
Resource Centre

Monitoring and evaluation of services

Evaluation and Planning

We carry out quantitative monitoring of the take-up of services and the nature of our user-groups and qualitative monitoring of users' views of the Centre. This information is regularly discussed and evaluated by both the staff team and the management committee with the aim of ensuring that:

- § the Centre is meeting both its own targets for take-up of services and any targets agreed with funding organisations
- § all the work of the Centre continues to further our aims
- § our services enable groups to organise more effectively in the community
- § we are providing equal access to all services
- § the organisation of the Centre remains efficient and cost-effective
- § we identify the changing needs of groups and gaps in service provision

Our assessment of the above information is put together with the Centre's financial information and external reports, such as details of new government programmes, strategies developed by the City Council or advances in Best Practice in the voluntary sector. All this material forms the basis for the development of services in succeeding years.

The reports and discussions of the staff team and the management committee are pulled together in this rolling three-year Programme of Work. The Programme is sent to interested parties such as City Councillors, MPs, local infrastructure support organisations and the Centre's member-groups in order to give the wider community the opportunity to comment.

Monitoring the take-up of services

We record the name of each group which visits the Centre to use a service, and its use of each service. This data is collated weekly and turned into a monthly summary which is evaluated at staff meetings. A full analysis of the data is given in Half-year and All-year reports, with comparative figures from previous years. These are discussed by both staff and the Management Committee to ensure that the Centre is meeting its targets.

Every 2 years in our User Satisfaction survey, we ask each group in the sample to classify its main activities under headings such as *Provide services to a faith or minority ethnic community* and *Work to improve your local area or neighbourhood*. This information enables us to build up a picture of our users and to assess whether we are meeting our priorities.

Monitoring the impact of our services

After each support session we ask the participants to complete a Session Evaluation Form. This provides us with qualitative information about the effectiveness of our support to groups and the extent to which this assists them in achieving their aims. We also follow up our support sessions by contacting groups to see if they need any further support.

Sometimes we can reliably gauge the effect of our services: for example, where a group receives an award after we have given advice or assisted them in identifying funders or completing applications. In many cases, though, it is not possible to measure objectively the effect of our services as they are only one factor in the combination of people and resources which determine the level of activity of each group. We therefore have to rely on the assessment by user-groups of the effectiveness of our services.

We also assess the impact of hire equipment by informal discussions with groups as they return the equipment. This often gives us qualitative information which is fed back into discussions when planning changes to our equipment services.

Users' perceptions

Every 2 years we carry out a detailed User Satisfaction survey of a sample of user-groups. The resulting report, including verbatim comments from users, is discussed by staff and the Management Committee. We continually encourage both written and verbal comments, whether positive or negative, and suggestions for improvements from any user-group and we have a Comments book displayed at the entrance. We also invite written comments from groups in areas of social housing when they re-apply for membership of the Centre every two years.

Complaints procedure

In the event of a formal complaint, we shall attempt to resolve it initially through discussion with the complainant. Any outstanding complaint will be discussed by the staff team and a report presented to the Management Committee. If the matter is still not resolved to the reasonable satisfaction of the complainant, it will be referred to the Management Committee.

At the outset we shall inform the complainant of this procedure and then provide a written response within one month of the complaint. Discussions of the complaint will consider not only the individual case but any wider implications for the service as a whole.

Financial reports

Both staff and the Management Committee discuss the budget report, the annual review of charges to users for services and the Annual Report & Financial Statements prepared by our chartered accountant. In addition we produce quarterly financial reports with all-year projections in order to monitor, throughout the year, both the performance of the Centre overall and key aspects of each service.

Other agencies in the voluntary sector

We discuss our work with other agencies, principally the Brighton and Hove Community Initiatives, the Working Together project and other voluntary sector support organisations, and the Community & Voluntary Sector Forum in order to ensure that our services remain distinct and complement those of other agencies. This is an essential element in maintaining services which are cost-effective.

Staff time

Records of service take-up do not measure the amount of time which the Centre puts into each service. Approximately every five years, we carry out a detailed internal review of areas of work and the amount of staff time spent on each area. The last review was in the summer of 2004. Such reviews are a key element in ensuring that services are organised efficiently.

Note: Definition of Uses and Visits

Use: this is each use by a group of a service or piece of equipment. We do not record as a *Use* any use by individuals.

Visit: this records each occasion on which a group visits the Centre to use services or equipment. The term *visit* covers visits to our website, visits by groups to the Centre and telephone calls whenever a service is used. We do not record as a *visit* any individual user or any general enquiry or booking from a group. A single *visit* may involve a single *use* or several *uses*