# Assess Your Impact Robustness

# Overview

The Impact Robustness Scale consists of 9 levels. Each level is a measure of how rigorous your research and impact monitoring is. By figuring out where on the scale to place your own programme, you can see what the strengths and limitations of your monitoring and evaluation are, and you can can see what steps you need to take to move you M&E to the next level.

| 1 Anecdotes | 2 Case Studies | 3 Number of Activities & Attendee s | 4 Retrospective Surveys | 5 Subjective Before & After Surveys | 6 Observable Before & After Surveys | 7 Triangulation | 8 Longevity | 9 Comparison |

## Anecdotes  1

These provide some positive feedback about the programme which can be motivating for staff. Anecdotes are selective so they do little to tell you whether everyone is experiencing those positive effects of your programme.
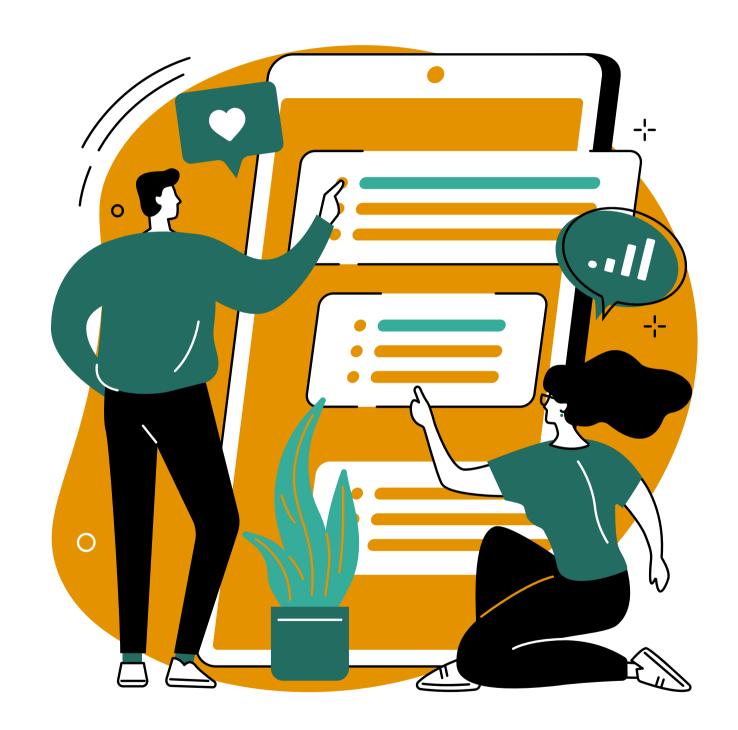
Example: "This programme fixed my marriage!"

## Case Studies  2

These are great tools for building empathy for your service users among potential supporters. However they are selective so give no indication as to whether the people in the case studies are the exception to the rule or the rule.

Example: "Bill and his partner had been married for five years but after medical complications with their son, their relationship started to decline…"

## 3   Number of Activities & Attendees

These enable you to create charts which can look impressive, especially if the numbers are big. But whilst they tell you how many people you reached, they do nothing to prove whether anything changed as a result of you reaching those people.

Example: 10 workshops held, 60 attendees in total

## 4   Retrospective Surveys

These tell you whether people think that the programme has had a positive effect but that is not the same as whether the programme did have a positive effect.

Example question: Has this programme increased the affection you show to your partner?

# Before & After Surveys 5

These are more robust because they give you a baseline (a result from everyone at the start) and then they allow you to show the distance travelled, e.g. "30% of people went from showing their partner no affection to showing their partner a lot of affection". However these are limited by each respondent's level of self-awareness; they might think that they are showing more affection, but how do you know if what they define as affection is the same as what you define as affection?

Example question: How much affection do you currently show to your partner?

# 6 Objective Questions

These get around the problem of definitions because they ask about observable actions which are unambiguous. When you ask a range of questions like this, they give you a more accurate and colourful picture of whether change is actually taking place. However given that the objective of the programme is not to increase hugs, but is to improve relationships; these questions fall short because they do not tell you whether the relationship has actually improved.

Example question: How many times did you hug your partner this week?

## 7  Before & After Surveys Aimed at Beneficiary's Community

This question gets to the heart of what your programme is working to achieve. Asking this question at the beginning and the end of the programme allows you to calculate the distance travelled. E.g. 80% of people felt that the state of their relationship improved.

Example question to the partner of the person on the programme: To what extent do you agree with this statement: I am pleased with the state of my relationship? Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree

## Track the Longterm Effect  8

Track the lasting impact of your programme by checking in with your beneficiaries 6 months after the end of the programme. You can gather even better data by checking in with them several times over a longer period. This deeper research will be valuable and persuasive to commissioners and funders.

Example question asked one year later: On a scale of 1 to 10 how pleased are you with your relationship?
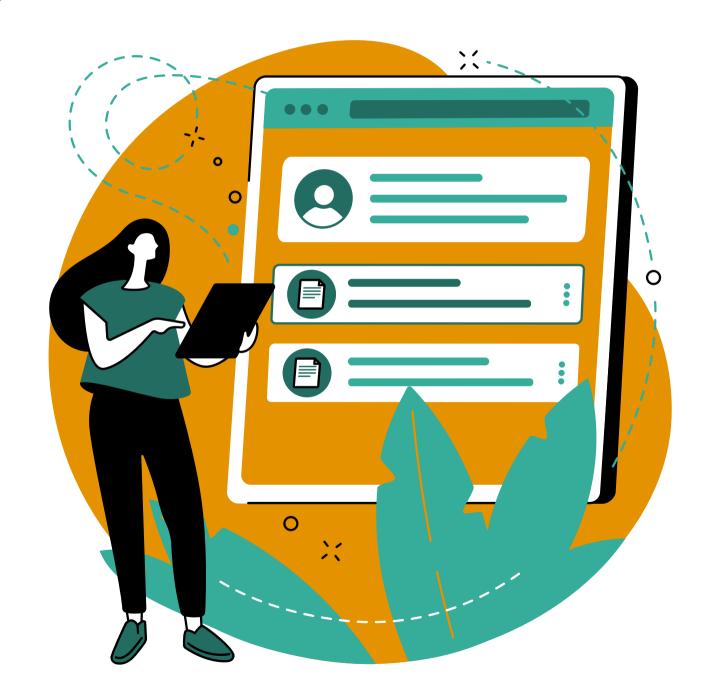
# Set a Baseline

Compare your programme's results with what happens when people do not receive the same support. This will allow you to say that, for example, 80% of people on your programme felt that their relationship improved, whereas only 25% of people who were not participating in the programme felt that their relationship improved over the same period. This helps you demonstrate, with a degree of scientific rigour, the impact that your programme makes.

Example question to ask your participants and a group of people not on your programme at the start and end of the programme:
To what extent do you agree with this statement: I am pleased with the state of my relationship? Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree

# Self Evaluation

**1** What method(s) of M&E are you using for this programme?

**2** Which level(s) does this method relate to?

**3** Are relevant lower levels also being fulfilled? If not, what steps can be taken to fill the gaps?

**4** What steps can be taken to move the programme's M&E to the next level?

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
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