

LEARNING POINT 38:

using evidence to help plan regeneration

FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you would like more information about any of the issues mentioned in this learning point, please contact:

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Support

The Community Engagement How To Guide has lots of useful case studies, resources and techniques to help you to work with communities.

The Scottish Centre for Regeneration has produced a learning point on using evidence within Regeneration Outcome Agreements.

Funding

The Scottish Community Action Research Fund gives funding to communities to carry out their own research.

Other formats

You can also ask for this publication in large print, Braille or audio cassette, and we also provide translations into other languages. Please contact 0131 479 5162 or email translations@communitiesscotland.gsi.gov.uk.



The views expressed in learning points are those of participants at various events and are not necessarily shared by their employers, the Scottish Centre for Regeneration (SCR) or Communities Scotland.

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What are learning points?

Learning points share what people have learned from their experience in regeneration – from people working or talking together, or from research into issues and evaluation of what is happening. Learning points can help people and organisations to improve their practice through identifying what works and what doesn't.

What is this learning point about?

This learning point summarises the discussions at an event which showcased how evidence has been used in planning four different Scottish examples of regeneration work. Collecting, analysing and using evidence when planning any regeneration activities can help make your work more effective.

There are two useful types of evidence: hard evidence like statistics and data, and soft evidence like experiences, views and priorities.

What are the important issues?

- Why and when is collecting and using evidence important in regeneration?
- How can evidence be gathered to support regeneration activities?
- How can communities be involved in gathering and using evidence?
- How can evidence be interpreted and verified?
- How can evidence be used in practice to achieve more effective regeneration activity?

What is already known?

- Regeneration is about creating opportunities for excluded or disadvantaged communities.
- To gain funding and support from others, a need or a problem to be solved must be shown.
- It is increasingly important to demonstrate the difference regeneration has made (the outcome). This means you must collect evidence that shows what your starting point was. And evidence about what has changed as a result.
- People often see evidence as statistics and numbers, but perceptions, views and experiences can also be valuable.
- Involving local people in work which includes planning and evidence gathering can have lasting benefits for their communities.



What has been learned?

Evidence is important to help clarify needs and priorities and to plan more effectively. It can also be a first step to involving communities in regeneration and can demonstrate that what you have done works.

Statistics must be meaningful to everyone – the available data can be difficult to interpret for people who are not experts.

Experiences, stories and views can be valuable evidence, and there are many ways to gather and record these, and as a result break down barriers to local people getting involved in regeneration projects. However, no one method fits all situations and a mixture of methods should be used.

Local people can play a key role in gathering evidence – people are often happier speaking to those they know. Community animateurs (local

people trained to speak to others in the community) and professional staff from regeneration organisations can also help.

Involving communities and a range of different organisations in gathering and analysing evidence can help to ensure that everyone's views are taken into account.

Linking to wider structures, like community planning, can be a good way to encourage joint working.

Working together can reduce duplication of effort. Gathering and analysing evidence is not a science, and the evidence gathered does not necessarily come up with one clear answer to the issues.

The way you ask questions also influences the responses you get.

It is important to dedicate time to analysing evidence, and making sure that evidence is backed up by different sources, compared and cross-checked.

Gathering evidence is only worthwhile if you can act on it. This can be a particular problem if local communities feel organisations are deliberately ignoring evidence. And so it is important to tell people what you are doing as a result of the evidence you have gathered. Early actions or 'quick wins' can help to demonstrate progress.

You should continually gather evidence of success, needs and experiences as part of your everyday work and ensure you analyse it effectively and act on your findings.

What next?

As people involved in regeneration, we need to:

- get better at capturing people's experiences as evidence;
- present statistics in a way that is meaningful to everyone;
- support communities to use evidence effectively;
- develop trust that we will gather and use evidence effectively – otherwise people will simply get fed up with the process;
- build evidence into our everyday work; and
- share our experiences of gathering and using evidence.

