

## CASE STUDY

# Working together to improve health and wellbeing in Edinburgh:

## how we know we collectively make a difference

### ABOUT THIS WORK

Many intermediary organisations want to say more about how their work makes a difference to outcomes. Edinburgh Community Health Forum (ECHF) - a collective of community-based third sector organisations in Edinburgh - is one of these.

ECHF supports member organisations by:

- creating opportunities for members to connect and learn from each other.
- advocating for a community-led approach to addressing health inequalities and improving the health and wellbeing of people and communities across the city.
- being the voice of the organisations in discussions with wider stakeholders and funders.

ECHF and members faced the following challenges and approached Matter of Focus for support to tackle them:

- How to report to multiple funders in a way that is more streamlined and less labour intensive.
- How to track and collect data in order to report and evaluate in a meaningful way.
- How to consolidate and embed learning from evaluations to improve their services.
- How to better tell their stories and show the difference that they make.

## What we did

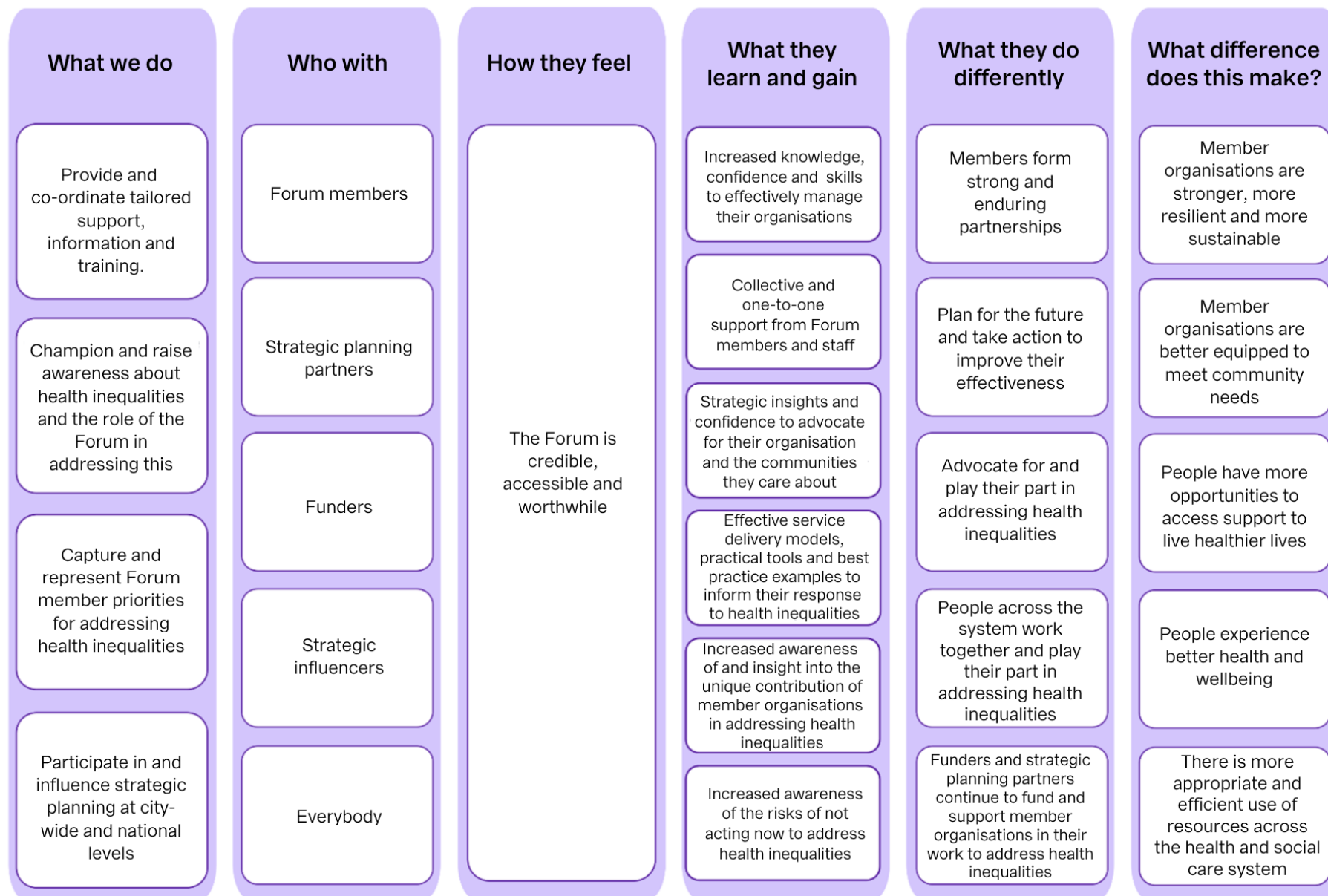
Over a period of three years, we worked together to develop an evaluation framework for the Forum to track their progress to outcomes, and to roll this approach to evaluation out to member organisations. Matter of Focus provided consultancy support in face-to-face and online workshops, and our software OutNav.

We ran a series of workshops, at the Forum level and then with groups of members, and supported them to bring the work into OutNav to track their impact. Forum members could better understand how they contributed to reducing health inequalities as individual community organisations and as a collective working together in partnership.

## WHAT WE DID FOR THE FORUM

Working together, we built a framework to understand and learn about the contribution of the Forum as a whole. We did this by mapping outcomes, collecting and collating data, and helping to pull this together into a clear contribution story so ECHF could demonstrate how they made a difference to health outcomes.

Edinburgh Community Forum Outcome Map:



## WHAT WE DID FOR INDIVIDUAL MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

To support ECHF members to evaluate their own outcomes, we began a pilot scheme with 11 organisations to empower them to tell their individual impact stories better.

We ran workshops to understand each organisation's contribution to outcomes as the basis for evaluation. We used these outcome maps as a framework for data collection and analysis. Over time, each organisation brought together reflections, data and evidence across their outcome map to highlight the difference they make.

A showcase event allowed members to share their work with each other and invited stakeholders including local authority members, to see how each organisation contributes to community health and wellbeing in Edinburgh.

We continue to support these organisations through regular meetings to reflect and learn together.

**Right: Forum members present their work at the ECHF Showcase at the Edinburgh City Chambers in January 2020**



## Who with

The Forum itself has a core team of two part-time staff, a voluntary chairperson and several trustees from across the member organisations.

The ECHR member organisations we worked with include:



Our OutNav subscriptions do not limit the number of people that can work on each project, encouraging collaboration and the integration of evaluation and tracking into organisations' everyday work. Several organisations have multiple staff members actively engaged in the process.

# What they learned and gained

As a result of this work ECHF can:

- capture evidence of the strategic work done by core ECHF staff.
- link to and reflect on notes from meetings attended by the Strategic Development Manager.
- capture the important work they do bringing the priorities and concerns of member organisations to the attention of policymakers, and influencing the strategic direction of health provision in Edinburgh.
- capture this work as it happens building a strong foundation for reporting and making the case for the work of the Forum.

Members of the Forum tell us:

- they are more able to organise the evidence of their impact in an effective, structured way.
- they can find evidence more easily when needed, for example when putting together reports for funders and statutory bodies.
- have insight into gaps in their evidence collecting processes.
- OutNav provides them with a platform to capture and organise types of data that might otherwise be lost.
- they can build the positive feedback they receive from their communities into their outcome maps where it is an important part of their contribution stories.

Some organisations have already taken their use of OutNav beyond the scope of the pilot: WHALE Arts sees OutNav as a way to 'own their outcomes', taking control of their own data to work towards the outcomes they see as important.

“

I hope [OutNav] will move us away from thinking about our data only in relation to what we report to funders. I think that too many third sector organisations collect data for their funders and not for themselves. I've been calling this 'owning our outcomes'.

”

Leah Black, Chief Executive, WHALE Arts



This report by WHALE Arts is drawn from their work in OutNav: <https://bit.ly/3JYUsSd>

# What they do differently

The benefits felt from using our process and the resulting outcomes maps vary from organisation to organisation, but commonly include the following:

- A simple way for employees to work together to organise and analyse collected data.
- More regular and structured reflection on how their work advances their organisational goals.
- Opportunities to connect and collaborate with, and learn from, like-minded people in other organisations.
- New ways to capture qualitative, anecdotal and other types of data that may otherwise get lost in the reporting process.
- Create a more robust body of evidence from which they can draw when reporting to funders and overseers.

“

Using OutNav has helped us to clarify the role and remit of our organisation, its members and the impact and outcomes of our work.

”

Stephanie-Anne Harris, Strategic Development Manager,  
Edinburgh Community Health Forum

# What difference does this make?

We hope using this approach makes organisations more efficient, effective and attractive to funders.

“

It's been heartening to hear from some of our funders that they would be happy to receive an OutNav report instead of their standard format (more of this please, funders!)

”

Leah Black, Chief Executive, WHALE Arts

One example of this is WHALE Arts' successful funding bid. Including their OutNav outcome map in their application demonstrated that a robust evaluation framework was in place and was met with praise by the funders.

Several ECHF members, along with Matter of Focus co-founder Dr Ailsa Cook, contributed to a Community Health Exchange briefing calling on planners, commissioners and funders to be more open to new theories of change including the Matter of Focus approach, to better demonstrate the positive impact of third sector and community organisations.

The full briefing can be downloaded from the CHEX website: <https://bit.ly/3BWYlQz>



Coming together as a collective focused on similar outcomes allows organisations to make a stronger case for the difference they make to those outcomes, as well as providing opportunities to share learning and support their peers.

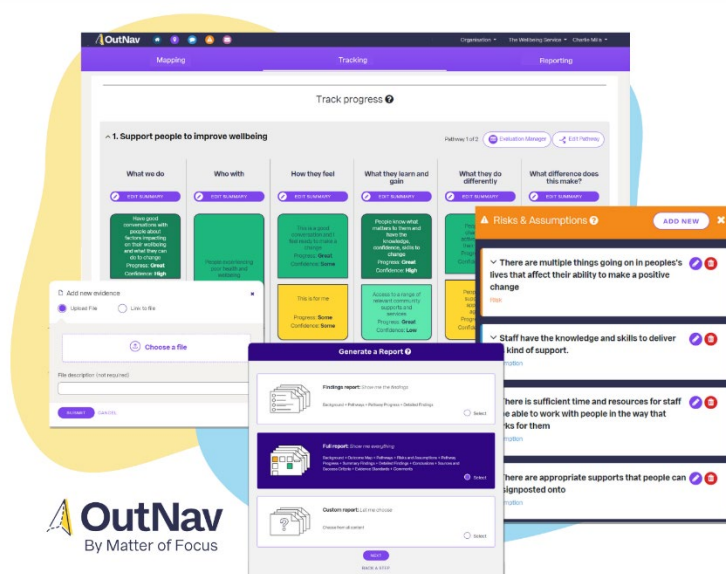
The work of the community organisations represented by ECHF adds up to more than the sum of its parts, and the Matter of Focus approach helps capture this. Highlighting the collaboration and interconnectedness of community organisations across the city demonstrates the value of partnership. OutNav enables this collective story to be told.

The core work of any intermediary like ECHF is to pool resources, knowledge and influence of members allowing them to influence policy and process in a way they can not alone. It can be hard to demonstrate how this work makes a difference, but working in this way has highlighted the importance of working together to deliver what local communities need.

## ABOUT US

Matter of Focus is a mission led company that supports organisations and partnerships to make better use of data and information to learn, improve and tell the story of the difference they make.

The team is led by Dr Ailsa Cook and Dr Sarah Morton, both their expertise on outcomes and evidence to action. Together, the team has more than 60 years' experience of bringing practical, well-grounded approaches to public and third sector organisations in the UK and internationally.



OutNav is the only software on the market that supports organisations and partnerships to plan, manage and report on outcomes using a theory-based approach to evaluation. It significantly enhances the capability of organisations and partnerships to make use of their data and information to learn, improve and tell the story of the difference they make.

# Matter of Focus

If you would like to find out more about how we can help you with your work, we'd be delighted to have a conversation about your evaluation challenges.

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