Summary of the Principles of Pragmatic Evaluation Event

Event structure

Key leaders in the field of health and social care policy, practice, research and evaluation attended a West of England Evaluation Strategy Group workshop in December 2015. The 35 participants provided input to the development of a common vision, strategy and action plan for evaluation though exploring a series of key questions. In summary, participants addressed issues such as building a culture to ensure meaningful evaluation is conducted, which is rigorous, ethical and supports public involvement.

Main findings

A number of the challenges of undertaking evaluation were explored and possible ways forward were identified. Importantly, there was a desire to support a culture of evaluation that ensures it becomes part of ‘normal’ practice, a position that could be supported through sharing learning and good practice across the group and beyond.

It was also felt that evaluation needs to foster a quality improvement approach which seeks to ensure the patient is at the centre of activity where possible. Participants suggested genuine co-production is needed thorough the involvement of patients and the public as part of evaluation teams. It was felt that having an inclusive approach to recruitment would also ensure representation of ‘hard to reach’ populations within evaluation activity.

The need to ensure evaluations are accessible to others was proposed. It was suggested that this could be supported through the use of a common language that can be understood and used by practitioners and the public. Conducting evaluations within an ethical framework was seen as key, and ideally a review process should be in place to ensure ethical conduct.

The importance of conducting rigorous and relevant evaluations was discussed. It was proposed that rigor could be supported through the use of evaluation toolkits.

Outcomes and actions

The findings are being taken forward in a number of ways.

1. Those participating in the event pledged to undertake a series of actions within their own practice and organisations
2. A set of key recommendations have been presented to the West of England Strategy Group and will be taken forward by members and the CLAHRCwest evaluation theme team
3. A set of tools to support wider evaluation activity will be produced including a set of guidelines to support patient and public involvement, an on-line toolkit with a 5-step guide (http://www.nhsevaluationtoolkit.net) and principles to support good practice in ethics.
4. A programme for evaluation training in place which include a 2-hour workshop called ‘Getting Started with Evaluation’ which is available on demand (http://clahrc-west.nihr.ac.uk/news-item/new-workshop-getting-started-service-evaluation/) and a range of other courses at http://clahrc-west.nihr.ac.uk/training-and-capacity-building/.
5. Good practice will be shared though a series of case studies (http://www.nhsevaluationtoolkit.net/resources/case-studies/)
6. A virtual evaluation network to support a community of practice is being explored. Contact Jo Bangoura if you would like to subscribe (j.bangoura@nhs.net).

For those interested in finding our more about the event, the full report can be accessed at http://clahrc-west.nihr.ac.uk/evaluation/principles-pragmatic-evaluation-event/.