

## **Simplifying data, governance and outcomes in Social Impact products** (March 2021)

### **Introduction**

I sometimes hear social impact projects are hard to understand. To be fair, I hear this mostly from Government and public sector commissioners of services. Those delivering social impact (especially the voluntary sector) completely get the value and transformation that social impact projects bring.

Of course, I don't think social impact products are complex, and I want to dispel this notion so we can use them more coming out of the pandemic to really help those communities/groups disproportionately impacted (e.g. unemployed, struggling to get support, mentally fragile, excluded) because it makes social and economic sense (the Public Health model of earlier intervention and prevention applies). This brief document explains outcomes/indexing (reference of measures) that show social impact. Social impact is about proving a social and economic measured improvement.

There are many layers of the social safety net and reliable indicators that already exist. We will look at these and add to them to demonstrate the truly human commitment to proving impact in:

- Social Services
- Education
- Housing
- Unemployment
- Justice System
- Healthcare

The challenge is to add to the existing indicators because we aspire to measure real human growth. The hard metrics (objective and measurable) and softer data (interpreted and qualitative) is collected by all partners and aggregated through a performance governance arrangement to show the socio-economic gain.

The data debate is what some call 'complex', but actually, it's quite simple –

The (so-called) complex: there is a nationally used spreadsheet\* describing outcomes and associated costs - this is used to calculate progress and what the service delivery partners have to collect/monitor depending on the social impact project ambitions. A specific data collection system is used to track and prove outcomes for a defined period (i.e. a year to show sustainability). This data is often aggregated and a wider picture of change/transformation is proven, - an audit-trail on source data is needed on all outcomes. There is a need to use baseline against which achievement data is compared to confirm the measured change/improvement (economic and social).

The simple: 3 or 4 key headlines are used to measure most projects - generally the delivery partners can do this, below the headline measures and lead-indicators (giving useful predictors) is the data that is tracked to show the socio-economic gain and the human-side of the benefits of social impact.

### **Data sets**

Below are the main measures collected. Measures are described as those which can be measured against a baseline and have an economic value (hard), and social-human measures that provide an indication of impact as people feel it or experience it. Both are important to assess to understand the true social impact.

## Social Services

<b>Measured Outcome (headline hard measure)</b>	<b>Lead indicator (social-human measure)</b>
Reduction in/better use of:  Child taken into care Children in need - management process Residential/nursing care for older people Reablement Service Home care package Day care or day services Parenting Programme School-based emotional learning programmes Multi-systemic therapy Social worker (safeguarding) intervention	Increase or reduction in:  Child confidence/resilience  Isolation/loneliness  Mentor/support network  Emotional intelligence  Advice and guidance  Positive influences (mentor/family)

## Education

<b>Measured Outcome (headline hard measure)</b>	<b>Lead indicator (social-human measure)</b>
Reduction in/better use of:  Persistent truancy Permanent exclusion from school Alternative education/PRU School-based emotional learning programme NVQ/C&G/BTEC and GCSE/A Qualification Children's Centre	Increase or reduction in:  Mainstream education  Family support  ACE/Trauma service  Domestic threat

## Housing

<b>Measured Outcome (headline hard measure)</b>	<b>Lead indicator (social-human measure)</b>
Reduction in/better use of:  Complex eviction/repossession Homelessness Temporary accommodation Homelessness advice and support Rough sleepers Housing Benefit Social and affordable housing Supported housing Support costs for accommodation	Increase or reduction in:  Feelings of security and safety  Ability to cope economically  Community support from neighbours  Help to manage resources effectively  Financial management skills

## Unemployment

<b>Measured Outcome (headline hard measure)</b>	<b>Lead indicator (social-human measure)</b>
Reduction in/better use of:  Job Seeker's Allowance - workless claimant Employment and Support Allowance Not in Employment Education or Training Sickness absence - sick pay Troubled Families Programme	Increase or reduction in:  Work valorisation  Feelings of self-worth and contribution  Financial education  Confidence

## Justice System

<b>Measured Outcome (headline hard measure)</b>	<b>Lead indicator (social-human measure)</b>
Reduction in/better use of:  Anti-social behaviour Domestic violence Offender, Prison and Probation (community) Youth offender Court event Violence against a person Criminal proceedings Crime - (fiscal, economic and social values) Police officer Resettlement programme Juvenile Custody	Increase or reduction in:  Restorative principles  Emotional awareness/Trauma-informed  Effect of crime on victim  Mentoring support  Wellbeing (mental and physical)  Awareness of and de-escalation of risk triggers

## Healthcare

<b>Measured Outcome (headline hard measure)</b>	<b>Lead indicator (social-human measure)</b>
Reduction in/better use of:  Alcohol misuse Drugs misuse Ambulance services A&E attendance (all scenarios) Hospital inpatients/day case Depression and/or anxiety disorders Mental health disorders Mental health community provision Care homes Counselling services GP service and prescription NHS Dentist Community health services - specialist	Increase or decrease in:  Positive goals/ambition  Wellbeing action (mental and physical)  Coping with stress and pressure (resilience)  Social network for support  Skill-deficits action plan  Problem-solving strategies  Emotional intelligence techniques  Good nutrition/exercise

## Data Management

Each project has its own set of data requirements. The data essentially tells us we are on track to achieving the desired outcomes. Most projects would have no more than 4 key measured outcomes and a similar number of lead indicators. Measured outcome data and lead indicator data should be collected monthly on all participants when a project is live. The data collected should seek to address the actual achievement or progress towards the achievement of outcomes or indicators. The source of data can be self-reported or triangulated through other parties which increases the data validity. All source information and disclosure showing achievement is an audit-trail and needs to be 'clean' and validated as it will be open to independent scrutiny.

Collection of data should be automated as far as possible and key support staff enter it in case notes that then flow into a data system which is reported on a given day each month and reviewed at the performance governance meeting where the 3 key partners (investor, delivery and outcome payer) sit. Data is often aggregated (combined across the whole client-cohort being worked on) to show the progress. Some outcomes/indicators will be weighted because they are critical to demonstrating the socio-economic and human progression – i.e. they are high-level outcomes because they show the core intent of the project and realise its benefits.

## Benefit

All projects are assessed on their outcomes and indicators. These tell us the benefit is being achieved and an economic index equivalent can be applied. Benefit is the productivity or improvement against a previous or comparable baseline. In other words, we show we are 20% better than the baseline of last year or compared to a similar area.

I don't think that's too hard to understand. I find it harder to understand why Government and public sector commissioners do not do more social impact schemes that prevent and intervene earlier but instead end up paying four/five or ten times more when the person is in crisis, has reoffended, been out of work for years, is street homeless, excluded from school, traumatised, etc, which incidentally takes a lot longer to recover from ...

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## References:

\*Core cost base and defined outcome – see unit cost database:

[Research: Cost Benefit Analysis - Greater Manchester Combined Authority \(greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk\)](https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/research/cost-benefit-analysis)

Core Government approved strategy (2018-19) to deliver more social impact:

[Civil Society Strategy - building a future that works for everyone.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/684441/civil_society_strategy_building_a_future_that_works_for_everyone.pdf)