Guidelines on the recording and evaluation of street work:

Outcomes of an evaluation of street work recording and evaluation practices.

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1.0 Background.

Most street workers are confident that their work helps combat poverty, social exclusion and discrimination, and that it supports the informal and non-formal education of those they work with. This confidence extends to a belief that street work makes a positive contribution to achieving equality and supports the participation of client groups in the decisions made by social and political institutions, particularly when these decisions substantially affect these groups. Others make claims that street work reduces crime and the harmful effects of drug and alcohol misuse, and so on. And yet, in a world that pays ever closer attention to the activities of street workers, does an increasingly wide range of 'stakeholders' share this confidence? Are these stakeholders equally convinced street work has the effects workers claim? Furthermore, are these effects the ones these stakeholders actually want to see in the first place?

Much hangs on the process of evaluation: what we take it to mean, and its relationship with the aims of the work – however and by whomever these are defined. We should be aware then that the perspectives of different stakeholders can be, and often are, conflicting. Those in the street, and street

workers themselves, may have a different view of the work compared to their managers or politicians and policy makers, or the increasingly diverse funders of street work.

All this informs a context, across Europe and beyond, in which politicians and policy makers, and these stakeholders, demand more and more evidence that street work is meeting needs and that workers demonstrate this in a variety ways, including making evident that their practice represents 'value for money'.

Therein, the quantitative and qualitative evaluation of street work has become probably the most pressing issue facing street work today. In addition, there are ever-increasing demands from governments and other agencies that services are accountable for the money invested in them and able to provide robust arguments as to why the work should be financially supported. This tendency is exacerbated by the prevalence of austerity politics that seek to mitigate budget deficits in many European countries, and a culture of short-term contracting and commissioning in which street work services experience a perpetual struggle to identify funding for their work. Add to this the reality that non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are increasingly identified as preferred providers of services, wherein they often obtain high percentages of their resources from government sources but, in so-doing, put at risk their autonomy through co-option and incorporation into government-driven policy agendas. Hence there are fewer voices contesting wider ideological paradigms and the constructions of 'evaluation' that flow from them. Professional control over the theory and practice of evaluation is a particular casualty, and the case for a more nuanced evidence base of the value of the work becomes increasingly difficult to substantiate. In sum, evaluation appears re-cast from without rather than from within, and in ways that create extraordinary dilemmas for street work.

This has contributed to a situation in which, to varying degrees, politicians across Europe increasingly express concerns, and even doubts, that social practices such as street work, and youth and vulnerable persons' services more generally, can offer this evidence. A particular example from the UK symbolises this new political reality: in 2011, the Chair of the Government Education Select Committee enquiry into services for young people[1] publicly harangued witnesses from the youth work sector with the following statement:

"It does seem an extraordinary failure that you can't make a better fist at explaining the difference you make."

[1] http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmeduc/744/744i.pdf

Such a comment will resonate with many street workers given their experiences in recent years. Certainly, these sentiments have been the topic of considerable discussion within *Dynamo International's* European network, and were a particular focus of the network's Pilot Group meeting in Pamplona, Spain, in 2010. There, the rise and effect of quantitative monitoring systems was discussed. Whilst it was concluded the concept of evaluation is reasonably contestable, it became clear that there is a widespread acknowledgement that a good deal more needs to be done to consolidate arguments in favour of street work. Effective evaluation systems are an obvious and essential element of the response needed, but they must take into account these new realities. The debate within the network catalysed a proposal to examine, in detail, these realities and analyse them, with a view to producing guidelines on the recording and evaluation of street work. This document attempts to do that and aspires to being at least part of a progressive response to the challenges faced.

2.0 Context.

A much more rigorous understanding of quantitative and qualitative approaches to evaluation is clearly needed, and is a reasonable marriage of the two. In the first instance, street workers must revisit their understandings of what actually constitutes 'evaluation'; clarity of definition, meaning and understanding is essential, and is the best of all places to start if the process of evaluation is to be made 'fit for purpose' in the context thus described. Beyond this, there are perhaps the ironic but nonetheless important questions of 'what is the value of evaluation' and 'why is it needed?'

A particular concern emanating from discussions in the network was the lack of a contemporary socio-political analysis of the changing regime in which street work is located, and how this has affected evaluation practices. Anecdotally, there was widespread disquiet that the use of some monitoring and evaluation systems were being insisted upon in order to manipulate practice for political ends – principally, to make it more oriented toward a narrower set of policy agendas (such as crime prevention and employability). Raising awareness within the profession of this possibility was judged of upmost importance. A specific issue was the need to reflect on and critically respond to the emergent language associated with evaluation, in which words such as 'review', 'appraisal', 'audit', 'quality assurance', 'standards', 'outputs', 'outcomes', 'performance indicators', 'performance-rating', and the like, were increasingly prevalent, just as they have come to dominate the wider policy landscape. Furthermore, many workers report a marked increase in external demands for statistical data-gathering, a shift they see as eroding the qualitative and ethical dimensions of evaluation and

representative of a shift toward greater surveillance and control of their work and those they work with. Finally, there is the sense that these expectations lead to a culture in which the work falls foul of problematic behaviours, focussing on clients that are easier to work with in order to meet targets set by funders. The lenses of gaming theory and performativity appear to resonate as they shed light on the abuse of evaluation such that it provides the types of evidence demanded – rather than an authentic picture of what is happening and the effect of actions taken (for good and for bad).

Despite all this, there appears to have been little resistance from within the profession; recent patterns of evaluation in street work seem to have mirrored these wider developments. Street workers have tended to take a pragmatic view, in trying to use models of evaluation that fit with the dominant system of new public management and despite their reservations that these systems may not be sympathetic to the subtleties of their practice. Notwithstanding, many street workers appear unconvinced that the models of evaluation they are asked to use are, indeed, 'fit for purpose'. Many say they use these models simply "because they have to" (given the demands of managers and funders). A few even express fears at the repercussions they might face if they don't work in this way. It should be noted however that some workers have also developed their own *ad hoc* models to try to get something that they believe works for them and their clients. What's intimated here is that this kind of evaluation is sometimes done independent of organisational systems, and in the workers own time; it takes place despite of, rather than because of, many of the evaluation systems used.

On the other hand, many data-gathering systems are criticised, at least in the rhetoric of some street workers, and most often because they believe they are unsympathetic to their work. There may be some substance in this as, on closer inspection, we find that few of the systems used have been developed specifically for street work. Rather, they tend to come from other social practices, such as formal and legalistic versions of social work. These systems are often very different to the few that street workers have created for themselves; they tend to bring in perspectives considered alien to street work but also mechanisms that fail to capture the realities and subtleties of the practice. They are often overly bureaucratic and emphasise recording the details of interventions principally to ensure the protection of both client and worker. Furthermore, they may compromise street work ethics, such as those relating to confidentiality and anonymity, in that data is often collected without the consent of those worked with – something that can put at risk the informal relationships that street workers rely on. Many models are imported from other professional cultures on the basis that they will (it is claimed) improve efficiency, but it is clear that they can actually inhibit effectiveness and contradict ethical frameworks – street workers worry that the ends might not justify the means

and that the behaviours demanded of them [to evaluate in these ways] might erode their ethical principles further.

A central concern has been the perceived inability of standardised evaluation systems to reflect the diversities of a practice aimed at identifying and meeting the needs of people who often have complex and chaotic lives. In this respect, the concept of 'evidence-based practice' (EBP) has come under scrutiny; does this disregards complexity, inhibit flexibility, and promote a 'one-size fits all' package of how to do street work? In its stead, might workers need to consider more the value of 'practice-based evidence', and learn how to make explicit and share tacit knowledge in order that their evaluations capture these subtleties?

The challenge, it seems, is to create an evaluation system than meets these varying demands and one which is accepted as credible and 'fit for purpose' by all stakeholders. In order to do this a review of the different mechanisms used in the evaluation of street work is needed. How do we judge what is valuable; what is useful; and what is quantifiable? What of the evaluation practices that might have negative effects; and how do we identify, challenge, and hopefully eliminate, them?

Whilst qualitative evaluation is generally accepted as essential in street work, it's important to recognise also that quantitative analysis can support street work. This should impel us to explore its merits more rigorously: what data should we collect, and why; and in what ways can this benefit those we work with? To consider the 'should' is to restate the importance of an ethical paradigm. For example, is there some data we shouldn't collect, or shouldn't share with others, perhaps because, in so doing, we are contradicting a duty of care and putting at risk the relationships on which street work is founded? And yet there are the demands of an era in which communicating and promoting the work is deemed more and more important, particularly in engaging with the wider public and policy makers in order that street work is better understood and recognised. Given this, might we need to consider also what types of data support this promotion in the sense of advancing the work in this indirect way, and, at the same time, protect those ethics?

At the heart of this analysis is a desire to reclaim what evaluation appears to mean in an historical sense; therein, it is about values and what we consider to be good, and bad, about the things we do as street workers. Equally, evaluation can be regarded as an endeavour designed to question whether practice lives out the values that inform it and becomes a process respectful of what those worked

with consider to be valuable themselves. Can then evaluation be re-imagined as a process that puts values at its heart, but also one that takes account of both qualitative and quantitative dimensions?

The thesis here is that street work needs a model of evaluation that really works, is easy to use and not too time-consuming, avoids "the danger of drowning in a sea of measurement" (as one contributor put it), and employs the best of both the quantitative and qualitative worlds. It is anticipated that such a model would benefit also the wider world of youth, community and social work, on the basis that street-based youth work so often 'shines a light' on many of the pressing issues that affect people-oriented services.

Stage 1.

3.0 The research process.

The research project had several partners, details of which can be found in section 9.0. The UK Federation for Detached Youth Work (FDYW) was the lead partner. The FDYW coordinated the research and managed a small team who undertook the research activities.

An historical gathering needs to be mentioned, as this confirmed interest in and the need for this work. This, two-day, meeting took place in London in 2011. Participants included representatives of the FDYW, and a small group of academics, researchers and trainers from across Europe, all of whom had particular interests in street work and evaluation. At this, the FDYW introduced findings of an initial survey conducted amongst its members as to how they evaluated their practice. This study focussed on the types of recordings and evaluation practices detached youth workers in the UK used and included the mapping of registration practices (the data collection activities undertaken by workers to evidence their contacts and on-going relationships with young people).

The survey asked questions relating to the following themes:

- Basic data on the organisation
- Methods of recording and evaluation and the focus of this recording (information collected)
- Time invested in these processes

- Ethical issues, such as confidentiality, data protection, and its accessibility to young people

4.0 The findings of this study were presented and discussed. The following salient features emerged:

4.1 Changing purposes; the reductive effect of new accountabilities and an outcomes culture: from evaluation to recording and monitoring.

All respondents thought recording and evaluation were important things to do. A myriad of reasons were given for integrating these processes into professional practice, most positive, some less so. But there was also a significant and notable ambivalence - and even scepticism - about the rationale behind recording and evaluation. The comments made are worth looking at for this reason. They included the assertions that "evaluation and monitoring is only useful when there is a clearly defined purpose and reasons for the gathering of information in the first place", and "it is a system and practice that constantly needs to be endorsed, and its importance reinforced. There is also the need to understand its usefulness and how it should inform our work practice."

Rather than being statements many would deem obvious, these comments appear to express a lack of confidence in knowing why recording and evaluation are important, and doubt about the authenticity of the processes of evaluation many street workers are expected to use. They appear testament to new realities; evaluation has become something different from that many workers previously understood. The sense is that many street workers see the process of evaluation as having 'lost its way'. There seems a conflict between the understandings many gained through their professional training, and a new world in which evaluation takes place simply because 'the system demands it'. Some at least invoke a history in which evaluation is, primarily, a process of reflection aimed at service improvement: "The data it produces allows us to make intelligent decisions about how to develop our work." But other voices expressed concerns about a context in which attitudes to evaluation are changing; they describe a reductive process in which evaluation has become little more than a process of data collection, recording and monitoring.

The fact that so many pose critical questions about what they are asked to record, and why they are asked to collect it, suggests evaluation, for them, is a deeply problematic process. Furthermore, others ask similarly profound questions about whether or not they [as street-based youth workers] should

be collecting the information they do in the first place. Most significantly, a number of voices doubt whether the evaluation they undertake actually benefits those they work with. One street-based youth worker stated:

"I have concerns about the things we are told we need to record about the young people and whether this information is relevant to our role as youth workers or translates into better outcomes for the young people we are working with."

So, the questions posed generally relate to the value of the process of evaluation. Conversely, many other comments express no such concerns. This is likely indicative of a more profound departure: that the critical, adversarial, cultures of street work are (in the round) less and less in evidence. Here, the comments state evaluation *is* about recording and monitoring (and implicitly then no more). This needs elucidating; the historical narrative of evaluation as a process of valuing appears now to be almost absent. It seems reasonable to speculate then that these workers have not been exposed to a wider account of evaluation, whether in professional or in-service training or perhaps because they have had little or no training or education about evaluation in the first place.

Ball (1995) theorises that the latter is more likely the case, as an active market now exists for staff who are "unencumbered by reflection", this being a consequence of lack of exposure to the professional training regimes that encourage it. Their value to the employer is that they are more readily available, cheaper and, in the political framework that Ball explores, less questioning – which makes them easier to manage and dictate to. In tandem, there is evidence (Tiffany, 2007) that some training institutions are adopting these new orientations to advance their own economic interest. So we must question more widely those processes that lead to the understanding (or lack of understanding) of evaluation that now appears commonplace.

How then do workers come to conceptualise evaluation and its purposes? Perhaps the greatest influence comes from the paradigm of new managerialism that appears to dominate street work and so many other social practices today. It is loaded with a language deliberately designed to render impossible anything other than a market-oriented view of these practices (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2001). It fosters a culture in which particular language forms come to dominate, without encouraging any problematisation of these terms. We see wholesale confusion and a range of misunderstandings as to the terms used – and implicitly then evaluation itself. This culture has a peculiarly reductive nature also. We can see this in the apparently simple challenge of saying what 'evaluation' means.

Most often the response is that it is about "recording". But even here there is little evidence of a widespread understanding of what that term means. Whereas an academic definition of 'recording' might describe a process of setting down, typically in writing, forms of evidence to substantiate, authenticate and account for particular actions (thereby making this material accessible to others, and especially those in officialdom) it is most often employed by the respondents to this survey as a catch-all phrase for data collection. The fact that significant numbers of workers do not know where and to whom the data they collect goes (nor what it is used for) corroborates the finding that evaluation has become detached from a value-based framework (or at least one that they would typically subscribe to). This reductive culture is further evidenced in that the data mentioned usually takes the form of numbers (the products of quantitative data collection) and rarely encompasses a more imaginative account of sounds, images, observations, interviews, case studies, descriptive accounts, and so on.

The same can be said of monitoring. Rather than this being conceptualised as a means by which awareness of social realities can be garnered and, similarly, the effect of interventions understood, 'monitoring' has become little more than a euphemism for data collection. Some accounts do see recording and evaluation in ways other than the systematic collection of tangible indicators (such as the numbers participating in a course, or accessing a training programme). Here we see reference to observation as a mechanism by which evaluation can occur. But the critical appreciation that all this has ethical dimensions is rare. For example, there are few accounts of the observation of young people being understood as a form of surveillance (however reasonable).

Following Wacquant's analysis, we might view this shift to a language of evaluation which includes myriad references to 'inputs', 'outputs', 'outcomes', 'indicators' etc. as symptomatic of increased external control (or 'governance'). Likewise, usage does not constitute evidence of understanding; misuse and misunderstanding is commonplace.

Now let's look at the specific rationale offered by respondents when asked about the purpose of evaluation. A range of responses were obtained:

4.2 Promotion: 'demonstrating effect'.

To varying degrees, street workers have always sought to promote their work. In part, at least, this has been based on a commitment to draw attention to the social realities faced by those they work with, thereby sensitising local communities, the wider public and political systems to the needs of

marginalised groups. '*Rendre visible l'invisible*' ('to make visible the invisible') has been a rallying cry for many. But in the current context of widespread cuts to public services, workers find themselves having to speak up for their work not just in this political sense but also in order to convince present and potential funders that their work is worth investing in in the first place. Coupled with this are new demands to provide evidence of the impact of street work. Therein, 'demonstrating success' has become, for many, the highest priority. Typically, we heard:

"Without proper, thorough, and robust recordings, evaluation and evidencing of detached work I can't show its success, strengths and unique abilities."

"The work needs to be recorded. If we want to be seen as a profession, we have to provide evidence of the work we deliver and the outcomes for young people."

"It is essential we record [our] work professionally to show its full impact and the importance of our work. If we consider ourselves professionals, which is what we need to do."

We see how this rationale is underpinned by a language of needing to "show" [funders] in order to be "seen" [as professionals]. Doing so is now commonly invoked as *the* central rationale *for* recording and evaluating the work. Doubtless this is connected (at least in part) to workers' fear for their jobs and their concerns about the potential demise of the services they provide. But it is also substantively informed by the political context that dominates these and other social practices, in which these new accountabilities have come to the fore.

Here we see a shift away from a culture that emphasised professional accountability for the quality of the work, as evidenced by the value placed on that work by those the street worker works with. In its stead, workers are increasingly asked to demonstrate that their work leads to a range of pre-determined outcomes which often come in the form of targets to be reached – targets which are established independently of (external to) the relationship between the street worker and their client.

This appears problematic at several levels, almost all of which have ethical dimensions. In the first instance, there are profound questions about whether street work has become detached from its historical value base and a practice in which the objectives sought are determined through a dialogue between the workers and those they work with. In must be asked then: if not a 'socio-educational'

practice, what is the purpose of this new regime if not to increase the surveillance and control of, not just the 'clients' of street work but the workers themselves?

Thereafter, there is the issue of whether a culture of working toward pre-determined outcomes influences particular behaviours in pursuit of these outcomes – in a manner Foucault (2008) describes as *performativity* – those adopted to meet the demands of a performance-based system. Performative behaviours, Foucault reminds us, can be aberrant and unethical. For example, some work, if publicised, can increase the risk of intimidation and prejudice against particular marginalised groups. So, in the sense of 'showing', this might not always be the right thing to do. Then there is the phenomena of being, at best, disingenuous in reporting what goes on; some workers may feel pressured to offer 'evidence' that often bears only a tenuous link to reality. Further, difficult cases and moral panics can be hyped up to stimulate funders' interest in the work. In this sense, evaluation might also have become a performance being played out.

4.3 The collection, storage and accessibility of information. Responses, resistance and new ethical questions.

Street workers appear to be under increasing pressure to collect ever-more detailed information about those they work with; the survey shows that this can be intense and difficult to resist.

"I feel under pressure because now we are doing a pilot scheme and each young person we come into contact with will have a file about them."

Whilst this adds to their daily tasks, workers appear ambivalent to any wider dimensions. For example, it's rare they question the rationale connecting data collection with evaluation. Certainly, there is a good deal of commentary on the practical challenges of collecting data. Typically, this speaks of difficulties in collecting data on individual young people, especially when they are part of a social group. The workers resist collecting it for fear of creating negative social dynamics. This means workers do not necessarily have information on young people. At other times they choose not to collect data because they see this as counter-productive to achieving their aims. However, as we will see, this becomes increasingly untenable. This contrasts with a history in which workers recorded 'pseudo' names, or nicknames, on the basis of observing young people rather than asking them direct questions (at least in the early stages of working with young people). But working in this way, they say, is increasingly rejected by managers. Workers fear this more formal collection of data

compromises their capacity to build trust-based relationships in which young people volunteer information, and believe this can undermine the effectiveness of their practice. Some street workers have actively resisted the demands of managers to provide this information:

"As a project we have resisted some of the pressure from our employers to record more details about young people, such as putting on a young person's record that they have signed up to a condom scheme or taken a chlamydia test. So far we have got away with this but the future looks like we will be moving towards more targeted work – or redundancy! So this may change."

This is a significant and representative statement that illustrates not only the pressure workers are under (and some of their attempts to resist it) but also the impact of structural forces. Here we see a shift in the policy agenda toward more targeted work, which means, in practice, that policy makers increasingly identify street workers as those who will intervene with specified individuals (and collect data on them) rather than engaging with them in the context of their social groups and communities. This can be described as a process of 'individualisation'.

The significance of data collection then becomes apparent and noteworthy. With no little irony, it is the data that street workers collect, about specific individuals, that then goes on to inform the rationale for targeting these individuals. There are further dilemmas; we should remember that street work services are designed in such a way that they can work with those who other services struggle to contact and engage. This is why street workers are often viewed as 'practitioners with access'; they may be the only ones capable of working with some people *and* collecting data on them. And yet, if data collection is intrusive and obsessive, it can come at a price: in disabling the very system for acquiring it in the first place. In this context, we might reflect on recent developments in Finland where an unprecedented investment in street work has occurred. This is to be celebrated but it is no doubt significant that these workers are being asked to collect a good deal of data about those they are in contact with. Might similar tensions materialise there?

Further interesting ethical questions emerge: what would happen to the risk-based analyses (informed by the process of individualisation that appears so antithetical to *social* street work) if workers decided not to cooperate? How would the monitoring of individuals be done? Hence, new demands for data constitute new challenges for the street worker, with the resulting ethical dilemmas and ethical conflicts becoming their biggest concern. For example, street-based youth workers fear that asking for the names, addresses, dates of birth, ethnicities and other personal information about

young people can be interpreted as prying, intrusive and a form of surveillance. Sometimes there are demands to also collect information on family members. Conversely, some workers worry less about the ethical dimensions but draw attention to what they believe is a system struggling to validate itself: "It's just about funding and looking good", which ties in with earlier observations about the obsession with 'demonstrating effect'.

After collection there is the issue of storage. The use of electronic databases is increasingly common. Their use also presents both ethical and practical challenges (the latter being discussed in further detail below). Some street workers believe these databases breach data protection and confidentiality protocols as it is impossible to say where young person's data is stored. This forces the hand of workers to discuss these issues with young people, including in situations where they judge such conversations can negatively impact their work. In some cases, attempts to bring these issues to the attention of managers have been ignored and the systems remain unaltered.

Street workers expressed similar concerns about the accessibility of information, with many believing information was more accessible to their managers than themselves. How information is stored, and who has access to the mechanisms for storage, appears critical. This is particularly important if it is remembered that a primary function of information collection is to inform the work as it develops. Lack of accessibility compromises this. Issues of accessibility include transparency; do young people know what kind of information is being collected about them, what systems are being used, how it is recorded and with whom it is shared? Are they aware of all those who can access information about them? The latter is particularly pertinent in the context of multi-agency teams and multi-disciplinary practice – which almost all street workers say they are now involved in and are often formally integrated into. Here there is a new reality, that the information gathered on young people by the street worker can subsequently be accessed by a wide range of other services and practitioners. In many cases this includes the police, so questions need to be asked about the extent to which their interest in this data constitutes a form of 'intelligence gathering'. Indeed, some workers identify this as an ethical concern:

"We used to use the council's stats system, but now we have moved to the one system [across many services], *and we have to add all the young people we work with on* [to] *this system. We need to know all details to confirm who they are … we keep our paper records and I tend not to add the private and confidential information for fear of other people using the information I have gathered through my interventions and not in the right way. I do put my number on so they can call me to discuss if it's relevant."*

Elsewhere, other workers have fewer concerns, which suggest there is an appreciation, at least in some situations, that data protocols exist; or, perhaps, they care little for them or are oblivious to their significance.

"We use recording standards and can offer young people the opportunity to view their file with a youth worker."

"We record young people's names but do not put [their] names on reflective recordings; that way any information directly related to a specific young person will only be known to the workers at the project."

There is also the question of anonymity (and in some countries 'professional secrecy'). This needs to be distinguished from confidentiality in which it is made clear that the disclosure of particular kinds of information (such as that that raises concerns about abuse) to a worker might lead them to act upon it – regardless of whether that is wanted by the person they are working with. In all this, some workers do go to great lengths to ensure that the information [young] people give them is treated sensitively.

4.4 Forms of recording: how tools are developed; the arrival of a 'measurement' paradigm and new electronic systems.

Street workers of long standing recall involvement in the design of recording and evaluation systems. Invariably, these were created to meet the particular needs of the context in which they were working. Hence, what was produced was different in different circumstances. Some workers still do this, although it is less and less common, as 'off-the-peg' systems have become increasingly popular (at least in management circles). As we have seen, many of these systems are based on electronic databases. It is clear that they are a particular bone of contention for street workers. At the heart of this is the reality that no-one has ever created an electronic system specifically for street work. In its stead street work agencies have adopted systems from other social practices, which are all too frequently designed for institutional, rather than non-institutional settings. This said, some work is going on to create such a tool, principally in Norway. This is very much needed.

Whilst these electronic systems are often the primary recording tool (as evidenced also by the time invested in their use) workers often employ a wide range of complementary mechanisms to record

and evaluate their work. Almost all do session recordings and try to complete these immediately afterwards. Some working practices stipulate that these are done as part of the workers' professional duties; others do not. In these circumstances some workers will do them in their free time; although the majority of those who responded to this survey do not. Most workers take part in the planning of sessions although these are often infrequent, typically once a quarter. These sessions are also recorded. Some workers have specific evaluation meetings although the data suggests these too are increasingly rare. In sum, the recording of data appears to take precedence over more evaluative (analytical) activities.

It is significant also that increasingly deliberate attempts are made to measure against a range of outcomes deemed desirable by the social policy agenda. For example, workers in England typically say: "*We link stats to the Every Child Matters agenda*". This identifies a number of themes against which workers must record outcomes; evidence must be shown that young people engage in activities that help them: Be healthy; Stay safe; Enjoy and achieve; Make a positive contribution; and Achieve economic well-being. The latter appears particularly significant; anecdotally, many workers say it is coming to dominate their work, with this being the principal criteria they are evaluated against. Whilst these themes would appear to be amenable to interpretation, the tendency is to design programmes specifically to meet the demands of each. A project-orientation to practice becomes apparent with young people being invited to take part in 'programmes' of pre-determined timescales. Truly participative practices, in which form and function are subject to negotiation, are much less common as a result. Concern is expressed that street work is becoming narrow in focus, and is forced to adopt an 'activating' orientation (Pohl & Walther, 2007). An engagement with other issues – as determined by young people – tends to be the casualty. Contemporary evaluation cultures appear to drive, or at least act in support of, this shift.

We have noted its common for electronic and web-based systems to be used in order to collect and store data. A primary concern is that these systems are imported from other social practices and, as such, are not suited to or "street work friendly". Specifically, workers draw attention to the assumption that people's details can be obtained and inputted on the first contact. They see this as deeply problematic, and unappreciative of the need to give people in the street space to control the terms of their engagement with the street worker. This includes them providing information about themselves of their own volition. One school of thought suggests this information can be collected provided a conversation about data protection has been had with the young person. But this too fails to appreciate that in these early stages of developing a relationship with a young person this can be

both undesirable and impractical. This is compounded by the inherent uncertainties of street work, as workers can easily find themselves in contact with very large groups, for example when working at weekends, and this makes it nigh on impossible to seek out information on young people in this social context and certainly so when the information sought is personal and sensitive.

Perhaps the greatest criticism workers have is of the sheer volume of time it can take to 'input' this data into these electronic systems: *"the length of time taken to evaluate depends on how many young people attend sessions."* A rare few appear to have secured assistance to do this, thereby being able to maintain a focus on face-to-face work: *"I have negotiated admin. support to input session sheets, attendance and adding new contacts – therefore making as much time for contact work [as possible]."*

These situations, like so many in street work, create dilemmas; should the worker 'get on with the work', or should they use the time they have with young people to collect data? Clearly there is a connection between the two. Gathering data can be important for progressing the work, but it's also clear that at other times the street worker needs to concentrate on the task in hand, typically engaging with the issues, concerns and interests presented by the people they are in contact with. The dilemma is exacerbated when they feel pressured to collect this data, regardless of the circumstances in which they are working. Many state they try to make these systems work "as best they can" but few are happy with the arrangements for recording and evaluation they feel are imposed upon them.

A further concern relating to data storage arises when the street worker records their activities on paper. These are then submitted to monitoring officers, typically within the local authority or municipality. It is here that the data is inputted into a computer. This can lead to the data being inaccessible to the workers.

Beyond these practical dimensions, there are further ethical issues. In situations where voluntary sector organisations are conducting street work on the basis of a contract with commissioning or funding bodies, such as the local authority, they will also be required to submit data. However, they may not be aware of, or have any control over, what happens to the data thereafter. Some workers appear oblivious to the ethical questions this poses, but others appreciate and are concerned about the implications of sharing data with others who may not subscribe to the same ethical protocols street workers regard as necessary in ensuring they are credible in the eyes of those they work with.

4.5 The shift from qualitative analysis; the effects of new temporalities.

A central theme that emerged from the survey is that qualitative analysis is less common. To some, this means they are no longer engaged in the kinds of evaluation they learnt as part of their professional training. Many street workers express concern that the focus on the quantitative is to the detriment of the work they do:

"Previously I used qualitative recording and evaluation systems. These were much more useful and gave us much more detailed information regarding the kinds of discussions and issue-based work we were regularly coming across."

Workers insist qualitative aspects must be recorded, analysed and responded to if the practice is to benefit. What has been described thus far shows that 'evaluation' is, in the eyes of the many, now taken more and more to mean little more than recording and monitoring. Significantly, this is most prevalent amongst new, inexperienced and poorly trained workers. The concern here is that it is this cohort that is least equipped to critically examine the demands made of them, and implicitly then demonstrate agency in the practice of evaluation. Those that retain this critique describe a tangible separation in attitude between street level workers and their managers: "*All the upper echelons seem to care about are quantitative recordings, rather than the quality of the work."*

Quantitative analysis has a tendency to employ a different temporality to that qualitative. It tends to be fragmented and related to the particular task and contract it is associated with. This can lead to its immediate and longer-term value being discounted. Workers report that the information they collect is rarely (and sometime never) "followed up." And that the material they produce is rarely employed in a 'debrief' and rarely read by managers. This leads some street workers to think its value has been completely instrumentalised, typically to keep commissioning bodies and funders happy. Others are more abrupt; they see this as filling in forms for no other purpose than it being "*part of the system*", or "*paper for paper's sake*":

"Its soul destroying.... inputting data on to a computer, this aim can become the main priority of managers, regardless of the young people's needs or where they are starting from. It often seems the completion of ticking the boxes has become my job and the work with young people is becoming secondary".

Pertinently, in a temporal sense, once the data is collected, that often becomes the end of the matter. This system of recording appears then to focus on achieving targets within particular time scales.

Despite the ambiguity of the term, it can be instructive to identify this as 'project-oriented' work, in the sense of a 'project' have a defined start and end point. This can be contrasted with the historical accounts of evaluation offered by some workers that illustrate a developmental approach to the work – in attempting to track the evolving life trajectories of young people and the groups they are part of, sometimes over long periods of time. There is little doubt that qualitative evaluation is degraded where these time-bounded models of practice dominate, such as in the descriptions from the UK found above. These tend to be commonest where contracting and commissioning regimes are employed to provide services. 'Project'-oriented work, it should be noted, is much less common in other countries. And this is reflected in different temporal understandings of evaluation also.

The specific case of data collection can also be seen in terms of conflicting temporalities. Workers describe how (in *their* historical understandings) the information obtained from the individuals they worked with is collected over time and through the process of getting to know them. That is, information flows as relationships develop. The contemporary demands on these workers to provide information in the early stages of these relationships are seen as out of synch with this process of relationship development. Some street workers speak of the need for managers to appreciate the process of "consent development", and the fact that this can take a great deal of time also. As ever, workers seek pragmatic responses to these demands:

"We will not put young people's names on the recording; however we ask them to complete a registration form when they begin to engage with the youth workers."

But others considered themselves coerced into so doing:

"I have been made to input young people's details when they have not filled in a membership form and therefore not given formal permission for their data to be stored. I make a point of telling them we record sessions but I don't think that's enough – consent is not sought!"

Trust appears a casualty also to develop:

"It's difficult to get names etc. of young people who we have just met and [who] may have issues trusting us. They can think we are the police."

And some comments illustrate well the paradoxes and dilemmas that are now ever more common in street work – in this case about information and safeguarding:

"Many of the organisations I have worked for have required full details of young people even from initial contacts. I have always believed that this is too much and too personal to ask of a new contact, and is contrary to the safety advice we give to young people about giving their personal information to people they have just met."

Herein, a marked contrast exists between street work and centre-based work. Street workers argue that using recording systems from the latter create tensions in their work. A young person attending a youth club, they say, makes a statement of intent in crossing the threshold that cannot be assumed of those in the street. Similarly, in some systems 'outcomes' cannot be recorded if the young person is not registered. This means (where anonymity is respected) good work is sometimes not taken account of in evaluation. Here again, the uncertain and often complex nature of street work appears to be ignored, and even undermined by the use of these systems. As such, it is reasonable to conclude recording systems do need to be different for work in different environments. Indeed, some workers have tried to do this. They have created sophisticated systems that are nuanced, context-appreciative and designed to respond to the ethical challenges they face in responding to the demands made of them:

"We operate a generalised recording [system] up until consent is needed; for example, when a young person participates in a trip. This allows time for the relationship to be developed and tested … young people not wanting to be tracked can then have a marker; they get to create an avatar."

Some analysis is needed. It is important to ask why there is a demand from managers that street workers collect data so soon in their relationships with young people and what the rationale (and motivation) for seeking this information is in the first place. Considering the issue of consent is instructive. The protection and safeguarding systems many street-based youth workers work to insist, for example, that parental agreement exists for young people to participate in a number of activities (the case here being of a trip or residential experience, which may involve a stay away from home). Then, the reality is that it is the consent of the parent or guardian that is sought rather than that of the young person. This can be viewed from differing perspectives. Some workers argue that systems of data collection need greater scrutiny and that parental consent to collect information on their children would help provide that scrutiny.

"I believe workers should need signed consent from parents in order to record confidential information – especially on databases which are accessed by several different members of staff."

Some workers try to do this:

"We use a system called Outreach. Parents are asked at the transition from junior school to high school if they will give their permission for the high school information system to be shared with the youth service [street work] system. Most do, so at the age of eleven all the young people's basic information is on our Outreach system and all we have to do is identify them from the basic information we ask young people for at the registration point (this includes name, date of birth, house number, post code, gender and ethnicity."

Conversely, other workers are concerned that involving parents can compromise low threshold practice – some young people might not want to engage with them if they think contact will be made with their parents. Similarly, this can reduce the level of confidentiality that they are able to commit to in their relationships with young people. Others take a more general view in worrying that it is unreasonable (and unethical) to share information with third parties without the consent of either the young person or their parents. Where this extends to sharing information in the context of multi-agency settings this troubles some workers even more, as they recognise that, for example, the confidentiality protocols of one partner agency can be different from another. A case in point is the threshold at which schools will make information available to parents, which tends to be lower than in street work. Information-sharing with criminal justice agencies, such as the Police, also causes concern, as they recognise that information collected on young people may be sensitive and, on occasion, regarded as 'intelligence' and used in inform policing activities.

At other times, consent is sought simply in the process of asking for personal details. Given street workers report the reticence of some young people in giving consent we are reminded again of the principles of low threshold practice – in which asking for information can create a barrier to engagement; does it drive some young people away from the very services designed to support them?

5.0 What's happening here; what is all this for: the need for a theoretical analysis?

It is not clear why such levels of data collection are deemed necessary; indeed few who responded to the survey are confident they understand the rationale behind the demands made of them.

In examining the forms of intervention street workers increasingly make something becomes apparent. Their work is increasingly targeted at particular individuals, invariably identified as 'at risk'. It seems then that the collection of data is necessary to feed into this system of risk analysis and identification. This is part of a wider policy context that increasingly employs epidemiologically-inspired rationale and utilises a language of not just 'prevention' but also 'prediction'. Street workers have long since problematized such policy agendas, given they are based on conclusions drawn from large data sets (populations) rather than the lives of individuals, and concluded many foreground coercive intervention strategies. They see 'prevention' as a 'floating concept' (Dynamo International, 2008), in the sense that it is used by some who believe incarceration is needed to stop crime as much as those who advocate vastly different socio-educational interventions in its name. Increased use of predictive sciences is also seen as in tension with democratic practice.

Considering the dynamics of recording and evaluation from a different perspective we might note also a shift in orientation around the meaning of 'accountability'. Historically seen as a function of professional judgement, accountability now appears more akin to a process aimed at the surveillance and monitoring of workers, where the focus of attention is economic rather than the quality of the work done. And recording is part of the process by which this happens. This reflects a concern for resources that some say has taken precedence over the work itself.

This shift is reflected also in a culture of measurement based on the sense that 'if you can't measure it, you can't manage it', and 'only that measurable is valuable'. This is a feature of New Public Management (NPM) (Gruening, 2001) which is now prevalent across the entire spectrum of public services. It is noteworthy that these new managerial regimes, and particular those that emerge from the contemporary orthodoxies of 'multi-agency' and 'multi-disciplinary' team-working, find many street workers managed by people with little or no knowledge or experience of street work. This is a theme regularly visited in discussions amongst street workers about the wider issue of the management of their services. It is clear also that NPM poses huge demands of managers also, particularly to demonstrate 'outcomes' in order to evidence the meeting of targets imposed by funding bodies and policy regimes. It is perhaps unsurprising then that street workers are critical of many of the ways their managers' behave with regard to evaluation:

"*All the upper echelons seem to care about is the recording of the quantitative dimensions of our work; its quality is rarely, if ever, recorded.*"

These comments are often linked to concerns about the efficacy of the work, which is ironic given NPM seems predicated on securing 'efficient service delivery'. Rather, street-based practitioners believe these quantitative perspectives narrower understandings of the practice and undermine its effect:

"*The system in which we work is the thing that lets the delivery down.*"

This has parallels with other ideological frameworks in which values are superseded by value, namely economic value. And the policy objective of controlling street work through its standardisation and systematisation appears to disregard all evidence that a systems world approach (as distinct from life world) (Habermas, 1984, 1987) is, at the very least, not 'street work friendly'.

In contrast, street workers point to the efficacy of democratic practice, and its demise because of these systems. They are concerned that their views and those of the people they work with are disregarded:

"We are now told that senior managers and inspectors look at this information and make decisions without other consultation."

We might also consider the extent to which the aforementioned process of individualisation is taking place. The comments made about the amount of time street workers say they need to record their work illustrates this and are pertinent when working with large groups of young people, as information is asked for each one of them. We see here that evaluation and recording systems are very much focussed on individuals and that social analysis is now rare. Of course, these individual perspectives have value, but their 'narrowness' also inhibits a more sophisticated analysis of social problems and the group, community, cultural and wider social interventions that may be needed for the alleviation of what are, invariably, social problems.

Some theoretical positions appear to corroborate this shift in focus away from the social and toward the individual (Rose, 1996). Some respondents have pointed to previous times when they would record also the problems and issues groups and wider communities were facing and/ or interested in. We can hypothesise then that individualisation means individualised data informs and rationalises individual interventions. The fact that many street workers consider that the thrust of the interventions they are asked to make have more to do with monitoring, controlling and activating

marginalised individuals perhaps speaks to something more fundamental: therein, these new, individualised, models of recording and evaluation might be conceived as mere symptoms of a substantive re-orientation of the aims and purpose of street work.

5.1 Evaluation, and the emergence of performative behaviours.

The systems of recording and evaluation that street workers are increasingly asked to use are found to encourage performative and sometimes perverse behaviours. Many of these behaviours emerge from the pressures upon workers to collect data in the manner described. Typical examples include:

- Casual contacts are sometimes elevated in status to more active engagement when this is not the case; this is done to 'evidence the work done' and provide the 'stats' demanded by managers.
- There is a shift to structured sessions, principally because of the demands of funders but also (in part at least) because they make it *easier* to collect data. The observed consequence is of the demise of flexible, negotiated, co-produced, street work.
- Attention being shifted to clients who are easier to work with in order to achieve targets – what some commentators have described as the "picking of 'low-hanging fruit": (Morgan, 2007) with the implication that others might be deprived of these services (a situation that can exacerbate rather than alleviate their exclusion – see Tiffany's (op cit.) characterisation of 'the pistachio effect', in which 'the hardest nuts to crack are ignored in favour of those easier to open').

5.2 The need for multiple forms of recording and evaluation: socialising the process; revisiting the use of qualitative methodologies; challenging product-only orientations.

The individualising turn has led to a restrictive view of what constitutes recording and evaluation. There has been a particular demise in issue-based analyses and those of a social nature. These include processes that record and evaluate how groups and communities are functioning and those that seek to analyse structural conditions. An adapted version of Thompson's (2001) model of anti-discriminatory practice is advocated. In this, the street worker should aim to record and evaluate the personal, community and cultural, and structural dimensions of their practice. Such a model must also evaluate process as much as product (outcomes) if it is to capture the diverse dimensions of street work. This means acting to address (and redress) the fact that qualitative methodologies are less and

less in evidence in the evaluation of street work. The rationale here is that qualitative methodologies are needed to do justice to that central tenet of evaluation – that it is a process where values are considered. Reclaiming a qualitative perspective requires first an understanding of the politics of recording and evaluation and recognising that the systems world approaches so prevalent in the administration and management of public services are, despite claims to the contrary, problematic in ensuring practice becomes more effective and efficient. Case studies, for example, are a particularly good way of recording and evaluating street work; they should be central to the diverse approach suggested here.

5.3 The provision of reflective social spaces

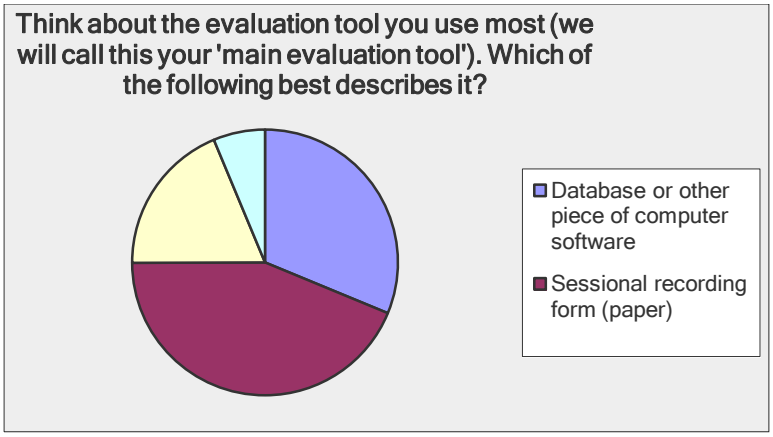
It is rare in the busy schedule of most street workers that time is found to engage in reflective practice. This extends to reflecting on the recordings they have made and employing them constructively in evaluating their work. Reflective spaces are important for discussing the ethical dilemmas and challenges workers face when evaluating their practice. Workers afforded these spaces value them highly, especially when there are opportunities also to reflect with managers.

Stage 2.

6.0 Moving on, widening the enquiry into evaluation

6.1 Further research and findings

Stage 2 of the research was to explore further the themes and tentative conclusions that had emerged in Stage 1. The findings from Stage 1 were used to scope a detailed survey was distributed through *Dynamo International*'s pan-European network. The survey asked mainly qualitative, open-ended questions. 87 unique and usable responses were received. These are summarised below.



6.1.2 The shift to software; further evidence.

In asking about the evaluation tools street workers used most (their 'main evaluation tool'), we found 45% used paper-based sessional recording forms, whilst 30% now used some kind of electronic database or other piece of computer software. Respondents reported using a wide range of these electronic tools, most often for the first time in recent years although some organisations had been using such systems for as long as 12 years. There was a common narrative of shifting from paper-based systems to database software, or, in other cases, from Excel to databases.

When asked what types of information these systems asked for, 8 themes emerged:

- Standardised demographic information about target groups, ranging from very basic details about age, gender and ethnicity to quite detailed information on living and family situations, health, social and welfare status
- Workers' own evaluation of their work. This ranged from purely descriptive accounts to self-assessments of their own performance and successes.
- Open-ended qualitative data with little or no prescription (some respondents stated they could write "anything we wanted to", to "narratives of interaction", to "what young people tell us"). In some cases, guiding themes were presented to the worker by the software and in others they were genuinely open.
- Specific details about local issues, typically levels and types of substance use.
- Longitudinal narratives of individuals, either recording referrals to other agencies or services or case ('background') histories of clients.
- Target group participation, in the form of clients' verbal or written feedback on the content or quality of the working sessions.

- The extent to which targets are met in relation to externally defined outcomes, which are themselves a function of the various local, regional and national expectations the organisation is working to. Typically, these are measured with 'off the shelf' tools.
- Current multi-domain life data, beyond the purely demographic. For example, the systems often request information on client's "functioning", in areas such as educational engagement, sexual activity, emotional well-being etc.

It is clear that a wide range of thematics exist, and that many workers invest considerable effort and time in these activities.

Respondents were asked when they used these tools. The vast majority said they used them each time they worked (often referred to as 'sessions') or on a daily basis. Others stated they used them to track or measure the 'progress' of, or impact on, individuals (and occasionally groups) over a defined period of time, such as a session or a longer period of work or 'project'. Typically, data was collected at the beginning and end of the work but also periodically, such as at a particular defined or significant point, e.g., weekly, monthly or (on rare occasions) at a time of crisis.

A few respondents stated they used several tools. These included those similar to above and designed to measure 'distance travelled' or 'progress made' by individuals over a given period of time. These were also 'bought-in', 'off-the-shelf' commercial products. The use of these was often mandated by managers or funders, although some are adopted on the recommendation of other workers, suggesting a conversation is going on between organisations about these tools. Whereas many are used as recommended by the manufacturers (some facility exists to define the fields) some workers choose to adapt them on the basis of having used them and found them wanting – although this is often not easy. On rare occasions workers develop their own systems from scratch.

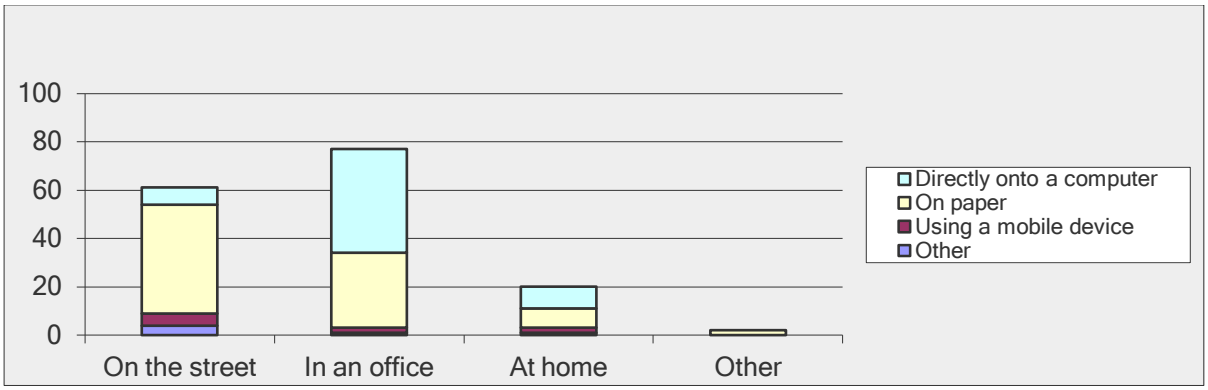
6.1.3 Other evaluation processes.

Amongst the respondents, two-thirds say they use other media for recording their work in addition to paper-based or electronic systems. For example, they say that by including photography and audio-recordings they are able to add "colour" and "texture" to evaluation, especially through the inclusion of positive images, in order to illustrate achievements. Some use these materials to support the participation of target groups in reflexive activities in which the achievements made, and the processes by which they came about, are considered. Typically, this happens at the end of a project.

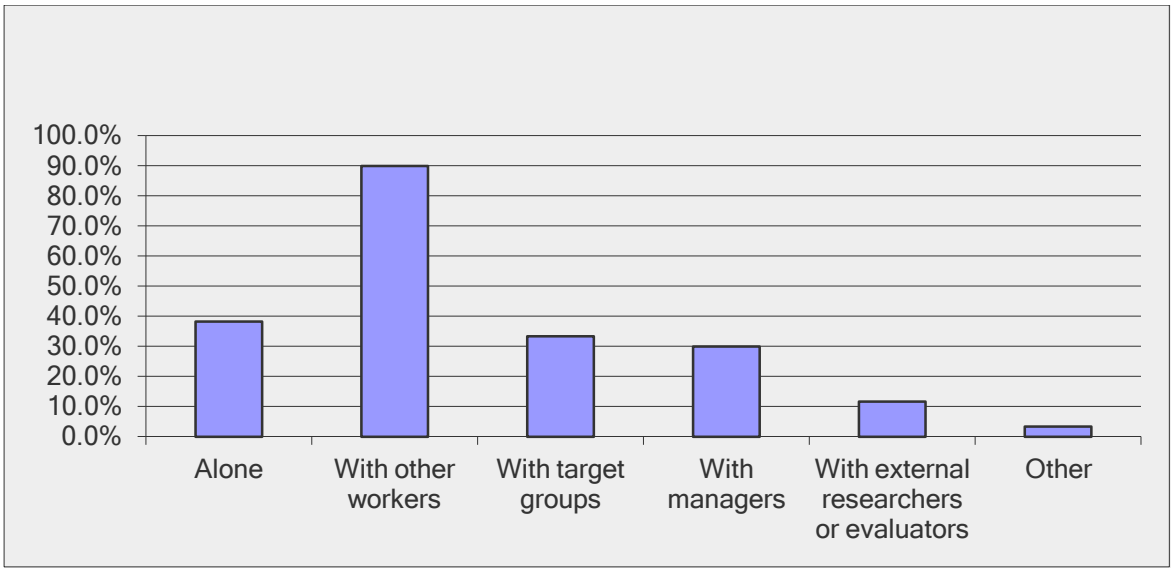
Sometimes this material is also used for dissemination purposes, for example, in communicating the work to other practitioners, politicians, journalists, websites etc. Some workers also refer to this as "publicising", or "selling", the work.

6.1.4 Where and how.

Respondents were asked where and how they used their evaluation tools (and told they could choose more than one answer).



And, whether they used them alone or with others (likewise, they could provide more than one answer). Many were found to do this with colleagues, and others in consultation with clients. Some worked with managers and others with external researchers and evaluators (albeit in small numbers).



Detail of this collaborative work was sought in order to establish precisely how this work was done. Four themes emerged and showed evidence of:

1. Data was generated on the basis of discussions within organisations or teams (sometimes including managers) but also used to stimulate reflective practice. Here collaborative work had a strongly evaluative character, with the term "debrief" used repeatedly in respondents' descriptions. This implies a process of cooperatively 'identifying' and summarising findings from a session or period of work in order to bring together the combined knowledge or opinions of colleagues. In one case, this was something that a manager did, by compiling data from that inputted by workers into a monthly internal report.
2. There was commentary about the use of information within an organisation or team, with the express purpose of planning or allocating resources to future work. This ranged from statistical overviews or demographic / geographical / resource 'monitoring' to more prosaic "recording" of activities (with particular emphasis on the focus of that work). This can be regarded as an 'internal' process, as the impetus is generated from within rather than in response to external demands.
3. Respondents also described sharing, reflecting, or discussing data on individuals or groups with outside "partners", "stakeholders" or "agencies". This was both 'horizontal' (such as with the police, drug intervention agencies, or social services) and 'vertical' (local government managers, and funders).
4. Finally, there was evidence of participation from target groups in producing data or "feeding back" comments. This included accounts of:
    - more and less formalised processes for participative data generation
    - group or individualised methods
    - discursive exchanges focused either on the development of the work and workers ("feedback"/ "planning"), or references to developmentally-inspired interventions with individuals ("motivational interviews; and goal setting").

Respondents were asked to evaluate their evaluation tools; did they have any particular benefits or cause any specific problems? Eight themes emerged:

1. There was a wide spectrum of opinion on the value of the technology and media used. A recurring theme was of databases and/or paper-based forms being slow and cumbersome (especially when the latter had to be manually inputted into the former – *see also 4. Duplication*).

This diversity of opinion also existed in commentary about the merits of portable, street-based recording systems. Some thought they could interfere with the work, but others judged them useful in that they could record data instantaneously thereby avoiding the risk of forgetting it when inputted later.

2. Many thought the tools used made record-keeping easier, helped workers develop an overview and enhanced understanding of their work (albeit this was only on a periodic basis). Workers noted that this could lend credibility to their work and make it easier to attract funding. Some tools (especially databases) were seen to help in making it easier to share information within teams and between agencies.
3. There is a general appreciation of tools that capture longitudinal data and a criticism of those that don't. This can be particularly important in evaluating what happens with people who are referred to an agency and in evidencing follow-up work with them and existing clients.
4. Some respondents stated duplication was a problem, especially when they are asked to record their work on paper and also input it into a database. Many seem resigned to this, given that it was a common experience that "different funders require[d] different data".
5. Conversely, some tools were identified as being useful; these tended to be those tailored to the specifics of the work.
6. There was a general and deep-seated concern that the data was not being collected nor being used properly. Many stated they lacked faith in recording and evaluation systems because of this and questioned whether there was any point in conducting evaluation whatsoever. This disposition is clearly intensified by the observation that even though they were collecting a lot of data many felt that nothing was being done with it. For some they even observed in being routinely shredded. These comments tended to reflect a lack of faith and negative attitudes toward evaluation, as a process that often meant time wasted.
7. This lack of faith tended to be compounded by concerns that evaluation can undermine the trust-based relationships on which street work relies. Issues relating to data protection and confidentiality protocols were highlighted. Conversely, some strategies such as doing 1:1 work and conducting interviews in secure spaces (usually somewhere indoors) were seen to mitigate these problems and help workers maintain a commitment to relationship-based practice.
8. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the geography and temporality of street work mattered significantly. For the workers, where and when evaluation took place was important although it was clear to many that what worked in one set of circumstances did not necessarily work in others. There is some synchronicity here in the responses given in theme 1 about the portability of recording tools: some systems worked for some workers but not for others and did so in some locations but not

others. No conclusions could be drawn from the responses as to what works best on the street and what doesn't. The context appears all important, which substantiates the importance of flexibility in street work, and intimates the same is needed in recording and evaluation systems.

As might be anticipated then, there was a wide range of responses to questions about the strengths and weaknesses of the evaluation tool/s used. Likewise, few summary conclusions can be drawn; engagement with the wider findings of the survey is essential. We can see this from the diversity of responses given:

- Reference to the participation of target groups in evaluation is mixed. Most state this strengthens evaluation, although there is a strong sense that this argument is made on the basis of participation lending legitimacy to the evaluation process rather than enhancing judgement. But others point to the challenges of doing participatory evaluation, not least because some young people are identified as unwilling to take part. Earlier concerns about the difficult of ensuring confidentiality are mentioned as inhibiting also.
- There were mixed references to the strengths and weaknesses of the technology used and the various media employed. Workers report increased confidence in evaluation methods and tools when they are using their knowledge and skills to create and inform them. This is considered of particular importance given we have found no evidence of evaluation 'products' specifically designed for street work. The development of these by street workers is called for and particularly those capturing longitudinal narratives and temporal aspects, as these are lacking in many of the evaluation tools and systems currently used.
- Attitudes toward evaluation are also significant; many talk of the "tyranny of monitoring" and feel strongly that evaluation is "more than just numbers". But they recognise the use value of particular methods in collecting data that external agencies desire. In contrast, some methods are regarded as having 'internal' value: for example, they support reflection and planning activities. Nonetheless, the view that recording and evaluation activities are time-consuming and over-complicated is widespread.
- The debate about the relative merits of qualitative and quantitative data is alive and well with no immediate prospect of resolution. A perceived shift toward the latter brings with it the claim that more of the former is needed. Notwithstanding, there is praise also for the value quantitative analysis can add.

The following quote seems to sum up much of this disquiet and reflect the sense that no underpinning rationale exists:

"*For street work, lots of data is collected. Much can be generated with those numbers. Though, sometimes the focus on the purpose of recording seems to fade, since a fuzzy strategy or limited strategy for recording and measuring outcomes exists.*"

Hence, street workers appear to request a 'steer' on how time works in evaluation, in the sense of the time frames they should be using. They seek also clarity on how this relates to a strategic approach to evaluation (hence the need to clarify the relationship between evaluation tools and evaluation frameworks). The over-arching demand is for "simplicity"; workers certainly do not experience evaluation as simple and are keen to see tools and frameworks made as simple as possible.

This leads to the obvious question of how could evaluation systems be improved? Here again, the diversity of answers make them difficult to summarise; answers can only be seen in the context of the wider survey. Naturally, the responses given to questions about strengths and weakness inform suggestions for improvement; action in response to all the above points is needed. In addition, there was commentary on the structure and design of evaluation systems, with proposals for changing the layout of forms or the functionality of databases.

Within all this (and aside from some predictable: "if it ain't broke don't fix it" answers), there was a recurring sense of a willingness and appetite to experiment, develop, and improve evaluation practices and tools. There was also a sense that organisational and funding strictures often stifle these desires. Nonetheless, the motivation exists to try to create tools and frameworks that are 'fit for purpose'.

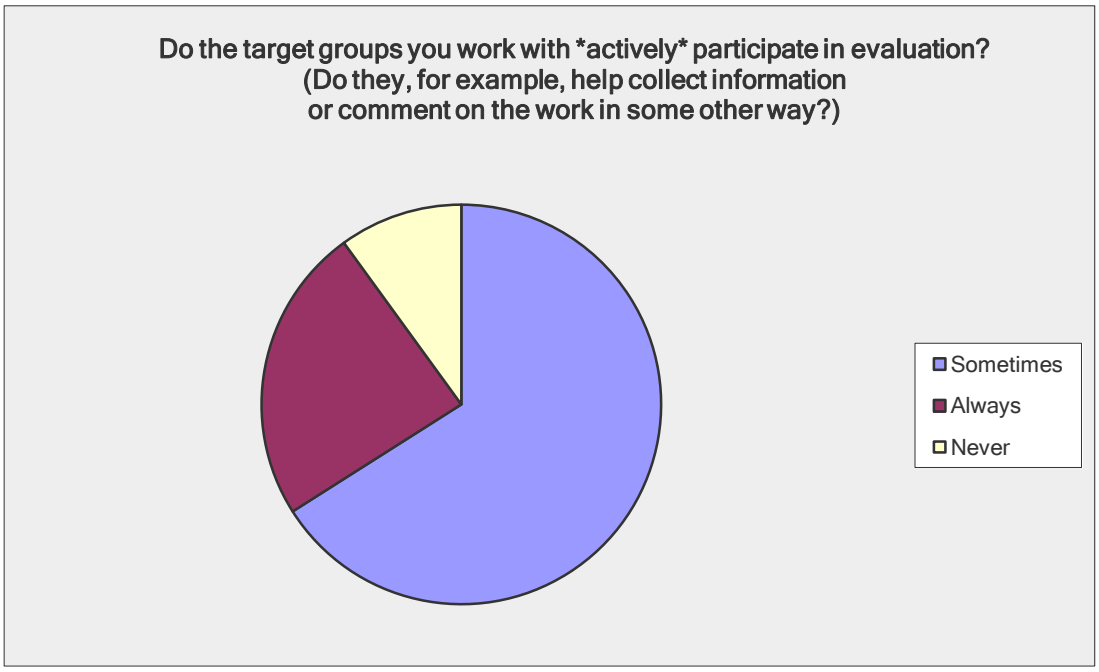
Notwithstanding, dilemmas seem ever-present, particularly ethical dilemmas. The survey asked specifically about these in relation to evaluation tools. There were three significant and recurring themes in the responses given, some of which had been intimated in the answers to previous questions. These related to:

1. Confidentiality and data protection, particularly around safe storage (these constituted the vast majority of responses).

2. The transferability of data; there were concerns about whom information is (and will be) made available. There are fears about how other agencies handle sensitive information relating to, for example, the sexual health of and counselling histories of the clients of street work services.
3. A significant number of respondents reported difficulties with the schema by which they were asked to categorise people. Some openly reject the categorisation offered. Typically, there were concerns about systems "trying to put people into boxes" or sensitivities about asking particular questions, for example about ethnicity and religious affiliations – a line of enquiry that many street workers believed could be inappropriate and intrusive.

The survey asked: "Of all the tools you have ever used or seen what has produced the best evidence?" The responses given did not identify specific tools (as anticipated) but rather the features of good evaluation systems. These were that they should be participative, involve a range of media, be developed by street workers for street workers, be 'street work specific', be appreciative of use value to external agencies ("the best evidence is that which shows funders what they want to see"), seek to capture the "real essence" of the work (especially longitudinal impact, and first person accounts), and, emphasise client's realities before and after the work with them (in the sense of 'distance travelled').

The theme of participation was examined further:



And detail requested as to the form of this participation. Five themes emerged:

1. Clients took part in verbal discussions with workers, with varying levels of formality (ranging from informal conversations to more structured sessions, some of which were "written down" by workers). These 'recorded' sessions either took place at the end of every session or at the end of a project or period of work.
2. Paper-based tools were used, mostly feedback forms but sometimes surveys. One respondent cited the example of journals.
3. Use of multimedia, including voice recording. Video diaries were popular.
4. The provision for target groups to access their own data e.g. case notes and session recording forms.
5. Significantly, data is collected from those present about others in the target group who workers are not in contact with. This ensures information (for example, about future activities) is disseminated to those not present by those who are but also that there is a flow of information to the workers about wider issues. Existing clients mediate this transfer of information, but only when they have a trust-based relationship with the worker.

Respondents were asked what impact they thought this participation had. A number of themes emerged:

Participation in evaluation processes was regarded as beneficial to target groups, in giving them 'ownership' of, and "a voice" in the process of planning and making changes to the work. This was seen to improve services by enabling workers to better identify what was going well and what was not; it supported tailoring the work to individual needs through direct feedback from these target groups. This said, the question of whose needs street workers are working to is considered ironic, given the many prescriptive demands made on street work services by external agencies. Nonetheless, workers also found client participation useful because it helped them review their own achievements and performance. It was seen to add legitimacy to evaluation results and processes, by reflecting the views and opinions of target groups and creating opportunities for them to influence the work. Clients' confidence increased; participation promoted self-reflection, self-awareness and self-esteem; and also their pride in the projects or work they were involved in. These contributions provided valuable data to funders and helped street work organisations gain new funding.

A question was asked about what street workers did with the information they collected and a framework suggested for answering: "Do you, for example, give it to your manager? Send it to an external evaluator? Use it to write a report for funders? Or, do something else with it?"

In response, street workers identified both internal and external activities. Internally, information was given to managers to assist with planning and monitoring and used to allocate resources and inform future activities. Externally, data goes to funders (mostly after being integrated into reports). Sometimes, giving the information to others was the only thing the workers did. More frequently, several functions were referred to. Data (sometimes also in a raw, un-synthesised form) also went directly to more centralised departments of the local or national state and to other external sources. These included drugs agencies, social services, the police etc. In one case it went to an external evaluator. On rare occasions the information was used to feed-back to clients, which seemed to confirm that external functions were much more in evidence than those internal. The implication is that evaluation systems are rarely focussed on workers reflecting on how to improve their work.

A supplementary question, asking what these third parties do with information merely reiterated these answers but also intimated a wide-spread feeling that very little was done with the data. Indeed, some workers reported both suspicion and concrete knowledge that nothing is done with their data once it is collected and handed on to managers or other authorities. This said, a quarter of respondents stated that they always received feedback on their evaluation. Two-thirds said they "sometimes" received feedback; and the remainder said it was never forthcoming.

Thereafter, the survey asked questions about the uses of evaluation within the organisations, such as in planning or making changes to the work. Here 60% stated this always happened, 35% that it happened sometimes, and for the remaining 5% that this never happened. The detail of 'how' evaluation was used was asked for. There were six themes within the responses:

1. Evaluation supported decision-making and planning about the geographical areas the organisation should work in.
2. Evaluation constituted a process whereby workers could assess the quality of their "delivery". This included several references to how evaluation helps identify training needs.
3. Evaluation informs the changes needed to improve a programme or the work more generally.
4. Evaluation informs the use and deployment of "resources", including human resources.

5. Evaluation supports participation of target groups, for example, by providing feedback that can be used to make changes.
6. Evaluation (as understood by street workers) is used to redress the difficulties and problems associated with implementing change on the basis of quantitative data alone. See, for example:

"*Generally if the numbers do not match our expectations or we become puzzled by them, we try to change the way we work or focus on specific areas we feel are important*."

This seems to allude to the tensions that exist between the use of numeric scoring systems and professional judgement (and in turn the wider notion of practical wisdom).

When questioned about the negative effects of evaluation, many workers suggested certain outcomes could lead to cuts in funding. On occasion, the absence of evaluation was identified as the reason; at other times workers viewed evaluation as "unsuccessful" if it did not lead to further financial support – clearly demonstrating the perceived link between achieving prescribed outcomes and the ongoing economic health of the organisation.

Other negatives included the re-occurring theme of problems associated with changes to administration systems and consternation that these were often rapid and not thought through. Here, it was the view that a great deal of data was underused, even ignored.

Finally, the survey asked: "What would an evaluation '*tool*' for street work that is 'fit for purpose' look like?

Here, it's important to restate the need to view the answers given in the context of the data generated by the whole survey. This said, there were repeating themes:

1. Technological and multi-media responses were called for. For example, many respondents wanted to see Ipads and tablets used in street work, provided they were portable and weather-proof. Yet others sought to problematise their use; as well as the benefits, what were the dangers, risks and disbenefits?
2. This resonates with commentary on the street's specificity, spaciality and temporality: evaluation systems and processes need to be able to cope with the different locations and the multiplicity of issues street workers are likely to come across. They needed to appreciate 'how time works' in

street work, and that it works differently to other more institutionalised social practices. Therein, methods of evaluation have to take account of contexts, especially the local, the geographic, the social and the temporal (they have to be able to collect longitudinal data).

3. Evaluation tools needed to be suited to collecting particular types of data, in particular so called "soft outcome" measurements, qualitative data and field notes.
4. This intimates also the need for systems that are sensitive to the subtleties of street work and especially the need for confidentiality, trusting relationships, and (at times) anonymity, where this is judged necessary for effective practice.
5. In general, evaluation tools and systems needed to be easy to use, and fit with the practicalities and time constraints often encountered in street work.
6. In sum, a vast majority of respondents stated: "One size doesn't fit all". Evaluation systems need to be adaptable and reflect different working contexts, particularly as street workers have to meet a range of demands from different stakeholders who often have needs for different data at different times.

Provocatively, the survey also asked: "What would an evaluation '*framework*' for street work which is 'fit for purpose' look like? This question appeared to have particular importance in the minds of respondents as all the issues raised existed within it. Again, the full dataset must be engaged with to make sense of the responses given, although the responses covered particular themes:

- The focus of an evaluation framework has to be on learning about, reflecting on, and planning future practice.
- Frameworks need to be able to produce rich, explanatory data of certain types which is clear and balanced. They must be sensitive to the need for confidentiality, trusting relationships, and (at times) anonymity.
- They should be participative, involving target groups, but also take account of workers' needs, including their need for support and supervision and the avoidance of an excessive workload associated with evaluation (duplication has to be eliminated).
- Technology and media applications can help.

7.0 Guidelines for the recording and evaluation of Street Work

7.1 Training in the theory and practice of evaluation should be available to all involved in street work.

Street workers, their managers, and those in roles that support and work in partnership with street work agencies should be given opportunities to learn about the theory and practice of evaluation. Evaluation-specific training should be available to all these stakeholders, regardless of whether they are involved in new projects or more established organisations. The latter particularly may have experienced the kind of challenges this research evidences (where evaluation has been largely 'externalised'). In this case, they should be supported in re-imagining good practice in the evaluation of street work in the context in which they now find themselves. Those working in environments where street work is funded by an increasingly wide array of charities, non-governmental organisations, and through state-sponsored contracting and commissioning arrangements have particular needs: evaluation here has multiple purposes and can create numerous ethical dilemmas. There is a strong case for extending these training opportunities to 'funders' to support their sensitisation to these dilemmas. This should be seen in the context of the comments made on the value of participation in the development and review of evaluation frameworks.

Training should cover the following themes:

- Conceptual analyses of evaluation-related terms (consider, for example, the terms 'collection', 'recording' and 'monitoring' – amongst many others). It is clear that there is great deal of confusion in the street work community as to their distinction and defining characteristics. Learning about definitions and meanings improves understanding of what evaluation is, what it is for, and the processes involved.
- Training should review the aims of evaluation in an appreciative way: it's common that different stakeholders have different aims and see evaluation as having differing purposes. It's important to consider evaluation from these varying perspectives. Therein, street workers need to consider for whom and for what reasons they are conducting evaluations and be aware of and responsive to any conflicts that may exist. Ideally, this should be a participatory process, involving a dialogue with others about these differing aims.
- Thinking about aims and purposes is integral to learning about the ethics of evaluation. Opportunities should exist to review evaluation in the light of the principles that underpin street work and organisational codes of ethics. Again, wider stakeholders need to be sensitised to this. Typically, there are important questions to consider relating to the ethical uses of data – how it is

collected, how it is used, and with whom it is shared (which is to consider also what partners might do with this data). Issues of confidentiality, privacy, anonymity, professional secrecy, disclosure, protection, surveillance and control will inevitably arise; training should offer space to scrutinise these issues in a non-threatening and preparatory way – it's always better to critically reflect on these matters before issues arise.

- Training should include learning about the use of participatory and democratic methodologies in evaluation as these are important in validating the principles of street work. They infer also the provision of space, time and support for reflection whilst training. This has the added benefit of further preparation for the reflective practice that is needed on a day-to-day basis, especially as questions about the ethics of evaluation are likely to arise on a regular basis.
- There are practical issues a plenty; techniques and methodologies for evaluating need to be examined - they are numerous, so the aim should be to identify those fit-for-purpose in the local context. It is strongly advised that training offers opportunities to critique any compulsion to 'buy-in' one of the many 'tailor-made' evaluation packages that are increasingly marketed. Typically, benefit is ascribed to the capacity to transfer data between sectors without necessarily focussing on what best supports the work. Indeed, good practice often resists this and, wherever possible, engages stakeholders in the collaborative act of creating an evaluation system that best fits local realities. The learning gained through the experience of doing this cannot be underestimated; it will help all involved to develop the knowledge, skills *and* attitudes needed to critique the context in which they are working and build an evaluation system that is appreciative of this context. This (practical) learning should be employed in reviewing both quantitative and qualitative processes, such as statistical analysis, diagnostic and electronic tools, documentation and the use of social media. Seeking a marriage of the quantitative and qualitative has to be an aim and is strongly recommended.

7.2 Thinking purposefully – and analytically – about evaluation.

Given evaluation can be viewed as having different purposes it is important workers think critically about these on an ongoing basis. Different forms of evaluation may be needed to reflect these different and changing purposes. It can help to think about audience-specific evaluations, given these different stakeholders might require different things from the evaluation process. Separating out these differences is important but in all there must be an emphasis on learning from what has gone on.

7.2.1 Evaluation for service improvement

Whilst stakeholders generally agree that the primary purpose of evaluation is service improvement it should not be assumed that there is consensus on what constitutes 'improvement'. Nor can it be assumed unanimity exists that the function of evaluation is to inform work and to enable the planning of it. This study suggests that in some situations the actual function of evaluation is to produce data specifically to make the monitoring and control of the work easier. Workers should not be naïve; how evaluation is constructed can be a product of ideologically-driven perspectives on what street work is and what it is for. In line with this, there can be a tendency for evaluation to seek particular answers in order to demonstrate 'impact'. What's problematic is critical analysis can be lacking and street workers might feel it necessary to behave in particular (and sometimes unethical) ways in order to achieve the targets demanded of them. Evaluation then becomes a self-validating side show disengaged from the needs of clients. This cannot be allowed to happen in any evaluation framework that claims to be good.

The worker must remember that the people they work with are their primary clients and, as such, evaluation to support service improvement *for these people* must be the first priority. It is the needs of the client, as identified in a dialogue with them, which should hold greatest sway. Certainly, wider demands (which might be regarded as the needs of others) have to be engaged with, but it's important that they do not take precedence if the worker is to maintain a commitment to the ethical principles that underpin street work and, simplistically, do good and effective work. There may be times then when the dominant rationale for the work is found to disregard worker and client-centred evaluation. In responding to this, the worker may have to conduct differing forms of evaluation in order to respond to the demands on them, but they should also be instigating a dialogue with those who make these demands – in the sense of 'humanising' this relationship. Ultimately, they should never disregard evaluation activities aimed at improving services for the primary client.

Given this context, it can be useful to think about evaluation from different perspectives:

7.2.2 Worker's 'own' evaluation; seeking autonomy within the evaluation process.

In thinking purposefully about the context of evaluation the worker may recognise that the evaluation processes they use are predominantly external in character, in that they are working to criteria established by external actors. This can inform the need to undertake evaluation activities beyond those stipulated by managers and funders. These activities can be regarded as the worker's

own in the sense that it is they that judge them necessary; they are a product of *their* professional reflection and the reflections of the colleagues they share them with.

Here there is an emphasis on the use of 'internal' data, as distinct from that requested by external agencies (such as the reductive account of numbers of contacts made and other simplistic outcomes, like levels of accreditation achieved). Typically, internal data will detail what is happening in the lives of the individuals worked with and include that of the social milieu they are present in. The worker must consider what data exists, what this is evidence of, and how this informs the evaluation they are undertaking. This data is most often qualitative in nature: recordings of the worker's interventions with individual clients and the groups and communities they are a part of. Equally, they should consider the absence of data and make plans, as appropriate, to seek out what is judged missing. In all this it's implicit that the worker engages in a process of analysis, a process that clarifies the needs of individual clients and the communities they are a part of; and the extent to which progress is being made in meeting these needs.

In sum, the worker should recognise the possibilities of, and their responsibility to, conduct autonomous evaluation. Constraints experienced due to organisational pressures to use standardised models (often, as we have seen, from entirely different services with often different aims, ethics and cultures) cannot, and should not, be regarded as limiting. Indeed, it is their responsibility to 'bridge the gap', to drive the creation of an evaluation system that is fit for purpose and respectful of the context they work in (and of which the worker is reasonably assumed to have expertise). Ultimately, such a system will have both quantitative and qualitative dimensions and be appreciative of the many demands made on that service my often multiple stakeholders. It may, given political realities, be necessary to create such a system independent of those they are currently expected to use.

7.2.3 Co-operative, collaborative and comparative evaluation; socialising the process of evaluation

Colleagues working with the same clients (or potentially working with them in the future) should also keep data and this should be shared within team-based evaluation activities. Therein, varying perspectives offer stimuli that can enlighten the process of evaluation; they can be discussed and used to clarify the effectiveness of the work. They can also inform future interventions and aid decision-making about who should undertake the work. Likewise, the primary aim of this co-operative evaluation (as with the worker's 'internal' activities) is to improve services from the perspective of the primary client.

It should be clear that co-operative work can be collaborative work. Whilst the co-operative work described here tends to reflect engagement between people *within* an organisation, collaborative work can take place with a variety of other individuals and external agencies. For example, collaborating with academic and professional researchers can lead to the production of more nuanced accounts of street work. Street workers should also recognise that collaboration with other street work projects (who, for example, are working on similar issues, say, gang intervention) offers the potential benefit that comes from comparing knowledge and experience. Such c*omparative* evaluation activities can utilise and bolster networks, identify and share good practice and draw upon multiple perspectives to ensure evaluation is critical and effective.

These are progressive and complexity-appreciative responses to the simplified and reductive versions of evaluation that this study shows are increasingly employed to measure and quantify street work; see also 'Evaluation as research'.

Interpreting data in evaluation is always challenging, particularly as we are all prone to selectivity. We select on the basis of values, cultures and prejudices. 'Socialising' the evaluation process can reveal and mitigate the effect of these prejudices but it has the capacity also to draw upon these varying perspectives to stimulate the learning of all. Working in this way can lead to the sharing of tacit knowledge and improve decisions about how the work should progress, and who should undertake it. As we have seen, collaborative analysis may identify the value of 'handing over' work from one colleague to another.

Good Practice examples

- Tacit knowledge workshops are designed to create a supportive yet challenging environment in which workers are encouraged to verbalise the rationale behind the interventions they have made. The use of social learning methodologies encourages the sharing of learning and the maintenance of communities of practice. They can be particularly important in contesting and resisting the competitive cultures that emerge through contracting and commissioning regimes that can inhibit sharing and collaboration. Equally, this process constitutes '*practice-based evidence*', which itself can mitigate the reductive, standardised, rationale associated with some interpretations of Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) and many of the evaluation frameworks in evidence today.

- A street work organisation invites a PhD researcher to join their team. The researcher is given training in street work and spends a whole year working with the organisation whilst also conducting their research. They come to see the work and the research as one. Having previously tried to conduct research on an ad hoc basis, the researcher concludes that this lived experience is necessary to fully understand how street work works and to appreciate the importance of low-threshold, flexible evaluation practices. Indeed, these offer an insight into people's lives that they had never obtained from previous research activities. Here they had assumed street workers could make their clients 'available' at specific times and in specific places. They realised later, having worked more closely with the project, that the often chaotic nature of street work in responding to people's lives demanded a different attitude to research if it was to be properly understood.

- A collaboration between street work organisations created opportunities for young people from the different projects to train as peer researchers. These young people worked with the clients of the partner agencies to evaluate the effectiveness of the support offered by the workers to young people involved in violence. The peer researchers were brought together to share their findings and discuss how the things they had learnt could be used to advise the wider street work community on how to improve interventions in this sensitive are of practice.

- A drug outreach service undertook evaluation activities using 'snowballing' techniques. In this, they prepared clients to engage with the drug users who were not in contact with the service but part of the social networks of those that were. This enabled the services to evaluate the 'state of play' within the wider drug-using community and learn valuable lessons about what the service might do to become more accessible and effective.

7.2.4 Evaluation as research

Conceiving of evaluation as research has multiple benefits. It substantiates the sense that evaluation is about 'searching out', a process of data collection, enquiry and subsequent analysis. The schema of the scientific method can be useful also in inviting hypotheses, and observing to confirm or deny these. The street worker should be encouraged to develop a research identity and see themselves as part of a wider community of research practice. Their daily proximity to social reality makes them ideally suited to doing research (something that is difficult for academic researchers to experience), and the relationships they have with clients means they can also encourage them to, in turn, see themselves as researchers.

7.2.5 'Outward-facing' evaluation, political engagement and the politics of evaluation

It is reasonably said that all street work is political. Certainly, the findings of this study show the often powerful of effect of politics on street work. And yet the political responses of street work to these influences are often lacking. Evaluation has the potential to act as a potent response. It starts with researching the political context in which the work takes place: workers should share stories with peers about their experience of evaluation frameworks; they should enquire into, for example, the impact of the marketization of evaluation processes. Familiarity with wider theoretical perspectives can help, such as the socio-political analysis offered by Ball (op cit.) in relation to governance and performativity.

In contrast to workers 'own' evaluation, the findings of which are often retained within the agency, there is a need to undertake 'outward-facing' evaluation. This too has multiple functions. Beyond 'internal' analysis, effective evaluation systems should seek to spot and describe trends and developments and monitor changes at a community level in order to communicate them to others and particularly those in positions of power and responsibility. The aim here is to exert influence and fulfil a commitment to advocacy, with a view to catalysing changes at the political level. These outward-facing evaluations should aim to analyse and bring forward wider social realities: the contexts beyond the individual – namely, those at a family, community (and cultural), and structural level.

This often reveals the need to intervene in these other dimensions in order that individuals are better supported and the circumstances that lead to the problems acted upon. Furthermore, where street workers use Rapid Assessment and Response (RAR) methodologies and/or situation analysis tools (particularly the participatory versions) as part of their evaluation activities they have the capacity to analyse the abilities of street work services and the local community to meet the needs of local people.

Workers should be aware that where evaluation practices fail to analyse in these multi-dimensional ways this can undermine both the evaluation process and the effectiveness of their work. Conversely, workers should recognise then that the data that emerges from these wider evaluations has multiple uses. It can be used for specific and targeted purposes (both within the internal and external contexts outlined above), such as assessing the effectiveness of work with individuals and that of the organisation more generally. But it also has important political value; it can be used to draw attention to unmet needs and wider service failings, and to feedback to policy-makers information about the effectiveness of policy and how it might be improved.

This 'politics of evaluation' is premised on drawing attention to the important role of evaluation as exemplified in commentary such as "taking the temperature of the street", 'bearing witness to social realities' and making known the outcomes of evaluation in order to "rendre visible l'invisible": making the invisible visible. Here we see the role of evaluation in protecting and securing people's rights and as a medium for political engagement.

Good Practice example

- A street youth work organisation adopts a rigorous and long-term evaluation strategy. Information is collected about the number of young people contacted, on-going contacts, where the work takes place, the issues presented and the successes achieved in helping young people deal with their problems and bring substance to their aspirations. This is mapped over time, resulting in the capacity of the organisation to illustrate, in great detail, the relationship between the resources invested in the work and the extent of the social problems affecting the local youth population. Furthermore, it can be seen how cuts to services affect the capacity to act; which gives a more enlightened appreciation of one of the classic ironies of evaluation: that providing evidence that something *didn't* happen (whether it be a young person not taking a drug overdose, or not committing a crime etc.) due to the interventions made is nigh on impossible.

  Local officials are invited to review this data on a regular basis and are left in no doubt that such a relationship exists. They recognise the value of supporting and investing in the work. The fact this data is now longitudinal [it has been recorded for over a decade] means it can show changing trends, such as drug use. This makes it even more persuasive, and has been instrumental in ensuring the sustainability of the work though continued financial support. Significantly, previously sceptical staff now recognise the political value in recording their work and are consistently committed to doing this as a result. Furthermore, local funders have the confidence to invest in the project with fewer preconditions as to the outcomes they wish to see, such is their confidence that the workers are doing a valuable and effective job. This supports the flexible working practices that are a hallmark of the good practice in this and many others organisations – and without which they will always struggle to do good work. This tension between prescription and flexible, responsive practices is perhaps at the heart of the challenges of modern day street work. Rigid evaluation systems merely hinder success.

Such, outward-facing evaluation typically emphasises 'non-personal data'. It is a necessary element of street workers' advocacy and promotional activities and part of their wider responsibility to demonstrate accountability and effect. Care must be taken in deciding what data to communicate, and what not. Workers should seek to identify data that (where suitably anonymised) can be reasonably shared in the public domain, in order to substantiate the conclusions drawn from their evaluation activities. Typically, this will include statistics on the number of clients worked with, hours worked (for example, time spent doing direct street work), and brief details of the interventions made (such as the kind of issues responded to and the way in which they are responded to). Reference should be made to those services the agency is tasked to undertake (inputs) but also other activities undertaken by workers on the basis of professional judgement. Once again, the latter has the capacity to educate wider audiences about the essential, democratic nature of good practice (and its core characteristics of flexibility, responsiveness, negotiation and an appreciation of uncertainty).

Making this data accessible supports transparency, which is important particularly for evidencing accountability for funding and demonstrating the impact of the work. Such, 'non-personal' data would typically be central to an annual report or other document and used to communicate impact to politicians, policy makers, partner agencies, research networks, and the media (typically in the form of press releases or material for press conferences the purpose of which is to generate positive media coverage).

Media training can complement evaluation training, and is recommended. It's important also in ensuring data is shared appropriately and respects confidentiality. Media training should focus on the particular challenges associated with communicating with the police, the media and politicians. Workers are advised to consider carefully what they say and what they don't say; thinking strategically, and spending time reviewing the communicative dimensions of evaluation is vital. Outward-facing evaluation should be recognised as a form of promotion.

7.2.6 Holistic evaluation

Workers should always be mindful of the need for evaluation frameworks to be holistic, that is, inclusive of both the internal and external dimensions identified above. The inclusion of case histories can add a human perspective to evaluation reports, offering something often lacking in more quantitatively-oriented documentation. Following the ethical parameters outlined in this guidance, their use should be consented to by those they refer to.

Good Practice example

A street work organisation working with young men who have experience of homelessness, criminal justice agencies, sex work or sexual exploitation aims to support them practically and emotionally and by providing opportunities for involvement in creative projects. The outcomes of these projects, typically, plays, videos or photography, are used to help young men evaluate their own lives but also communicate their realities to others in order that they might understand them better. There are often great sensitivities associated with them telling their stories so the workers discuss with what they are happy to reveal through these media. The dissemination of video, for example, is often subject to a time clause – after an agreed time the videos will be destroyed. Furthermore, they are only ever shown by workers in workshops, and never distributed. These strategies are designed to protect the young men such that the things they reveal about one stage of their lives does not impact on them negatively in the future. In combination, the project has, through its commitment to client participation, found a way of respecting and protecting those they work with but also a mechanism whereby the materials produced help a wide range of stakeholders evaluate the project also.

These stories can bolster considerably the often hard statistical data requested by funders relating to, for example, the numbers of contacts made and the outcomes of the work (such as the numbers of jobs secured by those previously unemployed). They can better illustrate and emphasise the detail of follow-on activities and the processes used in the work to support the client (and often disregarded in outcomes-focussed evaluation cultures). The old adage: "*Politicians ask for numbers but remember* stories" might well be instructive here. Experience will dictate how these documents should be organised in order that they speak to the relevant audiences, but achieving this must be an aim of the evaluation process. It is then the case that these materials can assist in securing funding as well as supporting the primary task of service improvement.

7.2.7 Participative evaluation

Participative evaluation adds a further and important dimension to the guidance here on holistic evaluation and the politics of evaluation – it can create opportunities for client groups to engage directly with policy makers, thereby empowering them in the process. Much of this stems from the fact that street workers work these spaces and this locates the practice decisively in a democratic context. Participation is fundamental to the street work ethic and necessarily so given how power

works in public space: disregarding the right of people to be involved in decisions that affect them only makes street work ineffective – put simply, it can mean having no-one to work with as they exert their right to walk away. And yet, involving those street workers work with should be regarded as no easy task.

Constructing an evaluation system that is participative means thinking about a range of issues, including: who should be involved and how they should be involved. Participative evaluation can benefit from thinking widely about this involvement. There can be collaborative activities with others in the street work community, partnerships with the academic and research communities, but foremost must be the involvement of those using street work services.

Participation, and implicitly then evaluation, also has a pedagogical dimension, people learn through the experience of it. Given all street work asserts educational aims, participatory evaluation offers the potential of informing and improving the workers' practice *and* enabling their clients to learn through their experience of participating in the evaluation of the services they use. Yet others can learn beyond. That is, there are multiple and mutual benefits. It is the dialogue between workers, clients and others that creates this possibility. Locating the client as central to evaluation brings criticality to the process of evaluation. But equally, the realities of what it is to be a worker and what it is to work within an organisation, and within policy agendas, are made known to the target group. Sympathies and understanding ensues.

7.2.8 Evaluating evaluation; reviewing bureaucracy and ethical auditing.

The resources invested in evaluating practice needs to be reviewed on a regular and systematic basis. Evaluation takes time and its important time isn't wasted, as it could be used in working directly with people. Keeping data collection to a minimum and ensuring it is targeted and focussed is a reasonable rule of thumb. That said, workers should remember that if participative evaluation is to have a pedagogical value seeking short cuts are not advisable. Simplistically, reviewing the bureaucracy of evaluation aims to identify which evaluation activities have value and which do not. This should inform judgements aimed at eliminating unproductive activities.

It has been noted that the demands from different (and sometimes competing) stakeholders on street work to evaluate in particular ways can lead to numerous ethical dilemmas. It is essential then that workers are supported to think critically about how to respond to these dilemmas. A particular issue involves the collection of data on young people and vulnerable adults. It should not be assumed that

individual clients can make informed judgements about sharing their data and consenting to this. Workers should be proactive in discussing these issues with those they work with, in the context of the general education street work services aim to provide. Issues of privacy, confidentiality and data protection should be proactively covered in one-to-one discussions and group work sessions, each of which requires their own protocols. The protection of this data must be kept a priority; it should be kept secure, typically in the form of protected individual files or journals.

Thereafter, data should be accessible to the people it relates to and they should be encouraged to view it and discuss it with the workers working with them in order that the conclusions drawn through evaluation processes are considered reasonable by all parties. This should be seen to have multiple benefits, in supporting the learning of both the worker and clients, and wider audiences.

The critical thinking central to the process of evaluation must also be employed to review street work behaviours in order to identify any unethical practices. Specifically, workers need to be watchful for times when they are acting in ways (either unconsciously or consciously) that might contradict street work principles in order to meet the targets set of them by managers or funders. Clearly this can be a painful process and something that demands reflexivity and a safe space to think about these things. Furthermore, it might only be through social processes, like tacit knowledge workshops, that some of these behaviours can be identified.

It is of course just as likely these processes help identify sound practices that can then be shared with others. Ethical auditing is central to, and should inform, both evaluation and the sharing of outcomes from it. In all situations, the aims, values and principles of street work need to be adhered to. Not that this is easy; street work is replete with dilemmas and many of them arise (as this research attests) through the process of evaluation. Indeed, many are not easily dealt with. Auditing can prevent their occurrence, and help think through responses.

8.0 End Piece

Learning to contest and re-imagine good practice in evaluation

In the introduction it was suggested evaluation was likely to be the most significant issue in the future of street work. Nothing that has been written in this report contradicts this; indeed, it confirms that what evaluation is taken to mean, how it is conducted and the inferences drawn from it matter more now than ever before. This is why considerable time has been taken in examining these realities and charting a way forward: the very essence of street work depends on it.

In preparing for this future we should anticipate more of the political realities that have come to dominate current understandings of evaluation. The outsourcing of services, the linking of contracting and commissioning regimes to pre-specified outcomes, and the control of services through more invasive data management systems are likely to become more, not less, evident. Data, certainly, is likely to be given even greater status and demands will grow for more of it to be collected. Likewise, the philosophical paradigm of cost-benefit analysis, 'value for money', and further extensions to the rationale of new public management (NPM) means street work will be challenged more than ever to demonstrate the impact it has. But what we have found is that evaluation systems of this nature tend to seek answers within its own context – which is typically one of seeking to activate clients with regard to specific outcomes – and this can be antithetical to the value base of street work with its democratic, low-threshold, rights-protecting and advancing ethos. As such, street workers must learn to contest evaluation even if only in taking the pragmatic position of employing forms of evaluation that they have created (ideally with the participation of those they work with) *in addition* to those they are currently mandated to use. Only then can they resist a range of inhibitors to a practice grounded in, and reliant upon, this ethos for its efficacy. This means challenging policy based on short-term temporalities – temporalities known to make street work less, rather than more efficient. Therein a moot point, resisting the language and practice of New Public Management has created a situation in which the street work community is often identified as surly, antagonistic, and unwilling to engage with modern realities. Doubtless, some of the efforts made to cast it in this way are deliberate, but they can affect the public imagination and undermine the support that is so important in community-based practice. Re-imagining evaluation must, then, involve both maintaining confidence in what are sometimes regarded as historical understandings of evaluation but also becoming more assured in speaking the language of efficiency and effectiveness. Street workers should be assured that this has merit; notable examples of autonomous evaluation, and particularly those activities that have been on-going for considerable periods of time, illustrate the extraordinary efficiencies of good street work. Both qualitative and quantitative means can and should be used to evidence this.

None of this is going to be easy, but the enquiry here also intimates the potential of a positive future. Certainly, caring that evaluation systems care for the value base of street work seems key. Here the social dimensions of street work offer a spur; working with others through cooperative, collaborative and participative endeavour enables the multiple talents and perspectives of others to be accessed, exchanged and employed to illustrate the nuances of street work that are so often lost when

mechanistic, systematised and standardised processes take over. This implies a planned, strategic attempt to utilise street work networks in support of crafting new processes of evaluation - processes that not only respond to current political realities but advance new ones. Which only goes to reiterate the importance of participation in the evaluation process – this is necessarily a political process.

Evaluation offers the means by which we can learn to value the work we do. The challenge is to do so from multiple perspectives without losing sight of the primacy of the client's perspective. Placing those that street workers seek to serve at the centre of the evaluation process implies trusting to the internal and the local; and yet it may also be the most productive way of sorting out social problems at a national scale: prioritising the needs of the people street workers work with – both youth and adult – has benefits to them and wider society. These needs must drive data collection systems, both qualitative and quantitative. Indeed, further enquiry into quantitative analysis is necessary, but this should not overshadow further investment in understanding the impact of street work from a qualitative perspective. Only then can the tyranny of 'data' understood only as numbers be resisted and challenged. Data, as we see in this report, can be as nuanced as words, images, even sounds. It can be collected and documented through a wide variety of ways, from written and audio interviews to video recordings, case studies, even philosophical enquiry. It is where these methods are the product of street work that they can be most illuminating and have the greatest effect; they can enable client groups to learn and become empowered though their experience of engagement with the process of evaluation.

Nonetheless, bolstering capacity in statistical enquiry is needed also. It creates the opportunity to bring forward data – forms of data that might be alien to many street workers – that can trouble the very systems that prefer some metrics over others. This becomes a case of thinking critically about what data is requested, and what is not. The latter often has political capital; it can shame service providers in providing testament to unmet needs, discrimination and inequalities.

This is integral to protecting and advancing the rights of clients: *their* data, illustrating *their* realities, must be brought forward to bear witness to injustice. In so-doing, street work can find a way to be more pro-active, and live out its aims and values through the process of its evaluation. This then offers the potential to evaluate the very societies we live in.

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- **Evelyne Baillergeau**, PhD, is Senior Research Fellow at CREMIS, Montréal, Canada, and associate research fellow at the University of Amsterdam (The Netherlands). She specialises in qualitative sociology and has extensive experience in international comparative research, including across Europe. Her work focuses on the evaluation of social prevention practices with marginalised groups, and has a strong emphasis on street work.
- **Else Kristin Utne Berg**, is an Independent Consultant working in Norway and Portugal. She has been working in the field of outreach work and detached youth work for more than thirty years, including as a street worker, trainer and service manager. She has been responsible for implementing a community rapid assessment tool (HKH) across Norway, as well as managing a pilot project that is developing an innovative method for situation analysis in small outreach agencies.
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- **Hugo Rukavina**, works for StreetInvest, an international NGO based in London that supports and trains street workers across the world, principally in Africa. StreetInvest aims to provide guidelines and street work evaluation tools that are 'fit for purpose'.