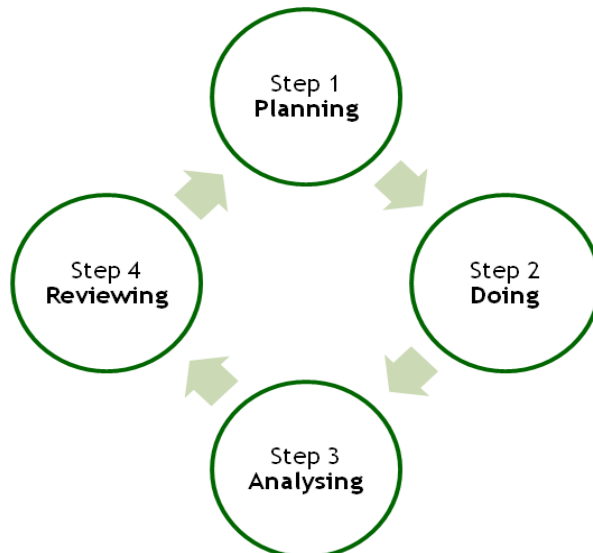




## Impact Assessment A brief step by step guide

An impact assessment is a 4 step process:



### Stage 1: Planning

The Planning stage is the time to ask “What are we measuring and why is this important?” It pays off to spend time at the start doing the planning. Impact assessment involves a level of commitment and you want to know it’ll be worth it.

- **The Scope:** Is this an assessment of one activity, a group of activities, or the whole organisation/everything we do?
- **Aims and Purpose** of the organisation or of the activity you are assessing. Ask yourselves what you are trying to achieve as an organisation. This will help you decide what impacts you are aiming to achieve. In turn, this will help you determine just what it is you need to assess.
- **Outcomes:** Once you are clear about your aims, you can decide your intended outcomes. Ask yourselves what changes you will see when you achieve your aims.
- **Your indicators of success:** Ask yourselves how you will know you have achieved your goals (or are working towards them). It can help to ask “what will it look like?”
- **The Tools:** How will you find out? Ask yourselves what questions you need to ask, and how you will do this.



## Practicalities at the Planning Stage:

It is important to plan the practical side of your assessment:

- Who will you ask? (Which service users?)
- How will you ask them? (What forms/tools? Paper based or on line? How will you distribute the forms, and collect them back? Will you chase returns?)
- When will you ask them? (What time scale for distributing and collecting the forms?)
  - Is this the right time to do it? What else is going on?
  - Will this exercise be an impossible additional burden at this time?
  - What will you stop doing, so you can do this now?
- How will you analyse the information? (Set up spread sheet? Add to existing Data Base? Have you set up a system for collecting the forms?)
- What will you do with the information - how will you feed back to service users, staff and Management Committee/Board? How will you communicate the results?

## Stage 2: Doing

This is when you gather the information. You will have worked through the process issues in the planning stage. At this point, you carry out your plan.

## Stage 3: Analysing

Once you have gathered the data, entered it onto your spread sheet/ data base (or other method) you have to analyse it. Otherwise, all you have is a pile of forms and a long list of seemingly random comments. Read through the comments, and identify the themes that emerge. Think about the findings in this thematic way.

Give yourself some thinking time to ask, and discuss the following questions:

- What does this tell us?
- What do we learn from this information?
- How will we use this to adapt and improve our services?



## Stage 4: Reviewing

What will you do with the information once you've analysed it?

Impact assessment is a continuous cycle for assessing, analysing and reviewing services - making changes and improvements based on your learning. The final stage involves planning for the future, based on the lessons from the past (or present) delivery of services.

### A note of encouragement

Impact Assessment is not as much work as it sounds. You probably do most of this already, but perhaps not in this systematic way. It pays dividends to spend a bit of time setting up an Impact Assessment system.

Users of our Impact Assessment systems say they benefit their planning and development, and have been used to raise finance by providing robust data that demonstrates the impact of their work. We can help you with all the stages of this process, and we can support you to develop your own, self-managed, systems.

Contact us if you would like to discuss this or for help.

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