NEON Establishing Evidence and Measuring Impact Working Group Meeting

2nd September 2015

Notes

HEFCE- Gemma Cadogan

NNCO Monitoring Returns

- Give a brief introduction to the scheme highlighting its aim of bringing together HEIs and FE colleges to work in a more streamlined way
- There are 35 local NNCOs; 3 national NNCOs; and currently 11 NNCO projects (which are linked to specific networks).
- There will shortly be a renewed NNCO project call and bids need to be received by HEFCE no later than 2nd October. Project details and funding will be released by November 2015 for the yearlong project. Themes included gaps in GCSE attainment; patterns of BME progression and embedding NNCOs.
- HEFCE conformed that there would be additional flat rate NNCO funding in 2015/16 (now £136k) and that this had already been send to the networks.

- As part of the monitoring return HEFCE will be assessing the networks' value- beyond existing activity in terms of enabling coordinated outreach.
- In the 2014/15 return HEFCE are looking at the background and context of the network- with confirmation that key outputs (website SPoC) are in place.
- Local networks will be required to complete forms A and C- the forms will cover geography and features of the network; financial assurance of income and expenditure; confirmation and description of the SPoC and website; what has been achieved to date; details of any challenges and benefits of the scheme; how networks are looking at sustaining their current position post dec-16; and allowing for the schools list to be revised and updated where necessary.
- Form A is the written submission where details of underspend and arrangements for sustainability are to be detailed.
- Form C is the data submission (most of which will be pre-filled by HEFCE) where details of current spend; schools coverage; and planned expenditure are to be detailed. All engagement with schools (as part of network activity) should be recorded in Form C- whilst HEFCE do not require breakdowns of the type and level of engagement it would be useful for networks (for their own purposes) to capture this information.
- Both forms need to be signed off by a senior member of staff at the lead institution.
- NB: Questions were raised by the group around planned expenditure and if monies could be allocated for NNCO work post dec-16- HEFCE advised that all money must be spent by Dec 2016
- Details of return dates can be seen below:

Monitoring	Year 1	Year 2
End Date	30th September 2015	31st December 2016
Return Date	30th October 2015	27th January 2017

- Included in the Yr2 return institutions will be required to confirm and give assurance that individual institutional allocations have been used to support the network.
- Any issues with regards the date of Yr2 return submission (being after the life of the project) should be communicated to HEFCE.
- NB: HEFCE were asked to confirm if any specific data will be required at the end of the project (similar to requests made at the end of Aimhigher) as the group noted it would be useful to know in advance so they could be confident they were collecting the right information when engaging in activity.
- Following the 2014/15 return HEFCE will provide a summary report highlighting best practice and any problems networks had with returns. Individual returns will not be made public but case study examples may be highlighted within the summary report with networks being contacted for permission in advance.

SHU- Prof. Jacqueline Stevenson

Evaluation of the HEFCE NNCO Project

Measuring the Impact of the NNCOs

- The key aims of the evaluation are to assess the value of the networks beyond existing activity; and to work with the networks to embed and share good practice in effective evaluation methodologies.
- The key objectives are to assist networks in building robust evaluation methods; to evaluative value and perceived benefits; to look at the efficacy of networks in achieving their own intended aims; and to identify best practice and possibilities for sustainability.

What can actually be claimed through evaluation?

- We can't say that because of the NCCO funding 'X' has happened
- We need to look at the outcomes for the overall programme and the outcomes for the individual networks- as well as any unanticipated outcomes

Impact Evaluation

- How would the outcomes have changed if the intervention had not been undertaken?- this would involve assessing the change that can be directly attributed to a particular intervention- which is heard to do but we can look at perceived changes and make casual inferences.

The evaluation (of the networks)

- The data collected so far includes:
    - 2 surveys (similar to the HEFCE monitoring returns)
    - Case studies
    - Workshops
    - Work with groups of networks

- To help answer the key questions: what have you been able to do with the HEFCE money? Could you have done it anyway?

The evaluation (by the networks)

- So far networks appear to be evaluating

Process	e.g. outreach events
Outputs	e.g. no. of hits to website; no. of activities; no. of participants
Outcomes	e.g. increased applicants
Impact	e.g. change in the HE demographic profile

Impact vs Outcome (see slide for details)

- What might be impact for one NNCO might be an outcome for another network
- Impact and outcome test the causal chain of events i.e. changing knowledge and confidence (assertion) will lead to a change in behaviour
- When evaluating impact and outcomes we should look at the activities what are taking place and what the end point should be- so you need to have a working hypothesis to test against so you can assess if the activity works
- Approaches to help with this includes both qual and quant evaluation; age appropriate evaluation; clear KPIs; and clear research and evaluation questions- set at the start.

CFE Research- Rachel Morton

Independent Evaluation of HEFCE Student Opportunity Allocation

- 2 reports commissioned by HEFCE-
    - Data Return- looking at can HEFCE do a better job of analysing SO allocation?
    - In-depth Study- with a more genera WP focus; how to conduct better evaluation and looking at developing a new evaluation framework
- Initially reviewed existing evidence and then consulted with 25 HE providers; interviewed key staff; and piloted a new data return.
- Key messages:
    - Developed logic chains (see slides) - which set out the steps to robust evaluation and how he impacts should link back to the issue you wish to address.
    - Looked at the purpose of an evaluation framework:

1	Accountability	Data returns are appropriate for this; if changes are to be made they need to be well communicated
2	Benchmarking	UK PIs already do this and are consistent across all institutions
3	What Works	Need stronger evaluation; more appropriate and innovative approaches; longitudinal tracking; better use of secondary data; and support findings with in-depth qualitative
4	Impact Assessment	

		research
		CFE would recommend more evaluation with good comparison groups; using HEAT or other similar alternatives to capture data and enable longitudinal tracking; liking to other datasets such as NPD, HM Revenue & Customs
5	Return on Investment	Need to look at econometric analysis of secondary data- but remembering that not all benefits of WP can or should be measured in financial terms

- Overall we need to ensure that findings are made accessible for all- with neat summaries and remembering to use appropriate context for the audience.

Training Needs:

- Post-Grad Schemes; what works?; NSP
- Data- including data collection (consent forms); data uses; data phrases; data protection; datasets and targeting; HESA KPIs
- NNCO evaluation update (Sept / Dec 2016)
- Impact Chains
- Retention Evaluation (in-reach)
- Commissioning Research- writing proposals (Dec 2015)
- Qualitative training sessions
- Types of Learners- Mature; Care Leavers