



# Steps to Measuring Impact

A practical guide to measuring  
the difference that you make



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# Foreword



I am delighted to present Age NI's *Steps to Measuring Impact* guide which has been produced following our participation in the Inspiring Impact Northern Ireland - Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) support programme to champion, promote and support greater understanding of impact practice in the work of the age sector. Impact practice is now a pre-requisite for many organisations and this practical guide provides inspiration and support to increase understanding of impact practice and to encourage groups to measure and communicate the difference that they make. It focuses on areas of activity, the cycle of impact practice: how to plan for the desired impact, identify how to measure it, collect measurement data, make sense of that information, then learn from it and, finally, communicate the result. It also offers signposting to additional learning that supports groups on their journey to demonstrate the difference they make.

We share the learning from the pilot programme that enabled Age NI to work with age sector groups and focus on measuring the difference that activities and services provided by groups make to the lives of older people. The Inspiring Impact NI VCSE support programme enabled Age NI to help groups prepare and plan for the impact they aim to have, and to choose the appropriate approach and measurement tools to achieve this. Measuring the difference you make is important, as is a full understanding of the steps taken to get there.

Thank you to the groups who provided demonstration projects and participated in the pilot initiative. We will continue to develop skills, knowledge and capacity in this area, and to share support for impact practice across age sector groups, enabling them demonstrate the difference they make to the lives of older people in Northern Ireland.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Linda'.

**Linda Robinson**  
Age NI Chief Executive

# Acknowledgements

Age NI is grateful to a range of people and organisations.

Inspiring Impact NI is part of the Inspiring Impact UK Initiative which aspires to change the way Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprises (VCSE) organisations and their funders think about impact and to embed impact practice at the heart of their work. We are grateful for the opportunity to participate in this pilot initiative. Inspiring Impact NI developed the pilot initiatives to support impact practice within the VCSE sectors. We have benefited from their support and practice. Special thanks to Aongus O’Keeffe, Programme Leader.



One of the principal strands of Inspiring Impact Northern Ireland work has been the development of a VCSE support programme. For this the Building Change Trust provided awards to enable network/umbrella organisations to promote inspiring impact among their sector and to provide support to enable improved impact practice to be developed. Thank you to Building Change Trust for this award to Age NI to prepare the age sector for impact practice.



Age NI has worked alongside other participating groups and organisations and we would like to thank them for sharing their experiences, knowledge and insights as they have developed and delivered a diverse range of approaches to champion and encourage impact practice.

Finally our own project was enriched by the participation of representatives from the Age Sector Sub-regional Networks. We are deeply indebted to them for their contribution and participation. Special thanks to Allison Forbes, Deidre McCloskey, Raymond McGarvey, William Hutchinson and David Hammerton.

This resource guide has been compiled by EJ Havlin and Daniel Jack, Age NI, Age Sector Development Team.

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# Jargon Buster

## Terminology

## Jargon Buster

**Beneficiaries**  
*Direct and Indirect*

Direct beneficiaries are those who gain from involvement in the activity. Indirect beneficiaries are those who do not participate in the action/activity provided but who gain as a result of the involvement of the direct beneficiary.

**Evaluation**

Use of information from monitoring and elsewhere to judge and understand the performance of a project.

**Impact**

Difference that you will make (could be benefits or changes). Broad and/or long-term effects of a projects activities, outputs and outcomes.

**Impact measurement**

Ways that you work out what difference that you make.

**Measurement tools**

Ways you collect information and data such as interviews, surveys, questionnaires, case studies.

**Milestones**

Interim targets (or stepping stones) which show how far you are progressing towards meeting your target goal. Reaching a milestone often signifies the completion of a particular stage of your project.

**Monitoring**

A systematic way to collect and record information to check progress against plans.

**Outcomes**

Specific changes that you want to achieve as a result of your work or project - they are the result of what you do, offer or provide.

**Outputs**

Products, services or facilities that result from project activities.

More jargon busters available at [www.ageni.org/stepstofunding](http://www.ageni.org/stepstofunding)

*The Code of Good Impact Practice* at [www.inspiringimpactni.org/resources](http://www.inspiringimpactni.org/resources)

# Introduction

**Impact:** the broad or longer term effects of a project or organisation's work (also referred to as the difference it makes). This can include affects on people who are direct users of a project or organisation's work, effects on those who are not direct users or effects on a wider field such as government policy. (Excerpt taken from *The Code of Good Impact Practice*)

Under an initiative by Inspiring Impact NI to develop a Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) support programme, a total of 13 organisations received funding to develop and deliver a pilot programme which would promote, disseminate and embed impact practice with their members. These organisations represented a wide range of themes, geographical spread and sectors and developed individual initiatives to act as champions for impact practice. Age NI took this opportunity to develop a pilot which would examine impact practice specific to age sector activities with the aim of helping groups to become more focused on demonstrating and celebrating the impact of their work. This guide will act as a resource for age sector groups and outlines our learning from the pilot programme, offers signposting to tools and resources and will help groups on their journey towards applying and embedding the practice of measuring impact.

Impact measurement involves looking at the difference that a group makes. This means planning what impact you want to have in the first place, how best to achieve it, collecting information about your impact, assessing what impact you're having, communicating this information and learning from it. This cycle of activities is called impact practice.<sup>1</sup> There are many ways to do this and the pilot programme enabled a shared application of the Inspiring Impact resources to improve understanding and awareness of models of practice which could be utilised in practical delivery to improve and embed measuring impact. To show how this practice was implemented or applied in reality, we have shared our demonstration projects in this resource and hope that these illustrate how the 'Cycle of Impact Practice' worked for the age sector groups to determine the difference that they make.

Ultimately, we aim to start a new process of planning what impact the age sector wants to have and the best way to achieve this. Age NI will embed impact in the centre of the age sector through providing leadership, being inspiring impact champions, through resource allocation and support.

<sup>1</sup> See Inspiring Impact: *The Code of Good Impact Practice*. Available online at <http://inspiringimpact.org/resources/are-you-leading-for-impact/#code>

# The Age Sector Pilot Programme

Age NI works with an established network of age sector groups in 11 sub-regional areas mirroring the new local government districts. Each of the networks is independently run and four of these elected to participate in the pilot programme.

## The 11 new local government districts

- Antrim and Newtownabbey
- Ards and North Down
- Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon
- Belfast City Council
- Causeway Coast and Glens
- Derry City and Strabane
- Fermanagh and Omagh
- Lisburn and Castlereagh
- Mid and East Antrim
- Mid Ulster
- Newry, Mourne and Down



The pilot programme was diverse in its practice and thematic focus, with an encouraging geographical spread. The participating Sub-Regional Networks were:

- Armagh Banbridge Craigavon (ABC) Seniors Network
- Mid and East Antrim Agewell Partnership (MEAAP)
- Mid-Ulster Seniors Network (MUSN)
- South West Age Partnership (SWAP)

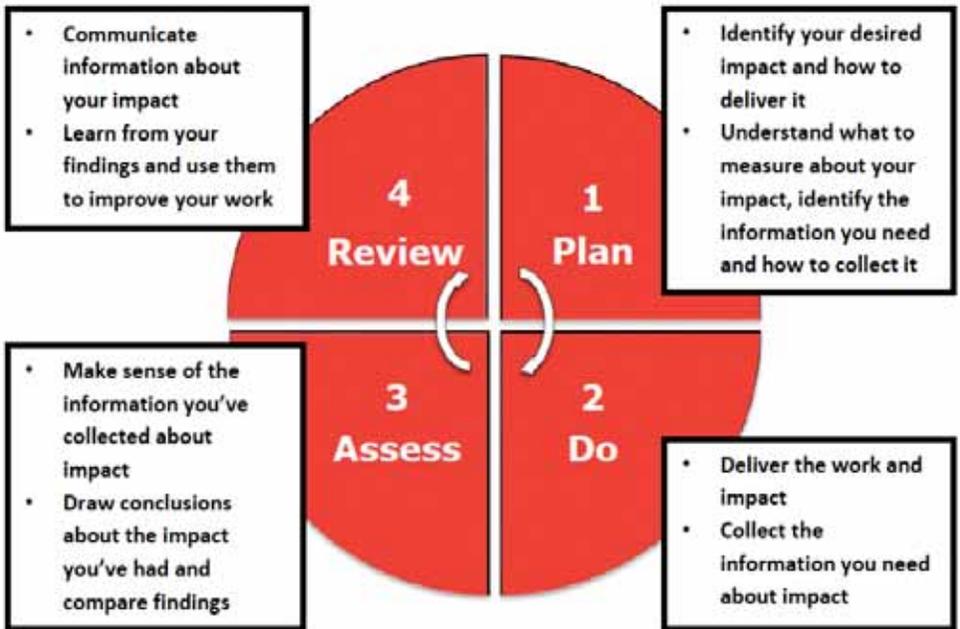
The pilot programme offered a broad mix of support, responsive to the needs of the different participating groups. This included one-to-one engagement support, group-learning exchange events to maximise shared learning in practice, summative review of the shared experience. There was an appetite for measuring impact that groups were making and to develop the capacity, skills and knowledge to improve and expand best practice. Throughout the pilot programme, Age NI co-ordinated all engagements which ensured consistency of approach, enabled comparability and developed a shared understanding of measuring impact, and the appropriate tools to achieve this.

The key components of the pilot programme aimed to develop support and focused on:

- Translating and defining what is impact practice – Understanding the ‘Code of Good Impact Practice’ (Provided in Appendix 1)
- Assessing the base-line of organisations in terms of impact practice – completing a self-assessment using ‘Measuring Up!’ online measurement tool
- Developing Impact Practice Plans based on the results of the self-assessment
- Practical implementation through the application of the ‘Cycle of Impact Practice’

## The ‘Cycle of Impact Practice’ model

There are four main areas of activity that make up impact practice:



The pilot programme applied the ‘Cycle of Impact Practice’<sup>2</sup> to focus on the four main areas of activity that make up impact practice. The progress of the pilot programme was divided operationally into four specific phases:

1. Engagement, introduce resources and agree outcomes
2. What to measure – how to measure
3. Measuring impact
4. Documenting and sharing

The work with the individual participating pilot programme Sub-Regional Network groups explored what they would measure, what support was needed in order to achieve this, identified the factors which contribute to successful outcomes, and documented the benefits and challenges faced in achieving these. A review of any current practice in measuring the impact was included; what actions were needed to improve any current practice; and what approaches/tools/resources could assist to do this.

The pilot programme initiated the beginnings of a change in practice with regard to enhancing organisational development and improving service delivery. The participating groups have assessed their impact practice, developed knowledge of the resources available and have begun to develop an impact plan. Age NI has benefitted from the opportunity to reflect on its organisational impact practice and will take this learning forward, in terms of embedding it in wider organisational development and service delivery. Current implementation is evident in our ‘Steps to Funding’ programme ([www.ageni.org/stepstofunding](http://www.ageni.org/stepstofunding)) profiled in appendix 2 and the Age NI outcomes-focussed Strategic Plan 2015-2020.

#### Online Resource: Self Assessment using ‘Measuring Up!’

‘Measuring Up!’ is a step-by-step online self assessment resource designed to help organisations review and improve their impact practice, that is, the way you plan, evidence, communicate and learn from the difference that your work makes. <http://inspiringimpact.org/measuringup/>

<sup>2</sup> Taken from Inspiring Impact: *The Code of Good Impact Practice*

# The Pilot Project - Practical Implementation

## Stage 1: Plan

This section of the cycle has a number of clear activities which include defining what you want to address, gather evidence of need, review research including any current activities, design your programme and measurement plan – what difference you want to make, what data you need to collect and how you are going to collect it. Here you set your aims, outcomes and activities as well as ways to collect data.

**Aims:** To help you set your aim, think about why you offer your particular service/services or why your group exists. What do you hope the effect will be? The overall aim describes in broad terms the change you want to see and is also the summary of how you will explain why your project/ organisation exists. For example, aim to ‘engage older people positively in the community’.

**Outcomes:** What needs to change for you to achieve the overall aim? What differences will what you do help to make for your beneficiaries (older people)? The answers to these questions are your outcomes. Some of these outcomes might happen quickly, while others may take longer and depend on meeting other intermediate/stepping stone outcomes.

Outcomes are usually described as ‘more, better, less, or improved.’ In some cases your outcomes may involve keeping something the same, or stopping things from getting worse. Your outcomes should refer to changes, for instance, instead of saying ‘older people contribute to decisions about running the project’, you might say ‘older people are more confident and able to express their opinions.’ Start by looking at the activities you intend to do and ask yourself why you are running them. What are the changes that you hope/expect the activities that you deliver will offer or lead?

**Activities:** Activities bring about the changes that your project wants to deliver. At the planning stage of a project, activities are best identified at a broad level by considering how best to achieve the outcomes, before moving on to specify activity levels and timescales. Once you know the changes you want, you can plan how to make them happen. They are the core of the project planning process, setting out what will happen, how it will happen, who will do it and when. Activities should be specific and measurable, so rather than simply stating

‘talks at the lunch club’, you might specify ‘one talk at the lunch club each month for one year, to an average of 25 older people.’

**Data Collection:** There are many ways of collecting information on the outcomes of your work. Some options are case studies, interviews, a survey or questionnaire, group discussions or even watching people doing activities and recording what you saw. Further examples available at [www.ces-vol.org.uk/tools-and-resources](http://www.ces-vol.org.uk/tools-and-resources) or [www.inspiringimpact.org](http://www.inspiringimpact.org)

## Stage 2: Do (and Monitor)

This stage is about implementation – actually doing what you had planned. It involves the real delivery of your activities/project and managing performance while also collecting information on the impact that your group or project is making.<sup>4</sup>

**Progressing activities:** The progress of your activities is simply about deciding and recording the main tasks that you will undertake, and when these will be completed. Activity milestones help link the main elements of a project to a wider timetable. These milestones let you measure your progress against your plan. It is useful to make sure that they are SMART:

**S**pecific / **M**easurable / **A**chievable / **R**ealistic / **T**ime bound.

**Progressing Outcomes:** It is important to think about how changes are being made. The measures that are used to do this are called milestones or outcome indicators, because they help to measure how far you are moving towards achieving the overall outcome, perhaps by recording how many people have reached the outcome so far, or how many have reached stages along the way.

**Monitor Outcomes:** Build monitoring into your work to capture what your project or organisation is achieving. It is best, where possible, to involve beneficiaries as your project is likely to be more effective if it gives the people it sets out to help a genuine say in what is done.

<sup>3</sup> See *A Journey to Greater Impact* published by New Philanthropy Capital (NPC). Available online at [www.thinknpc.org/publications/a-journey-to-greater-impact/](http://www.thinknpc.org/publications/a-journey-to-greater-impact/)

<sup>4</sup> See *Your Project and its Outcomes*; prepared for the Big Lottery Fund by Charities Evaluation Services (CES), available online at <http://www.ces-vol.org.uk/Publications-Research/publications-free-downloads/you-project-outcomes-download>. For more information visit The Big Lottery website which provides good support and guidance resources <https://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/research/making-the-most-of-funding/impact-and-outcomes/measuring-the-difference-projects-make>

## Stage 3: Assess

The next stage of the cycle of impact practice focuses on assessing how it all went - your activities and the data/information you have collected from monitoring. This allows groups to analyse the information on impact and draw conclusions from your findings.

**Analyse your Info:** Exactly what this information will look like and how much detail you have will depend on the monitoring you have done. Did the numbers that you expected attend the event? Did you distribute all the leaflets that you produced? What did people say about it all?

**Learn from your Info:** There are two main uses for the information you have collected and analysed. One is to report to others (funders/neighbourhood/community/council) about the progress you are making towards achieving your agreed outcomes. The other is for your group or project to consider and learn from your findings. This will affect future activities and enable you to celebrate achievements to date.

## Stage 4: Review

This stage of the cycle allows for groups and projects to share their impact, learn from findings, revise/improve and to tell others within your group, other groups, funders, the wider community and even the media about the difference you make based on facts.

**Using your learning:** Groups should take the time to consider the findings and use it for your benefit whether for forward planning or making change. The information that you possess will be more relevant and you will be better placed to make informed decisions about the future.

**Share your learning:** Use your outcomes information to highlight your success. You could distribute a summary of your key outcomes and learning, make it available to your beneficiaries and other stakeholders or groups and can be used it to apply for funding or to influence key decision makers in your area.

# Putting it all together

The relationship between the terms inputs, outputs, outcomes and impact can be represented like this:<sup>5</sup>



1. **Inputs** are all the resources you put into the project to enable you to deliver your outputs. Inputs may include time, money, volunteers, equipment, premises.
2. **Outputs** are all the products and services you deliver as part of your work. Examples of outputs are: support sessions, workshops, weekly events and publications.
3. **Outcomes** are the changes occurring as a direct result of project outputs.
4. **Impact** is the effect of a project at a higher or broader level, in the longer term, after a range of outcomes has been achieved.

## Demonstrating Impact<sup>6</sup>

In conclusion there are a number of specific principles that define what age sector groups should communicate about their impact:

### Clear Purpose

- Why do you exist?
- What issues are you trying to tackle?
- What overall impact do you want to have?
- What change do you want to happen?
- What impact do your key stakeholders want you to have?

### Defined Aims

- What is your short, medium and long term aims?
- How does achieving these aims help you achieve your overall purpose/impact?

<sup>5</sup> Taken from the CES publication: *Your Project and its Outcomes*. Available online at <http://www.ces-vol.org.uk/Publications-Research/publications-free-downloads/you-project-outcomes-download>

<sup>6</sup> Adopted from the NPC publication: *Principles of Good Impact Reporting*. Available online at <http://www.thinknpc.org/publications/the-principles-of-good-impact-reporting-2/>

## Coherent Activities

- What activities do you carry out to achieve your aims?
- What inputs/resources do you use to make these activities happen?
- What are the outputs of these activities?
- How do your activities help you achieve your aims and create change?
- Are your activities part of a coherent/common-sense plan?

## Demonstrated Results

- What outcomes/impact are you achieving against your aims?
- What impact are you achieving against the overall change you're looking for?

## Evidence

- How do you know what you are achieving?
- Do you have relevant evidence of your outcomes and impact?
- Are you sharing evidence to back up the claims you make?
- Are you seeking feedback, review and input where appropriate?

## Lessons Learned

- What are you learning about your work?
- How are you communicating what you learn?
- How are you improving and changing from what you learn?
- What has happened that you didn't expect (positive and negative)?
- Are you allocating resources to best effect?

Overall, the opportunity to implement the stages of this cycle with age sector groups required resources and a 'readiness' from the groups to engage in impact practice both operationally and strategically. Having a 'driver' enabled the momentum, reassurance and encouragement that groups needed.

Impact practice is seen as increasingly important. The process enabled a solid platform to be built to take the participating group through the cycle. It provided practical examples which have relevance to the wider age sector and an opportunity to disseminate relevant key messages about impact practice.

# Age Sector Pilots

## Applying the 'Cycle of Impact Practice'

## Pilot 1: Event

Mid and East Antrim Agewell Partnership (MEAAP) is a member of the Age NI Sub-Regional Networks. It was established in 2011 as a local inter-agency based partnership with the aim of improving the lives of older people aged 60 years and over in the Ballymena, Larne and Carrickfergus areas. MEAAP is a recipient of Big Lottery Funding under the 'Reaching Out- Connecting Older People' programme.

The pilot initiative looked at event planning and applied the cycle of impact planning to their pre-Christmas 'Happiness Day'. 'Happiness Day' was a one-off roadshow supported with funding by the Public Health Agency (PHA) and the Big Lottery Fund with the desired outcome being:

To host an event for older people in the Mid and East Antrim area to showcase small, simple ways that they can improve their own mental health and reduce social isolation.

### Aims:

1. Show older people across Mid and East Antrim area the link between good mental health and happiness
2. Provide information on services and support available
3. Showcase positive partnership working between statutory, voluntary and community sectors

### Plan

During the planning period MEAAP had to demonstrate the need for the event and prepared a project proposal in order to gain support from Good Morning Project, as the event would primarily target their clients and service users. Another key component of this stage was to identify funding opportunities and submit applications and engage with funders.

Included in the application would be transport hire, venue and catering costs as well as identifying complimentary therapies and practitioners. It was felt that there was a need to identify and invite key agencies to attend in order to showcase the work and position similar events for future in terms of funding and buy in. Volunteer support was considered to be crucial in the event and so engagement and recruitment of people to help on the day needed to be factored in.

Getting people to attend the event is a key consideration and the format needed to be addressed as part of this overall planning. In order to attract people, incentive goody bags and raffle prizes would be sourced and promoted.

Measuring the impact of the event featured in the planning process and it was agreed to design an interactive survey that participants could complete throughout the course of the event. In order to capture other impacts it was agreed to have photographers present as well as 'vox pop' recordings.

## **Do**

Funding was secured for the event and the various aspects of the plan could be implemented. A suitable venue was sourced, catering arranged and transport organised. An agenda consisting of four fun and three serious activities was devised and was circulated to network partner groups with a specific emphasis on the Good Morning Project as many of the clients and services users can be isolated, lonely and vulnerable. Numbers were determined so that final arrangements could be made regarding seating at the venue, transport and catering numbers could be finalised. A photographer was arranged to create a pictorial record of the day. Raffle prizes and goody bags were distributed on the day.

All the activities took place in a sequence which encompassed the fun activities - laughter yoga, story telling, sound therapies and arm chair aerobics, alongside those with a more serious message regarding fire safety, alcohol consumption, falls prevention over the holiday period. Participants were encouraged to fill in a 'happiness survey' as events happened in order to try and get the maximum response. There was local media present and the event featured in the joint Age NI/BBC NI 'Playing Our Part' appeal.

## Assess

In terms of assessing the event, information from the 'happiness survey' was collated. Additional feedback was obtained from the wider agencies and groups involved. The event would be objectively assessed within the independent Big Lottery evaluation.

A review of the budget/expenditure would be carried out (see figures below) with the main conclusion emerging was that there was a unpredictable drop-out rate due to illness which resulted in the event had been over-catered. Case studies would be invoked to look at the impact of the event on individuals and the photos would be used to endorse this. It was felt that early December works best for this kind of event and so if undertaken again, would be held at this time of year/month.

## Review

As part of the review stage, it was deemed necessary to share survey results/feedback via funders, Facebook and a newsletter in order to demonstrate the value that an event like this has on individuals, and to showcase the work of MEAAP in the wider public arena. All information would be shared with Directors so that it could set as a priority to repeat similar event in December 2015, especially in terms of allocating or accessing funding. The review found that it was important to keep the positivity focus of the event and there was a need to research new/different ranges of complimentary therapies. It was found that the agenda was too ambitious with too much content which would result in the seven sessions being reduced to four in future events. The overall attendance rate was a 90%.

## Group project aim:

To host a roadshow event for older people in the Mid and East Antrim area to showcase small, simple ways that they can improve their own mental health and reduce social isolation



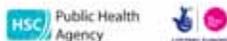
1. Show older people across Mid and East Antrim area the link between good mental health and happiness;

2. Provide information on services and support available;

3. Showcase positive partnership working between statutory, voluntary and community sectors.



Funded by the Public Health Agency and the Big Lottery Fund



Cycle of Impact Practice  
[www.inspiringimpactni.org](http://www.inspiringimpactni.org)



**Tea**  
90 packs of teabags donated by Purijana



**Slippers**  
90 pairs of slippers donated by Council Home Accident Prevention Teams



**3 Talks**  
Fire safety  
Alcohol consumption  
Falls prevention



**4 activities**  
laughter yoga / story telling / sound therapy / armchair aerobics

Contact MEAAP T: 2565 8604

# Age Sector Pilots

## Applying the 'Cycle of Impact Practice' Pilot 2: Organisational

The ABC Seniors Network is a member of the Age NI Sub-Regional Networks. It was established in 2010 as a local community based partnership with the aim of improving the lives of older people aged 60 years and over in the Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon areas. The Network consists of a core committee drawn from across the catchment area.

In looking at measuring impact ABC Seniors Network decide to look at their organisation and applying the cycle of impact practice, to revisit the core drivers of the network with the desired outcome being:

To enable ABC Seniors Network to represent and influence decisions or policies for the older people in the communities of Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon district areas by giving them a voice on issues that impact directly on their health and social wellbeing.

### Aims:

1. To give direction and common purpose
2. To give clear stages of delivery
3. To ensure organisational integrity

### Plan

In the planning stage members felt the need to have a global look at the network in order to give direction and common purpose, to define what the network is, to set aims to achieve, to work together for the same goals, to give clear stages of delivery, to give purpose to their work, to keep a record of why, what and how they operate, to make sure they are up to date with policies, procedures and governance documents and to adapt them if needed and finally to review where the network is at present in order to go forward and to explain things such as what we are about in one succinct place. Widespread discussion took place around how best to achieve this comprehensive and ambitious plan. The network had a small training budget from funding they had received and this was utilised to support this process by buying in a training programme on strategic planning which would introduce them to the concepts and key processes involved in developing their organisation and ultimately allowing for them to articulate the difference that they make.

## Do

The strategic planning training introduced key concepts and components of the process. It also allowed for the practical examination of the network. A fundamental question that arose as part of the training was why does the network exist? Members were able to collectively discuss and hence articulate the purpose as being so that they can have an impact on older peoples issues, to give a voice to older people in the area represented, to provide representation at various platforms and structures, to link in at council level especially now with the new powers, to pass information on (upwards) and (downwards) to and from the groups at grassroots, to pass information out to older people concerning issues that affects their well-being and current affairs, to express concerns to those in authority who are the decision makers and policy makers and to give the older community more confidence that their concerns are being addressed. All this give a clear picture to members of steps that they would need to undertake moving forward.

## Assess

The training created the space and context for the identification for areas of work. Matters identified were the need to re-examine governance structures and how we feed in to other networks and forums, to clarify the networks purpose and aims, the need to house all reports and evaluations and records including finance in the one centralised place/file, need to write up a data base of existing membership and get access to other groups to invite them along to develop and grow the network. Communication with older people on the ground was also identified as a key issue as was sustainability/funding. Profiling the network was a priority area especially if the group was to play a role in potential new structures that would come about due to local government reform. Developing and maintaining links with other organisations and support structures were also essential to the development of the network as was the need for funding.

## Review

The review of the work enabled the network to prioritise areas such looking at structure and representation, a clear vision and mission statement, communication and database development, seek funding sources and to be ready as a group for charity commission registration. The group identified that area where they perhaps need to look at overall following this process is devising a specific time bound action plan that will allow them to plot their progress and measure the impact of their work.



**Aims:**

1. To give direction and common purpose
2. To give clear stages of delivery
3. To ensure organisational integrity.

## Applying the Cycle of Impact Practice

In looking at measuring impact ABC Seniors Network decide to look at their organisation and applying the cycle of impact practice, to revisit the core drivers of the network with the desired outcome being:

To enable ABC Seniors Network to represent and influence decisions or policies for the older people in the communities of Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon district areas by giving them a voice on issues that impact directly on their health and social wellbeing.



### 1. Plan

In the planning stage members felt the need to have a global look at the Network in order to give direction and common purpose. Widespread discussion took place around how best to achieve this comprehensive and ambitious plan.

### 4. Review

The group identified that area where they perhaps need to look at overall following this process is devising a specific time bound action plan that will allow them to plot their progress and measure the impact of their work.



### 2. Do

A fundamental question that arose as part of the training was why does the Network exist? Members were able to collectively discuss and hence articulate the purpose as being so that they can have an impact on older peoples issues, to give a voice to older people in the area represented.

### 3. Assess

The training created the space and context for the identification for areas of work. Matters identified were the need to re-examine governance structures and how we feed in to other networks and forums, to clarify the networks purpose and aims

# Age Sector Pilots

## Applying the 'Cycle of Impact Practice'

## Pilot 3: Programme

South West Age Partnership (SWAP) is a member of the Age NI Sub-Regional Networks. It was established in 2010, following the rebranding of the Sperrin Lakeland Senior Citizen's Consortium, as a local inter-agency based partnership with the aim of improving the lives of older people aged 60 years and over in the Fermanagh and Omagh areas. SWAP receives funding from a number of different sources and is also a partner with the Red Cross to deliver the 'Neighbourhood Links Project' funded by Big Lottery under the 'Reaching Out – Connecting Older People' programme.

The pilot initiative looked at programme delivery and applied the cycle of impact practice to their 'Active Living Programme'. This is run annually with support from WHSCT, Big Lottery and Arts Council and involves age sector groups across the catchment area with the desired outcome being:

To run an active living programme of activities engaging older people across the Fermanagh and Omagh area to improve their quality of life, impact on physical and mental health and wellbeing as well as reduce social isolation.

### Aims:

1. Give a voice for local older people
2. Improve older people's health and wellbeing
3. Provide activities to reduce social isolation

### Plan

During the planning stage the Board of SWAP met to examine the feasibility and capacity involved in providing this ambitious programme. Much was dependent of attracting funding but operating within the predicted levels of funding allowed resources to be allocated in line with the budget. Engagement with groups and clubs was paramount at this stage as it shaped what activities would be sourced. Following this tutors and providers were sought as well as suitable venues. Access was a key consideration not only in terms of entering the building but also in respect of location as this is mainly a rural setting. Having proper insurance in place was a prerequisite for the programme to commence. Recruitment of providers who are able to fulfil the requested programmes was done at this stage. It was also imperative at this stage to identify if there were any shortfalls in terms of budget for which match funding or amendment to the proposed programme would be required. Capacity of staff and volunteers was also taken

into consideration at this stage and appropriate training etc was undertaken. Data capture which looked at a number of different approaches was considered and a range of suitable methods tried during the lifetime of the project. Finally a timeline was devised for programme delivery.

## **Do**

Having secured all necessary funding and recruited all tutors and providers, SWAP began implementing the programme with groups. Participating groups were engaged and commencement dates were agreed. Standardised recruitment forms were circulated, with information regarding beneficiaries being captured. Local autonomy was an important element of this programme but SWAP has a key role to play regarding the coordination and monitoring of the programme. Risk assessments were carried out regarding premises etc before any of the events or activities took place. Focus groups with service users were an ongoing feature of the programme that allowed for feedback and data capture, alongside the opportunity to make suitable amendments. Other information was sought through questionnaires and monitoring returns as required by the funder.

## **Assess**

The assessment stage was quite robust and the evaluation data was disseminated and discussed at Board level. Engagements were held with funders and on an ongoing process with service users. A final end of programme report was compiled comprising all the quantitative information (figures, numbers engaged, activities that took place). This allowed for comparisons to be made with previous years and learning and development to take place which would influence future practice.

## **Review**

The review highlighted that in order to maintain the programme a certain level of funding would be required and this in turn leads to a process of forward planning required for future programmes. Data capture was underlined as an area which needed a specific focus so that the longer term impact of the programme can be measured and articulated. This includes a specific tutor evaluation that would capture data from the session providers as well as the participants. More emphasis would be placed on maximising the opportunities provided by the focus groups to shape future programmes. It was felt that the importance of individual engagement was important and it emerged as a recommendation that the programme should consider as well as group settings although it was acknowledged that this had implications on resources.

## Group project aim:

To run an active living programme of activities engaging older people across the Fermanagh and Omagh area to improve their quality of life, impact on physical & mental health and wellbeing as well as reduce social isolation.



1. Give a voice for local older people
2. Improve older people's health and wellbeing
3. Provide activities to reduce social isolation



Funded by Western Health & Social Care Trust (WHST)



Cycle of Impact Practice  
([www.inspiringimpactni.org](http://www.inspiringimpactni.org))

**1,344**  
Total participants  
older people



# Age Sector Pilots

## Applying the 'Cycle of Impact Practice' Pilot 4: Organisational

The Mid-Ulster Seniors Network (MUSN) is a member of the Age NI Sub-Regional Networks. It was established in 2011 as a local community based partnership with the aim of improving the lives of older people aged 60 years and over in the Cookstown, Dungannon and Magherafelt areas. The network consists of a core committee drawn from across the catchment area.

MUSN was engaged through the initial pilot programme 'expression of interest' process. The group stated that they are a network which received no core funding but made a big difference to the lives of older people in the area. They were very keen to monitor and showcase their impact in order to demonstrate their value and map the difference that they actually made.

At an initial one-to-one meeting an introduction was given which referenced the available resources including the 'Code of Good Impact Practice', the 'Cycle of Impact Practice', 'Measuring Up!' online assessment tool and the Inspiring Impact Hub. The planned approach of the Age NI pilot programme was outlined.

The cycle of impact practice was not completed during the life of the pilot. As a group exclusively made up of volunteers from the age sector, participation in the pilot programme was challenging due to limitations on the time available and health issues of volunteer leaders, also, the technical focus of the tools and resources, therefore the 'readiness' of the group to engage in impact practice, operationally and strategically was a critical factor in the non-completion of a pilot cycle to demonstrate their impact practice at this time.

# *References, Further Reading and Appendices*

# References

Ref: 1 and Ref: 2. Inspiring Impact: *The Code of Good Impact Practice*. Available online at <http://inspiringimpact.org/resources/are-you-leading-for-impact/#code>

Ref: 3. *A Journey to Greater Impact* published by New Philanthropy Capital (NPC). Available online at <http://www.thinknpc.org/publications/a-journey-to-greater-impact/>

Ref: 4 and Ref: 5. *Your Project and its Outcomes*; prepared for the Big Lottery Fund by Charities Evaluation Services (CES). Available online at <http://www.ces-vol.org.uk/Publications-Research/publications-free-downloads/you-project-outcomes-download>

Ref: 6. *Principles of Good Impact Reporting* published by NPC. Available online at <http://www.thinknpc.org/publications/the-principles-of-good-impact-reporting-2/>

## Further Reading

Inspiring Impact Northern Ireland. [www.inspiringimpactni.org](http://www.inspiringimpactni.org)

- Code of Good Impact Practice
- List of Measurement Tools and Systems
- VCSE Shared Learning Paper
- Are You Leading for Impact
- Building a Movement

Community Evaluation Northern Ireland. [www.ceni.org](http://www.ceni.org)

- Prove and Improve: A self evaluation resource for Voluntary and Community Organisations
- An Approach to Outcomes for Voluntary and Community Organisations
- A Review of Evaluation Practice in the Voluntary and Community Sector

Charities Evaluation Services. [www.ces-vol.org.uk](http://www.ces-vol.org.uk)

- Online web specific - Tools and Resources to Support Charities
- Assessing Change: Developing and Using Outcomes Monitoring Tools
- Your Project and Its Outcomes

New Philanthropy Capital. [www.thinknpc.org](http://www.thinknpc.org)

- Creating Your Theory of Change: NPC's Practical Guide
- Principles of Good Impact Reporting: For charities and social enterprises

Evaluation Support Scotland. [www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk](http://www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk)

- Support Guide Series

# Appendices

## Appendix 1: The 'Code of Good Impact Practice'

The 'Code of Good Impact Practice' provides broad, agreed guidelines for focusing on impact. It sets out a series of high level principles to follow. Each principle includes a brief description of how your impact practice would look if you were applying the principle, an explanation of why it is important and some ideas about how to implement it.

### 1. Take responsibility for impact and encourage others to do so too.

Impact is embedded in the culture of your organisation. All staff and volunteers see it as their responsibility to create impact through their work, to play their part in showing how their work makes a difference and sharing what they learn from it with others. Leaders of your organisation see delivering impact as their primary responsibility and duty.

### 2. Focus on purpose.

You're clear about your purpose as an organisation: the difference that you exist to make. You're able to explain your expected impact in meeting this purpose. You can describe how you will create this impact, plainly and in ways that everyone can understand.

### 3. Involve others in your impact practice.

At all stages of impact practice you look for appropriate opportunities to involve others. As a minimum this includes involving those with direct experience of the organisation's activities. It could also include other organisations doing similar work or funders.

### 4. Apply proportionate and appropriate methods and resources.

You're realistic in your impact practice - you apply time, effort and methods proportionate and appropriate to the scale and scoop of the work. If necessary, you keep things simple and do what you can to focus on impact. You choose methods that fit with the values and ethos of your organisation, and you're clear about the purpose of collecting impact information, who will use it and for what.

**5. Consider the full range of the difference you actually make.**

You keep in mind that you might have an impact beyond your intended beneficiaries, a negative as well as a positive impact, or impact that you hadn't planned. You acknowledge that in some cases you have to balance positive impact on your beneficiaries with negative impact on others. You seek to understand if your work is having a longer term or wider impact than anticipated. Equally, you know that changes you see may have occurred without your involvement, be short term, or be the result of the work of others.

**6. Be honest and open.**

You're honest and open about the impact you plan to have, and your findings on the difference you have or haven't made, as well as what you have learnt from these findings and how you will act on these lessons. You're also honest and open about the scope of your impact practice. You and your funders discuss what hasn't gone so well and learn from it.

**7. Be willing to change and act on what you find.**

You're ready to change as a result of finding out what impact you are or are not having, and to accept you may not be having the impact you intended. You commit to learning from your impact assessment and you actively use it to inform planning and action. Your funders are also willing to learn and change.

**8. Actively share your impact plans, methods, findings and learning.**

You communicate your impact plans, methods findings and learning to ensure other know what you're trying to achieve and to contribute to a wider view of what does or doesn't work. You share appropriate information inside and outside the organisation. You acknowledge the limitations of your findings.

# Appendix 2: Age NI 'Steps to Funding' programme



## Steps to Funding



Impact Assessment Jan 2014 – June 2015

The Steps to Funding Programme is a three-year programme providing capacity building training and information for age sector groups delivered across NI/Ireland. The programme is funded by Comic Relief.

**The Programme aims:**

- To increase awareness and accessibility to funding opportunities for older people's services and activities;
- To increase the capacity of older person-led groups to access funding for local service delivery;
- To increase the collaboration and networking by older person-led groups.



**Session 1**  
Preparing and Planning for Small Grants  
7 workshops  
63 participants



**Session 2**  
Making the Approach - Sources of Funding  
12 workshops  
83 participants



**Session 3**  
Understanding Applications  
11 workshops  
124 participants



**Session 4**  
Development Workers Master Class  
3 workshops  
70 participants



**Sustainability Seminars**

Inspiring Impact / Tendering / Governance / Charitable Status  
196 participants



**Resources, Information, Guidance**

Funding Ezine 18 editions  
6024 recipients



**Dedicated Web Resource**

[www.ageNI.org/stepstofunding](http://www.ageNI.org/stepstofunding)



**Financial Leverage**



**Networking**

**Signposting**

**Meet the Funders**

**Total since Jan 2012**  
**£289,810.40**



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