

Evaluation Working Group Webinar

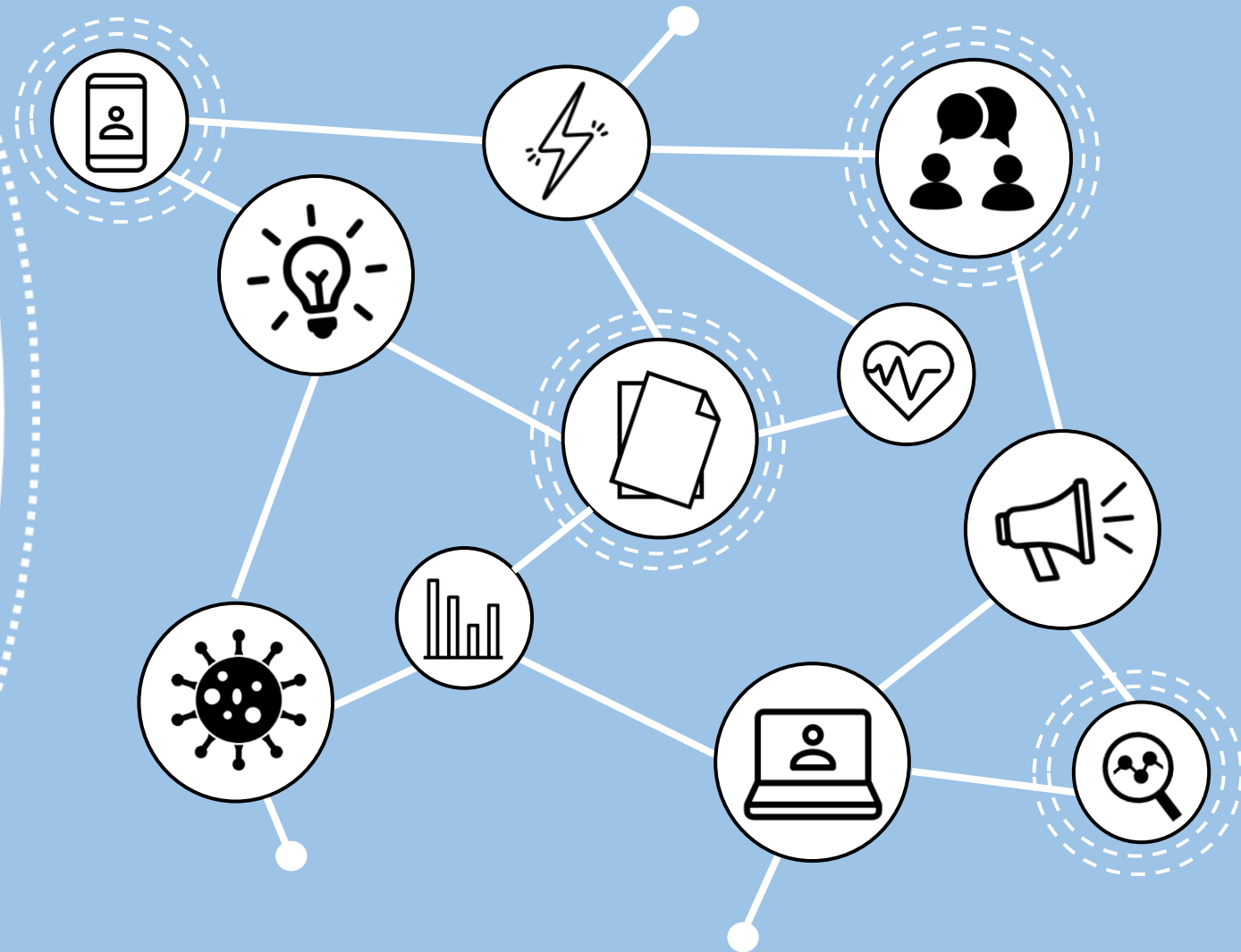
Evaluation Challenges in local authorities

Jo Mackenzie

29th November 2022
11:00 – 12:00



East of England
Population Health Research Hub
EoE PHResH





Introduction

- Understanding the political environment
- Look at specific issues you may encounter when carrying out an evaluation in a local authority
- Consider how these issues can be managed



Political environment

- Council is run by democratically elected members
- Council officers to provide unbiased information to members
- Final decisions made by elected members
- Elected members will be influenced by their voters
 - Contact with residents may be biased





Elected members

- Directly elected to represent a particular ward in the county
 - Will have contact with resident groups in this area
- Some members responsible for a portfolio area in the council;
 - Public Health & Community Safety
 - Adult Care, Health & Wellbeing
 - Children, Young People & Families
 - Highways and Transport
 - The Environment
 - Growth, Infrastructure and Planning



Understanding of evaluation

- Risk of evaluation being seen a trend
- Client needs to know why they want an evaluation
- Expectation management
- Remit of what can be evaluated
- More than just data analysis
- There is a cost to evaluation





Timescales

- LA's work in financial years
 - Spend it or lose it
- Evaluation planning time often not considered
 - Lack of understanding by commissioners
 - Ask for evaluation too late into the programme



Understanding the project/service

- Does the client really know everything about their project?
- What does success look like?
- Is everyone in agreement?
- Need to understand the project in order to evaluate



Useful tools

- The following can be useful to the project team
 - Logic model workshop
 - Theory of change workshop
- It helps them agree how their service intervention works



Project objectives

- Many people struggle with writing objectives
 - The 'To do' list
 - Output focused rather than outcome focused
- Key question to ask:
 - What does success look like?



Data challenges

- Understanding the concept of baseline data
- Identifying suitable outcome measures
- Collecting data at different points in time
- Buy-in from staff on the ground
- Data quality
- Data sharing agreements



Qualitative data

- Value of qualitative data in local authorities
- Lack of understanding in how to:
 - collect it
 - analyse it
- Used in a biased way by inexperienced officers
- When used properly can help to explain 'why' and give service user a voice



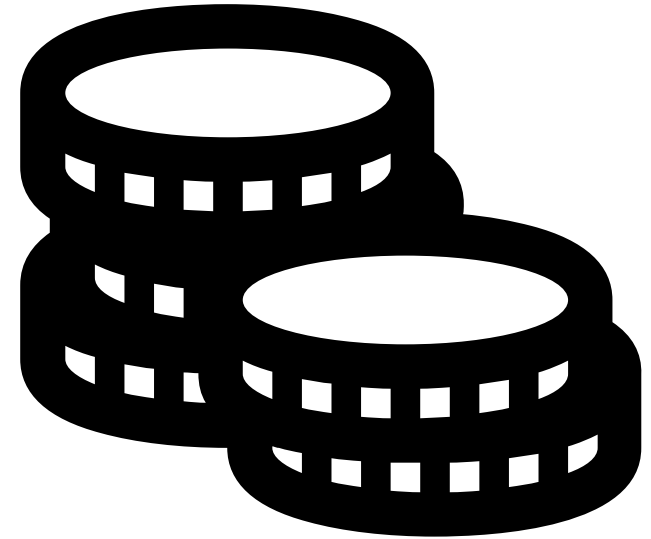
Ethics & research governance

- Will you be working with or collecting data from vulnerable service users?
- Data protection
- Has the local authority got a research and governance process?



Cost of an evaluation

- May be left out of a business case
- Budgeting for planning and design
- Risk of under estimating the cost
- A need to value the work involved
- May get push back on the evaluation resource required





Doing evaluation “themselves”

- Decision maker doesn't appreciate time required for good evaluation
- Core project team unlikely to have capacity to do evaluation
- 'Evaluation' not in their job description – will not be a priority
- Risk of appropriate data not be collected
- Data may not be analysed correctly
- Biased results



Fear of negative outcomes

- What are the clients expectations of the evaluation?
- What do negative outcomes mean to a client?
 - Criticism of their work
 - Risk of service being de-commissioned
 - Loss of funding
 - Loss of jobs
- Need to help the client see how the results are useful to:
 - Improve the service
 - Make changes to the service





Commissioned services

- Many services are not local authority run by commissioned to other organisations
- Need to make sure that evaluation is in the commissioning contract otherwise:
 - You will have not control over data collection
 - The appropriate evaluation data is unlikely to be collected
 - You risk only getting aggregated data or incorrectly analysed data



Who is your audience?

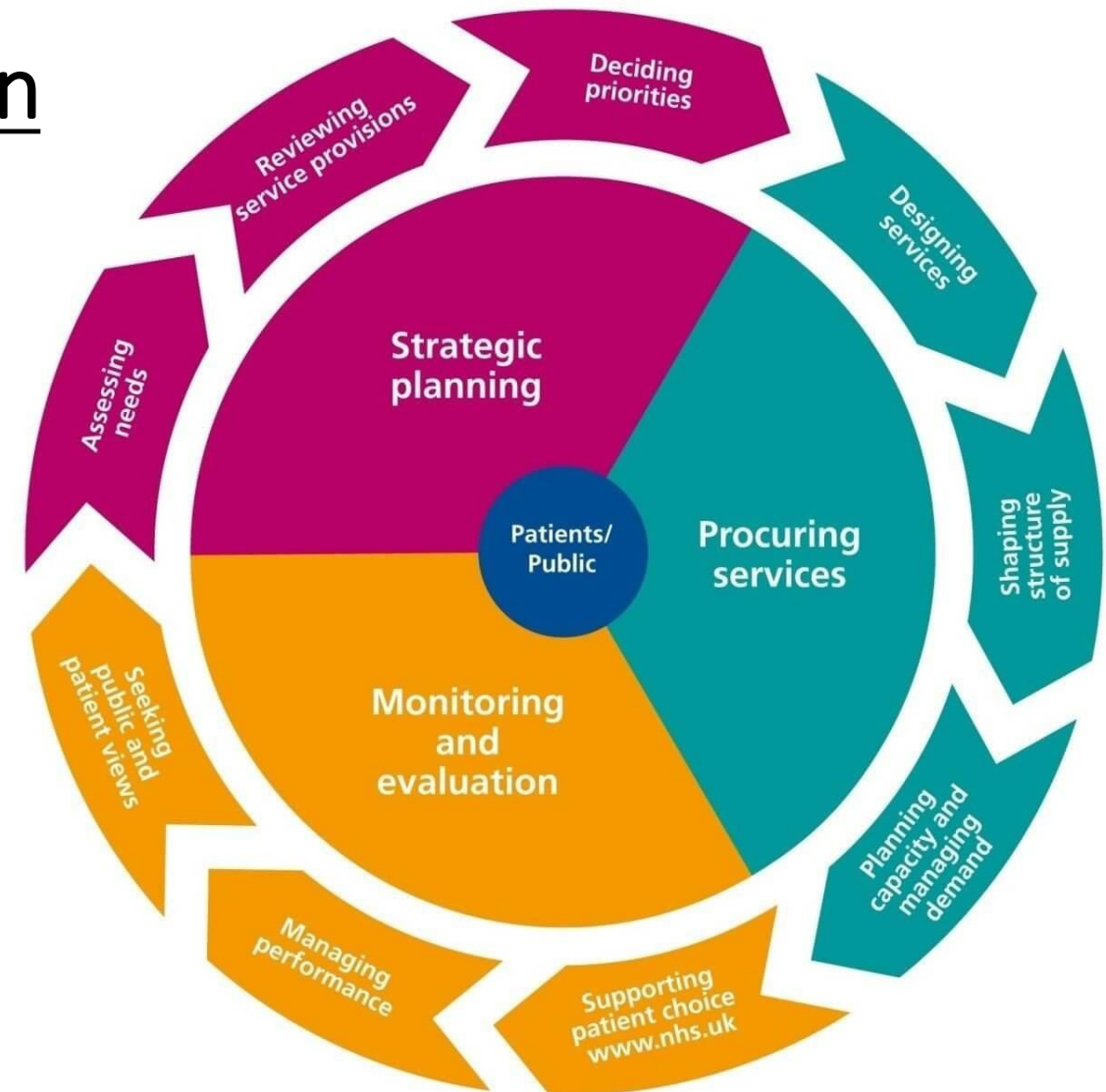
- Who will read the evaluation report?
- What will they do with the findings?
- Would they prefer an alternative format to a written report?





On completion of the evaluation

- The findings from an evaluation need to link into the commissioning cycle
 - This doesn't always happen so need to find ways to ensure it does





How to manage the challenges

- Important to promote the usefulness of evaluation to commissioners
- Be clear about the process involved
- Explain how evaluation can benefit them
 - Value for money
 - More efficient services
- Need to keep explaining the benefits as staff leave and join the organisation



Discussion - Questions

Your experiences

How you may have overcome evaluation issues

We are learning all the time



Evaluation 'Drop-In' Clinics

Are you thinking about carrying out and planning an evaluation at work? Do you have a question or challenge you like to discuss with an expert and get some advice on?

Book a place at our evaluation 'drop-in' clinic where you can meet online with **Professor Andy Jones, Public Health Expert Advisor, Norfolk County Council** on a one-on-one session for advice and guidance on the next steps for your evaluation.

Book your spot for the upcoming one on the 29th of November at 13.00pm

<https://adph.org.uk/networks/eastofengland/phresh-events/#drop-in-clinics>

All are welcome – no question too big or small!

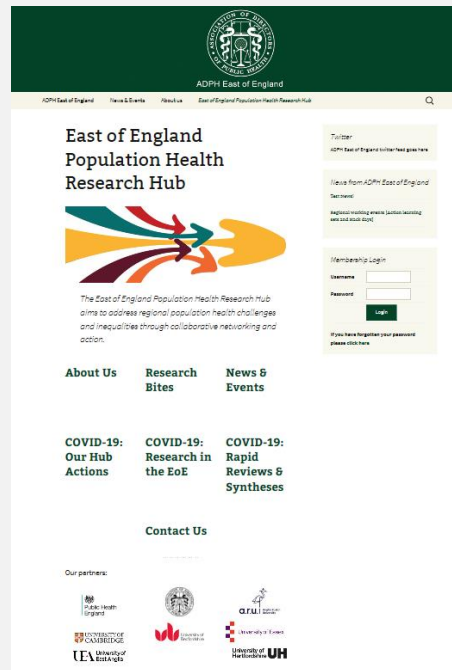


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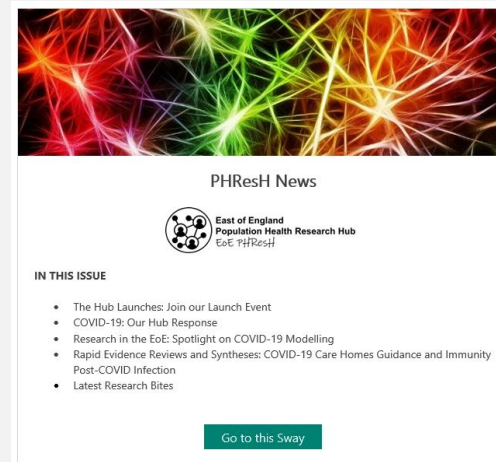
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The EoE Population Health Research Hub aims to address regional population health challenges and inequalities through collaborative networking and action.

[East, England](#)

Joined March 2020



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