Learning from the evaluation of the THRIVE toolkit

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Purpose of the evaluation

The evaluation of the THRIVE Toolkit aimed to:

- explore the effectiveness of the THRIVE toolkit
- make recommendations for improvement where appropriate, and
- identify key lessons for Spirit 2012 (and other funders) around the use of digital resources.

Limitations

In our original proposal for the research, we offered an approach based on accessing users of the Toolkit through a survey. Our proposal was to use the Kirkpatrick Model for evaluation:

Level 1 - Reaction (did they like it?)
Level 2 – Learning (did they learn the subject?)
Level 3 – Behaviour (have they been able to apply the learning in practice?)
Level 4 – Results (what happened as a result of the change in practice?)

However, after commissioning, we discovered that there was no mechanism to identify users (users do not register to get access to the Toolkit). As a result, we attempted to disseminate it through the established networks of organisations involved in development of the Toolkit and through the Physical Activity Champions. The response rate to the survey was very low (13).

Sources of data

Due to the limitations of the data, we have amended the scope and method for the evaluation. The analysis in this report is based on four sources of data:

- Google analytics which provides data on number of views, number of users, duration of sessions etc
- A survey of users which was disseminated in March 2018.
- Interviews with a sample of the strategic partners involved in the development of the THRIVE toolkit
- Interviews with a sample of projects funded by SPIRIT 2012 which were asked to incorporate the learning from the THRIVE Toolkit into their delivery.

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Use of the THRIVE Toolkit

The Thrive Toolkit was launched in August 2017.

In this section we compare the usage of the Toolkit in the post-launch period (August – December 2017) with the usage in a similar time period one year later (August - December 2018).

It should be noted that the time periods are not exactly the same, but are similar enough to give an indication of the pattern of usage of the THRIVE Toolkit.

The analytics demonstrate that the use of the Toolkit has reduced when we compare the post launch period (August to December 2017) with the similar period in 2018.

The number of users has fallen from **1,741** users in August-December 2017 to **995** in August-December 2018.

The percentage of those users who are accessing the toolkit from Scotland has dropped from 57% of total users in the post-launch period (**1,004** in 2017) to only 39% of users (**385** users) in 2018.

There is also a reduction in the number of sessions per user and the average number of pages viewed. The average duration of a session fell from 4 minutes and 13 seconds (August-December 2017) to 3 minutes and 9 seconds (August-December 2018).

	August 2017 to December 2017	August 2018 to December 2018
Number of users	1,741	995
Number of sessions	2,728	1,297
Number of sessions per user	1.56	1.30
Number of page views[1]	9,959	3,618
Number of unique page views[2]	6,443	2,468
Average number of page views per session	3.65	2.79
The average duration of a session	4 minutes and 13 seconds.	3 minutes and 9 seconds

Profile of the Toolkit users

In group involved in developing the THRIVE Toolkit took the decision to make the Toolkit as accessible as possible. Users do not have to register to view content. As a result, it is not possible to track who the users are.

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[1] Page views counts every time a page is viewed, but if for example, the same user views the same page five times as part of a single session, this counts a five views. However, this is obviously a different pattern of usage to five users viewing that page independently.

[2] The number of unique page views eliminates the factor of multiple views of the same page within a single session. If a user views the same page more than once in a session, this will only count as a single unique page view. For this reason, unique views can be understood as user sessions per page, with each session potentially representing multiple views of the page but a minimum of one view per session.

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The Google analytics can identify which country users are from, but no further information is available.

The data in the table below shows that in the first period August to December 2017, 57% of all users were in Scotland. **1,004** users from Scotland accessed the Toolkit.

In the second period August to December 2018, only 39% of the users were in Scotland, meaning that **385** users from Scotland accessed the Toolkit during that period.

	August to December 2017	August to December 2018
Total number of users	1,741	995
Number of users in **Scotland**	1,004	385
Number of users in Scotland as % of total number of users	57%	39%

What did we learn about the profile of users from the survey?
The number of respondents to the survey was very small (13 responses of which 5 were incomplete) and therefore did not provide much evidence about the profile of users.

Only one of the respondents reported that s/he was directly responsible for delivering activities to get people more active. The rest of the respondents were responsible for:
- The management or development of services aimed at getting more people active
- Promoting physical activity and supporting other organisations to deliver activities aimed at getting more people active.

Of the 13 who did responded:
- seven were from local authorities/leisure trusts
- three from community sports hubs
- two from national governing bodies and
- one was from a national third sector organisation

This suggests that the primary users of the Toolkit at this stage of development (the survey was carried out in March 2018) of the toolkit were those involved in programme development rather than delivery. This is not surprising given the timescale of the evaluation - the initial phase of promotional activity focused on promoting the toolkit to strategic stakeholders

How are people engaging with the Toolkit?
Which content are users accessing?
The table below shows the number of unique page views of the THTIVE Toolkit in each period.

In both periods, over 45% of the total number were views of the homepage and the 'about' page. The number of views of the content pages in each period was:
- 3,558 in the period August to December 2017
- 1,376 in the period August to December 2018

The content page with the maximum number of views in both periods was **'Who are the people we are trying to reach?'**. It received **303** views in the first six month period (August-December 2017) and **101** views in the August to December 2018.

The next most popular page in both periods was '**What type of activities might work for our group'**. It received 220 views in the first six month period and 94 views in the August to December 2018.

All other pages received less than 200 views in the August to December 2017 period and less than 100 views in the August to December 2018 period.

Number of page views	August 2017 to December 2017	August 2018 to December 2018
Total number of page views	**6,443**	**2,468**
Of which:		
Number of views of the Homepage	2,326 (36%)	909 (37%)
Number of views of the 'About' page	559 (9%)	183 (7%)
Number of views of content pages (excluding homepage/about)	3,558	1,376
Number of views: Who are the people we are trying to reach?	303 (5%)	101(4%)
Number of views: What type of activities might work for our group?	220 (3%)	96 (4%)

Although the number of respondents was very small, it is interesting to note that survey respondents rated the 'Golden Nuggets' and the 'practical tools and template' as the most useful elements of the toolkit; the videos were rated lowest in terms of usefulness.

Learning about the Toolkit from the SEF Projects
We interviewed a sample of the Sporting Equality Fund (SEF) Projects, a portfolio of projects funded by SPIRIT 2012 to engage inactive girls/young women in physical activity. There were 14 projects within the portfolio.

SEF projects were encouraged to engage with the THRIVE toolkit and to use the learning to influence their practice. Specifically, in the application form, each project was asked to identify how it would use the learning from THRIVE to inform practice.

> "**How do you plan to incorporate learning from the *Thrive* toolkit www.thrivetoolkit.org.uk in the delivery of your project? (150 words)"**

While all of the successful applicants provided responses at the point of application, interviews with the projects revealed that only a few projects used the THRIVE Toolkit after the application stage.

Issues affecting engagement with the Toolkit?

1. Some projects identified the PLAN/DO/REVIEW message as the key approach being promoted by the Toolkit: some felt that their existing practice already reflected this approach and did not feel the need to engage further.

    "We have used the Plan/Do/Review format in the planning and delivery phase, but haven't extended our use of the toolkit beyond that".

2. In some organisations, the person who had drafted the application was not involved in any way in the delivery, so neither the original response to the question about use of the Toolkit (in the application) nor the commitment to use of the Toolkit to inform practice had been passed down to delivery staff.

3. Some of the organisations who were funded through SEF were national organisations. These organisations were using SEF funding to expand delivery of an existing programme to enable the organisation increase engagement with girls/young women. In both cases, the organisations had established programmes and approaches and SEF funding was enabling them to 'do more of what they already do'. The capacity to influence practice in these circumstances is very low, so the Toolkit was of little value/interest to these organisations.

Learning for SPIRIT of 2012

Improving fund focus
It is important to note that for both of the organisations cited in point 3 above, the primary aim of the organisations was not to improve levels of physical activity per se. Both organisations use physical activity as a hook to engage people in other activity or involve people in physical activity as part of a journey toward other outcomes (e.g. employability). Increasing levels of physical activity is part of a **process**, but is not a core **outcome** for these organisations, as demonstrated in the quote below.

> "[X organisation] works with people with complex issues. The issue of whether people are 'inactive/active' is part of a complex range of issues and challenges in their lives. So you can't look at physical activity in isolation to the other things going on in their lives."

Asking the right questions
While the application process attempted to encourage projects to reflect on the learning from the Toolkit and consider how they could use the learning in practice, the majority of the responses did not indicate a commitment to using the learning. Many of the responses confirmed that the projects were already using PLAN/DO/REVIEW or other approaches resources such as the Golden Nuggets.

In future, SPIRIT of 2012 might wish to consider more focused questions:
- Tell us how you will go about engaging with inactive people (describe the processes you use and/or the other organisations you will work with to engage with inactive people)
- Tell us how you will engage inactive people in planning the activities that you intend to deliver

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How was the Toolkit used by SEF Projects?
Some projects could provide examples of how they had used the Toolkit, but these were the minority. Examples of use were:
- inducting new members of staff,
- as checklist in the development process, and
- learning practical ideas on how to record data.

One project which had experienced unforeseen problems in engaging with the target client group was referred to the Toolkit by the Fund Manager, and found some useful lessons to address the challenge.

There were also examples of practice in the delivery of SEF projects which exemplify the approaches which are central to the Toolkit. For example project delivered by KA Leisure (which was one of the organisations involved in the development of the Toolkit) was working with a cohort of girls who persistently didn't go to PE classes at school. Their response was:
- To ask inactive girls why they don't attend gym lessons
  - many were concerned about the effect on their appearance - for example their makeup and hair becoming messy, were anxious about being seen by boys, and complained that Techers didn't give them long enough to get changed and to fix their hair after PE
- In response a number of changes were made to the PE sessions :
  - girl only sessions
  - more time to change
  - new activities suggested by the girls
  - some low intensity activities that girls could participate in even without their kit.
- As a result, more girls started to bring PE kit and to participate.

- The worker also developed a hair/beauty session drop-in sessions during lunch-time at school.
  - the sessions gave the girls advice on hairstyles that would keep their hair neat while in PE, but its key purpose was to start to engage with inactive girls, and to build relationships with them.
  - having built relationships with the girls, the worker started to introduce them to a range of different activities, and has had success in getting this group of girls to try out a range of physical activities.

Issues and challenges in using the Toolkit
The research identified a number of issues and challenges in relation to the use of the Toolkit.

Lack of awareness of the product
There was a promotional campaign associated with the launch of the Toolkit, but no systematic marketing plan to promote the Toolkit to practitioners after the launch period.

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Appropriateness of content for the targeted users
Interviews/survey respondents who had responsibility for managing/developing community based activity could see the relevance of the toolkit for new projects and or volunteers.

> **"For CSH's [Community Sports Hubs] the current content is very useful and comprehensive, especially from a planning perspective to help clubs first consider this type of practice."**

However, while professional staff found the content of the toolkit useful/easy to use, some respondents reported that the content may be challenging for delivery staff and volunteers to use and suggested more support might be required to help staff at the operational level to cascade the use of the toolkit to club level. Other respondents commented that while the content was good, they felt that front-line workers/volunteers may need help to navigate their way around the toolkit.

Spirit of 2012 has responded and is currently designing a programme of training aimed at supporting projects/organisations to be able to learn from the toolkit and use the learning in their own practice.

People don't see the need or relevance of the learning
(People don't know what they don't know!)
Organisations involved in the delivery of physical activity projects - the Sporting Equality Fund portfolio - were encouraged to engage with the THRIVE toolkit and to use the learning to influence their practice. However, few of the projects actively engaged with the Toolkit.

The key barriers to using the Toolkit was that they didn't see the need or relevance to their delivery.
- They thought they were already doing it.
- They didn't recognise a need until they had a problem.

Based on a very small sample, there is a suggestion that the 'Plan/Do/Review' message is perhaps too generic. Some of the projects appeared to 'read' the key learning outcome from of the Toolkit as the development of a Plan/Do/Review approach, but were less clear about the specific purpose of the learning i.e. learning about what works when helping inactive people become active.

Conclusions

In developing conclusions on the use and impact if the THRIVE Toolkit, we must reiterate that we had limited access to users of the Toolkit, so the data we have is limited. The following conclusions are therefore based on the limited level of information available at this point.

Impact at the operational level
There is not enough evidence at this time to understand if the Toolkit is being used by those at the operational level (delivery staff). However, we do know that the number of users of the Toolkit and the amount of time that people are spending viewing it have fallen in the last year.

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Impact at the strategic level

Some of the interviewees who were already operating in the 'getting the inactive more active' arena reported that the THRIVE Toolkit provides a "crystallisation of the approach" which has helped to raise awareness of the physical activity/inactivity agenda but also promote understanding of the practical approaches to getting more people active, which in turn builds the credibility of the approaches.

The fact that the Toolkit was developed by practitioners and based on their own learning builds its credibility as a source.

As such the development of the Toolkit has helped to raise awareness and credibility of the physical activity agenda with other stakeholders.

The role of Spirit of 2012 in the development of the Toolkit has also positioned Spirit of 2012 as a leader in the physical activity arena.

So, although there has been limited impact of the toolkit at practitioner level, stakeholders see the toolkit as a product that holds 'a body of credible evidence about the approach' and recognise its importance at the strategic level in promoting culture change.

Summary of learning

Impact of the THRIVE Toolkit

The process of developing the THRIVE Toolkit has been significant even although we do not have evidence that the Toolkit is being used by practitioners.

The THRIVE product appears to have captured an understanding of the approach to engaging the inactive.

- The development process was collaborative and has helped to build collaboration and understanding across the sector.
- THRIVE is recognised as evidence based approach - it was developed by the sector for the sector - and therefore has credibility with the sector, with funders and strategic stakeholders.

The development of the THRIVE toolkit has therefore been significant at the strategic level and has contributed to the wider objective of building momentum of the 'increasing physical activity/sport for change' agendas and building a better understanding of 'how' to deliver on these agendas.

Learning about developing online toolkits

In the last decade there has been an explosion in the development of open on-line learning courses and toolkits. The accessibility of the technology makes e-learning a highly accessible format for sharing knowledge, especially for dispersed learners/workforces.

While there are clear benefits of creating on-line resources, there are also significant cost involved.

In this section we extrapolate some of the learning from the development of the THRIVE Toolkit, alongside learning from other research on the development of e-learning with a

view to provide some key lessons for other funders that may be considering the development of on-line toolkits and resources.

Clarify/refine your audience
The THRIVE toolkit was aimed at practitioners, but it was perhaps less clear if it was aimed at development staff (as a checklist for development), at delivery staff and or volunteers. Each will have different levels of existing skills/knowledge, will have different needs and will use the resource differently.

Consider how the toolkit will be used
Think about how the toolkit will be used. Will it be used, for example, to support face-to-face training delivered by development staff, or will it be used as a stand-alone tool which individuals will access on their own with no other support for learning. This will influence the content and design.

Clarity around the learning outcomes
Feedback on the THRIVE toolkit suggested that it was a valuable resource for 'demonstrating' a particular approach. However, there may have been some confusion about the key learning outcomes that the THRIVE Toolkit aimed to deliver, with some learners focusing on the 'Plan/Do/Review message rather than the learning about how to engage with inactive people.

Content
Although the content of the THRIVE Toolkit was considered to be highly credible and relevant, there appeared to be challenges for some users in 'finding' the key messages.
- **Structure the content around the learning outcomes**
  Good practice advice suggests structuring the content around the key learning outcomes.

- **Make content interactive**
  Learning theory also highlights the importance of engaging learners and enabling them to 'practice' their new skills. The use of 'quizzes' and other interactive formats gives learners the opportunity to rehearse the use of newly acquired skills and knowledge and to and reflect on what they have learned.

Ongoing marketing strategy
The learning from the development of the THRIVE suggests that without on-going marketing, the use of the toolkit is not sustained. On-going marketing is required to drive people to the toolkit.

Build in the capacity to review the impact of the toolkit
A clear lesson from the development of the THRIVE Toolkit is the importance of building in mechanisms to allow collection of data to review the use and evaluate the impact of the resource. Developers should consider at the build stage how to collect data to answer the key questions :
- who is using the toolkit (have you reached the target market),
- how are users using the site (which bits are they using/which are they not using),
- are users learning, and
- are users using that learning to inform their practice.

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References

Effective Practice in a Digital Age A guide to technology-enhanced learning and teaching, JISC, 2007 https://repository.jisc.ac.uk/6790/1/effectivepracticedigitalage.pdf