



Measuring Success in Advocacy Practice

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Bases covered

Bigger picture of success

Critical context of measuring success

Defining success in advocacy practice

Measuring success is measuring failure

Meaningful measuring

Measuring methodology

Practical considerations

Advocacy-partner voice

Reporting

A bit about me...

Worked in Independent Advocacy for 18 years

Done all the jobs

Advocacy Management for 5 years

Management and Leadership quals, Masters Degree Community Development



Introduction

Understanding whether our services are having a positive impact or not is key to principled provision. Both providers and funders spend time devising ways to evaluate and measure success.

But what is success? Who decides what success looks like? **How do independent advocacy providers ensure that ‘success’ meaningfully reflects community need and sector values?**

It is essential that advocacy managers think critically about these questions, remain independent with integrity and, at the same time, enable funders to see that they are getting value for money and that contractual obligations are met.



Zoom-out Context



The broader context of success



Service success isn't one thing. It's many aspects of delivery, process and outcomes coming together to improve lives.

“When we co produced with communities, focussed on outcomes, and using feedback and data on quality and impact as strong evidence of what works, what's needed and what must be improved, commissioning is a vital component of improvement, change and value for money”

Richardson and Pitt 2023



Critical Caveat



“Contemporary community development, as both the agent and subject of modernization, has become seriously undermined.... There is a danger that this leaves community workers stuck in the middle...”

“Empowerment measures often disempower.... Democracy is a code word for conformity”

“As [community development] becomes reconfigured through policy; new areas of relative autonomy need to be identified”

Mae Shaw, 2011



Case study

A large contract is being put out for tender. The contract value is around £90,000 a year. Before the process begins advocacy providers are invited to look at the draft service specification and ask questions.

The service specification asks for the provision of IPA for any adult, plus the provision of IMCA services to represent people with a Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards Authorisation in place.



Mature and trustful partnerships

“by using existing knowledge about the community supports that are helping people thrive, commissioning activity can support those enterprises, not overburdening them with bureaucracy, but supporting innovation; this involves ensuring contracts and specifications reflect a mature relationship based on trust, are proportionate and prioritise capacity on vital activities.”



Defining Success

Who decides what success looks like?

Services

Value for money?

Reduction in pressure
on statutory services?

Statutory duties met?

Advocacy providers

Does my service meet
advocacy standards?

Are we making a
positive difference to
individuals?

Are we contributing to
social change?

Community

How am I feeling?

Is my life better?

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The success dialectic

Measuring success will show off service strengths and expose flaws, gaps and failures.

This is good

- Collecting evidence of quality of work and outcomes
- Collecting evidence that shows what could be improved



Measuring with Meaning



Information Management Systems

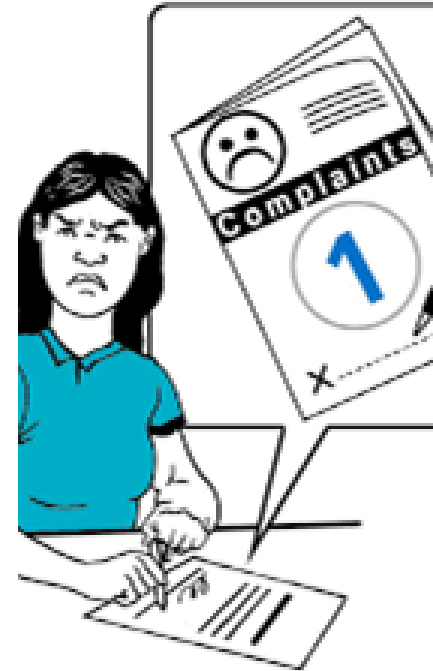


This section focuses on measuring and reporting. It assumes that that an advocacy service uses an information management system to record key information. This would be a database system of some sort and be able to record

- Referral information
- Advocacy-partner data
- Allocation information
- Case work details
- Case outcomes

What factors might affect what we measure?

- Specific to type of advocacy
- Capturing a range of data
- What is measurable and sensible
- Take into account abilities of advocacy-partners
- Sophistication of data management systems
- Quality or relationship with commissioners

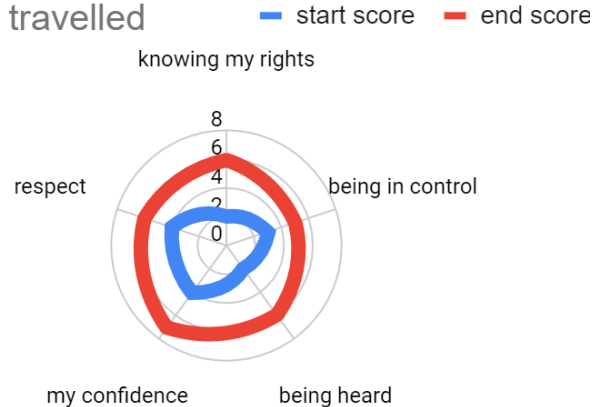


A range of measures

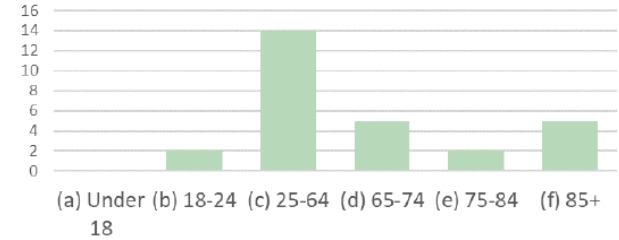
Case study 2

IPA, non-instructed representation through safeguarding process, open 3 months. This older person was in residential care and had no family member taking care of their finances. Concerns had been raised by the home because fees were not paid, and no money was being provided for clothing, personal hygiene or other purchases

Journey travelled



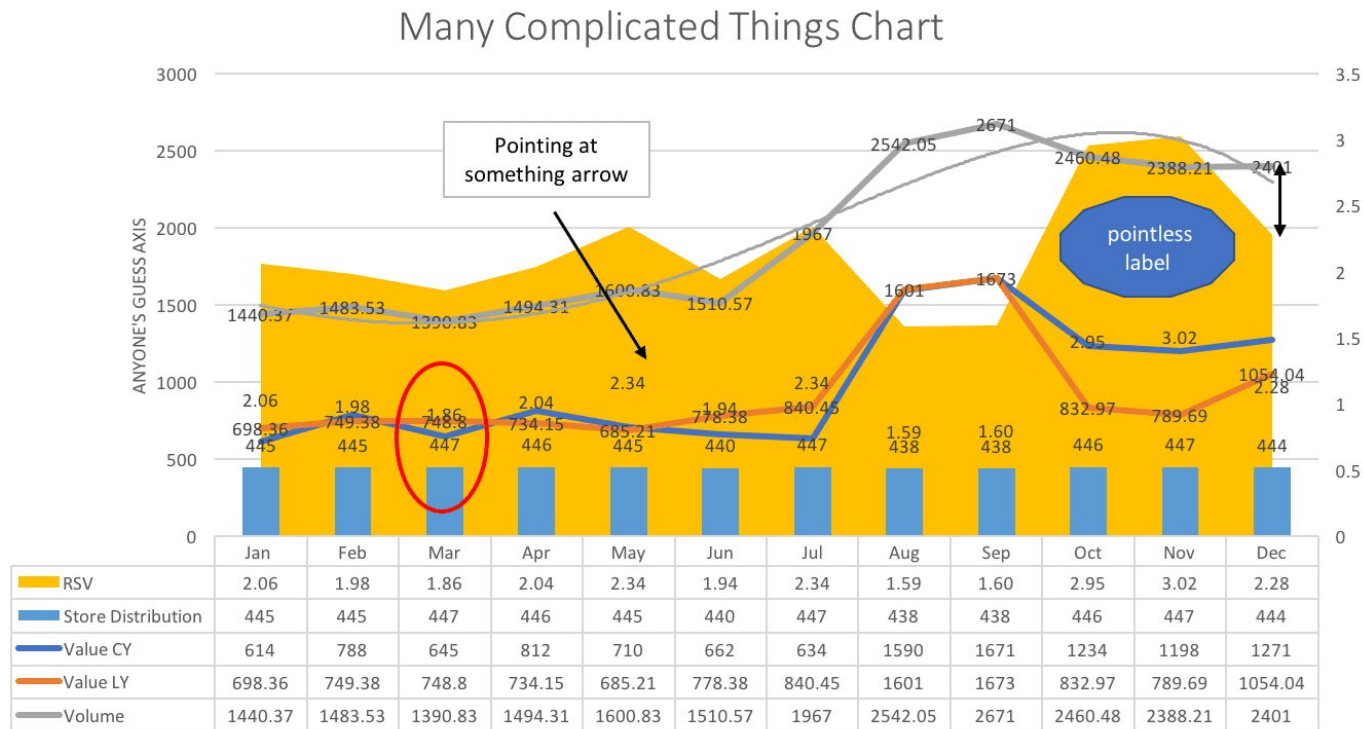
By age



referrals by advocacy input

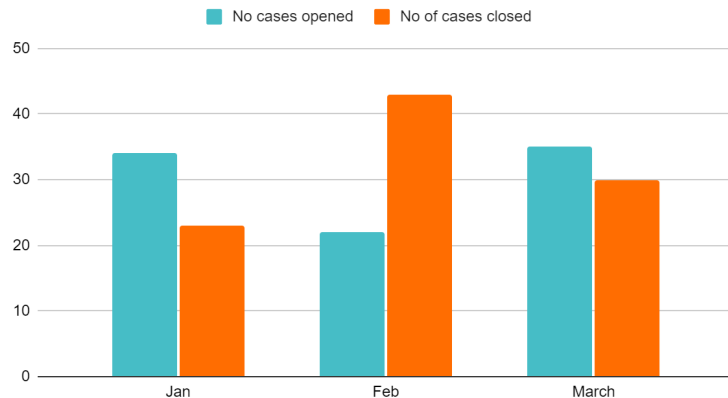
referrals by advocacy input		
IPA		24
Non IPA		14
Paid RPR		37

A Measuring Monster

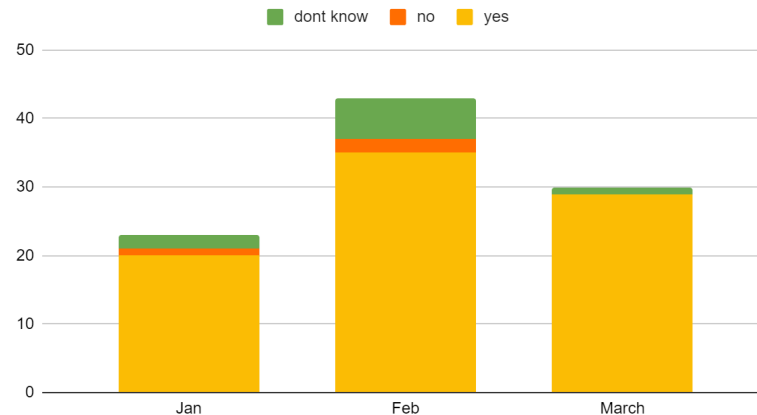


Meaningful measures

No cases opened and No of cases closed



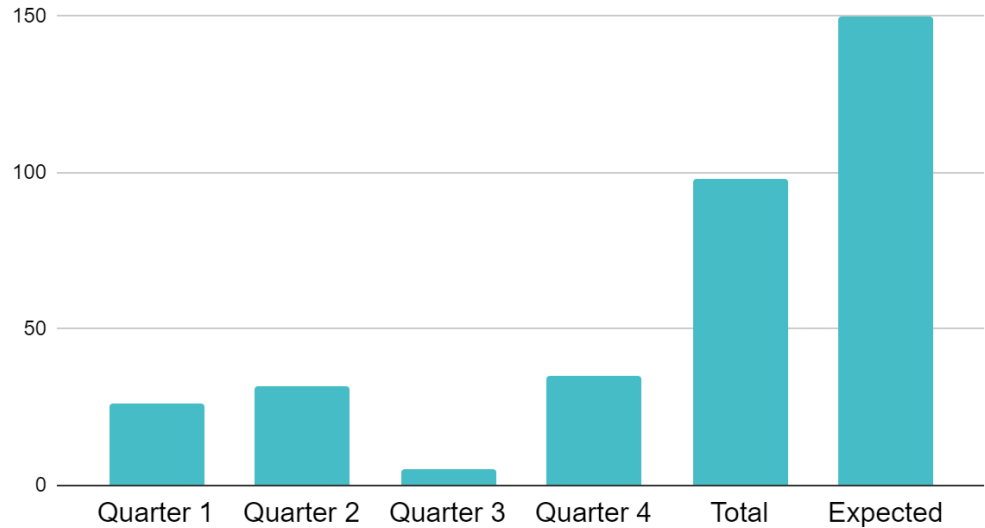
Feeling heard outcomes for cases closed



Quantitative measurements

- E & D data
- Referral numbers
- Referral sources
- Types of issue
- Types of advocacy
- Case length

Referral numbers



Subjective measures

- Case outcomes
- Distance travelled
- Satisfaction Survey

Journey travelled

— start score — end score



person led- taking instruction from the person, putting them first

AdvocacyinAction

#AAW21



Advocacy
Awareness
week

1st - 7th November 2021

Qualitative information

Story:

Nat is a young woman and since the pandemic has felt excluded from meetings to discuss her son's care.

Meetings were being held online and Nat could not participate because she did not have broadband. She had no way of knowing when meetings were due to take place, no way of taking part and did not how to solve this problem.

The advocate supported Nat to write a letter to her son's social worker. Nat explained how not being involved in decisions was making her feel. She laid out clearly what she wanted to happen to change this.

The result was that invitations were given to her in person when she had contact with her son. Nat is now able to join by phone and take part in the decision-making process. She feels more in control and more able to be a good mum. Nat said that she didn't think her letter would have been listened to if an advocate hadn't been involved.

- Open feedback
- Complaints
- Case studies
- Stakeholder engagement

Accessibility

Because advocacy providers inevitably work with people with a wide range of abilities and skills, a lot of attention should be given to accessibility and how to be inclusive of non-instructed Advocacy-partners

- Language choice
- Easy read formats
- Paper vs digital
- Support to answer questions
- Advocate discretion
- Referrer or family feedback



HOW DO YOU RATE OUR SERVICE





Reporting with Feeling

Story, story, story

Story telling in reporting shifts the narrative back to the provider and the advocacy-partner community.

*“An analysis of power helps us understand how the deeply personal is profoundly political”
(Ledwith and Springett)*

*“Little stories link voice to narrative, ‘by taking the perspective of an individual seriously; that is, the individual is situated in particular circumstances in all their complexity’ (Griffiths, 2003” in
Ledwith and Springett, p107)*

“At the start of this work, the parent felt like they were “losing everything” and that people were working against them. I knew i would need to help them build trust with services, but at the same time would need to make sure services could be trusted to work more respectfully with this person. This felt like a lot of responsibility. I did get services on board with this, they understood what I was telling them about her experiences and they worked hard to solve communication barriers and reset relationships. By the end of my work, she was confidently advocating for herself and her child. She has maintained her relationship with her child and improved their relationship with their solicitor and with services in general.”

Story for empowerment not disempowerment

We need to be mindful that stories, being deeply personal, should be told and re-told ethically. Bringing story telling into reporting requires considerations and forward planning:

Space for telling a story needs to be built into the advocacy relationship

Advocacy-partners and advocates need clear information about the purpose of documenting their story- consent is king

Some people won't have the ability to tell their story- how can we include them?

Some people will not want their stories told in a formal report- that's fine

Stories need to be in a place where they are easily accessible for the person writing reports- IMS consideration.

Take control of your audience

- Commissioners and contract managers
- Heads of service
- Cllrs / Board Members
- Your advocacy team
- Other agents of change





Truth to Power

Objective reporting

Be mindful of objective, fact based data and analysis when alluding to the failures of others

The right decision maker / agent of change

Be bold- as an independent service, take it where it needs to go

Transparency

Be honest. Let everyone know if a report is being shared more widely and let them know why, build in opportunity for discussion, feedback, follow up.

Follow up

Wherever possible, insist on a follow up meeting



Design

Presentation can be muddled, meh, or masterful.

Aim for the full Wow factor

- Boring reports are forgettable
- Confusing reports have no impact
- Long reports don't get read

Thank you.

References:

Richardson M., Pitts J., 2023, Valuing Community Led Support (CLS) The economic case for strengths based, community led support, National Development Team for inclusion. Published online at:

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Shaw M., 2011, Stuck in the middle? Community development, community engagement and the dangerous business of learning for democracy, Community Development Journal Vol 46 No S2 April 2011 pp. ii128– ii146, Oxford University Press, London

Ledwith M., Springett J., 2015, Participatory Practice, community-based action for transformative change, The Policy Press, Bristol