

Evaluating practice

There are two phases to evaluation: formative and summative. A formative evaluation involves collecting data during a development and using it to shape what happens according to problems that arise, and what seems to be working well. A summative evaluation occurs after the activity has ended and is used to make judgements about the success or otherwise of the development or service being evaluated.

Design the evaluation so that you:

- *specify exactly what you are evaluating – set priorities against what you need to achieve, time and resources available and obtain agreement from the practice team on the nature and scope of the task*
- *describe the expected impact of the programme or activity and who will be affected*
- *define the criteria for success – these might relate to the structure, process or outcome of a service or development*
- *identify the information required to demonstrate what the individual general practice nurse (GPN) or the team achieved. The information required might include:*
 - *observing behaviour*
 - *data from existing records*
 - *prospective recording by the GPNs themselves or by colleagues involved*
- *determine how long the evaluation will take overall, what you will do and by what time*
- *decide who collates the information for the evaluation and the respective deadlines for collecting the data*
- *review and refine the objectives of the evaluation and check that they are appropriate for the outcomes and impact you expect and the resources expended.*

Any evaluation of the GPN role or that of others in the team is complicated by the fact that the outcome may be dependent on many factors other than your own initiative, or it may take a long time to see results.

What to evaluate¹?

There are many varied approaches to evaluation.

You could:

- *evaluate any aspect of an effective service where the GPN plays a role in practice: such as:*
 - *access*
 - *effective delivery*
 - *efficiency*
 - *patient/carer experience*
 - *health outcomes*
- *evaluate the extent to which you achieve the outcome(s) of your practice plan for a new service²*
- *break the cycle of progress with a new initiative or service down into a RAID through these four stages:³*
 - *Review of progress*
 - *Agree the plan*
 - *Implement the plan*
 - *Demonstrate what you have achieved*

Set goals and milestones as interim measures for one or all of these four stages, and evaluate the extent to which you complete the various aspects of the initiative as planned.

- *Undertake regular audits of aspects of the structure, process and outcome of a service or development relating to a GPN post*

See if you have achieved what you expected when you established the criteria and standards of the audit programme. Check that you have completed the full cycle of the audit, including making changes and re-auditing (see [Tool – Judge how well you have performed an audit](#)). Think about the ways that you employ, train, develop and support GPNs – linking your evaluation to any part of this Toolkit.

References

1. Chambers R, Wakley G. *Making Clinical Governance Work for You*. Oxford: Radcliffe Medical Press; 2000.
2. Pawson R, Tilley N. *Realistic Evaluation*. London: Sage; 2000.
3. Wood L. *Review, Agree, Implement, Demonstrate*. Leicester: National Clinical Governance Support Team; 2001.