

THE  
ACCESS  
TO JUSTICE  
FOUNDATION



# MEASURING JUSTICE

**The opportunities and  
challenges of measuring  
legal advice outcomes**

## Table of Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Introduction.....  | 2  |
| Search Strategy.....   | 2  |
| Executive Summary.....   | 3  |
| Recommendations.....   | 5  |
| Initialisms and Acronyms.....  | 7  |
| Figures.....   | 7  |
| Findings.....  | 8  |
| Theory of Change in Advice Sector Outcome Measurement.....   | 8  |
| The Challenge of Attribution in Measuring Advice Sector Impacts.....   | 9  |
| Data Collection.....   | 10 |
| Soft vs Hard Outcomes.....   | 13 |
| Challenges in Data Analysis and Interpretation.....  | 16 |
| Challenges and Opportunities in Data Aggregation and Comparison.....   | 16 |
| Data Quality Challenges.....   | 17 |
| Prioritising the Client's View: Empowering Service Users to Shape Outcomes.....                                | 17 |
| The Client Journey: A Framework for Understanding Outcomes in Advice-Giving.....                               | 18 |
| Obstacles to Client Engagement in Outcome Measurement.....   | 19 |
| Obstacles to Engaging Service Providers in Outcome Measurement.....  | 20 |
| Navigating Funder and Donor Influences on Outcome Measurement.....   | 21 |
| Outcome Domains: Defining Success for Advice-Giving Organisations.....   | 22 |
| Beyond Individual Outcomes: Advice Services as Catalysts for Systemic Change.....                              | 23 |
| The Standardisation Dilemma: Finding the Right Balance for Advice Services.....                                | 24 |
| Conclusion: Implications for the 'Improving Lives Through Advice' Programme and MEL Framework Development..... | 26 |
| Contextual Analysis and Strategic Objectives.....  | 26 |
| Recommendations for MEL Framework Development.....   | 26 |
| A Model for Outcome Measurement and Sector Transformation.....   | 29 |
| Bibliography.....  | 31 |

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## Introduction

This literature review, commissioned by The Access to Justice Foundation, examines advice organisations' diverse methodologies and frameworks to measure their outcomes and impact. Providing accessible legal advice is crucial for navigating complex legal systems and empowering individuals within their communities. However, understanding the effectiveness of such services poses unique challenges. This review investigates various approaches organisations use to address clients' immediate legal needs while fostering a broader societal understanding of legal rights.

The importance of outcome measurement in the legal advice sector is undeniable. By understanding the impact of their services, organisations can not only refine their approaches for higher-quality advice and better reach marginalised communities but also demonstrate their value to funders. This data also becomes vital for advocating for policies that improve access to justice for all. This review highlights frameworks that seek to assist in this process, such as Theory of Change (ToC), which offers a structured approach to understanding the pathways towards desired outcomes. It also spotlights the fundamental challenge of attribution: isolating and evidencing the specific causal link between advice services and outcomes within a complex network of support, external factors, and unpredictable client decision-making processes.

Varying data quality, ethical considerations when engaging service users, and the need for adaptable data collection methodologies are also key themes explored in this review. The literature emphasises the value of mixed methods approaches that prioritise the client's perspective throughout their journey. Additionally, it examines challenges such as client engagement, the influence of funders, and inconsistencies in cross-sector measurement standards.

Ultimately, this review aims to contribute to ongoing discussions and refinements in outcome measurement practices within the legal advice sector. By fostering an adaptive and client-centric approach, we can better understand and capture these organisations' significant contributions to individuals and society. This understanding is crucial, as it holds the promise of refining strategies, empowering marginalised communities, demonstrating value to funders, and ultimately advocating for a legal system that ensures justice for all.

## Search Strategy

A multifaceted approach was adopted to capture the breadth and depth of outcome measurement practices within advice-giving organisations, with a particular focus on the UK legal advice sector.

- **Initial Exploration:** The initial search utilised Boolean operators to combine critical terms like "outcome measurement," "advice-giving organisations," and "impact assessment." This broad exploration served to establish a comprehensive understanding of the existing literature and relevant frameworks.
- **Targeted Sources:** Following the initial exploration, the search strategy transitioned to focus on trusted sources specifically aligned with the UK legal advice landscape. This included websites such as AdviceUK, a leading national organisation and support network for independent advice organisations, and the Social Science Research Network, a platform known for its concentration on social science research outputs. Additionally, targeted government resources were incorporated to ensure alignment with policy frameworks and evaluation practices within the public sector, acknowledging the unique needs of vulnerable populations served by legal advice organisations. To further enrich the search, resources were solicited from contacts at The Access to Justice Foundation (the organisation commissioning this review) and other contacts at relevant UK organisations, including the Public Law Project and The National Council of Civil Liberties. This outreach to experts in the field provided valuable insights and access to resources that might not have been identified through traditional search methods.
- **Refined Search Based on Literature:** A snowballing technique was employed as the review progressed, utilising the reference lists of identified articles to discover further relevant literature. This allowed for a more focused and relevant search as the research questions became more refined. Client-centric methodologies were prioritised during this stage, reflecting the importance

of capturing outcomes from the service recipient's perspective. Recognising the interconnected nature of advice services, the search explored other relevant sectors, such as housing or mental health, to capture the broader impact of advice-giving services.

- **Expanding the Scope:** Acknowledging that the outcomes of legal advice interventions may extend beyond immediate legal solutions, the search strategy was broadened to encompass "softer" outcomes such as increased client empowerment. This aspect of the search drew inspiration from evaluation frameworks utilised in related fields like domestic violence support, where empowerment is a key desired outcome.
- **Grey Literature:** To capture the practical expertise of practitioners, the search strategy included grey literature sources such as unpublished evaluations and toolkits specifically designed for advice-giving organisations. Additionally, the review process was flexible regarding terminology, ensuring relevant findings were consolidated even where different terms were used to describe similar concepts.

## Executive Summary

The executive summary below highlights key findings from the literature review, outlining challenges and recommending strategies for improvement.

### 1. Theory of Change (ToC)

The literature explores the use of Theory of Change (ToC) in the advice sector, highlighting its strengths and potential limitations:

- **Structured Approach:** ToC offers a structured way to understand causal pathways and clarify goals, assumptions, and links between project elements. This facilitates the identification of both immediate service results and broader societal changes.
- **Data Alignment:** The literature recommends aligning data collection with the ToC journey to monitor progress and support continuous improvement.
- **Potential for Overcomplexity:** In complex fields like legal advice, ToC models can become overly intricate, potentially hindering practical assessment. The literature emphasises the need to balance the benefits of ToC with the importance of practicality.

### 2. The Challenge of Attribution

The literature consistently emphasises the significant challenge of attributing outcomes directly to specific advice interventions. This challenge arises due to several factors:

- **Complex Interconnectedness:** Advice services operate within a network of support, external factors, and complex legal systems. Isolating the impact of one intervention can be extremely difficult.
- **Unpredictable Client Decisions:** Client decision-making is influenced by unpredictable external circumstances, potentially obscuring the direct impact of advice.
- **Time-Delayed Outcomes:** The full impact of advice services may take considerable time to manifest.

### *Recommendations for Addressing Attribution*

The literature proposes strategies for addressing this challenge, including:

- **Mixed-Methods Research:** Combining quantitative and qualitative data can provide a more nuanced understanding of the factors contributing to change.
- **Cross-Sector Data Sharing:** Collaborating with other organisations can reveal a broader picture of outcomes and the influence of multiple interventions.

- **Identifying Correlated Factors:** While direct cause-and-effect can be elusive, the literature emphasises the value of identifying factors that correlate with positive client outcomes. This knowledge can inform practice by highlighting elements that seem to support improvement, guiding the design and delivery of advice services for greater impact.

### 3. Data Collection in the Advice Sector

The literature reveals key principles and strategies for effective data collection in the advice sector:

- **Ethical Considerations Paramount:** Protecting client privacy and respecting vulnerabilities is crucial. Organisations must balance robust data collection with the ethical handling of sensitive information.
- **Leverage Existing Data & Adapt Tools:** Valuable insights can be gained from Client Management Systems and similar existing data sources. Adapting tools from other fields to address the sector's specific needs may also be beneficial.
- **Flexible and Adaptable Methods:** Tailoring research methods to the organisation's goals is essential while factoring in resource limitations and ethical concerns. Embracing technological advancements offers opportunities to enhance data collection and analysis rigour.
- **Comprehensive Understanding Through Mixed Methods** Combining quantitative data with qualitative methods like client testimonials, case studies, interviews, and focus groups provides a richer, more nuanced understanding of both short- and long-term outcomes. This approach also helps illustrate success, refine service offerings, and ethically demonstrate value to stakeholders.
- **Specific Tools for Assessing Impact** Existing tools like surveys and adapted measures like the Richter Scale and Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWEBS) are valuable. Collaborative frameworks like the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) facilitate broader data collection and sharing.

### 4. Challenges in Data Analysis, Interpretation, and Quality

The literature highlights significant obstacles in the analysis, interpretation, and overall quality of outcomes data within the advice sector:

- **Bias and Subjectivity:** Researcher or funder motivations can introduce bias, while the inherent subjectivity of interpretation can lead to differing conclusions. Maintaining objectivity and considering diverse perspectives is crucial for a balanced analysis.
- **Ethical Limitations:** Client confidentiality concerns pose significant restrictions. These limitations often prevent in-depth file reviews, which involve detailed analysis of case notes, correspondence, and other sensitive client information, limiting the depth of analysis possible.
- **Resource and Methodological Constraints** Smaller organisations often lack resources for robust data sharing and analysis, hindering sector-wide understanding. Additionally, varied maturity levels in data collection, storage, and analysis across organisations further reduce the reliability and comparability of outcomes data. This variation hampers the ability to gain comprehensive insights into the sector's overall impact.
- **Defining Success:** Disagreements about what constitutes "good" evidence reveal power imbalances that shape what metrics are considered important. Focusing on short-term, funder-driven metrics risks undermining long-term impact and the flexibility to accurately capture the full spectrum of benefits advice services provide.
- **Balancing Standardisation and Baselines:** Inconsistent outcome standards across the advice sector pose challenges for broad comparisons and advocacy, yet they offer opportunities for flexibility and tailored metrics. Additionally, the absence of historical baselines hinders the ability to demonstrate change over time. The ideal solution balances sector-driven standardisation with flexibility while ensuring baselines are established for accurate tracking.
- **Recommendations:** The literature advocates for a multi-pronged approach to address these challenges, including mitigating bias through objectivity and transparency in data analysis; prioritising ethical data handling practices; developing efficient and secure data-sharing

mechanisms; creating sector-driven standards that balance consistency, comparability, baselines, and flexibility; and fostering a culture of continuous improvement in data management and analysis methodologies.

## 5. The Client Perspective

The literature consistently emphasises the importance of a client-centric approach to outcome measurement within the advice sector. It stresses that top-down methods risk overlooking the complexities of lived experiences and can lead to services that don't fully meet clients' needs.

- **Participatory Design:** The review advocates for participatory design, with clients actively shaping measurement tools and defining outcomes. This collaboration enhances outcomes, better reflects client priorities, protects ethical considerations, and increases both client and staff engagement.
- **Client Journey Framework:** Using a client journey framework to map interactions within the advice process reveals what works, areas needing improvement, and how resources should be distributed for maximum client impact.

## 6. Challenges of Client Engagement

Despite the benefits, the literature acknowledges these key challenges to engaging clients in outcome measurement:

- **Post-Resolution Disengagement:** Clients often disengage after their immediate issue is resolved, hindering longer-term impact data collection.
- **Burden on Advisers and Clients:** Frontline advisers may perceive outcome measurement as an additional burden. Vulnerable clients may lack the capacity to participate due to mental, emotional, or linguistic barriers.
- **Strategies for Success:** Organisations must embed outcome measurement into their core culture, prioritise informed client consent, and create culturally and linguistically sensitive tools. Flexibility in approach is crucial, as a "one-size-fits-all" method will not adequately capture clients' diverse needs and vulnerabilities.

## 7. Organisational and Funder Challenges

The literature highlights significant obstacles to effective outcomes measurement within advice organisations, particularly for smaller entities:

- **Staff and Organisational Buy-in:** Gaining buy-in from staff and across the organisation can be difficult due to limited resources, time constraints, and a lack of research and data analysis expertise. Additionally, there may be concerns that data collection could negatively impact client relationships or place additional burdens on vulnerable individuals.
- **Funder Expectations:** Funders often emphasise quantifiable outputs and short-term results, which can pressure organisations to prioritise easily measurable successes over meaningful, long-term improvements for clients. This misalignment can hinder the development of robust measurement practices.

## Recommendations

The literature proposes several strategies to overcome these challenges:

- **Fostering a Learning Culture:** Organisations should prioritise a culture of continuous improvement, providing training opportunities, and celebrating successes related to outcomes measurement. This helps build staff buy-in and internal capacity.
- **Collaborative Approach with Funders:** The literature calls for a more collaborative approach. Organisations should work with funders to develop bespoke measurement tools that align with realistic expectations and the complexities of advice work. This advocacy is crucial for establishing a shared understanding of success.

- **Recognising Complexity and Value:** Funders must be encouraged to recognise the inherent complexity of advice work and the importance of a comprehensive approach to outcomes measurement. This shift is required to capture the true transformative impact services can have on clients' lives.

### Outcome Domains, Metrics and Beyond

The literature highlights the complex and multi-faceted nature of outcomes measurement in the advice sector. Advice organisations need to consider a wide range of outcomes, including empowerment, psychological well-being, efficiency in resource use, and the overall client experience.

- **Metrics and a Comprehensive Approach:** Specific metrics like client demographics, service delivery data, and well-being scales are essential to evaluate these domains. A thoughtful balance between breadth and applicability is crucial. Organisations can choose various data methods (e.g., surveys and interviews) to generate data for relevant metrics.
- **Moving Beyond Outputs:** The literature advocates for expanding beyond basic output metrics, such as cases closed. A comprehensive approach that integrates measurable outcomes with clients' qualitative experiences is essential. This strategy ensures that the evaluation process aligns with organisational goals and captures the transformative essence of advice services (e.g., building client confidence and fostering long-term well-being).
- **Balancing Short-Term and Long-Term Outcomes:** While short-term indicators provide immediate insights, capturing the nuanced, long-term effects on empowerment necessitates a broader array of measurement tools. Striking a balance between short-term and long-term outcomes is crucial for a comprehensive understanding of impact.
- **Limitations of Client Satisfaction:** Client satisfaction surveys can be susceptible to the "pew effect" (a sense of relief that can be mistaken for lasting positive change). Clients' immediate satisfaction after an interaction may not reflect the long-term impact of advice services. Therefore, relying solely on client satisfaction as a metric can provide a misleading picture of effectiveness.
- **Soft Outcomes:** "Soft" outcomes like empowerment and mental well-being are crucial but challenging to quantify. The literature emphasises the importance of involving clients in creating measurement tools and employing mixed methods (combining quantitative and qualitative data) to comprehensively capture the transformative effects of advice.
- **Catalysing Systemic Change:** Advice organisations can drive broad societal change by shifting focus to community-wide outcomes. Systems analysis frameworks, collaborative efforts, real-world evidence, and strategic partnerships are key to measuring systemic change and informing policy advocacy.

## Initialisms and Acronyms

**ToC** - Theory of Change

**IAG** - Information, Advice, and Guidance

**MSC** - Most Significant Change

**SMS** - Short Message Service

**CAF** - Common Assessment Framework

**RCT** - Randomised Controlled Trial

**SWEMWEBS** - Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale

**CMI** - Client Management Information

**EMMIE** - Effectiveness, Mechanisms, Moderators, Implementation, Economics (model)

**GRADE** - Grading of Recommendations, Assessment, Development, and Evaluations

**MOCA** - Measuring Outcomes from Citizens Advice

**A2J BC** - Access to Justice British Columbia

**QoL** - Quality of Life

**LSC** - Legal Services Corporation

**CABx** - Citizens Advice Bureaux

**CAS** - Citizens Advice Scotland

**AGOs** - Advice-Giving Organisations

**MEL** - Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning

**AICS** - Advice in Community Settings

**ILTA** - Improving Lives Through Advice

## Figures

[Figure 1: ToC Example \(Mayor of London, 2023\)](#)

[Figure 2: LawWorks activities and impact report: ToR Exert \(LawWorks, 2021\)](#)

[Figure 3: Barriers to Legal Advice ToC \(Poole, 2018\)](#)

[Figure 4: Outcomes Identified through MSC \(Franzen, 2018\)](#)

[Figure 5: How advice leads to improved health outcomes \(Gebremariam, A. et al., 2023\)](#)

[Figure 6: Outcome Web](#)

[Figure 7: List of possible Data Collection tools for outcomes measurement](#)

[Figure 8: Data Maturity Themes Organisations are Scored Against \(Data Orchard 2022\)](#)

[Figure 9: Extract of Victorian community legal sector outcomes measurement framework \(Federation of Community Legal Centres \(Victoria\), 2017\)](#)

## Findings

### Theory of Change in Advice Sector Outcome Measurement

Several studies within the literature investigate the potential use of Theory of Change (ToC) for outcome measurement. A ToC approach serves as a framework for identifying outcomes and pinpointing potential areas for programme enhancement.

#### Theory of Change as a Framework

The Advice in Community Settings Year 1 Evaluation Report (Mayor of London 2023) underscores the value of ToC in understanding a programme's causal chains, assumptions, and the factors both hindering and promoting success. ToC employs logic modelling to clarify linkages between various elements: inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and long-term impacts. Breckon (2018) similarly describes ToC as a means to delineate interventions, measurable effects, and wider benefits. This approach ensures clarity on goals and intended change.

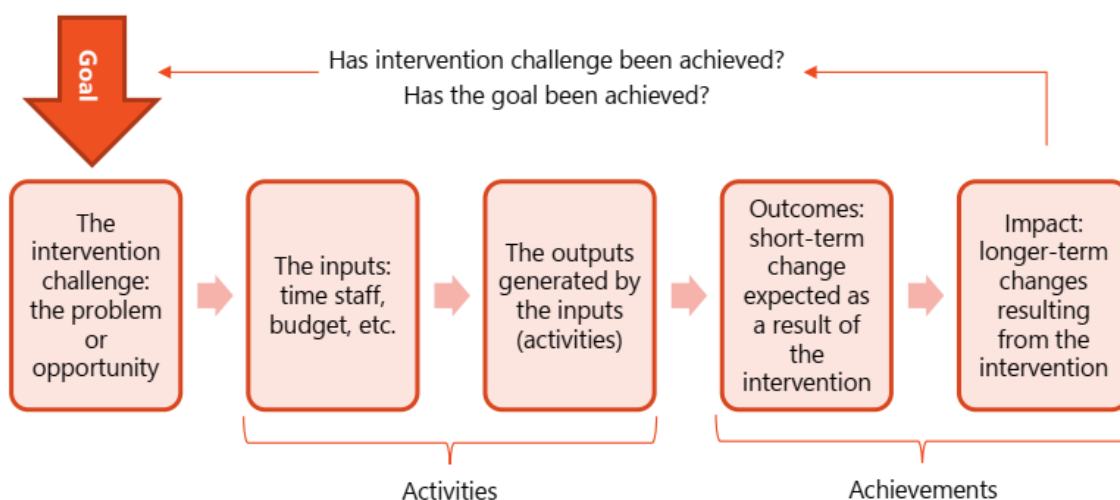


Figure 1: ToC Example (Mayor of London, 2023)

#### Differentiating Outcomes and Impacts

Breckon (2018) stresses the importance of distinguishing between outcomes and impacts. Outcomes pertain to the direct results of a service (e.g., favourable legal resolution, improved client understanding), while impacts encompass broader societal changes (e.g., reduced re-offending, community empowerment). Appreciating both dimensions is crucial for a holistic assessment of programme effectiveness, particularly within the legal advice field.

#### Data Collection and the Theory of Change Journey

Breckon (2018) argues that a robust ToC approach should guide data collection at multiple stages, not solely upon final outcomes. Evaluating audience outreach and comprehension enhances programmes' ability to refine strategies and achieve long-term aims. Hughes and Gratton (2009) also posit that outcomes in Information, Advice, and Guidance (IAG) can be categorised temporally – immediate, intermediate, and long-term – with long-term societal gains linked to economic benefits.



Figure 2: LawWorks activities and impact report: ToR Exert (LawWorks, 2021)

### Theory of Change: Applicability and Limitations

Poole (2018) recognises the broad adoption of ToC frameworks. Their ability to promote critical thinking on effective practices strengthens project designs. Poole provides an example of a ToC illustrating the barriers to people seeking legal advice; the ToC outlines inputs and activities designed to address these barriers, leading to the intermediate outcome of greater awareness and longer-term impacts, like improved food security.

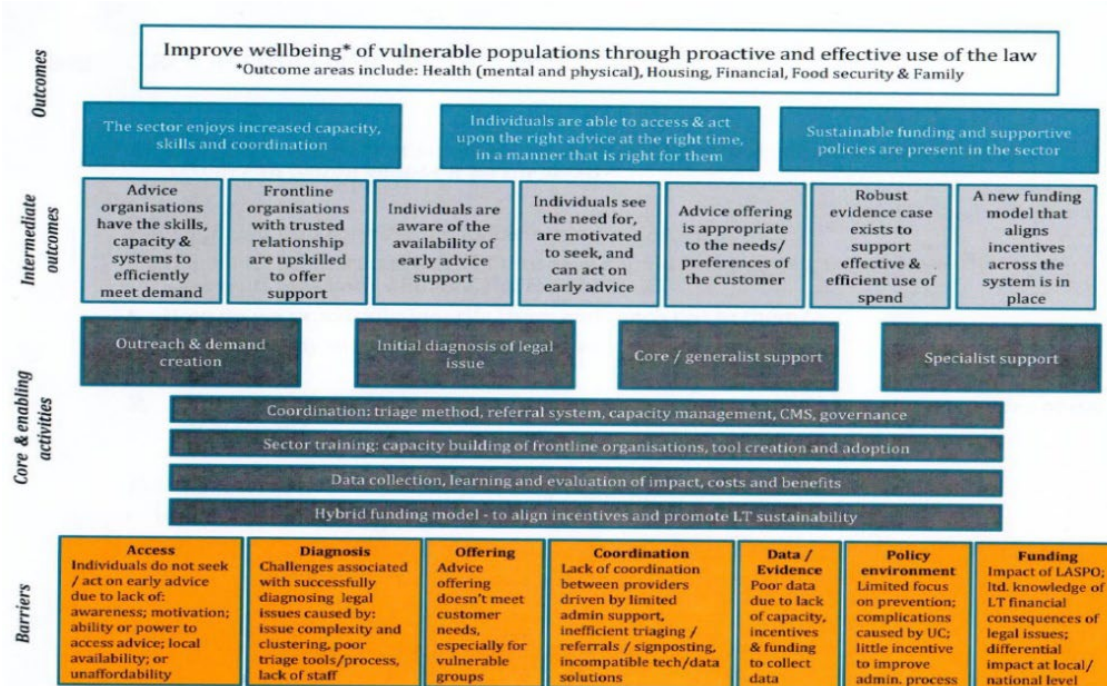


Figure 3: Barriers to Legal Advice ToC (Poole, 2018)

Nonetheless, she also notes limitations when ToC is used within complex interventions like legal advice. The complex and highly individual nature of these interventions can generate intricate models that lack clarity, undermining their potential as a framework for understanding programme efficacy.

### The Challenge of Attribution in Measuring Advice Sector Impacts

A recurring theme that emerges in the literature is the complexity of attribution. Organisations are shown to consistently grapple with isolating the concrete impact of a single initiative within the broader legal system and the intertwined needs of those experiencing legal, financial, or social justice-related difficulties. Several key points emerge from the literature.

## 1. Systemic Interdependence

Understanding the exact impact of any single advice service is tricky. This is because legal issues and the people seeking help are part of a complex network of factors. Often, people receive support from multiple places at once, making it hard to say which specific service helped the most (Dandurand & Jahn, 2013).

## 2. Influence of External Factors

Many factors outside an advice service's control can dramatically affect the outcome for someone who receives advice. These factors include changes in the law, unexpected events in society, and even the person's own life circumstances. This makes it difficult to know if the advice alone led to any improvement (Breckon, Dandurand & Jahn). Researchers also point out that people make decisions based on their unique situations, making it hard to predict how they'll act on advice, regardless of its quality (Hughes & Gration, citing Keep, 2004; Cassen & Kingdon, 2007).

## 3. Measuring Longer-Term Outcomes in Legal Advice

Measuring the long-term impact of legal advice services presents a distinct challenge within the broader issue of attribution. The literature demonstrates that the benefits of advice may only become apparent well after the initial intervention. Additionally, these effects can be indirect and far-reaching. For example, resolution of a housing issue could lead to secondary improvements in mental and overall well-being. These factors create complexity when attempting to link specific outcomes to the advice service provided.

Several key considerations highlighted within the research include:

- **Lost Contact:** Clients may be difficult to reach after their case concludes, hindering the ability to track long-term outcomes (Bhavnani, 2005). This lack of follow-up data obscures the potential for delayed success.
- **Client Hesitancy:** Overly intrusive surveys or frequent follow-ups can alienate clients and damage trust (Nurcombe, 2022). There is a risk of undermining long-term empowerment goals in the pursuit of short-term data.
- **Timing:** Success may not manifest immediately. Flexible timelines are needed to capture the potentially delayed positive effects of legal advice (Consilium Research & Consultancy, 2013).

**Conclusion - Limited Attribution vs. No Attribution:** While pinpointing exact cause-and-effect in advice outcomes has proven challenging, experts agree that abandoning impact measurement altogether is not the answer. Instead, shifting focus towards identifying factors within advice services that correlate with positive client outcomes offers significant value. By understanding these factors, service design and delivery can be improved for greater impact (Consilium).

## Data Collection

Advice-giving organisations rely on effective outcome measurement for success. Robust data collection strategies enable them to showcase impact, identify strengths, and target areas for improvement. Due to the diversity of outcomes, the literature offers flexible principles rather than a rigid methodology:

**Mining Existing Data:** Client management systems contain valuable, often underutilised information. The AICS Evaluation report (Mayor of London, 2023) exemplifies that analysing demographic data, service interactions, and financial outcomes can yield rich insights.

**Timing is Crucial:** Bhavnani (2005) warns against surveying clients too early, as advice takes time to have an impact. However, waiting too long can make clients' recall less accurate. The ideal timing will depend on the specific service.

**Adapting Proven Tools:** Organisations can creatively modify tools from other fields. A legal advice service might adapt the Richter Scale (typically focused on confidence) or draw inspiration from

frameworks like the Common Assessment Framework, used to personalise advice for young people [1, 2]. However, Rachel Hankins, a consultant with experience evaluating projects utilising the Richter Scale, highlights the potential limitations of such tools for traditional advice settings. These include cost, the tendency of clients to overestimate their well-being, and reliance on sustained client-worker relationships that may be less common in this context.

**The Importance of Aligning Tools and Questions:** The literature emphasises the need for careful alignment between the research questions you're asking and the tools you're employing (Breckon, 2018; Curran, 2013). Misalignment can significantly compromise the quality and insights gained from your research.

- **Focusing on Outcomes:** If you're aiming to measure specific outcomes, such as changes in eviction rates, quantitative approaches with clear metrics might be the best choice. To explore more subjective experiences, like clients' feelings of empowerment, consider qualitative methods that capture rich narratives.
- **Considering Context:** Legal advice covers diverse areas, from housing to family law. Using a research tool designed for one area in a significantly different context risks generating less insightful or even misleading data (Curran, 2013).

**Ethical Considerations:** Research in the advice sector, particularly the legal advice sector, must prioritise ethical principles. Client consent, privacy, and the sensitive nature of their circumstances necessitate a carefully considered approach to research methodology (Curran, 2013). The literature highlights several key themes:

- **Prioritising Client Well-being:** Methodological choices must never compromise client rights or undermine the primary goal of providing support. Randomised controlled trials (RCTs), while sometimes considered a research gold standard, can be ethically problematic if they necessitate denying services to a control group. Longitudinal studies offer a rigorous alternative that respects client needs (Moore, 2020).
- **Confidentiality and Context:** Stricter confidentiality requirements within the legal advice sector impact data collection practices. Certain methods, like focus groups, may require adaptation, and survey questions must be carefully designed to protect client privacy.
- **The Need for Tailored Tools:** Developing ethically sound research tools that are specifically sensitive to the context of legal advice is crucial for generating meaningful and reliable insights.

**Resource Considerations:** Effective outcome measurement in the advice sector requires careful consideration of both expertise and resources. Organisations may need to factor in the cost of external research support when designing their data collection strategies, as analysing interviews or creating effective surveys often requires specialised skills. The literature emphasises that research methods vary in complexity and cost (Curran, 2013). Smaller agencies, in particular, may benefit most from simpler, sustainable models that prioritise the regular collection of basic data. This approach can often provide more actionable insights than infrequent, resource-intensive studies.

**Technology** offers exciting possibilities for advice organisations seeking to improve outcome measurement. Tools like Qualtrics and SurveyMonkey simplify survey processes, while Short Message Service (SMS) expands outreach to clients with limited internet access. SMS allows for brief, targeted surveys or check-ins via mobile phone, ensuring a more inclusive approach to data collection. Cloud storage provides secure, scalable solutions for managing increasing amounts of data. However, it's crucial to weigh the potential benefits against practical considerations. Robust data security is essential to protect sensitive client information and uphold ethical standards. Organisations must also consider budgetary constraints and ensure they have the internal capacity to effectively analyse the data

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<sup>1</sup> The common assessment framework (CAF) is a process used to identify children's unmet needs and support them [https://www.learningladders.info/blog/common-assessment-framework/#:~:text=The%20common%20assessment%20framework%20\(CAF,provide%20the%20best%20support%20possible](https://www.learningladders.info/blog/common-assessment-framework/#:~:text=The%20common%20assessment%20framework%20(CAF,provide%20the%20best%20support%20possible).

<sup>2</sup> [https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/id/eprint/8156/7/Standards\\_Redacted.pdf](https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/id/eprint/8156/7/Standards_Redacted.pdf)

collected. By thoughtfully integrating technology while prioritising security and building staff skills, advice organisations can gain valuable insights, ultimately leading to enhanced services for their clients.

### Why Mixed Methods Matter: Deepening Impact Evaluation for Advice-Giving Organisations

The literature strongly advocates for using mixed methods approaches when evaluating the impact of advice organisations. Mixed methods blend quantitative data (like case resolution rates) with qualitative data (such as client narratives) to create a comprehensive understanding of outcomes. This approach is crucial in the advice sector, where the impact often extends beyond easily quantifiable metrics. By combining numerical trends with in-depth client stories, mixed methods can help illuminate the factors contributing to positive change, providing insights into how advice fosters empowerment or leads to broader life improvements (Curran, LawWorks). This nuanced understanding offers a more robust approach to addressing the attribution challenge within the complex landscape of the advice sector.

#### Beyond Numbers: The Power of Client Stories

While quantitative data, such as satisfaction surveys, offer important insights, they cannot fully capture the transformative power of advice services. Client stories detailing experiences like a newfound sense of financial confidence (Bhavnani, 2005) add a human dimension that resonates deeply with stakeholders. By skilfully weaving anonymised case studies into reports and communications, organisations like the Money Advice Service personalise their impact, going beyond mere statistics. This data storytelling technique makes a compelling case for continued and expanded support, demonstrating the real-world difference advice services make in the lives of clients.

#### The 'Most Significant Change' Technique

The 'Most Significant Change' (MSC) technique is a qualitative methodology that uses client narratives to gain deeper insights into the impact of interventions. Studies demonstrate the power of MSC, particularly when integrated with quantitative data (Franzen, 2018). This approach reveals personal stories of transformation and empowerment that traditional metrics may miss, placing clients' voices at the centre of impact evaluation. The MSC technique is valuable in sectors seeking to understand outcomes that extend beyond easily quantifiable data. While it may be more time intensive, MSC offers a distinct advantage by prioritising the richness of client experiences.

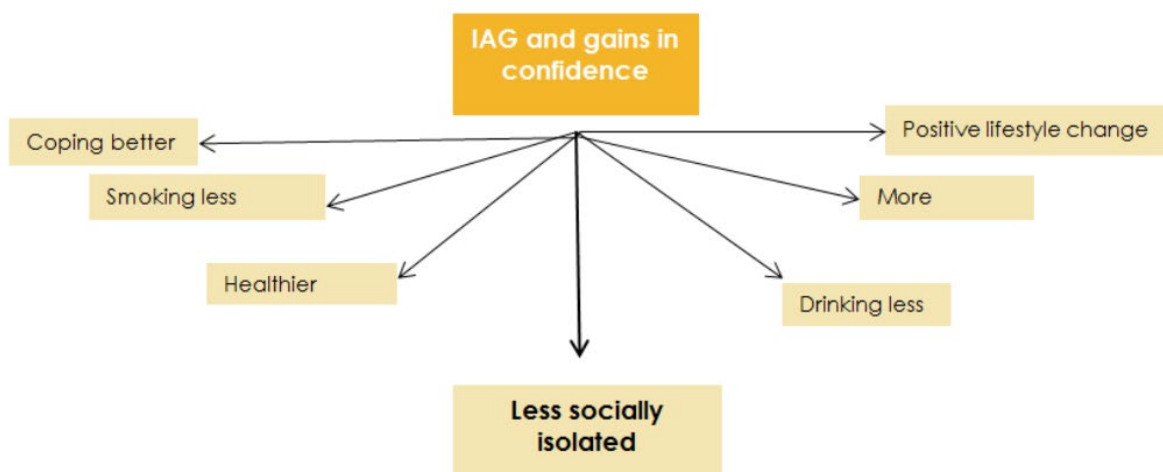


Figure 4: Outcomes Identified through MSC (Franzen, 2018)

#### Surveys: Gathering Information Efficiently

Surveys remain a vital tool for measuring outcomes in advice services (Bhavnani, 2005; Mayor of London, 2023). **Closed-ended questions** with pre-defined answer choices allow researchers to gather data quickly and easily, providing a quantifiable picture of service use. However, **open-ended questions**, where participants can respond in their own words, offer a deeper understanding of client experiences. These are particularly valuable when tracking the long-term impact of advice services. The AICS Evaluation report (Mayor of London, 2023) exemplifies the effectiveness of combining initial interviews with follow-up surveys to capture the lasting effects of advice services on clients' lives.

## Understanding Lived Experiences: Interviews and Focus Groups

When understanding individual and shared experiences is crucial, interviews and focus groups are powerful tools (Breckon, 2018). While these methods can be more time-consuming than surveys, they provide rich qualitative data about people's perspectives and experiences. **Open coding** is a data analysis technique where researchers identify recurring themes within interview or focus group transcripts. This can be particularly valuable for uncovering unexpected insights from the data.

## Ethical Considerations Drive Methodology

A focus on equitable outcomes and client-centred service must guide measurement approaches. Qualitative methods often provide a lens to uncover potential unintended consequences and can act as a counterbalance against an overreliance on purely quantitative data, particularly when working with vulnerable populations.

## Soft vs Hard Outcomes

Advice organisations create transformative change that extends far beyond immediate case resolutions or financial metrics. The literature emphasises the need to capture these 'soft outcomes' – the subtle yet profound shifts in clients' lives, such as increased empowerment, improved system navigation skills, and enhanced mental wellbeing – to tell the full story of an organisation's impact.

**Self-Advocacy and Resilience:** Advice can equip clients with the knowledge and tools to assert their rights, manage their affairs more effectively, and prevent future crises (Money and Pensions Service, 2022).

**Navigating Complex Systems:** Demystifying bureaucratic processes and providing clear guidance allows clients to interact with these systems more confidently and independently (Woodhead et al., 2017).

**Mental Health and Wellbeing:** By alleviating stress and anxiety associated with financial or legal difficulties, advice can contribute to improved mental wellbeing and better overall problem-solving abilities (Kitmitto, 2022).

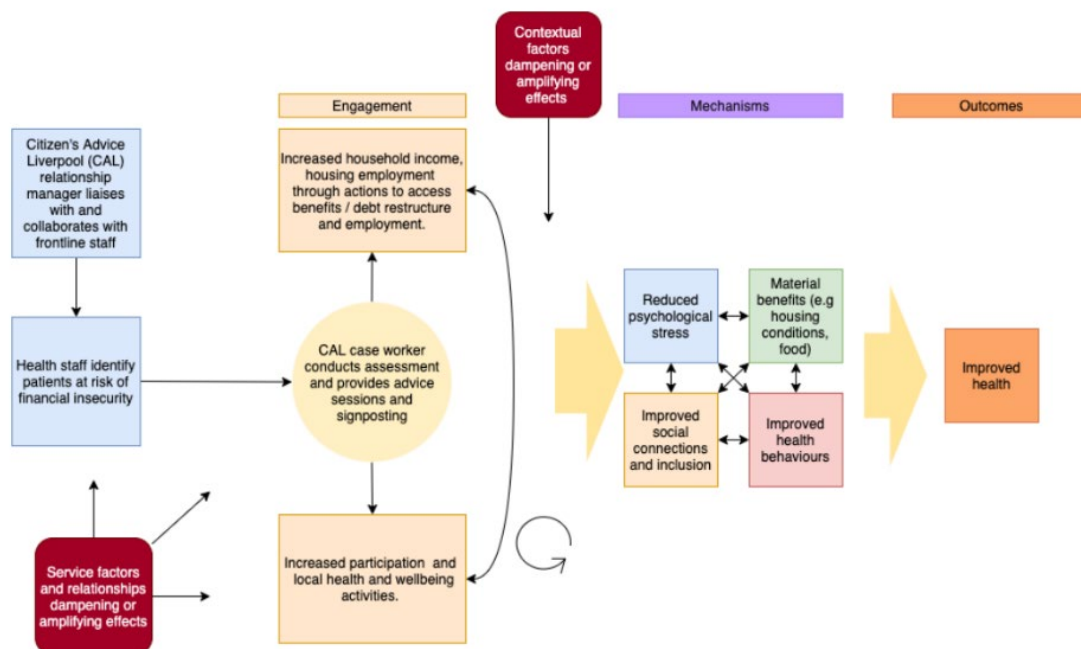


Figure 5: Illustration of how financial advice leads to improved health outcomes (Gebremariam, A. et al., 2023)

**The Transformative Process and Long-Term Impact:** While immediate "wins" are important, it's the journey of gaining confidence, skills, and understanding that lays the groundwork for lasting change. This

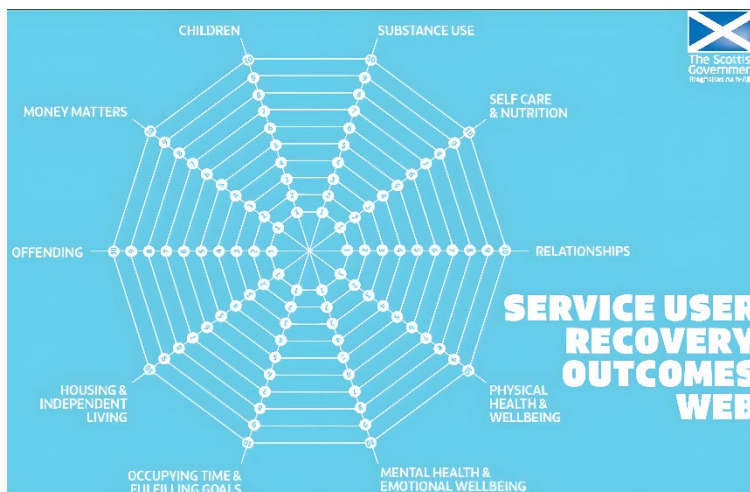
empowerment often extends beyond the individual client, as they apply newfound knowledge and resilience to make better decisions that benefit themselves and their families for generations to come.

**Resource Allocation and Ethical Imperatives:** Solely emphasising numbers may inadvertently harm those deemed less likely to produce a 'good' metric on an advisor's target sheet. Prioritising soft outcome indicators helps ensure equity in service design (Pleasence et al., 2007).

### Measuring 'Soft' Impacts

Measuring the less tangible outcomes of advice services requires specialised approaches. While traditional outcomes like financial gains are important, understanding changes in clients' well-being offers a more holistic perspective. In addition to the qualitative tools mentioned earlier, the literature highlights several tools for this purpose:

- **Client Feedback Surveys:** These surveys track emotional states, offering insights into changes in clients' confidence, stress levels, or overall outlook (Curran, 2013; The Money Advice Service).
- **Outcome Web:** A client-centred approach where individuals chart their progress against personalised goals, visualising improvements in areas ranging from practical skills to subjective experiences like empowerment. The Money Advice Service recognises its potential for capturing 'softer' outcomes often missed by traditional metrics in advice settings. This emphasis on client-defined goals highlights its alignment with broader trends pushing for empowerment and long-term impact measurement in the advice sector.



**Figure 6: Outcome Web**

- **Validated Instruments:** Tools like the Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (SWEMWEBS) provide standardised measures of mental well-being, allowing for a quantifiable assessment of advice services' impact on clients' emotional state.

It's important to note that implementing these tools requires careful consideration and might necessitate adapting them to the specific context of individual advice organisations.

| Data Collection Tool  | How to Implement in a Legal Advice Context  | Reference                  |
|---|---|----------------------------|
| <p><b>Surveys:</b> Structured questionnaires with closed-ended (yes/no, multiple-choice) and open-ended questions. Can be self-administered (paper, online) or via phone interview.</p> | <p><b>Client Feedback:</b> Pre- and Post-advice surveys with scaled and open-ended questions track outcomes like increased understanding of rights, feeling more in control, or reduced stress.</p> <p><b>Timing:</b> Design pre-advice surveys to establish baseline. Administer follow-ups later, allowing time for the impact of legal advice to manifest.</p> <p><b>Anonymity:</b> For sensitive legal issues, assure responses won't be tied to case files to boost honesty.</p> | <p>Bhavnani, S., 2005.</p> |

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <p><b>In-depth Interviews:</b><br/>Guided, open-ended conversations with individual clients. Offer rich, nuanced accounts of experience, beyond what simple surveys capture.</p>   | <p><b>Consent:</b> Prioritise informed consent with full transparency of how the recorded or transcribed data will be used.</p> <p><b>Interview Guide:</b> Craft questions focusing on client experience, not just case outcome. Ask how advice changed their outlook, what barriers were overcome, etc.</p> <p><b>Data Handling:</b> Requires analysis (e.g., thematic coding) to find patterns. Consider a smaller scale for initial use.</p>   | <p>Bhavnani, S., 2005; Mayor of London, 2023</p> |
| <p><b>Focus Groups:</b><br/>Facilitated discussions among a small group of clients sharing similar legal issues. Reveal shared experiences, unmet needs, and how services are perceived.</p>   | <p><b>Facilitation:</b> Choose a skilled facilitator to keep discussions on track, draw out quieter voices, and handle any sensitivities in the group dynamic.</p> <p><b>Recruitment:</b> Consider targeting groups impacted by specific legal problems (debt, eviction, etc.). Partner with organisations already serving these populations.</p>   | <p>Bhavnani, S., 2005; Breckon, J., 2018</p>     |
| <p><b>Client Management Information (CMI) / Existing Data:</b> Data collected during regular provision of legal advice services (demographics, type of assistance, case notes). Offers insights into reach, trends, and client profiles.</p>   | <p><b>Standardisation:</b> If collecting across programmes or in partnerships, agree on standard case records to make data comparable.</p> <p><b>Analysis:</b> Requires simple statistics or software. Reveals areas of high legal need or where your service may have capacity gaps.</p> <p><b>Privacy:</b> Anonymise data, aggregating when reporting out.</p>  | <p>Mayor of London, 2023</p>                     |
| <p><b>Rickter Scale:</b> Clients rate their confidence level on a scale regarding an action related to their legal advice (e.g., ability to speak up in court, negotiate with a landlord). Can be adapted from careers guidance context.</p>   | <p><b>Before and After:</b> Simple to measure changes in a client's sense of agency following legal advice.</p> <p><b>Focus:</b> Choose actions specific to common legal problems the organisation handles.</p> <p><b>Clarity:</b> Avoid overly legalistic language or complex concepts.</p>  |  |
| <p><b>Common Assessment Framework (CAF):</b> A holistic assessment framework, originating in social care, that considers a client's wellbeing across various domains (health, education, relationships, etc.). While the full CAF is often extensive, legal advice organisations can</p> | <p><b>Partnerships:</b> Collaborate with other service providers (community organisations, shelters, health clinics) to create a streamlined intake that identifies where legal issues intersect with broader client needs.</p> <p><b>Complexity:</b> Prioritise a simplified version that focuses on key indicators, avoiding lengthy assessments that might deter clients seeking legal assistance.</p> <p><b>Staff Training:</b> Train advisors to recognise signs that deeper needs may exist, knowing when to suggest a CAF-inspired assessment or referral to partner services.</p> | <p>Hughes, D. and Gration, G. 2009</p>           |

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| draw inspiration from its principles.  |  |   |
| <b>Outcome Web:</b> Client-driven progress visualisation. Maps where they felt powerless vs. where they have control on a 'web' graphic at intervals (intake, mid-case, resolution).                                       | <p><b>Engagement:</b> Requires good client rapport, may suit longer support rather than one-off advice.</p> <p><b>Client Buy-in:</b> Explain value for THEM of charting this, not just staff data capture.</p> <p><b>Staff Time:</b> Analysis needs clear methodology, may be resource-intensive initially.</p>  | The Money Advice Service (Year Unknown) |
| <b>Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWEBS):</b> Validated questionnaire to measure subjective wellbeing. Tracks emotional changes linked to unresolved legal issues (stress, worry, lack of self-worth). | <p><b>Timing:</b> Not in initial crisis phase. Ideal as baseline then later follow-up for legal problems known to harm mental health (family law, evictions, etc.).</p> <p><b>Scoring:</b> Easy numeric, gives clients tangible sense of change alongside qualitative input.</p> <p><b>Sensitive Use:</b> Requires clear explanation of its purpose, as a tool empowering the client's voice, not 'diagnosing' them.</p> | The Money Advice Service (Year Unknown) |

**Figure 7: List of possible Data Collection tools for outcomes measurement**

### Challenges in Data Analysis and Interpretation

Advice-giving organisations grapple with various challenges when collecting, analysing, and interpreting outcomes data. These complexities influence how conclusions are drawn and impact potential funding and services offered.

#### Potential for Bias

- **Researcher Motivations:** Bias can stem from the motivations of researchers and funders, affecting data collection, analysis, and how the final narrative is structured (Hughes and Gration, 2009). This can cloud true outcomes and misrepresent the impact of a service.
- **Conflicting Interpretations:** The same dataset can lead to varying or even opposing conclusions, heavily influenced by the interpreter's political standpoint (Data Orchard CIC, 2022). This is seen in discussions of social mobility, where progress or shortcomings are debated.
- **Deciding 'Good' Evidence:** Disagreements on what constitutes robust evidence underscore a power dynamic; those in authority (e.g., funders) ultimately frame definitions of success or failure (Hughes and Gration, 2009).

### Challenges and Opportunities in Data Aggregation and Comparison

- **Preserving Client Confidentiality:** Ethical considerations are paramount. Any analysis of aggregated data must employ strategies to protect client anonymity and uphold privacy principles (Curran and Crockett, 2013).
- **Overcoming Data Fragmentation and Addressing Attribution:** Collaboration is key. By securely sharing data, advice organisations can gain a broader understanding of the complex journeys clients often undertake, revealing the combined impact of multiple services over time. This helps address the challenge of attributing specific outcomes solely to a single intervention.

Cross-sector collaboration and long-term tracking can illuminate these multifaceted journeys (Coxon).

- **Balancing Perspectives:** Avoid a purely top-down, centralised approach to data aggregation. Combining standardised data with bottom-up insights from individual organisations ensures a more holistic perspective without sacrificing the nuances of local context (Nurcombe, 2022).
- **Streamlining Workflow and Data Integration:** The Money Advice Service cautions against outcome measurement tools that create friction with existing data management systems. Disparate systems can lead to fragmented or lost data, hindering valuable insights. Instead, integrating outcome measurement seamlessly with existing data structures whenever possible promotes efficiency and avoids duplicate data entry (Breckon, 2018). This saves time and resources and fosters a richer understanding of client journeys by enriching data with contextual information from other sources within the organisation.

## Data Quality Challenges

The literature highlights several factors that can compromise data quality in advice organisations, hindering their ability to effectively measure and understand outcomes:

- **Inconsistent Data Practices:** Organisations vary significantly in their data collection and management practices (Data Orchard CIC, 2022). This inconsistency can lead to incomplete datasets, unreliable storage systems, or ineffective analysis, limiting the value of data for impact assessment.
- **Lack of Historical Baselines:** Even when robust data collection tools are adopted, the absence of historical baselines can make it difficult to demonstrate the specific impact of interventions over time (The Money Advice Service).
- **The Need for Adaptive Tools:** The dynamic nature of the advice sector necessitates an ongoing process of refinement and adaptation in outcome measurement (Curran, 2013). Static tools risk becoming less relevant as client needs, organisational priorities, or external factors evolve.

## Prioritising the Client's View: Empowering Service Users to Shape Outcomes

Advice organisations strive to improve the lives of their clients. To achieve this goal most effectively, a growing body of literature advocates for participatory approaches, giving those who seek advice a significant voice in defining successful outcomes. This shift acknowledges that what advisors or funders prioritise might differ from the changes that truly make a difference in clients' lives.

### Understanding the Disconnect

Studies demonstrate that what an advisor or an organisation might consider a successful outcome can sometimes differ significantly from what truly makes a difference in a client's life (BMC Nursing, 2020; Windle et al., 2012). Understanding the client's perspective is crucial for designing services with lasting impact (Poole, 2018). For example, a client might place equal or greater value on the feeling of being heard, reducing anxiety, or gaining a newfound sense of confidence in navigating the system, even if the original legal issue isn't fully resolved. Traditional outcome metrics might fail to capture these important factors.

### The Power of Collaboration

Participatory design is a practical approach that benefits the organisation directly. When clients contribute to creating the tools used to measure progress, research shows the results are more adaptable and resilient as services evolve with changing needs (Nurcombe, 2022; The Money Advice Service, Year).

### Evolving Methods: Putting Clients at the Centre

There is no single way to prioritise client voice in outcome design. The literature highlights various approaches:

- **Inclusive Frameworks:** Organisations are actively collaborating with wider communities to develop inclusive outcome models to avoid blind spots and better serve diverse populations (Curran, 2013; World Bank, Year unknown).
- **Action Research in Practice:** Curran (2013) spotlights action research as a powerful tool. This approach emphasises using client feedback to drive ongoing improvements, making the evaluation process itself a mechanism for delivering better outcomes measurement.
- **Harnessing Lived Expertise:** Advisors gather qualitative insights into what truly improves clients' lives over time, providing a long-term understanding of the services' impact (Poole, 2018).

### Benefits of Client-Led Frameworks

- **Stronger Buy-In:** When people feel ownership and investment in how success is defined, they are more likely to actively work towards those goals (Curran & Crockett, 2013).
- **Focus on Richer Impact:** Service-user involvement allows organisations to measure deeper changes in well-being that traditional metrics might overlook (Dandurand & Jahn, Year).
- **Ethics by Design:** Empowering clients to shape how data is collected and used helps ensure the process is respectful and protects those who are often in vulnerable situations (Poole, 2018).

### Challenges and Considerations

While participatory approaches offer clear benefits, it's essential to be aware of the challenges. Meaningful participation requires resources: organisations need to budget time for staff training, prioritise accessibility, ensure processes engage marginalised voices, and in some cases, it might be necessary to offer financial compensation to service users for their time and expertise (Poole, 2018).

### The Client Journey: A Framework for Understanding Outcomes in Advice-Giving

The literature emphasises the concept of the client journey as a powerful framework for organising outcome measurement in the advice sector. This approach focuses on mapping the various stages of client interaction with services, the experiences that shape their trajectory, and the ultimate long-term impacts that result.

#### Client Journey Mapping

Hughes and Gratton (2009) propose using client journey mapping to break down the service experience into detailed stages, enabling outcome measurement at each step. This highlights not only the achievement of immediate goals but also potential areas of friction or success within the process. Research by the Welsh Government's 2013 Rapid Evidence Assessment (Consilium Research and Consultancy) further supports the use of client journey mapping as a valuable tool for evaluating service processes across diverse advice settings.

This approach is put into practice by organisations like LawWorks and Citizens Advice Bureaux. LawWorks' 2021 Activities and Impact Report emphasises the ongoing, cumulative impact of advice, using a longitudinal approach to analyse how continued support fosters client empowerment and future self-advocacy. Similarly, Citizens Advice Bureaux (see their 2020 report) regularly engage in client journey mapping. Their process uncovers the diverse needs clients might have at different stages of the process, demonstrating how personalised interactions can influence their ability to navigate the system on their own, both in the moment and in the future.

#### Benefits of a Client Journey Focus

The literature highlights several key benefits of client journey mapping for both advice organisations and the clients they serve:

- **Holistic View:** Instead of isolated data points, mapping enables a deeper understanding of how experiences throughout the client's journey shape overall outcomes (Curran & Crockett, 2013).
- **Continuous Improvement:** By pinpointing both successes and hurdles along the journey, mapping guides the optimisation of services (Poole, 2018).

- **Informed Resource Allocation:** Understanding where interventions have the most significant impact empowers evidence-based decision-making on funding and support (Genn, 2023).
- **Client-Centricity:** Mapping reveals how client needs shift throughout their journey, promoting responsive, tailored services that ensure continued impact (Federation of Community Legal Centres (Victoria), 2017).

## Obstacles to Client Engagement in Outcome Measurement

Advice-giving organisations (AGOs) face multifaceted challenges in designing inclusive outcome measurement tools and engaging their diverse clientele in the process. The literature emphasises key barriers that must be addressed:

- **Client Heterogeneity and Tailored Approaches:** A one-size-fits-all approach fails to capture the distinct needs and vulnerabilities of clients, including language barriers, literacy challenges, mental health concerns, technology access limitations, or past trauma (Windle et al., 2010). Outcome tools must be carefully tailored to ensure they are relevant and accessible.
- **The Limitations of Demographics:** While demographic data offers a starting point, it cannot provide a nuanced picture of individual circumstances or how services impacted a person's life. Overreliance on simplified classifications or postcode-based generalisations can obscure disparities in service access or outcomes (Dandurand & Jahn, Year; Mayor of London, 2023).
- **Addressing Capability and Communication Gaps:** Outcome measures need to be designed with the client's ability to understand and act upon the advice in mind (Windle et al., 2010). Tools that rely solely on self-reporting or digital access risk systematically excluding those without those capabilities. Assisted approaches that prioritise accessibility and alternative communication methods are essential.
- **Prioritising Inclusivity and Well-being:** AGOs have an ethical duty to safeguard clients, especially those facing vulnerable circumstances. This means minimising potential harm by offering immediate access to support services when needed. It also involves ensuring robust data privacy practices and employing diverse feedback mechanisms to ensure that voices from all backgrounds are heard (Curran & Crockett, 2013).
- **The Challenge of Client Follow-Through:** A significant barrier is that clients may cease contact after their immediate problem is resolved, hindering longitudinal analysis and potentially skewing outcome results (Citizens Advice, 2022; Mayor of London, 2023). Developing short, targeted follow-up surveys and potentially offering ethically appropriate incentives for completion may help address this challenge.
- **Adviser Reluctance:** Frontline staff, driven by a desire to provide immediate solutions, may view outcome measurement as a burden, especially when working with vulnerable clients (Hahn & Cella, 2003; Windle et al., 2010). Embedding an outcome focus into organisational culture and emphasising how data improves future service quality can mitigate this reluctance.
- **Overburdened Clients:** Individuals facing complex challenges often lack the mental and emotional bandwidth to engage in research-related activities, even well-intentioned ones (Law and Justice Foundation of New South Wales, 2012; Windle et al., 2010). Outcome measurement must be as streamlined as possible, with options for completion via phone, in-person, or online to respect client preferences.
- **Linguistic and Cultural Barriers:** Measurement tools must be adapted to serve diverse populations. The absence of linguistically and culturally sensitive approaches severely limits outcome data validity and inclusivity (Legal Services Corporation). Organisations must translate materials, provide staff training in cross-cultural communication, and consider participatory design models that directly involve clients in developing the tools.

## Strategies for Enhanced Client Participation

The literature suggests strategies to overcome these obstacles:

- **Informed Consent:** Obtain clear consent at the outset, explaining how data benefits clients and the organisation. Use plain language, respect cultural differences in the consent process (Advice Services Alliance, 2015; BMC Medical Ethics; Mayor of London, 2023), and consider user-friendly "opt-out" consent models.
- **Client Empowerment through Choice:** Provide flexibility in how clients participate in outcome measurement. This demonstrates respect for individual needs, increases engagement (Bate & Robert, 2006; Windle et al., 2010), and ultimately leads to higher quality data.

## Obstacles to Engaging Service Providers in Outcome Measurement

While client engagement in outcome measurement is vital, advice-giving organisations (AGOs) also face internal barriers stemming from limited buy-in and resistance from frontline staff. The literature highlights several key factors contributing to this:

- **Need for Expertise and Capacity Constraints:** Smaller AGOs often lack the in-house research expertise or staffing capacity to implement complex outcome frameworks and effectively analyse the data collected (Breckon, 2018; Curran, 2013; Poole, 2018). Time pressures and competing priorities can make outcome measurement feel like an added burden rather than an integrated practice (Nurcombe, 2022; Windle et al., 2010).
- **Perceived Conflict with Client-Centeredness:** Staff committed to serving vulnerable clients may see data collection as potentially disruptive or harmful to established rapport (Christopher et al., 2018; Law and Justice Foundation of New South Wales, 2012). Advisors may feel ethical tensions between providing immediate support and fulfilling research imperatives.
- **Unfamiliarity and Skills-Based Hesitancy:** Staff may lack confidence in administering outcome measurement tools or understanding relevant terminology (Bhavnani, 2005; Citizens Advice, 2022; Nurcombe, 2022). There can also be a misconception that outcome measurement is solely about additional reporting rather than a tool for improving client support (Curran, 2013).

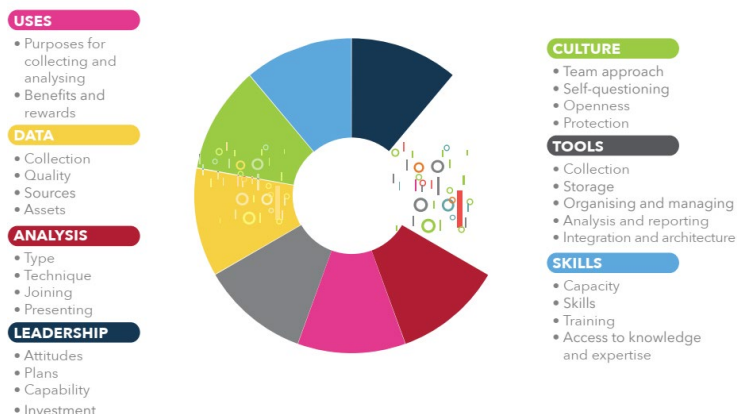
## Strategies for Fostering Change

The literature offers guidance for overcoming these obstacles and embedding outcome measurement into organisational culture:

- **Systemic Shift, Not Simple Add-On:** Leaders must champion outcome measurement as integral to continuous improvement (Bhavnani, 2005). Integrating it into existing staff roles fosters a sense of ownership (Windle et al., 2010).
- **Staff Empowerment Through Skills and Purpose:** Provide comprehensive training on data collection, analysis, and how outcomes directly improve client services (Nurcombe, 2022). Consider participatory approaches, where staff help co-design tools (Bate & Robert, 2006), or explore frameworks that emphasise skills development, such as the Data Orchard CIC's 'Data Maturity Framework' (2022).

### The seven data maturity themes

Each of the seven themes described in the framework cover a number of sub-themes.



## Figure 8: Seven Data Maturity Themes Organisations are Scored Against (Data Orchard 2022)

- **Client-First Outcomes:** Starting with short-term, easily measurable indicators demonstrating tangible client benefits can build buy-in (Nurcombe, 2022).
- **Motivation Through Impact:** Celebrate successes stemming from data-driven insights (respecting confidentiality). This reinforces staff's sense of contribution and motivates continued engagement (Bhavnani, 2005).

## Navigating Funder and Donor Influences on Outcome Measurement

The literature reveals a fundamental tension between the needs of advice organisations and the expectations of funders and donors. This dynamic can inadvertently compromise outcome measurement and undermine the quality of services offered. Key challenges include:

- **The Focus on Quantifiable Outputs:** Funders often prioritise easily measured outputs, such as case volume or client demographics (Windle et al., 2010). This emphasis can marginalise qualitative data that captures the transformative impact of advice on clients' lives.
- **Resource Constraints and Conflicting Priorities:** Rigorous outcome measurement requires time, resources, and expertise (Windle et al., 2010). Advice organisations are often caught between funder demands for robust data and the realities of stretched resources and competing priorities focused on direct service delivery (Curran, 2013).
- **Unrealistic Expectations and Power Dynamics:** Externally imposed reporting requirements, especially when tied to funding, can be overly burdensome for smaller organisations (Nurcombe, 2022). Prioritising positive results might incentivise selective reporting (McDermont & Hirskyj-Douglas, 2023) or prioritise quick wins over sustainable solutions for complex cases. This highlights power imbalances and ethical concerns within the funder-recipient relationship.
- **Inappropriateness of Metrics:** Funders' reliance on simplified metrics may fail to reflect the complex realities of advice work (Eubanks, 2018). This can result in flawed data collection, hindering genuine outcome assessment and potentially perpetuating harmful practices that undermine equity and inclusion.
- **The Narrative Divide:** To attract funding, organisations may prioritise compelling anecdotes over rigorous analysis (Curran, 2013). However, an overemphasis on isolated success stories can obscure challenges, distort the value of advice work, and misrepresent the experiences of clients (Hughes and Gratton, 2009).

## Toward a Collaborative Model

The literature advocates for a more collaborative partnership between funders and advice organisations:

- **Embracing Experimentation and Adaptability:** Funders should support pilot studies and flexible grant structures that allow for iterative improvement of outcome measurement tools (Poole, 2018).
- **Recognising Complexity and Valuing Expertise:** It's essential for funders to acknowledge the unpredictable nature of advice work and respect the subject-matter expertise of organisations in shaping appropriate outcome measures (Franzen, 2018; Windle et al., 2010).
- **Partnership and Shared Understanding:** Collaborative initiatives like the Measuring Outcomes from Citizens Advice (MOCA) programme demonstrate the value of funders, researchers, and advice organisations working together to develop meaningful outcome measurement frameworks. To achieve this shift, funders must move beyond a focus on compliance and actively support tailored measurement approaches and capacity-building within organisations (Nurcombe, 2022). Franzen's work offers a positive case study of proactive funder guidance assisting community initiatives in achieving realistic and impactful outcome measurement.

## Outcome Domains: Defining Success for Advice-Giving Organisations

Advice organisations strive to achieve a wide range of positive outcomes that transform the lives of their clients. The literature highlights several key areas where this impact is most evident:

- **Empowerment: Building Self-Advocacy and Confidence:** Advice services play a crucial role in empowering clients by giving them the knowledge, skills, and confidence to navigate complex challenges on their own. This might involve understanding legal systems, knowing their rights, or developing strategies to manage financial difficulties. By fostering this sense of agency, advice can have long-lasting benefits, reducing the need for ongoing intervention in the future (Genn, 1999).
- **Psychological Well-Being: Reducing Stress and Promoting Resilience:** In times of crisis, receiving clear guidance and support from an advice organisation can make a world of difference for a client's mental health. Studies suggest that advice can reduce stress, anxiety, and even improve mental health outcomes by giving people a sense of control and optimism about resolving difficult situations (Knapp et al., 2011).
- **Resource Efficiency: The Preventative Power of Advice:** By providing timely information and support, advice organisations can help people avoid costly and emotionally draining legal battles, healthcare crises, or other situations that escalate problems. This has a positive ripple effect, not only for the individual but also on broader support systems within the community (Genn, 1999).
- **User Experience and Access: Prioritising the Client Journey:** Ensuring that advice services are accessible to everyone who needs them and providing a positive client experience is essential. Client satisfaction surveys, like those used by the National Audit Office (2005), are valuable tools to assess how well an organisation is meeting the needs of its clientele. However, it's important to be mindful that clients often seek immediate solutions, while advisors are bound by ethical obligations to prioritise long-term, sustainable outcomes (Curran & Crockett, 2013; Windle et al., 2010). These can sometimes be at odds, making it difficult to align immediate client satisfaction with the ultimate goals of the service. Additionally, surveys can unintentionally overemphasise the short-term feeling of relief a client experiences, rather than capturing whether lasting change or problem resolution has truly been achieved (Consilium Research & Consultancy, 2013; Nurcombe, 2022).

### Indicators: How Do We Measure Progress?

To track their success within these domains, advice organisations use specific indicators to translate their broader goals into concrete data points. These indicators include:

- **Survey Items:** Questions designed to measure if clients feel more knowledgeable about their rights, have a greater sense of control over their situation, can make more informed decisions, and are satisfied with how staff communicate with them.
- **Client Demographics:** Tracking the percentage of clients from marginalised groups highlights the organisation's efforts to reach underserved populations and ensure equity in access to services.
- **Service Data:** Metrics like average wait times, how many clients the organisation can help versus the demand for their services, and overall success rates in helping clients resolve their issues.
- **Wellbeing Scales:** Using standardised tools to assess changes in clients' mental health or financial stress provides insights into the long-term, transformative effects of advice.

### Going Beyond Simple Outputs: It's Not Just About the Numbers

The literature strongly encourages advice organisations to move beyond simply measuring outputs – like the number of cases closed or clients served. Instead, they urge a more holistic, client-centred approach that captures the full transformative potential of the advice process. Here's why:

- **The Limits of Case Outcomes:** While successful legal outcomes or problem resolution are important, they don't always guarantee lasting well-being for clients (Pleasence et al., 2007).

Ongoing insecurity or unresolved trauma related to the problem may continue to impact a person's life, even if the original issue is resolved.

- **The Distortion of Targets:** Focusing too heavily on hitting specific targets can incentivise staff to prioritise quick fixes rather than exploring the root causes of a client's problems for long-term, sustainable change (Hughes & Gration, 2009).
- **Meaning Beyond Measures:** Advice work can change lives in ways that aren't easily captured in numbers – by increasing client knowledge, fostering a sense of empowerment, and helping people feel more in control of their own destinies (Curran & Crockett, 2013).

## **Beyond Individual Outcomes: Advice Services as Catalysts for Systemic Change**

Advice-giving organisations have the unique potential to transform not only the lives of individual clients but also the broader systems those clients navigate. Measuring this systemic change is essential for demonstrating the full value of these services and advocating for policies based on real-world impact. The literature reveals several strategies, each with its own complexities and nuances:

### **Community Outcomes: Mapping the Ripple Effects**

Advice organisations can play a significant role in improving wider community well-being. Bhavnani (2005) recommends aligning the outcomes an organisation tracks with relevant external datasets. For example, if an organisation provides job readiness support, demonstrating that those services correlate with a decrease in local unemployment rates would highlight their broader community impact.

### **Systems Frameworks: Changing the Game, Not Just Playing It**

Frameworks like the Access to Justice Measurement Framework (Dandurand & Jahn, Year) go beyond tracking isolated outcomes. This approach emphasises collecting data that can actively fuel policy changes for a more just and accessible system. The Triple Aim approach in this framework highlights that justice requires both widespread access and positive individual experiences within the system (Dandurand & Jahn, 2013).

### **The Long View: Impact Across Time**

Hughes and Gration (2009) propose a model for understanding the ripple effects of advice over time. The initial skill-building offered by an organisation might translate into concrete actions by the client (like applying for a better-paying job) which ultimately creates long-term improvements such as increased income and greater economic stability for both the individual and their community. Capturing these long-term effects is key to measuring the full potential of advice services.

### **Lessons from Healthcare: Redefining Success**

While the legal advice context differs from healthcare, Genn (Year) suggests adapting successful approaches. Instead of focusing solely on "case wins," success for advice services might be measured in terms of reductions in family conflict after mediation, or by analysing data to pinpoint systemic issues, like unfair housing practices, that repeatedly drive clients to seek help. This type of data can then inform advocacy for preventative policies that address root causes.

### **Beyond Simple Metrics: Measuring True Strategic Impact**

Curran and Crockett (2013) challenge the overemphasis on metrics based purely on time spent with clients or activities tracked. They argue that these measures fail to capture the real strategic impact an organisation might have on the wider system. Instead, they urge for more qualitative assessments that can reveal the underlying factors contributing to systemic change.

### **Collaboration and Real-World Impact**

Examples like Derbyshire City Council's shift away from simple output counts toward a focus on tackling systemic causes (Nurcombe, 2022) demonstrate the potential of holistic outcome tracking. Similarly, the Federation of Community Legal Centres (Victoria, 2017) advocates for sharing data across

organisations. This collaborative approach creates a robust collective picture, informing targeted support initiatives and powerful advocacy for systemic change on behalf of marginalised communities.

## **The Standardisation Dilemma: Finding the Right Balance for Advice Services**

The lack of consistent outcome measurement standards across the advice-giving sector creates a complex situation with both benefits and drawbacks. The literature reveals a tension between the desire for localised flexibility and the need for standardisation that would allow the sector to compare results, advocate for itself effectively, and secure robust funding.

### **Flexibility: When Is It Too Much of a Good Thing?**

Frameworks like the Access to Justice Model (Dandurand & Jahn, Year) are designed to be adaptable to specific services and contexts. While this offers localised tailoring, it makes it difficult to compare services across the wider sector or clearly demonstrate the collective impact that advice organisations have on policymakers and funders. There's also a risk, highlighted in the AICS Evaluation Report (Mayor of London, 2023), that focusing on easily measurable outcomes might incentivise organisations to prioritise services based on what's easy to report, rather than what's truly transformative for clients – particularly when dealing with complex, long-term issues.

### **Conflicting Standards: Navigating a Patchwork of Expectations**

The advice sector doesn't suffer from a lack of outcome frameworks. However, the different priorities of frameworks like GRADE, focused on specific outcomes, and Data Orchard CIC's broader approach emphasising data maturity can leave organisations feeling confused and unsure of which path to follow (Data Orchard CIC, 2022). This uncertainty makes it difficult to make effective internal decisions and also to meet the varied expectations of funders. Furthermore, as Sinclair (2005) points out, without a sector-wide agreement on what constitutes high-quality advice, measuring outcomes might simply be measuring the impact of suboptimal services – ultimately eroding public trust and support for funding.

### **The Opportunity of Standardisation: Speaking a Common Language**

If legal advice providers across the board used consistent outcome measures, the sector could make a powerful case to policymakers and funders, demonstrating its long-term impact. This kind of standardised data would provide a solid foundation for strategic investment decisions, as outlined in the Victoria Community Legal Sector Framework (2017).

### **Practical Roadblocks: It Takes More Than Good Intentions**

Many advice organisations genuinely want to collect, analyse, and share outcome data. However, as the AICS Evaluation Report (Mayor of London, 2023) and Breckon (2018) illustrate, they often lack the essential infrastructure. This includes compatible software, budgeting for data initiatives, and staff with data analysis skills. Without addressing these practical barriers, the idea of standardising metrics across the sector remains theoretical. Additionally, the Welsh Rapid Evaluation Assessment (2013) highlights that since advice services vary significantly based on location, funding, and clientele, it raises the question of whether standardisation should even aim for identical reporting or instead focus on a more flexible system of quality indicators that still allows for meaningful comparisons, even across diverse services.

### **The Deeper Risk: When Numbers Lead Astray**

The literature reveals a fundamental danger stemming from a lack of standardisation:

- **Chasing Short-Term Wins:** Without established benchmarks, organisations can fall into the trap of prioritising whatever outputs will appease funders in the moment, even if those don't align with the deeper, long-term change their service is designed to create (Nurcombe, 2022).
- **Funders Defining "Value":** This reliance on pleasing funders can incentivise organisations towards telling easily digestible "impact stories", potentially prioritising quantifiable metrics that may not truly reflect the type of change that improves client lives (Breckon, 2018).

## Towards Solutions: The Sector Defining Its Own Standards

A successful model will likely need to balance several approaches:

- **Framework Layering:** A model like the Victoria Outcome Framework (2017), combining broad, shared goals with space for locally relevant metrics, could offer sector-wide cohesion while maintaining adaptability. This would allow individual organisations to demonstrate their contributions within a larger framework.

### HIGH LEVEL OUTCOME 3

CLCs and stakeholders have increased capability to provide integrated responses to the needs of people experiencing disadvantage

| INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES   | INDICATORS   |
|---|--|
| 3.1 Partnerships and relationships between CLCs, service providers and other stakeholders are established and strengthened        | <p><b>3.1a Partnerships and relationships strengthened:</b> Number and % of relevant partnerships and relationships which the CLC considers to have been strengthened within a specified time period. [Data source: Relationships register]</p> <p><b>3.1b Partner rating of partnership strength:</b> Average rating by partners of strength of service delivery partnerships with CLC. [Data source: Stakeholder and partner survey]</p>   |
| 3.2 Service providers and CLCs have increased capability to identify legal issues and link people to appropriate legal assistance | <p><b>3.2a Referrals from external services:</b> Number and % of referrals from external service providers, by source of referral and type of legal issue. [Data source: CLASS database and associated forms]</p> <p><b>3.2b Capability of non-legal workers to refer:</b> Number and % of non-legal workers from relevant services who feel more capable to refer appropriately to legal services, following information provision by CLC. [Data source: Stakeholder and partner survey]</p> <p><b>3.2c Inappropriate referrals:</b> Number and % of referrals from external service providers which are inappropriate, by reason for inappropriateness. [Data source: Incoming enquiry log]</p> <p><b>3.2d Coordinated legal response:</b> % of service users with issues across multiple areas of the law, who receive a coordinated legal response from relevant areas within CLC. [Data source: File review template]</p> |
| 3.3 People have increased support to address their non-legal needs  | <p><b>3.3a Assessment for non-legal needs:</b> % of service users for whom assessment for non-legal needs is completed. [Data source: Non-legal needs assessment form]</p> <p><b>3.3b Referrals to non-legal supports:</b> Number and % of service users with identified non-legal needs who are referred to non-legal supports by CLC, by area of non-legal need. [Data source: CLASS database and associated forms, or non-legal needs assessment form and referral record]</p>  |

**Figure 9: Extract of Victorian community legal sector outcomes measurement framework (Federation of Community Legal Centres (Victoria), 2017)**

- **Beneficiary-Centric Evidence:** Designing outcome indicators with direct input from clients helps ensure that what's being measured aligns with the actual improvements that those seeking advice value most.
- **Policy Alignment:** Encouraging major funders to use consistent outcome metrics would ease the burden on advice organisations by reducing ad-hoc reporting requirements. This in turn allows the sector to present a more unified analysis of its collective impact, building a stronger case for future funding (Breckon, 2018).
- **Standardised Protocols:** The development of participatory outcome measurement tools specifically designed for the unique context of advice services is an ongoing need (Poole, 2018).

# Conclusion: Implications for the 'Improving Lives Through Advice' Programme and MEL Framework Development

## Contextual Analysis and Strategic Objectives

The 'Improving Lives Through Advice' (ILTA) MEL framework can take significant lessons from the literature review. The programme has the complex task of not only enhancing legal advice provision for marginalised communities but also empowering them to resolve legal issues while improving organisational capacity, influence, partnerships, and fundraising. This ambitious agenda, set against a backdrop of varying capacities and interests in Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) among a large cohort of grantees, necessitates a nuanced approach to the MEL framework development. The framework must be flexible and robust – capturing meaningful outcomes and verifying the theory of change without overburdening participants.

## Recommendations for MEL Framework Development

### 1. Flexibility and Standardisation: A Tiered Approach for Leveraging Data

The 'Improving Lives Through Advice' (ILTA) Programme's MEL framework should prioritise flexibility alongside the standardisation of crucial outcome metrics, recognising the diverse MEL capacities among grantees. This can be effectively achieved through a tiered approach:

- **Essential Core:** Establish a set of core indicators that are readily attainable and measurable by all grantees. This core set ensures consistent tracking of primary outcomes and progress toward the programme's Theory of Change. Focus on those metrics most central to the programme's fundamental goals. Allow customisation so indicators are relevant to each grantee's niche (e.g., housing advocacy vs immigration-focused law centres), ensuring the MEL framework resonates with grantees and supports their unique missions.
- **Advanced Track:** For organisations demonstrating higher MEL maturity, offer optional resources, templates, and tools that facilitate:
  - **In-Depth Data Collection:** Going beyond the basic metrics for a more nuanced understanding of issues and outcomes.
  - **Client Management System Integration:** Explore ways to standardise metrics extracted from existing CMS, with robust informed consent protocols to maintain privacy. This leverages data already being collected while ensuring client confidentiality.

#### ***Benefits of a Tiered Approach:***

- **Addresses Diverse Needs:** Accommodates the varying capabilities and resources of grantees while ensuring crucial data is collected by all.
- **Fosters Growth:** Encourages grantees to progress their MEL capabilities over time, enhancing the quality of data collected across the cohort and increasing the programme's overall understanding of its impact.
- **Aligns with Programme Goals:** Provides a consistent basis for measuring progress toward the ILTA Programme's overarching objectives and verifying its Theory of Change.
- **Builds Sector-Wide Strength:** Contributes to knowledge sharing and a culture of data-driven improvement within the legal advice sector.
- **Maximises Existing Resources:** Leverages Client Management Systems, streamlining data collection and minimising redundant efforts for grantees.

### 2. Capacity Building and Organisational Development

Recognising the diverse MEL experience levels within the ILTA grantee cohort, the programme should integrate a robust capacity-building component to support the MEL framework's successful

implementation and continuous improvement. This approach aligns with the programme's overall aim of strengthening and empowering grantees:

- **Tailored Support:** Provide grantees with training and resources tailored to their specific needs. This should cover:
  - **Technical Skills:** Data collection methods, analysis techniques, and how to navigate tools within the MEL framework.
  - **Strategic Application:** Leverage MEL findings for programme improvement and impactful advocacy, demonstrating the value of their collected data.
- **Focus on Organisational Capacity:** The MEL framework should include indicators directly measuring the effects of core funding on grantee organisations' long-term health and sustainability, aligning with the ILTA programme's 2029 objectives by tracking progress in:
  - **Influence:** Ability to advocate for policy changes relevant to their target communities
  - **Partnerships:** Success in forming or strengthening collaboration with other support networks
  - **Fundraising:** Increased effectiveness in securing diversified funding beyond the ILTA grant
- **Manage Data Burden:** Prioritise critical indicators and streamline processes. Acknowledge smaller grantees' limited capacity to ensure meaningful data collection doesn't create additional strain.
- **Building Trust:** Position the MEL framework as a tool for:
  - **Enhancement:** Demonstrating the ILTA programme's reach and its positive effects, potentially attracting more significant funding for the sector as a whole.
  - **Advocacy:** Showcasing grantees' critical work to The Access to Justice Foundation, other funders, and policymakers to justify ongoing support.

### ***Benefits of This Approach***

- **Grantee Empowerment:** Provides organisations with the skills to implement the MEL framework effectively, improving data quality across the programme while fostering a sense of ownership.
- **Sustainable Impact:** By actively tracking how core funding strengthens organisations, the ILTA programme validates its Theory of Change while demonstrating the value of this funding model, bolstering its case for future sector-wide support.
- **Long-Term Growth:** Developing MEL capacity empowers organisations to understand their impact, use data for ongoing programme improvement, and become more effective at securing the future funding they need.

### **3. Participatory Design for Relevance and Impact**

To ensure the MEL framework is truly grounded in the experiences and needs of its users, adopt a participatory approach throughout its development and ongoing refinement:

- **Broad Stakeholder Engagement:** Involve grantees, beneficiaries, and other key stakeholders (e.g., referral partners, policymakers) in the framework's development. This diversity of input will enhance its relevance and ensure it reflects the realities of those it aims to support.
- **Grantee Co-Design:** Specifically, collaborate with a representative sample of grantees and frontline staff in the initial design and subsequent revisions. Their practical knowledge will improve usability and foster a sense of ownership that translates into buy-in and better adoption across the programme.

## **Benefits of a Participatory Approach**

- **Relevance:** Ensures the MEL framework aligns with the lived experiences of both legal advice providers and the communities they serve.
- **Usability:** Input from frontline staff helps create a practical, not burdensome, framework. It's more likely to be used consistently if the people using it daily helped shape it.
- **Buy-in and Adoption:** Grantees are more invested in a process they have helped design, leading to better quality data collection and utilisation of the framework.
- **Equity and Empowerment:** Actively involving beneficiaries fosters empowerment and helps ensure the framework reflects their needs and priorities.

## **4. Addressing Attribution: A Realistic and Impactful Approach**

Acknowledging the inherent complexities of the legal landscape and diverse funding sources grantees utilise, pinpointing the exact impact of ILTA funding in isolation can be challenging. Clients may engage with multiple support services and face unpredictable personal circumstances, and factors beyond the programme's control can influence outcomes.

To gain a robust understanding of the ILTA programme's effects, implement the following:

- **Focus on Contributing Factors:** Identify how ILTA funding and other resources like core and restricted grants contribute to favourable outcomes and enhance overall organisational capacity.
- **Apply Mixed Methods:** Combine quantitative data with qualitative tools like case studies and client narratives. This will provide a comprehensive view of the programme's impact within the context of an organisation's overall funding and operations.
- **Track Organisational Capacity:** As mentioned, tracking changes in grantee capacity areas as outlined in the 2029 goals (influence, partnerships, fundraising) will provide insights into how ILTA funding may have contributed to strengthening the organisation overall.
- **Prioritise Context:** Capture broader trends and contextual factors influencing outcomes. This provides a more nuanced picture of how the programme makes a difference within complex, real-world scenarios.

## **5. Streamlining Data Management with Technology**

The ILTA programme, with its large and diverse grantee cohort, requires a robust approach to managing data collection. Technology solutions can significantly enhance this process:

- **Digital Platforms for Reporting and Analysis:** Implement user-friendly digital platforms for data reporting and analysis. These platforms should accommodate varying complexity levels—catering to grantees with advanced MEL capabilities and those with more limited resources.
- **Real-Time Monitoring and Feedback:** Design the platform to facilitate real-time monitoring and feedback. This allows for timely identification of potential issues or areas for improvement, ensuring data quality and maximising the programme's responsiveness.

By leveraging technology, the ILTA programme can streamline data management, reduce the burden on grantees, and gain valuable insights to guide decision-making and programme adjustments.

## **6. Centring Client Voices: Capturing Client Experiences and Outcomes**

The literature review highlights the importance of client perspectives in measuring the effectiveness of legal advice services. To ensure the ILTA programme's MEL framework reflects this, incorporate mechanisms for capturing client experiences and outcomes:

- **Client Satisfaction Surveys:** Integrate client satisfaction surveys into the standard reporting requirements. This allows grantees to gather quantifiable feedback on client experiences and perceptions of the legal advice received.

- **Qualitative Methods:** Complement quantitative data with qualitative methods like case studies and client narratives. This provides a deeper understanding of individual client journeys and the real-world impact of legal assistance.

By prioritising client voices, the ILTA programme's MEL framework will paint a complete picture of its success beyond basic metrics to capture the human stories and positive transformations facilitated by legal aid services.

## 7. Measuring Impact: From Individuals to Systems

To comprehensively evaluate the ILTA programme's effectiveness, the MEL framework must measure immediate client outcomes, organisational changes, and broader, long-term systemic changes. These systemic level shifts might include:

- **Policy Changes:** Track policy changes directly or indirectly influenced by advocacy efforts.
- **Public Awareness:** Capture shifts in public awareness of legal rights and how to access support. This could be through surveys or tracking demand for specific types of legal advice.
- **Community-Wide Impacts:** Develop indicators to monitor broader community-level improvements potentially linked to the programme's work and the increased capacity of grantee organisations (e.g., reduced rates of some legal issues in the target region).

By including these systemic-level indicators, the MEL framework will provide a holistic understanding of how the ILTA programme catalyses change beyond individual cases, contributing to greater justice and equity within the community.

## 8. Institutionalising Adaptive Learning: A Cycle of Improvement

To maximise the ILTA programme's effectiveness, adaptive learning practices should be embedded into its core. This allows both the programme and its grantees to improve based on insights gained from the MEL process continuously:

- **Regular Review Cycles:** Implement scheduled intervals where MEL data is thoroughly analysed and discussed. These sessions should involve various stakeholders, fostering diverse perspectives on the findings.
- **Actionable Insights:** Focus discussions on identifying actionable changes to programme strategies or grantee support mechanisms based on emerging trends and lessons learned.
- **Refined Indicators:** Periodically review the MEL indicators to ensure they provide the most relevant insights to guide decision-making.
- **Collaborative Knowledge Sharing:** Establish mechanisms for grantees to share success stories, challenges, and best practices uncovered through their MEL data. This fosters a culture of continuous learning and sector-wide improvement.

### *Benefits of Adaptive Learning*

- **Responsiveness:** Empowers the ILTA programme and grantees to adjust quickly to emerging needs, ensuring optimally directed resources.
- **Impact Maximisation:** Creates a data-driven feedback loop promoting continuous improvement and maximising the programme's positive effects.
- **Sector Strengthening:** Fosters a learning culture within the legal advice sector, contributing to stronger organisations and more effective service delivery.

## A Model for Outcome Measurement and Sector Transformation

The literature review illuminates the unique complexities of outcome measurement within the legal advice sector. The 'Improving Lives Through Advice' Programme has the opportunity to address these challenges thoughtfully, developing a MEL framework that meaningfully supports both The Access to Justice Foundation and its diverse grantee cohort.

By following the recommendations outlined – prioritising flexibility, capacity building, client-centred and systemic change measurement, and embracing a participatory, adaptive approach – the ILTA programme can achieve several significant outcomes:

- **Grantee Empowerment:** Grantees will be equipped with the skills and resources to implement the MEL framework effectively, fostering ownership and enhancing data quality throughout the programme.
- **Validating Core Funding:** By tracking its impact on individual outcomes and long-term organisational development, the programme will substantiate its Theory of Change and demonstrate the profound value of core funding models.
- **Improved Services and Advocacy:** The continuous improvement model fuelled by MEL insights will enable grantees and the ILTA programme to refine their strategies, services, and advocacy efforts over time.
- **Sector-Wide Transformation:** Ultimately, the 'Improving Lives Through Advice' Programme can potentially model robust outcome measurement for the entire legal advice sector. This will demonstrate the value of specialist legal advice while advocating for sustainable funding models that empower organisations, ultimately enhancing community-wide access to justice.

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39. **Windle, K., Netten, A., Caiels, J., Masrani, R., Welch, E., & Forder, J. (2010).** *Measuring the outcomes of information and advice services: Final report.* PSSRU Discussion Paper 2713. Online. Available at: <https://www.pssru.ac.uk/pdf/dp2713.pdf> Accessed 21 December 2023. Summary: Part of the Measuring Outcomes and Impact of Information and Advice Services (OIASS) project, which delves into effective ways to measure the impact of information and advice services on individuals and communities. This comprehensive report contributes to understanding and improving the measurement of service outcomes to better meet client needs and demonstrate service value.
40. **Gebremariam, A., Piroddi, R., Abba, K., Anderson De Cuevas, R., Corcoran, R., Mahoney, C., Barr, B. (2023).** *Liverpool Citizens Advice on Prescription Internal Evaluation Report – January 2023.* University of Liverpool. Summary: Describes the initial findings of an evaluation of the Citizens Advice on Prescription (CAP) service conducted by the University of Liverpool. The service offers social welfare advice and support to patients within primary and secondary care settings, and includes wellbeing support for secondary care patients. This specific report highlights findings from the analysis of the service's case management system data.