Evaluation and Learning for Uniting the Movement

Updating our approach
November 2021
Developing this approach

• During 2021, our evaluation team spoke to colleagues and partners to understand their experiences of evaluation and learning, and to find out how they think our approach should change or evolve in the future.

• As well as working with colleagues and partners to reflect on our experiences, we’ve drawn on published evidence and good practice from other sectors.

• Through this process, we identified three shared ambitions for evaluation and learning and a core set of principles for how we’d like to work.

• We’ll work with colleagues and partners to develop and implement work to help embed this approach.

• The approach is not fixed, we’ll keep working to review and improve it.
Why we need an updated approach

• Uniting the Movement is about unlocking the advantages of sport and physical activity for everyone, and it identifies high quality data, insight and Learning as a crucial catalyst for this.

• It introduces a new way of thinking about the complex challenge of addressing inequalities in physical activity that requires us all to work together to achieve our collective purpose.

• Our approach to evaluation and learning must reflect and support the Uniting the Movement vision of how we want to work and what we want to achieve.

• To be successful, we must generate evidence from evaluation to learn about what’s shaping and influencing physical activity in different contexts, and use this knowledge to guide our action.

• We can do this by working together with partners to build on existing strengths, continuing to improve our collective evaluation and learning capacity and capability.
What we mean by evaluation and learning

The concepts of **evaluation** and **learning** can be understood and defined in many different ways. As a starting point, this resource defines them as:

**Evaluation**

The purposeful collection and use of data and information to understand, improve and show the value of a specific piece of work.

**Learning**

The various ways we generate, reflect on and apply the knowledge and insight gained from evaluation and other sources.

We hope these definitions can themselves generate useful discussion and reflection about the role of evaluation and learning.
How evaluation and learning can help us

Evaluation and learning about what’s shaping and influencing physical activity in different contexts can help us navigate the complex work required to enable everyone to benefit from sport and physical activity.

This goes far beyond asking if an intervention is working, to explore a broad range of questions that are useful for decision making. Here are just some of the ways evaluation and learning can support the ambitions of Uniting the Movement:

**Tackling inequalities in physical activity**
- Listening and responding to new audiences; tracking diversity and inclusion; using what we learned during the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic.

**Showing why moving matters**
- Identifying changes to health, wellbeing, community, economy and other outcomes.

**Supporting innovation and new ways of working**
- Testing, explaining and learning from new ideas.

**Building the movement**
- Identifying and exploring the shifts in partnerships and connections.

**Meeting people where they’re at**
- Working with partners and communities to co-evaluate the success and value of investments; providing data of value to our partners.

**Being the change**
- Maximising the value of evaluation and learning.
A shared commitment to evaluation and learning

The ambitions and principles set out in these slides are shared by the colleagues and partners that helped develop this approach.

Collectively, we think this approach will give us the best chance of delivering on the vision of Uniting the Movement.

Success will only be possible by working together to improve our collective evaluation and learning capacity and capability.

Whatever our role, we all have a responsibility to support the approach e.g. by reflecting on our experiences, valuing and using evidence, bringing in diverse voices, sharing information with others, and acting on what we learn.

This shared commitment means that while our evaluation team will lead on some of the ideas presented here, others will lead on different parts of the work.
What we’ve heard

And the direction we’d like to head in
Our ambitions and how we want to work

- Embed evaluation and learning
- How we evaluate
- How we use what we learn

- Inclusive and collaborative
- Live, iterative, flexible
- Open, honest, curious
- Visible and valuable
Our ambitions
Embedding evaluation and learning

Working together to build the culture, leadership, capacity, capability and connections needed to make evaluation and learning a part of everything we do.
Suggestions for how we can embed evaluation and learning

• **Galvanise evaluation** – work together to build a strong common purpose, language, tone and ownership of evaluation and learning.

• **Build capacity and capability** – provide funding, tools and resources to boost evaluation and learning capacity and capability, including for smaller organisations.

• **Funding, time and other resources** – provide time, funding, practical support and encouragement for evaluation and learning for our specific awards/investments, and where appropriate make funding conditional on good levels of engagement with evaluation and learning.
Improving how we evaluate – methods, tools and approaches

Adopting an approach that’s tailored to context and is meaningful and valuable to partners and communities.

Balanced against a desire for greater consistency of approach.
Suggestions for improving how we evaluate – approaches, methods and tools

**Approaches**

- **Place-based system change work** – develop approaches, methods and tools to support place-based and system change evaluation, not just ‘delivery’ projects and programmes.

- **Learning from and through evaluation** – move away from a narrow focus on targets and KPIs towards a culture of shared accountability and learning.

- **Demonstrating the benefits** – produce accurate, high quality reporting with a broad understanding of value, including finding ways to demonstrate the collective impact of our work.

- **Technology and innovation** – use technology and innovation to help improve evaluation and learning.
Improving how we evaluate continued...

Broadening our methods and analysis

- **Bespoke advice** – provide bespoke technical advice on methods and analysis.
- **Mixed methods** – promote a mix of methods depending on context, partner and stakeholder needs, including more ‘light-touch’ approaches where appropriate.
- **Qualitative methods** – use more qualitative research methods to build a greater depth of understanding about how and why things are happening.
- **Longitudinal methods** – carry out more longitudinal work to assess development and impact over the longer term.

Tools and frameworks

- **Learning tools** – develop tools to support learning and reflection.
- **Data collection and reporting tools** – create tools to support greater consistency in how we collect, structure and report data.
- **Our internal processes** – clarify the division of responsibilities between the evaluation team and programme/functional teams.
Improving how we use what we learn from evaluation

Having effective mechanisms to interpret, share and use what we learn from evaluation and other sources.
Suggestions for improving how we use what we learn from evaluation

Supporting effective learning

- **Prioritise learning** – develop leadership, motivation and organisational processes to support evaluation and learning.
- **Learning objectives** – set learning objectives for shared strategic priorities as well as specific investments to help us organise what we’ve already learnt and identify what else we need to find out.
- **Conversations and relationships** – promote and facilitate reflection and interaction within and across systems locally and nationally to discuss, connect, exchange and develop our learning.
- **Learning into action** – focus on turning what we learn into actionable insight, acting on it ourselves and getting it to other people and partners who can use it.

Having effective mechanisms to interpret, share and use what we learn from evaluation and other sources.
Improving how we use what we learn from evaluation continued...

Publishing and sharing what we learn about what’s shaping and influencing physical activity in different contexts, so we can all use this knowledge to guide our action.

- **Open** – make evaluation and learning content available to all colleagues and partners in a single open location.
- **Thematic** – share learning and reporting by theme as well as by programme, to help people find relevant information.
- **Connected** – facilitate learning by exploring and connecting findings and discussion to other learning and reporting, rather than considering it in isolation.
- **Consistent** – where relevant for understanding collective impact, create tools and processes to support a consistent approach to reporting and using data for partners across different initiatives.
- **Accessible** – create clear and engaging outputs designed for the audience, making better use of creative and innovative formats.
- **Timely** – share learning proactively, early and regularly as it begins to emerge.
How we want to work
Inclusive and collaborative

We want to move away from centrally determined ‘top-down’ approaches and towards greater community, partner and stakeholder involvement throughout the evaluation and learning process, welcoming diversity of thought and reducing inequalities in evaluation.
Live, iterative and flexible

We want to move away from purely retrospective evaluation towards approaches that support regular and timely reflection, learning and adaptation.

As well as adapting delivery, this means reviewing and updating evaluation and learning processes as we go.
Open, honest and curious

We want to move away from closed relationships towards more open and trusting interactions where we share and learn from success and failure alike.

We don’t have all the answers but we’ll keep asking questions, reflecting and learning from ourselves and others, and improving and developing as we go.
Visible and valuable

We want to move away from thinking of evaluation as something that has to be done for other people, towards recognising it as an essential, embedded and valued part of how we work across the sector.

This is about working together to champion the importance and use of evaluation and learning.
What next?
What next?

November 2021
• Publish the shared approach

November 2021 onwards
• Design and implementation of work packages to embed the approach
• Ongoing review and improvement of the approach.