



# Introduction to measuring outcomes

## 2. Introduction to outcomes

As stated above, outcomes are the changes, benefits, learning or other effects that occur as a result of your activities. They are NOT the same as outputs, which are the services which are offered to clients, rather than the changes these services achieve.

In order to decide on outcomes, you need to look at your planned activities (i.e. objectives and outputs) and ask “what will be different, what will change as a result of our activities?”.

### Words associated with outcomes

Outcomes are easily identified by words which suggest some kind of change, such as:

- Increased
- Decreased
- Improved
- Enabled
- Reduced

Below are some examples of outcomes, which could result from a variety of different projects and activities:

- Increased self confidence
- Decreased acts of violence
- Improved communication skills
- Women are enabled to participate in public life

Outcomes can take place in a number of areas and contexts and on a number of scales:

- Individuals
- Families
- Communities
- Environment
- Organisations
- Policy

### Outcomes in individuals

The work of women’s organisations often focuses on outcomes in individuals and there are a number of different aspects of an individual where changes can take place. The table below shows different aspects of an individual where changes can take places and examples of these outcomes.

| <b>Where?</b>                | <b>Example outcomes</b>  |
|------------------------------|--|
| Health                       | Reduction in mental health problems<br>Reduction in physical trauma    |
| Behaviour                    | Reduction in violent behaviour<br>Reduced use of drugs                 |
| Attitude and self-perception | Increased motivation to find housing<br>Increased self-confidence      |
| Knowledge and skills         | Increased knowledge of advocacy services<br>Increased parenting skills |
| Circumstance                 | Women secure permanent housing   |
| Relationships                | Women improve relationships with children                              |

### **Hard and soft outcomes**

Outcomes can be classified into two different types: hard and soft.

**Hard outcomes** are those which are easily quantifiable, such as the number of clients securing accommodation, the achievement of a qualification or getting a job. An example of a hard outcome for a domestic violence outreach service:

**e.g. Increased number of women and children at risk of violence securing temporary or permanent accommodation after a stay at the refuge**

This outcome could be expressed as a number or a percentage of the women and children accessing the service who secure accommodation, e.g. 10% more women and children at risk of violence securing temporary or permanent accommodation after a stay at the refuge

**Soft outcomes** are those which are less quantifiable, more qualitative outcomes, which are not so conventionally measurable. However, they can be just as measurable as hard outcomes and the basic principles of monitoring stay the same – you still need to be **routine and systematic** about collecting data. It’s just that you might need to think differently about how you go about collecting this data.

With many projects and activities, it is likely that you’ll be collecting data on both hard and soft outcomes.

Some funders will give you specific outcomes to work towards, whereas others will expect you to come up with your own outcomes for your project

### **An example of a project’s outcomes**

Below is an example where the funder (in this case London Councils) has come up with a set of outcomes which need to be met through delivery of a particular project, funded under the funding stream ‘service 60’

Service No 60 - Counselling & psychotherapy support for those affected by domestic violence, rape or sexual abuse to improve safety, confidence, emotional health & wellbeing and promotion of safe choices

**Outcome 1:** Increased confidence, self-esteem and motivation

**Outcome 2:** Improved health and well-being

**Outcome 3:** Reduced violence and abuse and enhanced ability to make safe choices

**Outcome 4:** Increased access to other support services

**Outcome 5:** Enable those affected by domestic violence, rape or sexual abuse to achieve long-term improvements in their lives

Four out of the five outcomes can be classified as soft outcomes, as they relate to changes in individuals which are hard to measure, such as self-esteem and improved health and wellbeing. However, outcome 4 is a hard outcome, as it relates to something quantitative, i.e. the level of access to services, which would be measured by the number of hours spent engaging with other support services, the length of opening hours of drop-in centres or the number of referrals to appropriate support services.