Transforming outcomes: social impact measurement and youth justice

Dr Claire Paterson-Young

HM Inspectorate of Probation

Academic Insights 2022/02

FEBRUARY 2022

Contents

Foreword

HM Inspectorate of Probation is committed to reviewing, developing and promoting the evidence base for high-quality probation and youth offending services. *Academic Insights* are aimed at all those with an interest in the evidence base. We commission leading academics to present their views on specific topics, assisting with informed debate and aiding understanding of what helps and what hinders probation and youth offending services.

This report was kindly produced by Claire Paterson-Young, setting out the value of social impact measurement for organisations so that they can account for the outcomes achieved by beneficiaries and at the same time identify strengths and weaknesses in service delivery. In the context of youth justice, the 'Young Person Centred, Theory-led Social Impact Framework' is introduced, mapping a theory of change and relevant outputs, outcomes and impact in the context of (i) Maslow's hierarchy of needs, (ii) Integrated Cognitive Antisocial Potential (ICAP) theory, and (iii) desistance theory. This multi-theoretical lens requires attention to be given to measurement in areas such as health and wellbeing, relationships, education, independence, and pro-social attitudes. Importantly, children are placed at the heart of the outcome-focused service design, empowering them to overcome past experiences and to move towards positive and fulfilling lives.

Dr Robin Moore

Head of Research

Author profile:

Claire Paterson-Young (BA MSc PhD) is a Senior Researcher at the Institute for Social Innovation and Impact (ISII). A key feature of her research is the development of social impact measurement frameworks that help organisations to identify the positive and negative, intended and unintended outcomes of interventions and activities. Claire has over 10 years practice and management experience in safeguarding, child sexual exploitation, trafficking, sexual violence, and youth and restorative justice. She consults nationally with local authorities, police forces, and national organisations to develop Child Sexual Exploitation services. She is a member of the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner Ethics Committee, Health and Research Association Ethics Committee, and the University of Northampton's Research Ethics Committee. She is co-author of 'The Social Impact of Custody on Young People in the Criminal Justice System' (Palgrave, 2019) and co-editor of an upcoming book entitled 'Social Impact Measurement for a Sustainable Future: The Power of Aesthetics and Practical Implications' (Palgrave, 2021).

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the policy position of HMI Probation.

1. Introduction

Social impact measurement allows organisations to develop an approach that empowers the disempowered and, in the context of this paper, specifically children and young people. The concept has received growing attention for decades, with increased pressure on organisations from public/third sector funders and legislation to measure impact (Paterson-Young et al., 2019). Social impact measurement has a plethora of definitions and methodologies, which creates a certain ambiguity around the true nature of impact measurement (Sairinen and Kumpulainen 2006; Paterson-Young et al. 2019). The best-known definition of social impact emerged from the European Commission's Groupe d'Experts de la Commission sur l'Entrepreneuriat Social (GECES) sub-committee on impact measurement:

> *The reflection of social outcomes as measurements, both long-term and short-term, adjusted for the effects achieved by others (alternative attribution), for effects that would have happened anyway (deadweight), for negative consequences (displacement), and for effects declining over time (drop-off) (GECES, June 2014:12).*

Social impact measurement allows organisations to identify an individual's journey of support through the identification of short-, medium-, and long-term benefits (Paterson-Young et al., 2019). This not only helps to identify the benefits for individuals but enables identification of any shortcomings in service delivery, driving organisational change when it is required (Nicholls 2009; Clifford et al. 2013). Adopting a social impact measurement approach also helps organisations to identify the role of different stakeholder groups from strategic (power) and operational (delivery) perspectives (Paterson-Young et al., 2019).

This Academic Insights paper outlines the fact that children and young people in conflict with the law are often disempowered within the youth justice system. It seeks to establish the role of social impact measurement in empowering children and young people by placing them at the heart of outcome-focused service design. The concept of social impact measurement is set out for practitioners, outlining the role that such measurement plays in mapping the outputs, outcomes, and impact for children in conflict with the law.

2. Social impact measurement in improving outcomes for children

Social impact measurement offers an outcome-focused approach to measuring the impact of services that empowers the disempowered. It refers to the positive and/or negative outcomes of activities and services on individuals. The GECES sub-committee defines social impact as an investigation of:

- the scope of the programme (*outputs* of the programme)
- the positive and negative outcomes for beneficiaries (*outcomes* for the beneficiary group)
- the changes for beneficiaries and society (*impacts* on society)
- the role of other organisations/stakeholders in this change (alternative attribution)
- the changes that would have occurred anyway (deadweight/control group) (Clifford et al., 2014).

This Academic Insights paper outlines the fact that children and young people in conflict with the law are often disempowered in the youth justice system. It offers insight into two core questions around social impact measurement (the why and the how) by focusing on the developments of social impact measurement and the empowerment of children and young people.

2.1 Measuring social impact – the why and how

Organisations commonly report outputs (e.g. number of children supported) and outcomes (e.g. self-reported wellbeing) but rarely report impact data (Ogain et al., 2012). Reporting data on outputs and outcomes is valuable in identifying outcomes for children. However, this can often be superficial, reporting basic information without the benefit of a robust measurement approach that combines quantitative and qualitative information (Stevenson et al., 2010). Reliance on output measurement in evaluation reports, in isolation, neglects the longer-term benefits of services (i.e. outcomes), and the wider social change (i.e. impact) (Paterson-Young et al., 2019). Collecting in-depth information that not only identifies the benefits for individuals but also for the wider community is essential in delivering effective and sustainable services.

While there is no single approach to impact measurement, there are common elements that enable the creation of a common-sense approach (Hazenberg and Clifford, 2016; Paterson-Young, 2018; Paterson-Young et al., 2019). Discerning the best approach to measuring impact for specific programmes relies on identifying a robust social impact measurement framework that balances the scope of measurement and stakeholder engagement. A review of frameworks/approaches to identify the scope of the measurement tool (comprehensive to limited) and the level of stakeholder engagement (high to low) was conducted in 2018, leading to the identification of a specific approach to social impact measurement in youth justice – the social impact for local economies (SIMPLE) approach. This approach (McLoughlin et al., 2009) allows for the measurement of:

- outputs (tangible and immediate results of activities)
- outcomes (the positive and/or negative changes that enhance beneficiaries' lives)
- impact (the intended and unintended social changes of activities).

The SIMPLE approach allows for the development of robust measures; however, identifying clear guidance on the strategic and operational delivery of social impact measurement is essential. The European Commission's GECES framework (Clifford et al., 2014) developed useful guidance with *seven* key elements in delivering social impact measurement, both strategically and operationally (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Elements in delivering social impact measurement (Clifford et al., 2014)

The GECES framework highlights additional areas that require identification to capture social impact in a robust and meaningful way, including *deadweight, alternative attribution*, and *drop off*. Deadweight refers to the changes that would have occurred regardless of the activities offered by the organisation, alternative attribution is the impact resulting from other activities, and drop-off refers to the decreasing effect of activities over time (Clifford et al., 2014).

2.2 Measuring social impact in practice

The empowerment of children and young people in conflict with the law needs to be led through an outcome-based approach centred on empowering young people. Building on the SIMPLE approach (McLoughlin et al. 2009) and the European Commission's GECES framework, Paterson-Young et al. (2019) developed a 'Young Person Centred, Theory-led Social Impact Framework' for measuring social impact. It offers a starting point for measuring activities that support children and young people; however, the diverse nature of activities and the organisations operating across the youth justice sector mean that caution should be exercised in implementing this framework without considering the individual organisation's objectives, mission, and stakeholders (Hornsby 2012).

The 'Young Person-Centred, Theory-led Social Impact Framework' combines:

- Maslow's (1943; 1987) hierarchy of needs
- Integrated Cognitive Antisocial Potential (ICAP) theory (Farrington and Ttofi, 2014)
- desistance theory (Maruna, 2001).

The framework provides academics and practitioners with a road map for effective and robust evaluation of the outcomes of services supporting children and young people. Implementing such a framework requires an understanding of the pathway towards measurement, paying attention to the following five stages (Clifford et al., 2014:7):

1. *Identify objectives:* What are the objectives of the impact measurement (for the organisations and partners)?
2. *Identify stakeholders:* Who are the beneficiaries and who provide resources?
3. *Relevant measurement:* Understand the theory of change and then utilise relevant indicators to capture this.
4. *Measure, validate, and value:* Assess whether outcomes are achieved and whether they are recognised by the various stakeholders.
5. *Report, learn and improve:* Ensure the dissemination and meaningful use of the data gathered and findings produced to internal and external stakeholders/audiences.
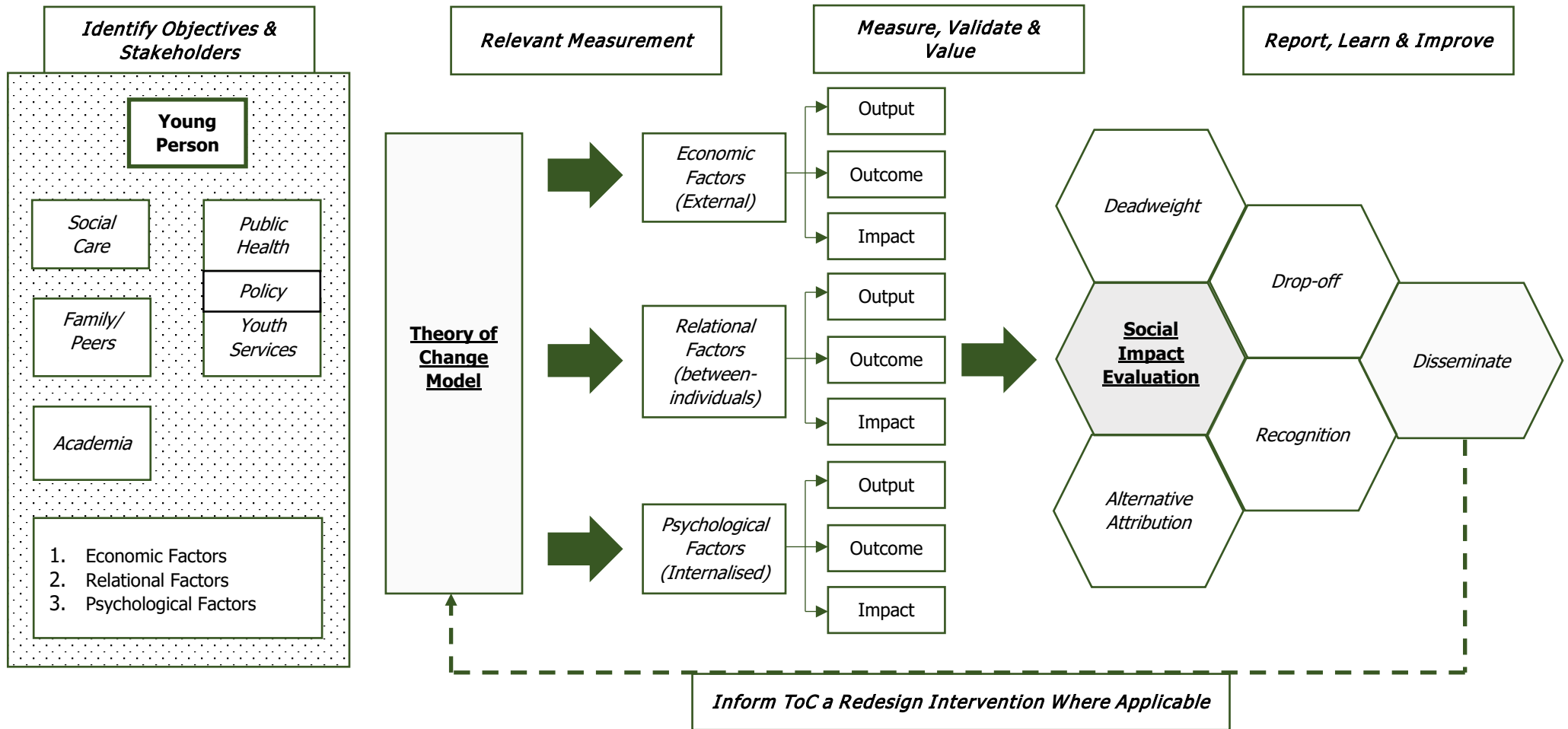
Figure 2: The five-stage process for social impact measurement

Embedded in this pathway is a multi-stakeholder engagement approach centred on the young people, with family/peers, social services (i.e. public health and social care), youth services, academia, and policy in the periphery. Accompanying this approach is a theory of change mapping the relevant outputs, outcomes, and impact in relation to key elements within Maslow's hierarchy of needs, ICAP theory, and desistance theory. ICAP theory identifies three main impact areas for youth offending: (i) economic factors, such as low income/unemployment; (ii) relational factors, such as delinquent families/peers and living in high-crime neighbourhoods; and (iii) psychological factors/impacts, such as family breakdown/poor parenting, and internal functions such as high anxiety. Desistance theory meanwhile highlights how changes in behaviour can be influenced by ageing, life events, social bonds and personal narrative, impacting on the individual's sense of self. Through combining these theories, attention needs to be given to appropriate measurement in areas such as health and wellbeing, relationships, education, independence, and pro-social attitudes.

Finally, the framework outlines the inclusion of deadweight, alternative attribution and drop-off calculations (Clifford et al., 2014), and acknowledges the need for dissemination of the social impact findings both externally and internally (Clifford et al., 2014; Hazenberg and Clifford, 2016) (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Young Person-Centred, Theory-led SIM Framework for Youth Offending (adapted from Paterson-Young et al., 2019)

Identify Objectives & Stakeholders

Young Person

Social Care

Public Health

Policy

Family/Peers

Youth Services

Academia

1. Economic Factors
2. Relational Factors
3. Psychological Factors

Relevant Measurement

Theory of Change Model

Economic Factors (External)

Relational Factors (between-individuals)

Psychological Factors (Internalised)

Measure, Validate & Value

Output

Outcome

Impact

Output

Outcome

Impact

Output

Outcome

Impact

Report, Learn & Improve

Deadweight

Drop-off

Social Impact Evaluation

Recognition

Alternative Attribution

Disseminate

Inform ToC a Redesign Intervention Where Applicable

3. Conclusion

Social impact measurement has received growing attention for a number of decades, with increased pressure on organisations from public/third sector funders and legislation to measure impact. It encompasses the positive and/or negative outcomes of activities and services on individuals, as adjusted for the effects achieved by others, for effects that would have happened anyway, for negative consequences, and for effects declining over time. Social impact measurement allows organisations to identify an individual's journey of support through the identification of short-, medium-, and long-term benefits. This not only helps to identify the benefits for individuals but also any shortcomings in service delivery, driving organisational change when it is required.

Social impact measurement allows organisations to develop an approach that empowers the disempowered. Children and young people in conflict with the law are often disempowered in the youth justice system; social impact measurement thus provides a means of empowering them through placing them at the heart of outcome-focused service design. This has been framed within a multi-theoretical lens that positions Maslow's hierarchy of needs, ICAP theory, and desistance theory within a social impact measurement framework. Through the creation of such frameworks, organisations can be held accountable for the outcomes achieved by beneficiaries. Furthermore, by positioning children and young people at the centre, it empowers them to overcome past experiences and achieve positive and fulfilling lives.

References

Clifford, J., Hehenberger, L. and Fantini, M. (2014). *Proposed Approaches to Social Impact Measurement in European Commission legislation and in practice relating to EuSEFs and the EaSI*, European Commission Report 140605 (June 2014). Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=7735&type=2&furtherPubs=yes (Accessed: 22 November 2021).

Clifford, J., Markey, K. and Malpani, N. (2013). *Measuring Social Impact in Social Enterprise: The state of thought and practice in the UK*. London: E3M. Available at: https://can-online.org.uk/uploads/editor/files/Invest/Measuring_Social_Impact_in_Social_Enterprise_report.pdf (Accessed: 22 November 2021).

Farrington, D. and Ttofi, M. (2014). 'Developmental and Life-Course Theories of Offending', in Morizot, H. and Kazemian, L. (eds.) *The Development of Criminal and Antisocial Behaviour*. Springer.

Hazenberg, R. and Clifford, J. (2016). 'GECES and the valid measurement of social impact in the VCSE sector', in Gunn, R. and Durkin, C. (eds.) *Social Entrepreneurship: A Skills Approach*, 2nd Edition. Policy Press.

Hornsby, A. (2012). *The Good Analyst: Impact Measurement and Analysis in the Social-Purpose Universe*. London: Investing for Good CIC.

Maruna, S. (2001). *Making Good: How Ex-Convicts Reform and Rebuild their Lives*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Maslow, A. H. (1943). 'A theory of human motivation', *Psychological Review*, 50(4), pp. 370-396.

Maslow, A. H. (1987). *Motivation and personality*, 3rd Edition. India: Pearson Education.

McLoughlin, J., Kaminski, J., Sodagar, B., Khan, S., Harris, R., Arnaudo, G. and McBrearty, S. (2009). 'A strategic approach to social impact measurement of social enterprises: The SIMPLE methodology', *Social Enterprise Journal,* 5(2), pp. 154-178.

Nicholls, A. (2009). 'We Do Good Things Don't We? Blended Value Accounting in Social Entrepreneurship', *Accounting, Organizations and Society*, 34(6-7), pp. 755-769.

Ogain, E. N., Lumley, T. and Pritchard, D. (2012). *Making an Impact*. London: NPC.

Paterson-Young, C. (2018). *'Inspiring Futures' - How social impact measurement as a form of organisational performance management can enhance outcomes for young people in secure accommodation*, PhD Thesis. University of Northampton.

Paterson-Young, C., Hazenberg, R. and Bajwa-Patel, M. (2019). *The Social Impact of Secure accommodation on Young People in the Criminal Justice System.* London: Palgrave.

Sairinen, R. and Kumpulainen, S. (2006). 'Assessing the social impact in urban waterfront regeneration', *Environmental Impact Assessment Review*, 26, pp. 120-135.

Stevenson, N., Taylor, M., Lyon, F. and Rigby, M. (2010). *Social Impact Measurement (SIM) experiencing and future Directions for the third sector organisations in the east of England.* Working Paper. Bradford: Social Enterprise East of England.