Notes, meeting minutes and emails

Many people are collecting useful evaluation material without even realising it, in the form of notes (in workbooks throughout project planning and development), meeting minutes, or emails exchanged between project workers or partners.

If you have organisational or relationship/partnership focused outcomes, these types of data can provide useful, time-based, reflections and observations. It is important to consider that meeting minutes may be used as evaluation data when setting agendas to ensure that certain questions are being addressed (e.g. an outcome focusing on the development of partnerships should ensure that advisory group meetings spend some time reflecting on partnership development).

As with other methods, short quantitative questionnaires can also be administered at meetings or amongst partners and stakeholders over email.

It is very important to remember consent if using notes, meeting minutes, or emails as evaluation data. You should be clear from the beginning if you are planning to use any otherwise confidential exchanges in your evaluation and seek appropriate permissions. If, on reflection, you see an email or meeting minutes that could be useful to indicate change in your outcomes reporting, seek permission to use these retrospectively.

Box 1. Reporting example from Making Sounds- Notes, Meeting Minutes and Emails

In order to track the development of partnerships between Youth Offending Teams and the host music organisation, an agenda item was added at the end of each advisory group meeting. All meeting attendees were asked to reflect on anything that had contributed to stronger working between project partners. An analysis of this section of the meeting minutes showed three main factors contributed to the strengthening of partnerships in this project:

It with the group in this way, rather than just talking about it. The lyrics themselves show an increasing maturity and greater sense of emotional expression. A sample from the lyrics is below:

Regular meetings – it was important for regular face to face meetings to take place, attendees felt a lot of meaning can get lost in email.

Shared outcomes – attendees felt it was important to have a clear sense of shared outcomes for each organisation from the beginning – highlighting the relevance of the project for each partner organisation.

Honouring commitments and mutual trust – attendees repeatedly mentioned thatthey felt partners should 'stick to their promises' or ensure that they follow through when making commitments, building shared trust across a project.