

Writing your report

How you present your findings could be of vital importance to your programme's future as your report could be what your funder and stakeholders base future support of your organization on. Consider and list your key audience or audiences to help you decide on the format for your report.

An attractive visual style tends to be more accessible, as does a short punchy style of writing that delivers key messages quickly and effectively. Think about how much time your reader will likely have to read your report and what is most important to get across.

What are your audience needs in terms of language and accessibility? Do you need to adapt or translate your language?

You may choose to create a shorter summary report listing your key findings and recommendations, separate from your detailed longer report. The longer report may be essential for a funder at the later stages of a funding bid, but the shorter report may help you get you to that stage.

Include photographs and visual material to break up text, illustrate key points, and as data sources in their own right. A picture can indeed paint a thousand words.

Example 1: White City



- 1) Foreword
- 2) Executive Summary
- 3) Introduction
- 4) Aims of Report
- 5) Methodology
- 6) Findings
- 7) Summary and Conclusion

Suggested report structure – long report:

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Background – explain who you are, what you are trying to achieve and who your service users are.
- 1.2. Need section – this can be brief and is not always necessary. To show why your service is necessary, you could present key local area statistics, baseline or consultation data or the results of previous evaluations.
- 1.3. Aims of report – tell the audience why you conducted the evaluation research. Make sure you match the purpose of your report to the requirements of the funder if you are writing in support of a specific grant. Generally speaking, the purpose is to evaluate the extent to which you are meeting your organization's aims, objectives and outcomes, and to improve your impact in the future.

You may also include a foreword from the project leader or a key stakeholder at the beginning of your report – this can give a personal flavour to the report and sets the context for why it has been produced. An executive summary is a shortened summary of your key achievements and recommendations moving forward. This may form the basis of a shorter report.

Example 2: The Limes AP



Background

The Limes Play and Participate is an independent children's charity supporting children and young people from birth to 25 years in an inclusive and fun environment in the centre of Walthamstow. The Limes has run successfully in the centre of Walthamstow for over 11 years; integral to its success and longevity is the emphasis on children and young people shaping the design of services both within the charity and in the borough more widely.

Our vision is that all disabled children and young people will enjoy, achieve and participate

Our mission is to provide a safe place in which all disabled children and young people are encouraged and enabled to:

- Enjoy opportunities to learn and play
- Achieve their potential socially, emotionally and educationally
- Participate in a range of activities alongside their disabled and able bodied peers

(Play Works report 2016)

2. Methodology

This tells your reader how you conducted your research. It should clarify what you tried to find out, from whom and how you went about it. You should also mention who conducted the research – which staff or service users collected data and when. Clearly state the timeframe within which your research took place.

Using your m&e plan, you can share lots of information concisely using a table:

- Table 1: Share your AP's objectives, outputs and output indicators (targets)
- Table 2: Outcomes – share your specific aims, outcomes and outcome indicators

Clearly list all your data. You may want to list this in two main sections: primary and secondary data sources. Primary data includes all the feedback you collected directly from various stakeholders during the research timeframe. Secondary data includes any written sources: previous reports and research data from other sources, for example local statistics, from within your research timeframe.

Example 3: List of data gathered for the PACE Rebuilding Bridges Pilot report

Methodology

PACE commissioned A5cend Ltd to conduct an external evaluation of the pilot project in October 2015. A5cend worked closely with PACE project coordinators to conduct and compile the following research data, which was analysed in order to produce this summary report.

- Interviews with Henry Purkis, strategic manager, and Glenys James, project coordinator, PACE, October 2015
- Survey with 12 key stakeholders (including two PACE staff, plus referral partners including Robson House Primary Pupil Referral Unit, Camden Centre for Learning KS3, plus Camden's Children Schools Families Transformation Team, Youth Offending Service and School Inclusion Team), October 2015
- End of project surveys with 10 parents, October 2015
- Project monitoring data from 21 participants
- End-of-project reporting for eight young people aged 12-15 (Thursday Club), including baseline, mid-way and final SDQ scores, baseline referral notes and final assessment notes. The sample consists of longer-term attendees with whom it was appropriate to conduct end-of-programme data collection
- End-of-project reporting for five young people aged 8-11 (Tuesday Club), including baseline, mid-way and final SDQ scores, baseline referral notes and final assessment notes. The sample is made up of longer-term attendees with whom it was appropriate to conduct end-of-programme data collection
- Notes from a practitioner interview with Camden Centre for Learning staff, October 2015
- Practitioner self-evaluation reports from Thursday and Tuesday clubs, September 2015
- Case studies produced by practitioners exploring more detailed outcomes for four CYP, September 2015
- Practitioner notes from focus group discussion on outcomes with Thursday Club participants (aged 12-14), August 2015

3. Findings

This section is most important, as it shares the results of your research. We suggest you give a quick overview of the extent to which you have met your desired outputs and outcomes, before providing a more detailed analysis of the outcomes, as this is what funders are most interested in: what difference has your service made to people's lives.

- 3.1. The overview – summary of outputs and outcomes achieved
Make this simple to read by creating two summary tables

Example 4: A5cend summarized key achievements for each outcome, indicator and target measure in a table, before looking more deeply at findings for each indicator in subsequent sections

Overview of achievements in Y1

OUTCOME	INDICATOR	TARGET	EVIDENCE OF CHANGE
<i>O1: Vulnerable boys and fathers report improved relationship/more secure attachment as a result of spending more quality time together and enhanced communication</i>	1.1 Number of fathers demonstrating improved communication skills	40 by end Y1	This outcome has been achieved: 97% of fathers talk more with their children. All sons said their fathers listen and speak more
	1.2 Number of fathers/children recording spending more than one hour a week together	80 by end Y2	On target: 100% of fathers and sons spend more time together. All sons agreed their fathers make more time for them now
	1.3 Number of fathers and young people reporting improved bonding and relationships with each other	240 by project end	100% of fathers and sons surveyed experienced improvement: on track to over-achieve target
<i>O2: Low-income fathers report an increase in parenting skills</i>	2.1 Number of fathers reporting learning new skills	40 by end Y1	Achieved: 100% of fathers are engaging with learning; some 91% report gaining new skills

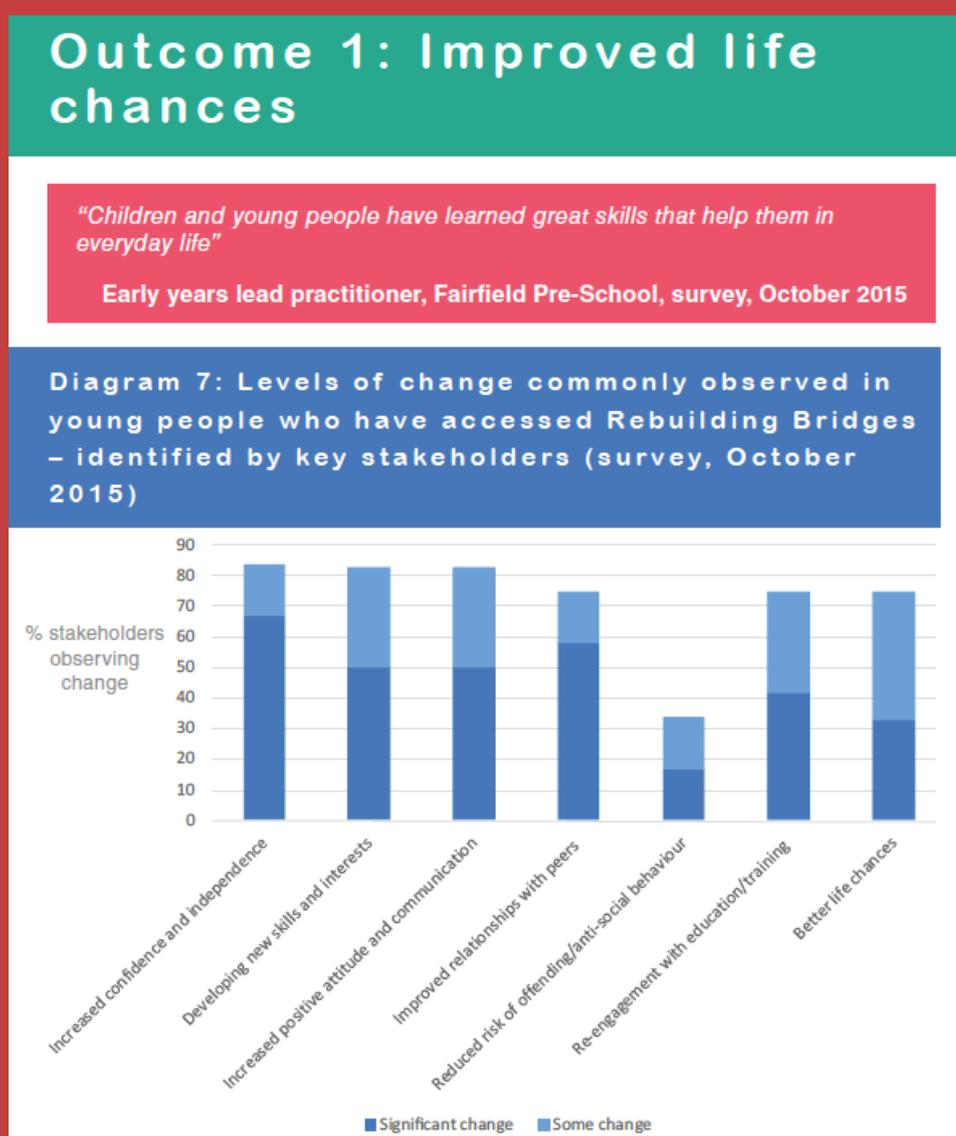
(CC Boys Club evaluation, 2016)

3.2. Exploration of outcomes

After your output and outcome tables, use your outcomes as sub-headings and then analyse your findings in more detail. This is where to present your analysed data in graphs and paragraphs of text and show where findings have been triangulated (backed up using multiple data sources exploring the same theme or indicator). Include evidence of positive change as well as evidence of what has not worked or not been or only ambiguously achieved.

You could include: quotes and comments from your stakeholders, graphs and charts, percentages, photos and pictures (numbered and titled) and case studies, as well as explanatory text describing conclusions reached.

Example 5: Presenting outcomes data in a punchy visual style



3.3. Additional outcomes

This is where to list any interesting or unexpected findings that were outside your core agreed outcomes, but still relevant to your stakeholders and organization's development.

4. Conclusions

This is your opportunity to clearly sum up the positive impact your service makes, and link very clearly your outcomes to your practice. If you have not achieved all you wanted, this is also where to describe what you are learning and make recommendations for how you will adapt / evolve / improve the service in the future, based on the evidence you have collected.

4.1. Areas of achievement

This is where to big up what your research has revealed about what you do well and highlight your amazing work. As well as the success of your current services, describe any improvements you have made to working practices, processes, systems and staff development, especially if they have come from feedback you have gathered from service users / the m&e process in general.



Photograph Courtesy of Marble Hill Play Centres

Example 6: Concise reporting of key achievements by White City AP



SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Areas of Achievement

Specific Aim One - *To provide increased opportunities for children to support their own agency and holistic well-being through everyday actions.*

From 751 individuals currently accessing Playful Foundations play provision, 93% report an improvement in their holistic well-being.

We have increased the amount of facilitated staff play provision in 2016.

We have increased the number of children who attend staffed play provision.

We have increased our work with children in non-mainstream education establishments accessing regular play opportunities.

Specific Aim Two – *Working to remove the barriers that prevent children from accessing playful opportunities for themselves*

88% of respondents suggest that, through Playful Foundations, identified barriers to play have been or are in the process of being removed.

In 2016, Playful Foundations have maintained the same level of play events as 2015, and have committed to more events before the end of 2016.

We have increased the number of children and their families accessing play events across the ward of Wormholt and White City.

Although difficult to quantify, through our playwork observations we have noticed an increased degree of engagement by adults in the local community.

4.2. Areas for Development

Number these clearly because you'll link back to them in the recommendations section that follows. This is where you talk about what has not worked and why, and where processes and delivery could be developed and improved in the next phase of your work. Don't be afraid to be honest – funders want to see evidence of learning and development rather than perfection. This shows your integrity and adaptation based on evidence and responding to change is also what makes your organization feel dynamic and resilient.

5. Recommendations

Close your report with a clear and concise set of recommendation for how you move forward into the next phase of your delivery, addressing any areas for development you identified in the previous section. Number these as you did areas for development and make at least one recommendation for each area.

Example 7: Key findings included recommendations in the PACE pilot project report

Recommendations

- 4.1. Fully resource early assessment work in light of what has been learned during the pilot about creating optimal group dynamics from the start of the project, and the need for flexibly meeting individual need rather than placing all young people in the same group (point 5 below)
- 4.2. Pilot a girl-only group or groups, with female practitioners as keyworkers and positive role models
- 4.3. Explore ways to deepen the potential for positive role modelling opportunities among young people. For example, older or pro-social service users helping younger or more vulnerable ones, in order to further embed gains in confidence/skills and maximise impact for all

Suggested report structure– short report:

1. Introduction and methodology

- 1.1. Brief background to organization, project, and project aims and key outcome measures, including dates and timeframes.
- 1.2. Write a short paragraph detailing who conducted data collection and when, and briefly summarizing the key data sources.

2. Key findings and recommendations

Use bullet points and make your sentences short and punchy – these are headlines. The findings and recommendations could be separate sections, or, if your recommendations are closely aligned with your key findings, each recommendation could be presented underneath each key finding point.

3. Contact details

Write a paragraph telling your audience where they can find more detailed information about your research and findings, including contact details.

Worksheet

1. Who will read your report?
2. What is most important for them to know?
3. What kind of style, length of report and language will be most appropriate for your audience?
4. Which of the following have you used in your reporting?
 - Photographs
 - Punchy headlines
 - Executive summary, or key findings and recommendations summarized at start of report
 - Clear list of data including number of stakeholders consulted, how and when
 - Findings summary tables for both outputs and outcomes
 - Graphs and charts presenting key data visually under outcome headings
 - Discussion of areas for development
 - Recommendations
 - Direct quotes – with name (with permission), date, method of consultation
 - Introduction to organization and project
 - Foreword from key stakeholder