

Establishing a common language

When developing a theory of change it helps to establish a common language amongst your colleagues. Some terms are recommended below but it is not essential that you adopt these – rather the most important thing is that everyone in the team has a common understanding.

Term	Definition
Inputs	The resources a team or project needs to carry out your activities
Activities	A description of a project/service components. An activity is something within your control that you plan to do or aspects of how you chose to deliver the project/service. You can also include considerations around the quality of delivery
Outputs	The quantity of activity you deliver; for example the number of users, how many sessions they receive and the amount of contact you have with them.
Engagement	This reflects reality of how the project/service is delivered and what users make of it. Engagement is about the nature of the relationships you aim to establish but also about how service users engage with and use the resources you give them., A useful way to think about engagement is what you achieve with people <i>on the day</i> , or while you are working with them, and how you want service users to see you.
Intermediate Outcomes	These are how you want service users to be influenced or changed by your service in the short term, which will contribute to a final goal such as reduced (re)offending. It may include changes in users' knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour but also 'harder measures', like entering substance misuse project or sustaining a tenancy. A useful way to think about intermediate outcomes is the outcomes achieved after the project/service – what service users take away from it.
Final goal	This describes the broader social change you are trying to achieve and how your project contributes to it. For criminal justice charities, desistance from crime and/or reduced offending tends to be the main focus.

Other terms:

Enabling factor: something outside of your control that can help or hinder your project/service

Evidence: information you already have or plan to collect that is relevant to supporting/testing the theory of change

Assumption: the underlying beliefs, the people involved, the context and the way we think the programme will work. These are sometimes implicit in a logic model or theory of change but it can be useful to state them explicitly.

Two useful resources on terminology:

- <http://www.jargonbusters.org.uk/>.
- <http://www.theoryofchange.org/what-is-theory-of-change/how-does-theory-of-changework/glossary/#2>