



## Commissioning For Outcomes

Traditionally commissioning has been focussed on what goes into a service, rather than what comes out. Now, there is a growing emphasis on outcomes throughout the commissioning cycle.

Commissioning for outcomes involves:

- Shifting the focus from activities to results
- Moving away from counting the quantity or number of services given, to measuring the impact that those services have achieved
- Placing service users at the heart of service delivery: this is because outcomes demonstrate *what* is changing, and *how* this makes a difference, to the people benefiting from services

This involves being clear from the outset about the outcomes that

- as a service provider, you are seeking to achieve
- as a commissioner, you are seeking to purchase.

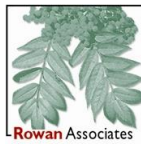
It's worth putting some time and thought into the process of setting outcomes, and knowing how you will assess them, early on in the commissioning or service planning process.

### Where to start?

Developing outcomes involves:

- Being clear about the rationale for each outcome. Ask yourself what you are aiming to change.
- Setting a baseline. This is information that allows you to assess the position at the start of the service/project so you can assess what changes. Without baseline data, it is very difficult to assess the impact of the work
- Being clear about the level at which the outcomes apply: individual, service level, or strategic.

Individual outcomes	"Mary" had some equipment delivered and installed in her home, so she can do her own cooking
Service level outcomes	The service supported (xx number of) service users to access mobility or safety equipment that enabled independent living
Strategic outcomes:	More people are able to remain living in their own homes, with decreasing levels of support



## Indicators

Indicators tell you how effective the service is, and show the progress that is being made towards the desired (or commissioned) outcomes. For example:

Outcome	Indicator
There are higher rates of tenancy sustainment	Tenants identify problems and seek help at an early stage
A greater sense of safety in the community [in the specified area]	People [in the specified area] are more willing to participate in community activities, and be out and about more on the estate
Children develop a more positive attitude to school	Children enjoy school more They are prepared to ask for help They have more friends
Older people have opportunities for healthy living activities	Service users visit the local community centre for tea dance sessions They have access to transport to get there

**Indicators must be measurable.** For example, if a youth project aims to increase self esteem, its indicators might include the following questions:

Indicator	Measure
How do you feel about being you	xx% felt better about themselves
How do you cope with stress	xx% coping better
Safe adult to turn to	xx% improvement (identified adult)
Making and keeping friends	xx% improvement

*Note that these are highly subjective measures, and will need very specific tools to gather clear and meaningful data.*

Commissioning for outcomes should be a creative process! Once the commissioner specifies the outcomes that are required, it is up to providers to design the services that will deliver. The role of the commissioners is then to keep a check on progress towards outcomes delivery, but the way in which services are delivered should no longer be their domain. In this way, outcomes based commissioning requires service providers to innovate and think differently about what they do and how they do it.

Contact us if you would like to discuss this or would like help in designing your indicators and measurement systems.

**Rowan Associates**  
[lori@rowanassociates.com](mailto:lori@rowanassociates.com)  
[www.rowanassociates.com](http://www.rowanassociates.com)  
 0117-954-1795: 07813-823175