



On 5th September 2018 we hosted the second event in our Masterclass series, this time on 'Measuring performance and outcomes in complex systems'. It was aimed at community safety partners, policy makers, performance and evaluation professionals and those working within community engagement and empowerment.

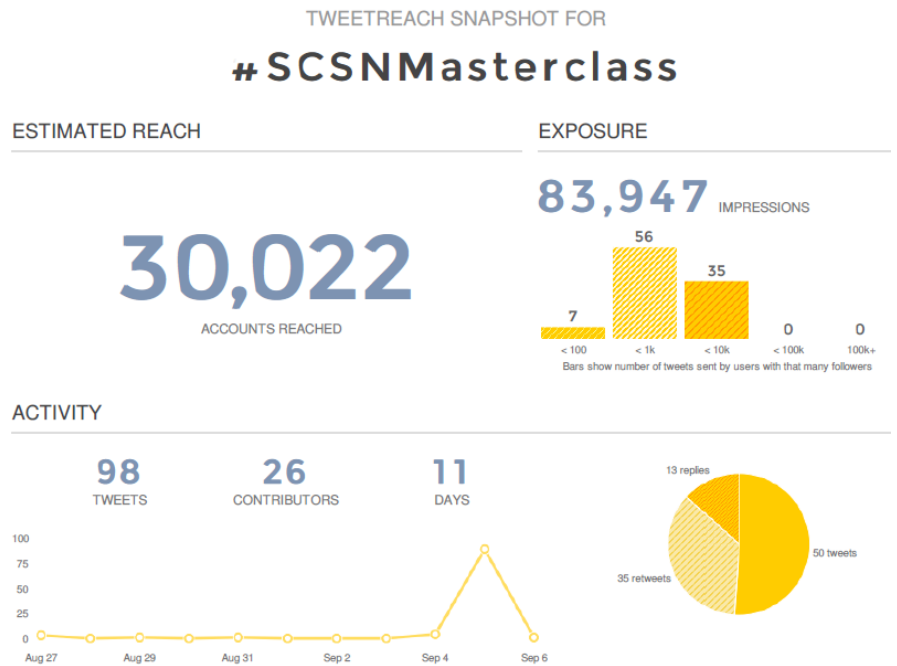
This seminar covered a different approach to performance management – one informed by the complexity of the systems in which we operate. We also heard from people and organisations that are putting these principles into practise, and participants had the opportunity to explore these ideas and provide opportunities to discuss how they could apply them to their own team, organisation and partnership.



We wanted to introduce this new approach – that at the heart of good outcomes lies a healthy system – to the community safety and justice sector in Scotland and get them to think about a new approach to performance management using this principle and what it might look like for them.

The Masterclass sold out and had a waiting list which was really positive and something the SCSN team were excited about as it is quite a step-change from previous SCSN training events. On the day we had 33 participants. We had some great questions, really interesting conversations and positive feedback from participants; with the sense that this is only the beginning of the journey for this approach within the safer communities sector.

We also had a Twitter # for the day with 98 tweets about the session reaching 30,000 accounts.



We circulated a Survey Monkey link to gather some feedback from participants and we also used a reflective method to gather people's personal reflections on the content.

This learning report pulls a summary of each of the sessions together with the formal and reflective feedback to give readers a sense of the day and the major learning points. We see this as one stop on the journey of learning about complexity and will be using the Masterclass and the learning report as a springboard to develop further support and guidance for people working in complex systems; for example practical examples of applications, further learning sessions.

The Powerpoint presentations from the day have been sent to participants and are available on request for others. We also videoed the day and you can access presentations [here](#) if you were unable to attend on the day or want to dip back into the sessions. A summary of the sessions and some reflections are covered below.

Session 1: Does using “impact” or “outcomes” for performance management create worse outcomes and increase costs?

Dr Toby Lowe, Newcastle University Business School

The outcomes which we care about – like safer communities – are created by hundreds of factors all working together. They are the products of complex systems. They aren't delivered by organisations alone.



Funding or performance managing organisations on the basis of outcomes like the one above is to hold people accountable for things they don't control. In fact, the evidence shows that if you try to hold people

accountable for things they don't control, you make the system worse, and you (perversely) end up with worse outcomes.

Session 2: Improving performance in complex systems – how might we 'performance manage' differently?

Dr Toby Lowe, Newcastle University Business School

This new complexity-informed paradigm has three key ideas:

- That the people who do this work are intrinsically motivated
- That learning is the engine for performance improvement
- That funders, commissioners and performance management teams need to take responsibility for the health of the systems that produce positive outcomes

This is a fairly new concept for the SCSN audience but really resonated with the participants with lots of questions and discussion.

You can view Dr. Toby Lowe's presentation on our Youtube account. View Part 1 [here](#) and Part 2 [here](#).

Session 3: Some case studies of where people and organisations are managing performance, funding and commissioning differently.

Elaine Wilson, Corra Foundation and Marie-Amelie Viatte, Inspiring Scotland's LinkUp team.

Both Elaine and Marie-Amelie spoke about the use of reflective practice by the teams of community-based workers and how this collective analysis of weekly logs allows them to pull out themes and begin to assess the impact. It is now becoming an inquisitive space, permits peer review and support and a way of sharing learning between team members, all of which are hallmarks of a healthy system.

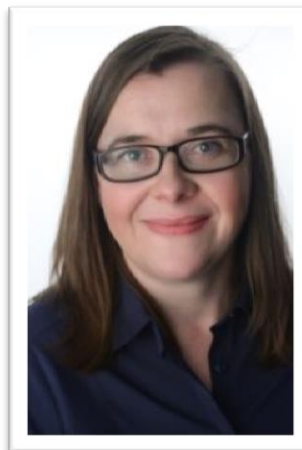
This was a good session which gave people the opportunity to see how frontline staff assess the impact of their work without being measured on, for example, the number of visits they do or events they attend etc.

You can view Elaine Wilson's presentation on our Youtube channel [here](#).

Session 4: Conversations on applications.

In groups participants talked about

- ? Discuss the relative value placed on qualitative vs quantitative data. Why does this happen? What can we do to redress the balance?
- ? *When does 'anecdote' becomes evidence? What can we do to help this along?*
- ? What's easy to measure vs what's right to measure? How can we make the change?
- ? Where are people in this?



Key highlights from the conversations were:

1. We need to work on **rebalancing the relative value** placed on quantitative and qualitative data. There is a **skills gap** for recording and understanding qualitative data, and gaps around using both types of data to tell the full story. There is also the need for people to **explore quantitative data by** asking questions and interrogating it rather than simply taking it at face value. Data should follow a shared vision, not be the beginning of it.
2. Definitions are important in relation to opinions and stories, and we need to get **better at recording individual stories** and **building them up into a shared narrative** and body of evidence.
3. We need to **share these approaches** and **instigate change** at all levels to stop counting unnecessary, and in some case, damaging and meaningless things.
4. We need to **involve people**, but this is a big culture change for some organisations and sectors and is a lengthy process – all about **relationships and trust**.

Some helpful advice that came from these discussions were things like not trying to change the whole system at once but instead try and **carve out small bits of the system to change** e.g. in your own role, the way your team works etc rather than being paralysed by inaction because you can't change the whole system. Start building relationships and trust within teams and partnerships, focus on learning, permit people to try different things and make mistakes.

Feedback

We had two ways of gathering feedback from the Masterclass – reflections using an 'unfolding stories' approach from My Home Life (thank you!) and a short online survey using Survey Monkey that we asked all participants to fill in.

Survey results:

12/16 people gave the speakers and inputs four or five stars.

10/16 people gave the networking four or five stars.

11/16 people gave the venue and catering four or five stars.

12/16 people gave the event overall four or five stars. The remaining four people gave it three stars.

Most people heard about the event via the SCSN email or was passed it by a colleague.

"I just want more senior leaders to have access to this"

Participant

"One of the best events that I have attended. I really enjoyed Dr Lowe's input and the opportunity to have the conversations and a chance to put the practice into theory"

Participant

"The speakers were good but I could have done with more practical support to outcome measurement. I'd like to have seen more case studies"

Participant

We could have allocated some time to discuss some other questions which may have helped those who wanted something practical from the session e.g.

1. What would it look like for you to work in this way?
 - a. How would you use trust to empower your frontline staff?
 - b. How will use measure for improvement?
 - c. What would a learning system look like for your organisation/system?
2. What's your role in nurturing the healthy systems that produce positive outcomes?

Learning

Participants were asked How much they knew about managing performance in complex environments before the session and whether the event increased their understanding (they were asked to pitch their knowledge on a sliding scale of 0-100):

- Before the session (average score 45. 6 people around the 20-30 mark and 7 around 50-65 mark).

- Following the session (average score 64. 6 people from 80-100, 7 from 50-70 and 3 people around 20-30 mark)

Finally, participants were asked what their main 'takeaway' was from the day, and whether there was anything they would do differently when they got back to work.

"Thinking through the outcomes we are really looking to achieve, not just the things we can measure"
Participant

"I understand more about the need to keep a system healthy. I need to think about how this can be put into practice in my own work"
Participant

"I think it made me consider the value of self-evaluation more and how to get the best from this, creating the climate for effective partnership working"
Participant

"More confident in trying to persuade others about the challenges of using traditional outcome measures"
Participant

Reflections

We asked participants at the end of the day to use these prompts as a group or individually to collect their thoughts as a group or individually. Thanks to My Home Life Scotland for the prompts.

"Review how we fund and evaluate partnership initiatives"
Participant

I've compiled a story from my overall sense of the day but the full list is available on request – just email info@scsn.org.uk. Hopefully this is the start of a series of conversations we wish to continue.

My word of the moment is bravery

It's a bit radical but could we stop 'measuring' and start *understanding*

I would like to think more about what I can do

Let's stop counting pointless things

I'd be upset if we didn't try and change things together

Let's start by questioning why we do things and measuring what matters

Imagine if everyone challenged the rules / processes more often

We'd like to say a big thank you to our speakers on the day – Toby, Elaine and Marie-Amelie – and our participants for asking questions, talking honestly and most of all for being comfortable stepping into uncertainty with us!

At SCSN we are going to continue these conversations in our network and embed these approaches and principles in our own organisation and the work we do. We are also going to think about how we can share this learning more widely and how we can support people to do this. We will continue to link with Dr Lowe and others as part of the developing community of practice, share these approaches more widely, something that the participants on the day were keen to see happen.

Our ask of you, if you attended on 5th September, watched the input on our YouTube channel or want to get involved is that you keep these conversations going, share the approaches widely (or "shout from the rooftops" as one of our participants said!), and think about how you could take something of this into your own workplace or team – carve out your own small bit of change. Be brave!

We'd love to hear about what you do so get in touch with us at info@scsn.org.uk or 0131 225 7772 / 8700.

You can keep in touch with what we're up to at www.safercommunitiesscotland.org where you can also sign up for our monthly newsletter. Or Like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter:



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