



Theory of Change Workshop

Date: Wednesday 21st June 1.30 - 3pm

Purpose

To understand the concept of a 'theory of change' and why it is a useful tool in articulating and measuring impact.

Exercise 1: defining challenges, target groups

Pretend you would like to (or already do) deliver an advice service on living a healthy lifestyle (smoking, physical activity, diet, alcohol).

What is the problem or challenge you are trying to address?

- People are unable to afford healthy ingredients.
- Lack of skills & knowledge in how to cook from scratch
- Poor mental health/anxiety/stress, etc. so physical health is not a priority.
- Not knowing what services, groups & activities are available locally that can contribute to their health & wellbeing.
- Need longer term behaviour change.
- Healthy food choices can be expensive
- Can be a vicious circle, more difficult to exercise if you are overweight
- Stress and poor emotional health can lead to poor food choices, also alcohol and other substances
- Helping people find their motivating force - as only they can make the change needed
- Competing demands on lifestyle and constraints beyond the programme and their ability to address
- Access to spaces to get exercise could be limited

- Many people have tried the quick fixes so disregard potential efficacy as past solutions didn't work
- Those who are already disadvantaged are facing multiple challenges and healthy lifestyle isn't top of the list
- Unhealthy behaviours are embedded in intergenerational culture
- Identifying who needs help and getting services to them
- How do you persuade people that they have an unhealthy lifestyle and that they need your services? (e.g. alcohol)
- Healthy lifestyles are complex - smoking/alcohol may be co-related - and linked to other health issues. What scope is the advice going to go to?
- What type of advice are you going to provide - will it need medical, psychological or community support type interventions?

Who is affected by these problems/challenges, and who will benefit the most?

- Lower income households
- People on benefits
- School-age children
- Older people will limited mobility/connection to friends/family/support networks
- Groups with reduced access to physical green space
- Minority groups with less knowledge about how to access Countryside, national parks etc. what is available, what equipment they need..
- All ages & backgrounds really - mental health, smoking, alcohol, etc.
- These are common issues and are faced by many individuals and many agencies trying to provide advice and support - some of whom may be helping at the same time as us.
- Low income households
- Those at risk of stroke/heart disease/diabetes - could make a big change
- Those now facing health problems and needing expert medical care due to an unhealthy lifestyle
- Those at risk of and experiencing poverty (trap)
- Children - unhealthy lifestyle growing up sets a precedent for life
- Society as a whole tends to have worse outcomes when there is inequality in healthy lifestyles
- Will you target individuals or groups [good question]

Exercise 2: defining impact and outcomes

Definition of impact: the sustained change you want to see in your target group

Example Impact statements:

People have learned how to manage their own mental/physical health and wellbeing in a sustainable way (The Cart Shed)

People no longer die prematurely or suffer from cardiovascular disease. (The British Heart Foundation)

Youth homelessness no longer exists. (Centrepoint)

A world where every woman's right to equality and freedom from violence is unquestioned. (Women's Aid)

People are emotionally resilient, thriving, and feel they belong in their communities. (YSS)

Healthy people in healthy communities (The Family Centre)

Every nonprofit organisation uses data effectively to achieve their goals (Data Orchard CIC)

What is the long-term change (impact) you want to see people make in their lives?

In one succinct statement avoiding jargon

- People live a healthier lifestyle
- People make healthier choices long term
- They can sustain a healthy lifestyle long-term
- A better idea of how to help themselves
- "People have learned how to manage their health and wellbeing independently."
- People have the skills, knowledge and confidence to make positive lifestyle changes.
- Reduce reliance on services
- People manage their health without referring to medical services
- Using lived experience to help others
- People can live healthy happy lives

Outcomes: changes to attitudes, behaviours, skills or knowledge

Definition of an outcome: changes to attitudes, behaviours, skills or knowledge

Hot tips for defining outcomes

- Use words like 'increased', 'improved' 'reduced' or 'decreased' to convey that *change* is taking place.
- Use the past tense to avoid confusing outcomes with activities i.e. '*increased self-esteem*' instead of '*increasing self-esteem*'.
- Define a single change, not many, so that '*increased resilience, confidence and self-esteem*' describes three outcomes, not one.
- Specific enough to be meaningful and measurable; '*increased knowledge*', for example, is neither.

What shorter-term changes (outcomes) are you aiming for that contributes to the impact?

- People have improved skills around making affordable healthy meals from scratch
- People have increased their levels of exercise over a sustained period of time.
- People have reduced levels of alcohol consumption
- The number of people who smoke has been reduced
- People have increased knowledge of support services available to them.
- Parents are more confident preparing a nutritious meal from scratch.
- People have achieved a 5% loss in body weight.
- People have increased the amount of time they spend outdoors
- People feel that have successfully made a positive change to their lifestyle
- People have increased levels of physical activity.
- Decreased smoking, increased exercise levels, reduced alcohol consumption - people made considered choices
- People have successfully given up smoking.

Reflections/questions

See recording :)

Harder to articulate change for PSBs - quite broad

Involve people at different levels from strategic to operational/front-line in defining the change you want to make as a PSB

Resources/further reading

At Data Orchard CIC, we've recently reviewed our own theory of change (which took 6 months!). You may want to look at our final output to give you ideas about how you want to articulate and share the change you want to make:

There's a video and article on our website about the process.

<https://www.dataorchard.org.uk/news/creating-a-new-theory-for-change>

New Philanthropy Capital provide this useful tool too:

<https://www.thinknpc.org/resource-hub/ten-steps/>

A theory of change is a type of [logic model](#) which includes stakeholder engagement rather than 'just' researchers.

Review (delta/plus)

Things that went well	Things we could do better
Very clear description of the model, useful to have a specific example to work with	I was surprised how few people attended - not sure if there is something around improving communications around these events
Good logical explanations	As above, I am sure there could have been a lot more that would have benefited, but pleased to see colleagues from NPT joining
Concepts were described in a clear and easy-to-understand way	If given time, would have been good to look at a PSB priority as an example.
Taking things back to basics, unravelling a simple example.	Would love a revisit to this topic later in the year!