



British Heart Foundation Case Study

Introduction

The British Heart Foundation is a large national charity that works to prevent people from dying prematurely of heart disease. They do this through pioneering research, vital prevention activity and ensuring quality care and support for everyone living with heart disease.



The British Heart Foundation's Business Unit was set up in the Medical Division to monitor specific projects. However, managers felt they lacked an objective method of comparing the charity's wide range of activities. So the team asked the Charities Evaluation Services to help it develop a bespoke monitoring and evaluation framework.

Clare Mills, Head of the Business Unit, the team which works to improve the Organisation's performance talks about how the British Heart Foundation has benefited from working with Charities Evaluation Services.

A View on Consultancy Support

Developing the Framework

Consultants from Charities Evaluation Services supported us with workshops with staff, beneficiaries and healthcare professionals which helped us to break down our overall aim of playing a leading role in the fight against heart disease into three strategic aims - desired areas of change, such as improving care for people affected by heart disease. Corresponding to these aims were outcomes that projects should contribute to, such as changing people's behaviour to minimise their risk of getting heart disease.

Three strategic objectives - ways of achieving the strategic aims - were then defined. These were providing resources, funding external organisations and providing direct services.

Key aims were also developed for each of the strategic objectives, many of which - such as increasing people's knowledge of cardiovascular health - are applicable to all of the division's work. These were further boiled down into more practical key objectives, such as providing a central hub of information, and concrete outputs such as providing a heart helpline.

Further workshops generated a range of indicators for each output, relating to how well it achieved the desired outcomes.

It was great working with CES to achieve this because it was good to have external people looking at the issues with fresh eyes and expertise and they were incredibly well organised and easy to work with. They made something which some people find complicated very clear and made sure it was workable.

The Difference that it has made

Having a set of pre-defined indicators and outcomes that can be applied to all of the Division's projects has introduced more rigour to project planning and monitoring, and saved the division's 80 staff from having to duplicate work each time they set up a new project. A full-time evaluation manager helps them think through what to monitor and how to do it, typically with a mixture of qualitative and quantitative techniques.

The impact of the work will be better seen in the next couple of years because the projects that are using the framework are only just coming up for evaluation now.

It has certainly changed things internally in that it helped staff collect lessons and think more about what they want to get out of the project, how they will monitor it and how they will report on it at the beginning of the project rather than bolting it on the end. By providing a set of defined outcomes applicable across all our work, we hope that it will allow us to rigorously compare the relative success of different projects and support our resource management and future strategies for work in areas that will make the biggest difference.

The lasting impact is that it makes staff think about why they are doing things – to what end and whether they should change things rather than doing how they have always done them.

Many of our evaluations are done by external organisations, but staff have learnt to set these up themselves and run tenders for evaluations, so we have more robust processes in place.

Next Steps

The charity has an Evaluations Manager and the role is changing its remit to expand the work across the organisation providing evaluation expertise and support to staff across the organisation including advising on the design of individual frameworks for particular projects based on the models that Charities Evaluation Services

developed. The new post-holder will be working with managers at all stages of external and internal evaluation development, implementation and management, to extend the benefits of the work that CES did for us.

As we expand the work further, and also as a result of staff turnover, we are hoping to work with CES further, perhaps on refresher courses and integrating the work further across the organisation. We have certainly benefited from the support from CES so far in developing our monitoring and evaluation framework which will make a big difference to the way that we work, especially as we expand it further to other areas of our organisation.

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