



# OUR GUIDE TO IMPACT

How to measure, understand, and talk about the difference you make to lives in Bexley.



# WHY DOES THIS GUIDE EXIST?

We've made this guide because there is no sign of people starting to care less about the impact- if anything, it's going the other way. It's become such a key part of life for charities and community groups, affecting funding, partnerships, recruitment, reputation- it's become the new norm and we, at BVSC, want to make sure we do all we can to prepare charities for this.

Charities and community groups aren't exclusively made up of people that are fantastic with data, or surveys, or digital tools- they're mostly made up of people who care deeply about those around them and want to see other people thrive. Our role at BVSC is to make sure you have everything you need to be competitive and sustainable, including the skills and knowledge laid out in this guide.

Now, a quick disclaimer, it would be impossible to write a guide that suits each project 100%. What we've tried to do is create something that outlines the process, with lots of resources that go into more depth in specific areas. It's intended for those that are just getting started, or maybe in need of a refresher.

Enjoy!

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Click the lightbulb with headphones icon for a webinar link.

# PART 1- LAY THE FOUNDATION





Before we get into it, it's a good idea to look at these key areas and make sure everything's in line.



## Where do you fit in?

Understanding how your project fits in with projects and strategies around you is essential. Not only will most funding applications ask for this, but it's helpful so that we aren't duplicating projects and can prove why we are needed (before our impact data proves that for us).

Some great resources for this are:

-  Bexley Council Statistics on Deprivation
-  Bexley Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
-  Public Health's profile on Bexley
-  BVSC's State of the Sector Report

### How do we use this?

Take a look at these websites and get more familiar reading this kind of data. Pick a few key statistics that show you're important and use these in funding applications or any time you're describing your organisation.



Developing Your Case for Support- a 30 min talk on showcasing who you are



## Where are you at?

Where in The Impact Journey are you?

Not everyone starts out at the same stage. In my experience, charities are often collecting lots of data already- looking at Impact just helps them focus their methods and only collect what they really need to prove the value of their work.

Knowing where you're at also applies to knowing if it's the right time for impact- or at least, how much time can you give this right now? Once your processes are in place, impact methods aren't hugely invasive or time consuming, but the process of understanding who you are and what you want to achieve does require a decent amount of time and head space.

**If you're going into a busy time, try and think about how you can begin this without overwhelming your team.**



*Take a look at Inspiring Impact's initial assessment [here](#)*



Strategy and Business Planning- a 30 minute talk on making the best start for your charity

# PART 2- PLANNING YOUR IMPACT

At the start of this process it's good to take a step back and think about where you are, who you are, and what you want to achieve.

The planning stage can take a few different forms depending on your organisation and how complex your work is. Something I often recommend is to create a diagram of your aim, your outcomes, and your activities. Sometimes called a planning triangle, sometimes called a Theory of Change, this is basically a good exercise to look at your organisation as a whole and what it accomplishes.

Let's start with a good ol' planning triangle and go through each stage.

1. Our Aim: what change are we hoping to make? This is where you write your biggest goal, for example, "To ensure children in Bexley are living healthier lives"

2. Outcomes: What do we need to achieve to reach the main aim? It's a bit like breaking it down into steps, e.g., "Schools are better equipped to teach children about nutrition", "There are more free sports clubs in Bexley"

3. Activities: How will you achieve your outcomes? What are the actions you will take to achieve your aims? For example, "Networking in schools and youth forums", "Creating easy to understand resources for use in schools", "Holding community events".



Something I often ask charities to think about is **what's happening on days when they feel like they're doing great work**. For me, it's when I'm able to provide really good, tailored support for organisations. This should be the foundation of your impact work- putting evidence behind the effect you know you're having on people's lives.



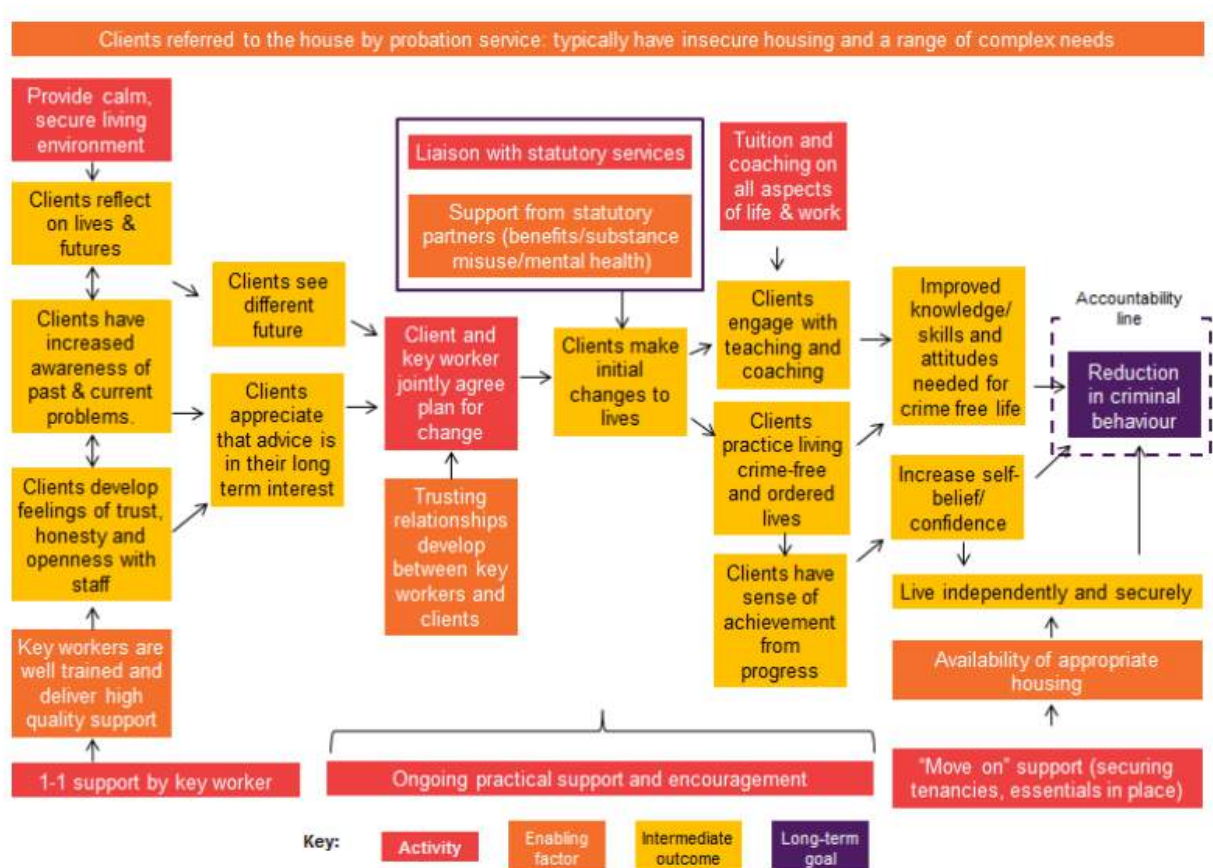
Want to make your own planning triangle? Take a look at this video which walks you through the process



If the planning triangle seems a little too simple for your project, you can always create a Theory of Change. This is a much more comprehensive diagram, and includes far more information.

Here's what a Theory of Change can look like:

*Credit to New Philanthropy Capital, this image is from their guide on Creating a Theory of Change linked at the end of this chapter*



Why do we use these models?

- They keep things clear and focused
- The process of creating it means looking into everything our organisation does and what we aim to achieve- a really helpful exercise
- It shows us what we need to measure (*see Outcomes on next page*)
- They're a quicker way of getting across what we're about. Describing all this in words would be pages long!



# Outcomes: The one impact word that trips everyone up at some point

The word 'Outcomes' deserves honourable mention for being the most mind-bendy concept in impact measuring but fear not, we can break this down.

**An outcome is what happens as a result of action we take.**

For instance, if we bake a cake, the outcome is that people who eat it feel happier and more satiated. This is often confused with our outputs i.e., how many cakes we make.

Knowing your desired outcomes is key to impact. If your desired outcome is happiness (from eating your cake) then we need to make sure this is what we're measuring and keeping an eye on.



## Resources to help with planning:



Learn how to distinguish your outcomes.



Want to make a logic model? Take a look at this video walkthrough.



Ready for the Theory of Change?



Read about Theory of Change (including lots of links to resources) here.



Adam's Outcomes Video- a visual guide to Outcomes.



Intro to Impact and Outcomes- Recorded Webinar.



Planning Your Impact- Recorded Webinar.



NPC's Guide to Creating a Theory of Change.

# PART 3- MEASURING IMPACT & ANALYSING THE RESULTS

Now you know what you're measuring (your outcomes) **how do you measure it?**

For some projects, it's better to come up with your own measurement (so, creating your own survey or interview questions) as it means you're measuring only what you need to. I often recommend this for smaller projects, or projects doing really specific work that can't be measured by existing tools.

For other projects, you might find it helpful to use existing tools as they might be well known to funders and supporters, as well as saving time and energy. I would usually recommend this to projects working in areas where there has been a lot of research, such as loneliness and wellbeing, because it means you're aware of what's going on around you and these are really good measures.



**Remember! Everything I'm going to lay out in this part (and in the guide as a whole) is just a guideline- there's nothing to stop you from making things your own. The important thing is that your measurement tool works for you.**

## Types of Data

You have your Quantitative and your Qualitative, or numbers and words. There may be more, but let's start out slow.






Generally, I think there needs to be a balance between the two. Numbers are great because they can give a concise and precise idea of what you have achieved; you end up with hard facts. Words (and by this, I mean more case studies and quotes) are really key for capturing the depth of how you have changed someone's life.

Click the icon below to read an excellent (and simple) blog from Survey Monkey on what each one means, and how to use them



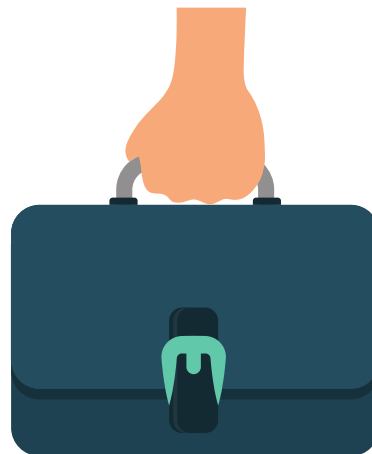


## Good tools to start with:

-  **Survey Monkey:** Although it can handle both numbers and words, this is a really good tool for quantitative data as it makes analysis a breeze. It also has great blogs on creating good surveys.
-  **HACT's Social Value Calculator:** This is really interesting because by filling out an Excel spreadsheet you can download from them, you can put a number on the amount you make in social value which really turns heads. However, it is just an estimation so do take it with a pinch of salt.
-  **WEMWBS:** Very popular and well recognised, but it doesn't consider things outside of your control. I'd use this to understand a bit more about how people are assessing Well-Being and in combination with another measure for extra brownie points.
-  **Public Health England's Toolkit for Schools and Colleges:** A guide to impact for youth projects
-  **Inspiring Impact's Resource Library:** A great resource for finding existing tools. Some of these are paid, some are a bit too complex, but you'll definitely find some inspiration here.

## Don't Forget About Case Studies!

Everyone loves a good statistic, but they don't always show the full depth of the work we do. There is something so powerful about hearing what your work has done from the perspective of someone you've helped. [Click here for NCVO's excellent guide on getting started with Case Studies.](#)



Remember, you'll need to get written permission from people to use their stories. Here's a template from Charity Comms that you can modify to suit your needs

## Processes

Something key to mention here is how you work impact into your existing processes and day to day routines. Always consider how you will make time in the day for impact otherwise it's very easy for your team to feel overwhelmed.



Need to get your team on board with impact? Check out our Intro to Impact presentation here

A big thing to think about is that impact works best when you take a measure of how someone is doing when they walk in the door (we call this a baseline), and then how they're doing after having your support for a while. By doing this you can clearly show how much your work has helped your beneficiaries. Having a process that takes this baseline is really important.

*Remember, it's ok to let your beneficiaries in on why they're filling in surveys and giving quotes. If they value your work and want it to continue, people are usually happy to spend a bit of time helping you out.*



### Where will you store your data once you've got it?

Give some thought to where you will put information, especially if you'll be using paper forms at any point. There's nothing worse than when you come to monitoring season and you've got reams of paper forms to put into Excel so it can give you your statistics. Good impact definitely comes from good habits! There are a lot of different tools out there- some free, some far too expensive- but if you're looking for a good place to start I would absolutely suggest Excel as it can handle almost anything you throw at it.



Click the lightbulb icon for our quick Excel for Impact Guide.

## Some quick data tips:



### **Make it visual**

By putting our data into charts and graphs it makes it much easier to spot trends and patterns. It makes the information easier to understand in much less time- vital for showing your team, your board, or your supporters.

Here's a quick guide to getting to grips with graphs



### **Different folks, different strokes**

How have different people reacted to the work you do? See what you can understand from your data about this. Are there any trends that will help you shape your work going forward? If men are responding better to your project than women, or if children over 10 years respond better than children under 10- this will all help steer the future of your work.



### **Look for the unexpected**

There might be unintended outcomes of our work, i.e., things we didn't see coming. For instance, if your work is all about improving the physical health of people in Bexley, you might notice that their mental health and feelings of well-being improve. This is fantastic and should be captured!



Read more about assessing data with Inspiring Impact [here](#).



Take a look at this data visualisation- a great example of how creative you can be with your data. I know this might seem a little high brow- but it's good to think about the ways you can make your data hit home.



Listen to a 30 minute webinar on [Measuring and Communicating Your Impact](#)

# PART 4- SHARING YOUR IMPACT

If you ask me, the best part of impact is sharing what you find out. A lot of charities forget to do this and the impact data, however impressive it may be, stays inside drawers or stuck in hard drives.

What is there to gain from sharing our impact data?

- **It helps people get to know you.** Whether they're thinking of working or volunteering with you, or considering donating to your organisation.
- **It builds trust.** Having thorough measures of your impact readily available shows that you're proud of what you do.
- **It gets attention.** Saying you have achieved something is more likely to be noticed than talking about what you want to do. Think about how many interviews we've seen of politicians avoiding talking about how to solve problems. Taking charge and realistically talking through how you're going to change lives is powerful and eye-catching.

## Ways to share impact data:



### Social Media

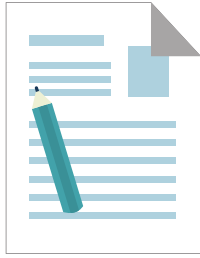
The biggest and most important way we can regularly talk to our supporters is through some kind of social media channel. Sharing impact data on here is fantastic because you can share the information in smaller doses, and you can repeat social media posts to save yourself time and effort.



### Annual/ Impact Reports

This is where we can talk fully about the difference we have made.

We can use visuals, we can use text, we can use case studies and quotes- all to give an in-depth insight into what you do and why you do it.



### **Funding Applications**

Here you can use impact to talk in a clear and precise way about what you do and the difference you make.

Rather than writing a wordy explanation of what you'd like to do, you can talk about what you have actually achieved. This is much more direct and makes a great impression on funders and is handy if you have word counts to think of!



### **All Kinds of Publicity Materials**

If you're talking about your organisation, why it's great or why it deserves support, you can always be using your impact data to show who you are.

Compare these two statements:

"We care deeply about the environment and work to stop pollution from local businesses"

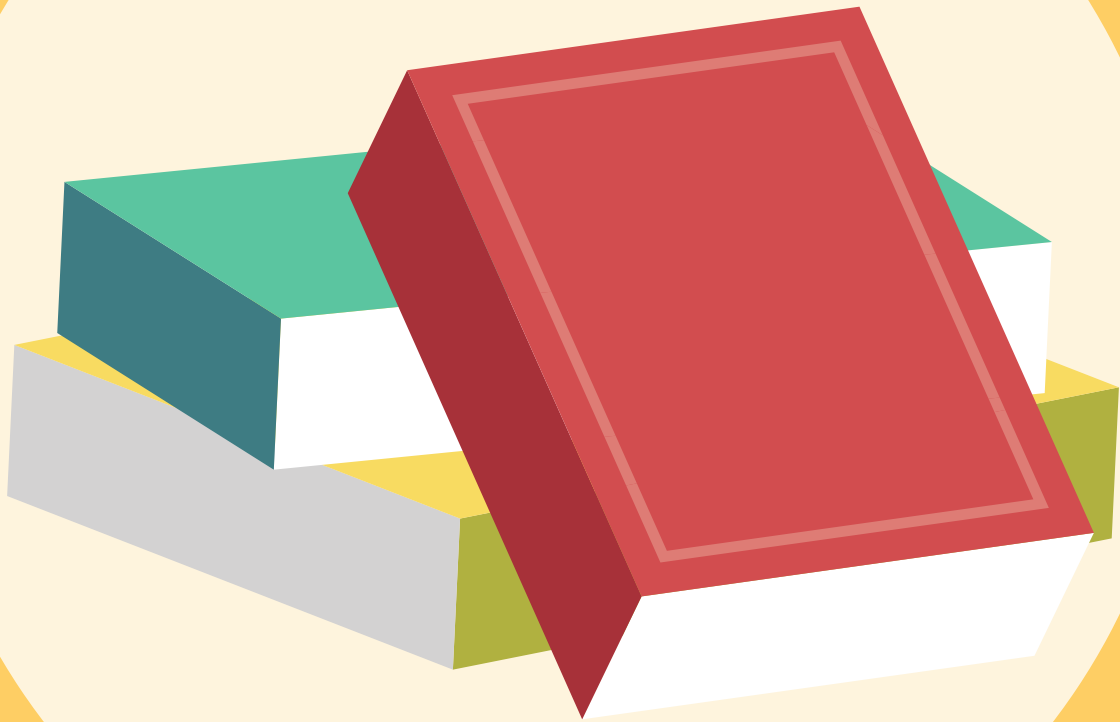
"We're care deeply about the environment and have reduced pollution from local businesses by 60%"

The second one sounds far more impressive because we can see what they really achieve.

Aside from funding applications, the rest of these ways to share impact data are opportunities for you to be as creative as you like.

Videos, visuals, sketches on tissues- anything goes. It's just important to remember to be yourself.

# The Extra Bits





# Social Media



The world has advanced a lot in the last decade or so, and we in the charity sector aren't immune to these changes. Where, in the past, someone might have found out about your organisation through a chat on the high street, now they're much more likely to know you through your online presence- especially your social media, but this isn't a bad thing!

Social media can be a wonderful tool for letting people in to your organisation like never before, reinvigorating your supporter base, and inspiring people to take action.

My tips for social media:

- Take a look at what other charities are doing. By following other charities and organisations you can get more familiar with social media and learn the kinds of things you might post.
- It's largely trial and error. It's a tricky thing to find your voice and reach your audience. Try new things, keep at it, and see what sticks.
- Don't use a voice that isn't yours. I've come across quite a few people that worry their English isn't good enough or they aren't great writers- don't worry! An authentic and honest voice is the most important thing you can bring to social media.



Make it Social's Guide to Social Media- not necessarily for beginners but a great guide to having a strong social media presence



Nonprofit Tech For Good- a website with tonnes of blogs and resources about social media



Charity Comms- A fantastic resource for comms support.

# Funding Applications



"Help! I've got a funding application due soon and I don't have any impact data!"- A problem I hear a lot! Here are some ways you can handle this:

- A snapshot survey: this is you writing and sending a big survey out to your beneficiaries to understand how they feel about you. It can be really insightful for a one-off survey, and because it's a one-off you can put a few more questions on it than you would normally.
- Case Studies: having good quotes and case studies show that you're having a positive effect on your beneficiaries and are really powerful. They're usually a little quicker to come by as you don't need a baseline or robust impact methods- it just means brainstorming some key questions. and giving some service users a call. Make sure you get your permissions sorted too!
- A plan: sometimes there'll be a question like 'How will you know you have achieved your outcomes'. It trips people up but basically this is your opportunity to give the impression that you know exactly the effect you will have and that you have your eye on the big picture. Remember what you read in the Planning Your Impact chapter!



# Thank you for reading!

Got a question or a comment on this guide? Email [shaan@bvsc.co.uk](mailto:shaan@bvsc.co.uk) to let me know your thoughts.