MEASURING SOFT OUTCOMES WORKSHOP

March 4th 2010

Jonathan Breeze, Director of Consultancy, CLES

Natalie Qureshi, Consultant, CLES

Structure of the session

1. What are outcomes?

2. Why are they important?

3. Ways of measuring soft outcomes

4. Challenges to measurement

5. Approaches to embedding soft outcome measurement in project delivery and reporting

Introductions

- Organisation

- Background

- Areas of interest

Outputs vs outcomes

OUTPUTS

- Clearly definable and quantifiable
  - e.g. gaining a qualification, finding work
- Straightforward and easy to measure

Outputs vs outcomes

OUTCOMES

- Evidenced as beneficiaries move towards hard outputs
    - e.g. improved self-confidence, attitudinal changes
    - Ability to ask for help or assistance
    - Communication skills
- More difficult to measure

Distance travelled

- Progress made by beneficiaries

- Assess individual progress on two occasions

- Particularly important in projects focussed on employment

Why is measuring soft outcomes important?

- Provides an initial assessment of client support needs

- Demonstrate progress to beneficiaries

- Show project staff, how a project is progressing

- Support project development

- Assist in measuring impact amongst most disadvantaged

- Demonstrating impact to funders

Common elements of measuring soft outcomes

- A set of indicators

- Scoring system

- Baseline and subsequent interviews

- A system for reporting results

Discussion

What activities are you currently undertaking to measure soft outcomes in your programmes or projects?

The Outcomes Star

- Developed by Triangle Consulting for the London Housing Foundation

- Means of measuring change when working with vulnerable people

- 'Journey of Change' – key steps in transition, dependence to independence

- Focus on potential not problems

The Outcomes Star

1. Motivation and taking responsibility – the internal journey

2. Self-care and living skills

3. Managing money and personal administration

4. Social networks and relationships

5. Drug and alcohol misuse

The Outcomes Star

6. Physical health

7. Emotional and mental health

8. Meaningful use of time

9. Managing tenancy and accommodation

10. Offending

How does it work?

- Asks users to score themselves, using a range of issues on a 1-10 scale

- Acts as a discussion point

- Shows change over time

- Results analysed to show status at the start of contact with the project, during and at the end
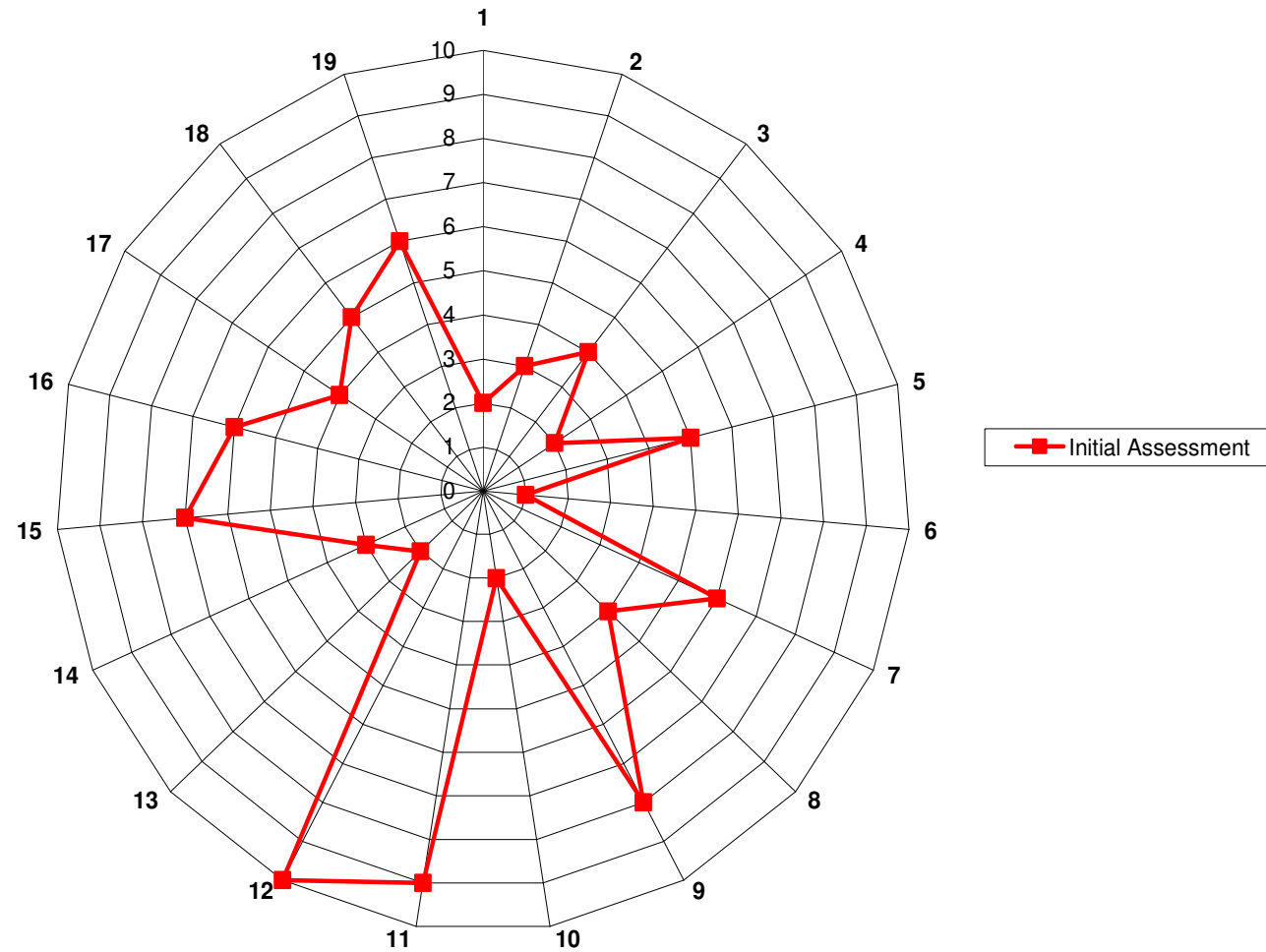
Practical examples: Norwich

- Norwich Local Enterprise Growth Imitative (LEGI) Evaluation

- CLES developed soft outcomes tool-kit, 12 projects, bespoke

- Developed in recognition that hard outputs inappropriate for client group

- Range of soft outcomes developed and participants asked to score themselves against a range of indicators
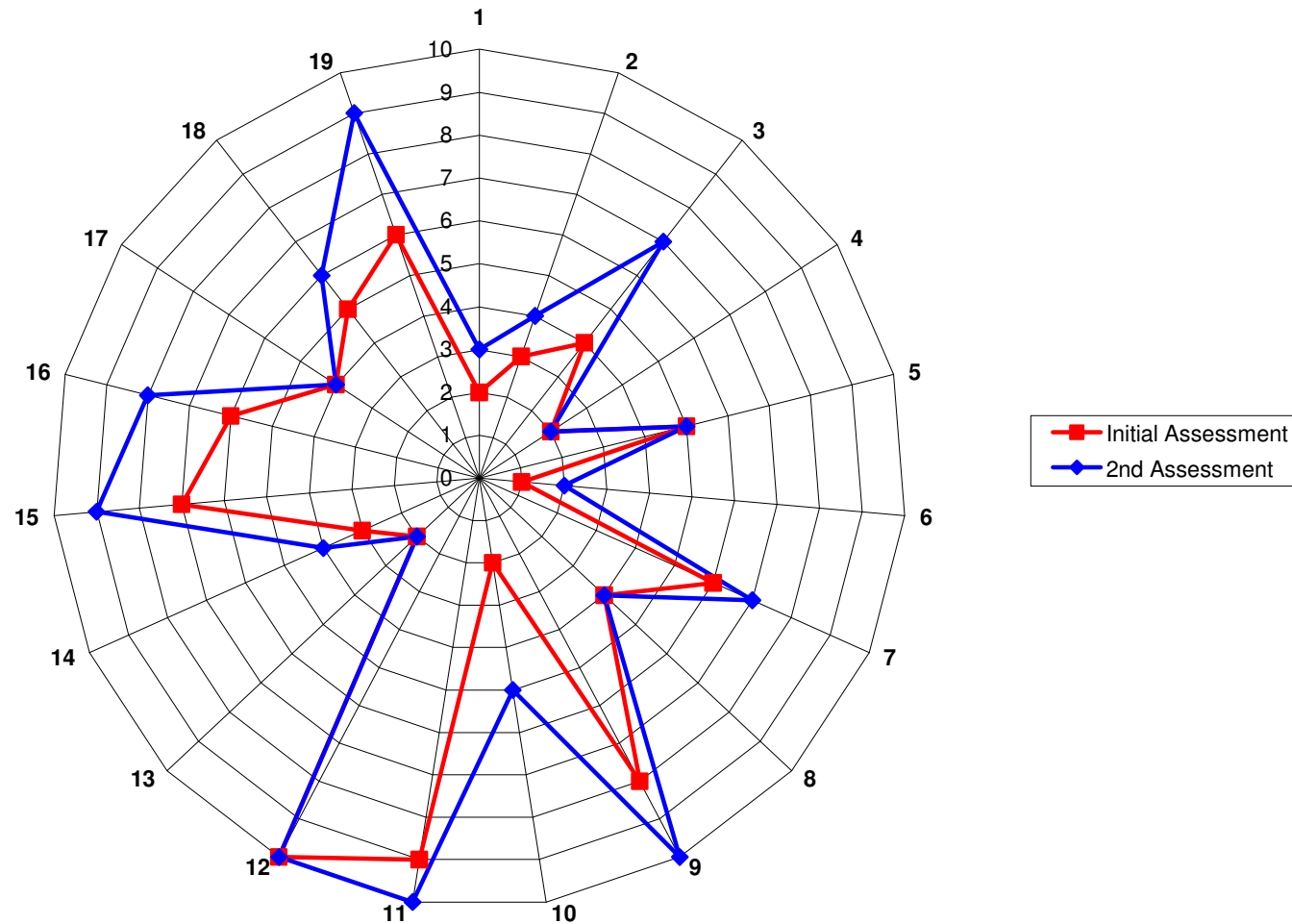
- Based on star model

Ways of measurement - Ladder statements

Indicator			Level of agreement									
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Key work skills	1	I feel comfortable working as part of a team										
	2	I feel comfortable working on my own when needed										
	3	I always ask for help when I am unsure										
	4	When I need to check change I can always do it in my head										
	5	I am confident in using a computer										
Attitudinal Skills	6	I feel very motivated to find a job										
	7	I would feel confident in my own ability if I was attending a job interview today										
	8	I would feel confident if I was going to start a new job today										
Personal skills	9	I understand what I would need to wear for a job interview										
	10	I always arrive for appointments on time										
	11	I am confident that I could plan a journey to work using public transport										
Practical Skills	12	I am confident when speaking to strangers on the telephone										
	13	I would be able to write my own CV if I found a job I was interested in										

Ways of presenting findings

**Practical example:
Heywood 'At Work'**

- Evaluation of NDC employment project in Heywood, Rochdale, Greater Manchester

- Key aims – helping local residents get back into work

  - Work ultimate goal, small steps towards this more realistic

- Range of soft outcomes developed based on DWP best practice

- Workshop held At Work & NDC partners

Practical example: Heywood 'At Work'

- Soft outcome information collected at the start and end of contact

- Practical difficulties integrating with IT system

- Change in project workers led to a loss in continuity

Rickter Scale

- Way of working, not just an assessment tool

- Developed within the criminal justice field

- Allowed clients to assess themselves on a 1 – 10 scale

- Useful for those with limited numeracy and literacy skills

- www.rickterscale.com

The Greenwich experience

- Local labour initiative, Work for Health, Work for Families

- Assist with access to training and jobs

- Tailored action plans developed for clients

- Rickter scale used as a tool for client development

CLES

ISSUES

- Lack of adequate training and support for project workers

- Poor implementation – little consistency...but

- Helpful in identifying unknown barriers

- Building rapport with service users

Generic Key Challenges

- To be used in conjunction with professional judgement of staff

- Resource constraints – administrative burden

- Not an exact science

- Scales are indicators of movement, not exact measurements

- At times, inappropriate

  - Assessment intrusive

  - Attendance short-term, erratic or insufficiently frequent

Key Challenges

Data collection approaches Paper-based systems	
Advantages	**Disadvantages**
Straightforward to operate	Requires literacy
Cheap to develop	Will require inputting onto an IT system
Cheap to implement	

Key Challenges

Data collection approaches
IT-based systems

Advantages	Disadvantages
Avoids paper-work	Cost/time/skills to develop
Simplified and rapid storage	Data security issues
Attractive to certain groups, e.g. young people	Off-putting?

Discussion

1. What type of barriers do you feel there are to measuring soft outcomes in your own programme or project?

2. How might these be overcome?

Embedding processes

Useful elements

- Introductory meeting/training sessions – project workers

- Piloting

- Regular update meetings

- Adequate time for implementation

- Ensure consistency of implementation

Reporting soft outcomes

Common elements

- A set of indicators

- Scoring system

- Baseline and subsequent interviews

- A system for reporting results

- Training for staff using the system

Reporting soft outcomes

Reporting to funders

- Report average for the project, rather than individual impact

- Report changes against baseline

- Use brief notes explaining how results produced

- Include case studies

QUESTIONS?