



# Introduction to measuring outcomes

## 1. Introduction to monitoring and evaluation

**Monitoring:** the routine, systematic collection of information for the purpose of checking your project's progress against your project's plans.

**Evaluation:** using monitoring and other information to make judgements on how you are doing.

It is important to have a good understanding of the purpose of monitoring and evaluation and how it can be used. Below are some examples of what monitoring and evaluation can achieve:

- Shows what has been achieved
- Enables effective planning
- Improves services
- Empowers and involves users
- Motivates staff and volunteers
- Provides credibility for the organisation e.g. when applying for future funding

Monitoring and evaluation is essential to any organisation and can be incredibly beneficial. It shouldn't just be about collecting what is necessary to fulfil demands from funders, but also about how it benefits the organisation and all its stakeholders (services users, staff, funders, trustees, volunteers, statutory bodies).

There are a number of terms involved in monitoring and evaluation. Confusingly, different funders and organisations use different terms and different definitions (i.e. aims are sometimes goals), but in this handout, we will be using the following definitions:

**Aims:** the changes you are trying to achieve. They describe the difference you hope to make in the lives of the people or organisations you work with

**Objectives:** the **planned** activities by which you are going to achieve your aims

**Outputs:** the detailed activities services and products your organisation **actually** does or provides i.e. what is on the 'menu' for service users, what services they are able to access

**Outcomes:** the changes, benefits, learning or other effects that **actually** occur as a result of your activities. They can be expected or unexpected, positive or negative

**Indicators:** things you can assess and measure to tell whether the expected outputs or outcomes are occurring. The things you measure can be quantitative or qualitative.

The diagram below is a visual representation of the relationship between all these different terms:

## CES Planning Triangle ©



This shows the planning stage of developing a monitoring and evaluation system. From the aims come the outcomes (i.e. what actually changes as a result of your activities) and from the objectives come the outputs (i.e. the services offered to clients, a 'menu' of services).

Below is a specific example which will hopefully make the relationship and process clearer, as well as showing the kind of language associated with the different terms. This example of the women's centre is taken from CES.

**Aims**

- To increase mental and physical wellbeing
- To increase confidence
- To increase career-related skills
- To improve childcare provision on the estate
- To increase interaction between women on the estate

**Objectives**

- To provide outreach work
- To provide learning opportunities
- To run health and fitness classes
- To organise childcare activities
- To provide social activities for women on the estate

**Outputs**

- Outreach visits
- Literacy, numeracy and IT classes
- Aerobics classes
- Crèche
- Lunchtime club for women

**Outcomes** Increased confidence  
 Increased career-related skills  
 Increased mental health and physical wellbeing  
 Women have more stable childcare arrangements  
 More women offer and provide support to each other

**Indicators** Level of confidence reported by women  
 Number of children enrolled in crèche  
 Level of skills in literacy, numeracy and IT  
 Attendance at fitness classes  
 Level of alcohol intake  
 Level of isolation expressed by women

