

The 'go to' organisation for local
government improvement in Scotland



Evaluation offer

The Improvement Service (IS) - supporting
evidence-informed decision making

Context

Funding for local government has not kept pace with inflation and has reduced, in real terms, by 6% since 2010. The Scottish Government's Resource Spending Review¹ which is intended to guide financial planning and reform across the public sector shows local government spending being maintained at 2022-23 levels until March 2026. This will result in an even greater real terms reduction.

Whilst funding is decreasing, the demands placed on local government are increasing.² In addition,

“a growing proportion of Scottish Government total revenue funding to councils is protected to support Scottish Government priorities.”³

Although services such as education and social work enjoy a limited degree of protection - others do not. In real terms this means that many non-statutory services have experienced much greater reductions in spending.

Given the limitations on available funding, spending can be focused on delivering front line services. As a result, local authorities can find it challenging to find resources to assess the effectiveness and value for money offered by existing, or planned, policies or programmes. There is often a requirement to focus on data collection and reporting with limited capacity for analysis and evaluation.



1. (published in May 2022)

2. https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/uploads/docs/report/2019/nr_190321_local_government_performance.pdf

3. As above

Why evaluate?

Essentially evaluation aims to provide answers to key questions about activities. Did it work? Should we keep doing it or do something else instead? What was the value of what we did - both socially and economically? Can we get better value for money?

As financial pressures grow, it is increasingly important that investment is targeted at policies and programmes which will result in the greatest impact. Unfortunately, as resources become scarcer - and demands on them increase - it can become increasingly difficult to fully support evidence-informed decision making. The IS has a dedicated evaluation team that can help.

Evaluation offers systematic analysis and assessment, using set criteria, of the extent to which an activity will deliver the intended results. It enables us to identify what's working ... and equally importantly what isn't. This allows evidence based decisions to be made in relation to what is required to improve performance. Any evaluation undertaken needs to be proportionate and a reasonable balance struck between 'doing' and 'proving'.

Evaluation support to external organisations can take place at varying levels and operates on a full cost recovery basis.

The IS offers an independent evaluation service which enables projects and services to be assessed by an external body which has a unique understanding of local government. Although evaluation is offered on the basis of full cost recovery, where appropriate, we will encourage and support the local authorities we work for to share information and to identify opportunities for collaboration.



How we can help

Evaluations can focus on the processes used to deliver activities or the impact created or a combination of both. The Evaluation team has wide ranging experience with all aspects of evaluation. The starting point is to look at the main purpose of the evaluation and to develop and agree a plan which will set out how this will be achieved.

Examples of the types of evaluation that the IS has delivered with local authorities include:



Social Return on Investment analyses:

The IS, in partnership with NHS Lothian, Dundee City Council and Granton Information Centre, carried out a Social Return on Investment analysis on [co-location of advice workers in medical practices](#).

In partnership with City of Edinburgh Council, NHS Lothian, Edinburgh HSCP, Capital City Partnership and Community Health Initiative, the IS carried out a Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis of the [Maximise! Project in Edinburgh](#). Maximise! offers access to schools to welfare rights and employability advice alongside family support.

We are currently working with Greener Kirkcaldy to carry out a SROI of their energy advice service.



Process and Outcomes Evaluation

The IS is currently evaluating the effectiveness of the Place Based Investment Programme across all 32 Scottish Local Authorities. A reporting framework gathering both quantitative and qualitative data has been established and support sessions on its application are planned. The first evaluation report of the [Place Based Investment Programme \(PBIP\) direct allocation to local authorities](#) has been published.

The report covers financial years 2021-22 and highlights how local authorities have used the investment from Scottish Government.

We are managing the delivery and evaluation of the [Welfare Advice and Health Partnerships](#). This seeks to assess the effectiveness of the programme and the potential for rolling out the approach nationally (process) and the impact on key stakeholders including service users (outcomes). It involves the following local authorities: Aberdeenshire; Argyll and Bute; Dumfries and Galloway; Dundee City; East Ayrshire; City of Edinburgh; Falkirk; Glasgow City; Highland; Inverclyde; North Ayrshire; North Lanarkshire; Renfrewshire; South Lanarkshire; Stirling and West Dunbartonshire.



General Evaluation support and Guidance

A wide range of assistance to design and prepare activities to influence and inform evidence based decision making can be offered. These include the following examples:

- **Audit, review and report** – e.g. Gathering information from all 32 local authorities on the impact of the pandemic on local authority funded money and welfare rights advice services.
- **Stakeholder mapping and engagement** – e.g. Working with Angus Council to identify and engage with key stakeholders in their review of community councils
- **Logic models and theory of changes** - e.g. Delivering tailored support and engagement sessions to develop a logic model for service planning in North Lanarkshire Council.
- **Independent evaluation for partners** – e.g. We worked with Public Health Scotland to identify the barriers and enablers to delivering a community pharmacy project.
- **Acting as a critical friend** and participating in reference groups

For more information contact:

karen.carrick@improvementservice.org.uk



Improvement Service
West Lothian Council Civic Centre
Howden South Road
Livingston
EH54 6FF

Tel: 01506 282012
Email: info@improvementservice.org.uk
www.improvementservice.org.uk



*The 'go to' organisation for Local
Government improvement in Scotland*

is.
improvement **service**