

The challenge of monitoring benefit

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In launching his review, Sir Michael Marmot called on councils to improve monitoring, evaluating and sharing of evidence from their health inequalities work.

Local authorities are undoubtedly thorough record keepers - but it is a whole lot easier to record how many people receive services than how much they have actually benefited from them.

Traditionally, public sector organisations have lacked an understanding of how to develop an approach to benefits realisation for the services they provide and ensure they are measuring the right things to assess the return on public investment.

The burden therefore falls on the local authority leadership to create a genuine learning culture within their organisations that acknowledges good practice and uses this learning to drive change.

Historically, this has not been in place in most organisations but this might be changing. Many of the authorities we work with recognise the importance of tracking benefits and when embarking on pilot initiatives are including benefits tracking as a key work stream.

Local authorities are bombarded with opportunities to share learning, whether through regional working groups, communities of best practice, pathfinder programmes, collaborative online tools or local benchmarking clubs.

The challenge is often in knowing the most effective channel in which to spread learning and absorb the most helpful best practice from elsewhere.

If Marmot can offer practical advice and tools that can help them better track the benefits of their work - making the case for continued investment and the expansion of success - I am sure councils would welcome this.

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