



How do you know if everything is working well?

There are lots of very good groups running in Norfolk. Some of these are excellent, some of these are good and some of these continue to run when they are past their sell-by date. It is important that you understand what you do, that you are able to say this works and this is how we know. You also need to regularly review what you do so you can continue to be relevant and effective going forward. This section looks at monitoring and evaluation.

- Reviewing the previous year.
- Identifying future provision.



Reviewing the Previous Year - How well did we do?



Summary

Evaluation is an important but often overlooked part of running a youth group. Many people do not bother with it but if you take the time to stop and think about it, there are a number of ways that evaluating is hugely beneficial:

- It is an ideal opportunity to learn from what you are doing and do things even better.
- It allows young people to understand that their opinion matters and they can have influence.
- It provides a good evidence base for when you want to apply for funding.

Principles

- Evaluation starts at the planning stage - know what you want to do, how you are going to do it, and who will benefit from this (see Setting Up Section). Finally you need a system to measure you are doing this.
- You should have regular checks so that you can monitor that you are on the right track - you need to have a system of gathering evidence.
- Gathering evidence is not just about collecting numbers; it is also about getting feedback from a wide range of people (aka stakeholders), and using different ways to get this.
- An annual evaluation report is good practice even if it is only one A4 side in length.
- Young people should be central to the monitoring and evaluation process.

Things to do/consider

- How can young people get involved? Seek their ideas and get them to lead as much as possible.
- All the different ways you can collect evidence - surveys, small groups, case studies, taking photographs/video, doing art projects. Be creative.
- How the evidence collected supports the aims of the group, how does it prove that you are achieving what you intended to?
- How you will respond to feedback and make changes, particularly if you feel the feedback is negative?

Useful links



- The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has produced a short guide to Evaluating Community Projects - <https://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/default/files/jrf/migrated/files/1859354157.pdf>
It is aimed at wider community projects but has some useful information nonetheless.
- The European Union Youth Partnership has several guides on their website, including one on Educational Evaluation in Youth Work which has some helpful tips and examples.
<http://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/t-kit-10-educational-evaluation-in-youth-work?inheritRedirect=true>

Identifying Future Provision - what do we do next?



Summary

A big mistake that groups make is becoming complacent; things are going well so there is no need to change anything. However, every group needs refreshing and re-energising from time to time, this is not likely to mean a complete overhaul but it may mean changing little things. This is important because the context you started in may no longer be the context you operate in. For example: you start with a group of 11 and 12 year olds but they stay with you. As they get older and new youngsters come in means you are delivering to a wider age group (younger and older), therefore you may need to do things differently to accommodate all ages. This section should be read in conjunction with the Planning Activities section.

Principles

- The previous year evaluation will help you to understand what is going well and not so well.
- Plan what changes need to be made as part of your usual planning cycle.
- Get help from the young people in the planning stage to think about what comes next.
- Don't change provision based on one comment, talk to the group to understand what the consensus is.
- Identifying what you do next should be part of an ongoing conversation with the young people and volunteers building on the strengths of both.

Things to do/consider

- What aspects of delivery are you comfortable in changing or trying? Is there a need to get more experienced youth workers to the group to either support changes or to deliver the changes?
- What other skills and knowledge can you draw on in the community or with specialist groups to deliver appropriate activities?
- When the group may need to close - this does happen and sometimes it may be better to call it quits rather than providing something that is no longer needed.
- When the committee may need new people to help guide the group?

Useful links

- Ambition Quality provides a framework which can help you identify areas to improve. Contact Momentum's Supporting Excellence Officer for more information.

