

Revised approach to the qualitative evaluation design for the National Evaluation

Opportunities for partnerships

We have revised our evaluation design, taking into account the significant feedback we have received from areas. The new approach seeks to capitalise on existing learning, avoid duplication and minimise the research burden on partnerships and participants, ensuring we fully utilise existing local evaluation evidence and do not duplicate activities taking place at the local level. The national evaluation is acting to complement existing evidence with primary evaluation activities to generate comparative learning across the programme on key themes.

By engaging with the national qualitative evaluation, partnerships can generate programme level learning that compares and contrasts approaches across the programme, ensuring the programme is more than a sum of its parts, and is able to inform national policy debates and developments on significant topics. This thematic work will be directly informed by the Ageing Better strategic/ambition group, the knowledge and learning subgroups, and the strategic stakeholder connections we are making. This will ensure that collectively we can demonstrate the broadest impacts achieved by the partnerships, telling the fullest story of the successes and challenges of the programme on themes which resonate externally and which will support the programme's sustainability and legacy ambitions.

Products

This will be achieved by creating products to help local programmes with stakeholder influencing, contributing to national strategy discussions, and adding to the evidence base. Products the national evaluation team will produce include:

- **Thematic policy papers:** designed to engage stakeholders, contextualise partnership evidence and stimulate sector debates.
- **Thematic meta-evaluations:** bringing together evidence from local evaluation activity to develop a strong collective voice and lift partnership messages to external audiences, demonstrating the learning the programme offers aligned to sector and policy developments.
- **Snap-shot (one-off) and longitudinal case studies:** providing insights from a variety of perspectives (programme leads, delivery staff, volunteers, participants), giving a direct voice to local experts to share their experiences and results with policy makers and practitioners, to inform sector developments.
- **Filmed case studies:** high quality visual accounts, illustrating Ageing Better impacts on a thematic basis, involving partners and practitioners, for dissemination at conferences and events.

Partnership responsibilities

The national evaluation team regularly work with partnerships, and support volunteers and participants, to contribute to learning outputs. We are keen to work with Ageing Better partnerships to ensure volunteers and participants can contribute to the national evaluation.

The recent review of the national evaluation demonstrated that there was an insufficient balance between the level of qualitative and quantitative outputs and in order to build the most influential picture of the programme and partnerships an increase in qualitative resources was agreed. We are really excited that you will all be involved to help us develop programme level learning to share with the ageing sector!

We are therefore asking partnerships to:

- **Stage One: Complete quarterly calls for evidence on specific themes agreed with the Fund as a result of the Ageing Better Ambition and Learning programme activity.** Partnerships will be invited to reflect on a selected theme each quarter, using a ‘test and learn’ approach – identifying what has and hasn’t worked, and why. The calls for evidence provide opportunities for partnerships to contribute to programme learning and the production of meta-evaluation evidence, which can be shared with the wider ageing sector, and potentially inform practice and policy developments. The calls for evidence will firstly focus on bringing together existing evidence from local evaluation or partnership learning documents to develop programme learning. It will also provide an opportunity for partnerships to feedback learning that is not captured in formal local evaluation outputs. For example, local partnerships and their evaluators may have shared learning with sector stakeholders/ regional players’, gaining insights which could inform programme messaging. The results will help plan the focus of thematic work and programme evaluation activities, ensuring that primary research conducted by the national evaluation team does not duplicate local evaluation activity.
- **Stage Two: Participate in quarterly keep-in-touch telephone catch-ups between local evaluators, partnership leads and the national evaluation team,** focusing on the qualitative evaluation programme, and building on the productive relationships forged at the recent scoping visits. This will help to keep us clear on what you are producing and when so that we can build your local learning into our national approach.
- **Stage Three: Host snap-shot case study visits, showcasing learning on core themes.** Some of these case studies will become longitudinal overtime, as themes are revisited and updated. Not all areas will be asked to take part in case studies for all themes. Selection will be determined by our national ambition and learning strategy and the key messages the programme wishes to share. Partnerships will be invited to volunteer to host case studies, to fit around existing local evaluation practice and avoid overburdening any partnerships. All primary research for these case studies will be undertaken by the national evaluation team.
- **Stage Four: Contribute to a filmed case study on a selected theme,** enabling project stakeholders and participants to tell their story in their own words. Only one partnership will be involved in the filmed case study for each theme. Selection will be determined by our national ambition and learning strategy and the key messages the programme wishes to share, and the capacity of local partnerships to engage in this activity.
- **Stage Five: Programme learning will be explored and discussed at annual reflections meetings and evaluation workshops** which we will set up, inviting programme teams and local evaluators to attend. These sessions will enable us to share learning across all partnerships.

Ageing Better programme evaluation team.