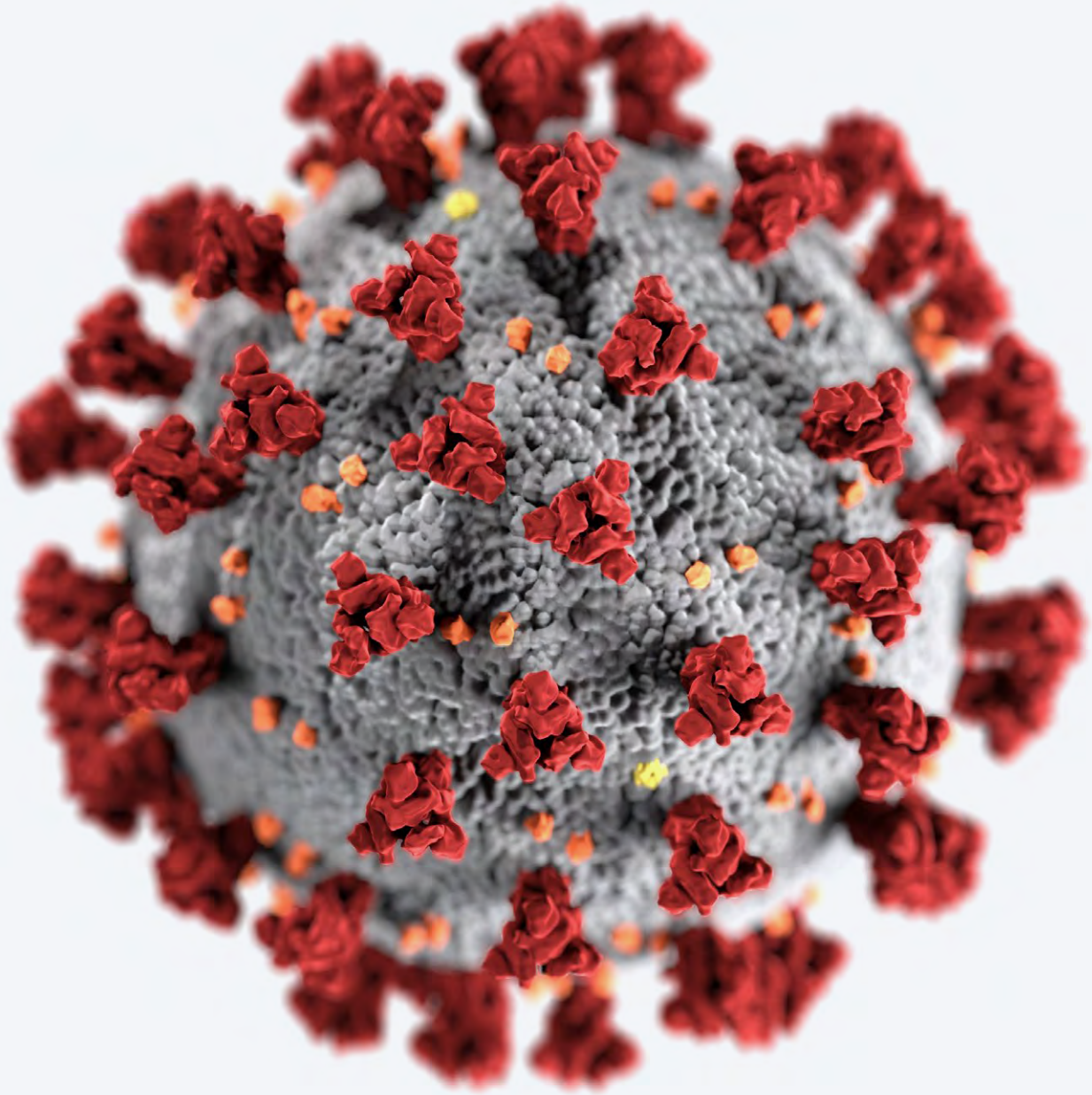
Regular discussions have been taking place across professional networks in government which acknowledge the importance of ethical issues around conducting fieldwork at this time and balancing burdens on respondents with the need to collect timely evidence.

Analysts are consulting extensively with both internal and external stakeholders to consider the implications for evaluation during the pandemic. Consideration is being given to whether fieldwork should continue given ethical considerations, reputational risks for Departments and the possible impact on data quality. Analysts are giving consideration to whether or not it remains appropriate to engage with stakeholders and the likely impact of COVID-19 on respondents' ability to engage with government at the time. A summary of factors analysts are taking into consideration was summarised in a recent Social Research Association blog post:

Where fieldwork is continuing, government analysts are sharing good practice around how to conduct evaluations during the pandemic. The importance of patience and a sensitive tone are being stressed by analysts even if this means extending timescales. The MHCLG European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) evaluation is an example where fieldwork is proceeding, but with adjustments to the research design in response to COVID-19. For example, while the survey on established businesses continues, the start-ups and entrepreneurs survey has been put on hold to reduce the burden on these groups during the early stages of the COVID-19 crisis. Further, numerous checks had been built into the data collection process to prevent, as far as possible, any distress to respondents, reputational risks to the department, and loss of data quality. This includes the interviewer recording any signs of respondent distress, asking respondents how they felt about being interviewed at this time, and being flexible about timescales. Questions were also included to provide a check on how responses may have been impacted by COVID-19. This information is compiled and updated on a weekly basis and sent to MHCLG to review and monitor the survey in relation to these risk factors. This data, as well as an analysis of survey responses to questions pre and post COVID-19, are being built into evaluation plans. Other communications include an official letter forwarded to beneficiaries if they require additional information, which explains the basis for the survey, why it is proceeding given current circumstances and a clarification that beneficiaries may opt-out or participate at a later date. It also includes the contact details of the relevant policy advisor in MHCLG if the beneficiary has any further questions or concerns.

The context for some government programmes has changed considerably during the pandemic and there is a need to understand the context and adapt programmes as necessary. One approach being taken by analysts is to 'stress- test' the theory of change for their programme and to use this as a tool to adapt programmes. The **Complexity Evaluation Framework** and the **Magenta Book Guidance on Handling Complexity** are relevant to considering how to adapt programme evaluations; characteristics of complex systems include adaptation, emergence and tipping points which can lead to unpredictable behaviour and unexpected outcomes.

Adapting data collection methods such as the move from face to face data to telephone and on-line methods of data collection has enabled some fieldwork to continue. The acceleration of digital solutions has also arisen as an opportunity during the pandemic, such as the move to hearing on-line court cases.



It is clear that COVID-19 represents both challenges and opportunities for government analysts in evaluating the response to the pandemic. Challenges in terms of the availability of analytical resources with some staff being moved on to frontline activities or having sufficient funding to evaluate COVID-19 interventions. In some instances existing evaluations are being de-prioritised to release resources for COVID-19 work. Probably the most significant challenge is designing rigorous evaluations at pace given the importance of getting interventions up and running as quickly as possible. This will inevitably lead to pragmatism around not necessarily having ideal impact evaluation approaches in place but ensuring that processes are in place to capture learning.

Developing valid baselines is another challenge being highlighted by analysts. One approach is the use of dual-baselining, which involves taking baselines pre-crisis and ideally post crisis but pre-intervention.

Analysts are highlighting the importance of smart objectives and the use of monitoring data for enabling the evaluation of COVID-19 interventions.

Opportunities are being created for natural experiments and for comparison pre and post COVID-19. This can help to understand the effects of potential policy options which would have not been possible outside of these exceptional times. One example that has received widespread media focus is the temporary housing of rough sleepers in hotels.

There are many challenges but also opportunities for evaluation in a COVID- 19 world. In summary, evaluators should perhaps revisit the theory of change for programmes, look out for opportunities for natural experiments and comparisons pre and post COVID-19 and consider how to avoid burdening respondents and minimising mental distress.

COVID-19: Evaluating at a Distance

EVALUATION SUPPORT SCOTLAND

Evaluation Support Scotland (ESS) works with third sector organisations and funders so that they can measure and report on their impact. Our services include 'Let's evaluate!' workshops and tailored support sessions for third sector organisations. We provide free online evaluation resources and webinars. Like many others, our services have changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We are delivering our services online and have produced several resources to evaluate services in the current situation. Here's ESS's top tips for evaluating now.

Covid-19

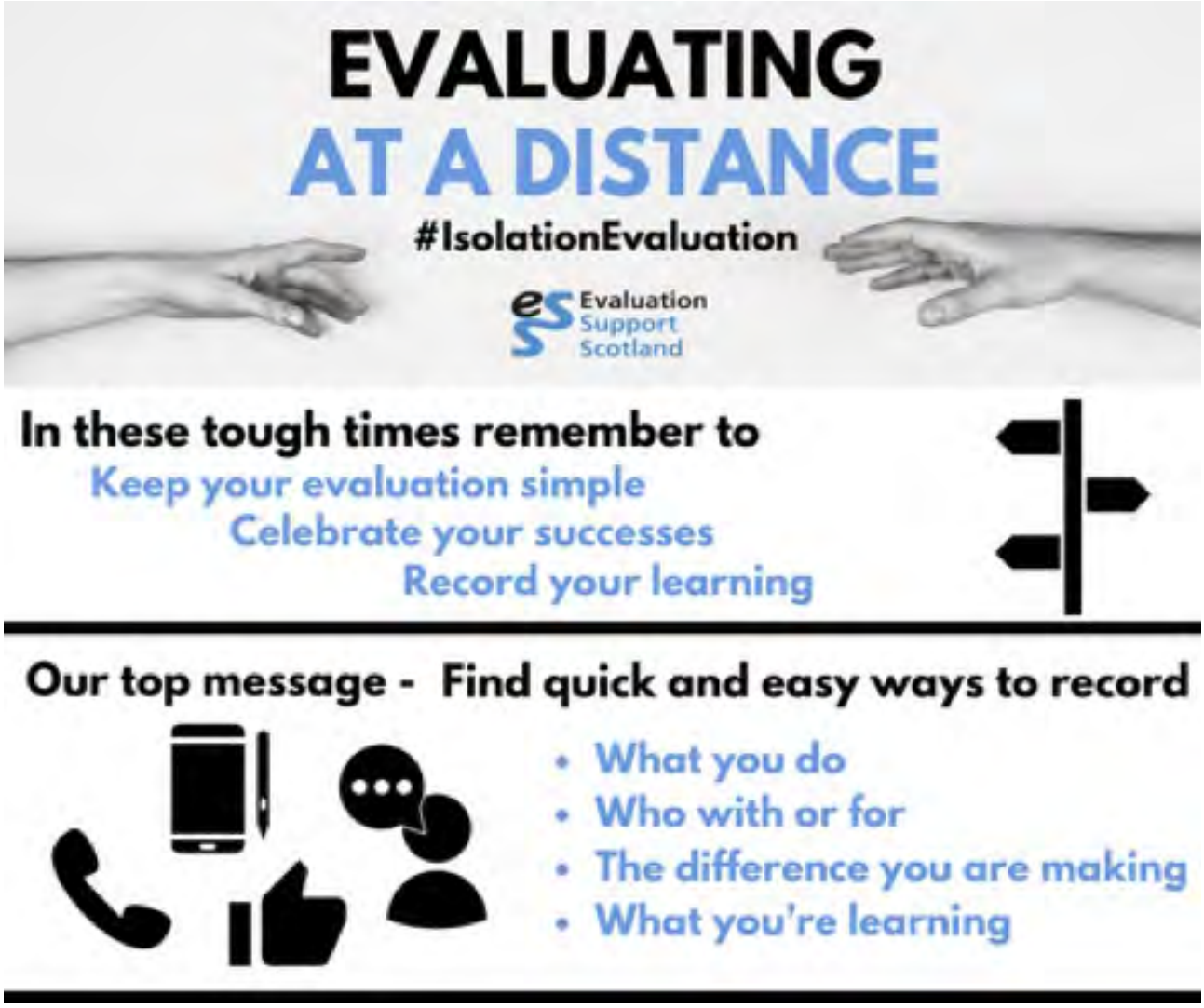
Life in Covid-19 times is not easy for anyone. For many third sector organisations you'll be finding ways to reach your service users and provide your services users in different ways – at a distance. At the same time you may be concerned about what this will mean for your funding and for reporting to your funder, as you are busy making radical changes to your service and keeping yourself safe.

You may also be thinking "Is this really a time to worry about measurement?" In fact, evaluation – simple evaluation – is crucial. As we all deliver services virtually, help more or new beneficiaries, or meet new needs arising from the pandemic, we all need to check we are doing the right things and reaching the people who need us.

ESS Top tips for now

- Keep evaluation simple
- Find successes to celebrate to keep us positive in tough times
- Capture evidence now for reporting later
- Record learning now that we can use in future
- Find quick and easy ways to record:
  1. What you do
  2. Who with or for
  3. The difference you are making
  4. What you're learning

"We provide free online evaluation resources and webinars. Like many others, our services have changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic."



Useful resources to help you capture evidence:

- Our **change record** might help you record the changes you are making to your services, or the changes in beneficiaries' needs.
- Our **capturing casual moments method sheet** might help you jot down a few words beneficiaries give you at the end of a phone call.
- **Using case records** – This method sheet shows you how to make use of the information you collect during everyday practice to collect evidence of meeting your outcomes.
- **NEW** **Using contact forms to gather evidence during a call**
- **NEW** **Pain Concern case study about measuring the impact of a remote service**
- **NEW** **Method sheet: Taking stock in time of change**
- **NEW** **Method sheet: Using social media to evaluate other activities**
- **NEW** **Blog COVID-19 has zoomed many of us on a huge learning curve! How do we deliver our services and evidence our impact in our 'new normal'?**
- **NEW** **Webinar Evaluating in a time of change**
- **NEW** **Blog Evaluation Support Scotland's response to COVID-19 pandemic - supporting hird sector organisations and funders to learn in a crisis** – guest blog written for **Policy Scotland**
- **How to evaluate asset-based approaches in an asset-based way**
- Our **support guides** and **webinars** might give you ideas.
- Inspiring Impact has new resources to help you evaluate in the crisis **here** including webinars

Please adapt any of our tools to meet your own needs (we'd just ask you to reference ESS - thank you).

SCVO Coronavirus Third Sector Information Hub has lots of general advice for third sector organisations

UK Evaluation Society

Discover more:
evaluation.org.uk