

Documenting outcomes and the importance of evidence-based services: Lessons for Children's Centres

**Anne Barton, Dr Jill Jesson, Kevin
Broughton**

anne.barton@m-e-l.co.uk

Sure Start Conference 14 -15 June 2006

Evaluations – reviewing existing data

- ◆ Since 1999, 23 projects on behalf of nationwide SSLPs
- ◆ Comprehensively reviewed Management Information Systems of eight SSLPs in last two years, to answer a variety of evaluation questions
- ◆ Present some lessons from evaluating SSLPs

Evidence base and evaluation

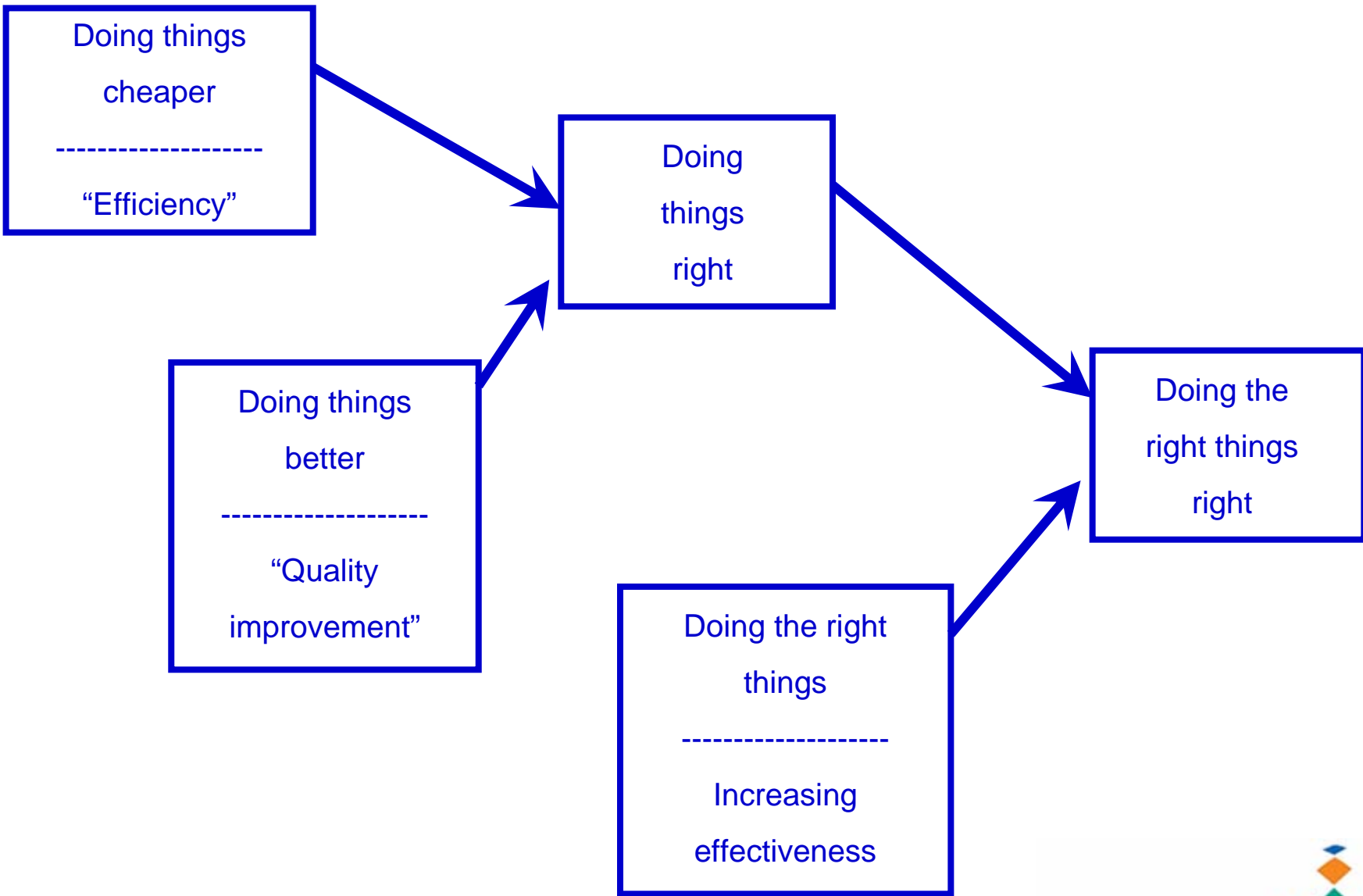
- ◆ There are differing standards of MIS across SSLPs
- ◆ Those SSLPs with more robust MIS generally have better evaluation findings than those with poor MIS – the evidence base is crucial

Transition to Children's Centres

- ◆ Never been more important to evidence impact and progress
- ◆ Need firm evidence base to 'prove worth' of services
- ◆ Children's Centres provide the opportunity to get it right from the start!
- ◆ Why the need for evidence-based services?

Figure 2.2

The evolution of evidence-based healthcare



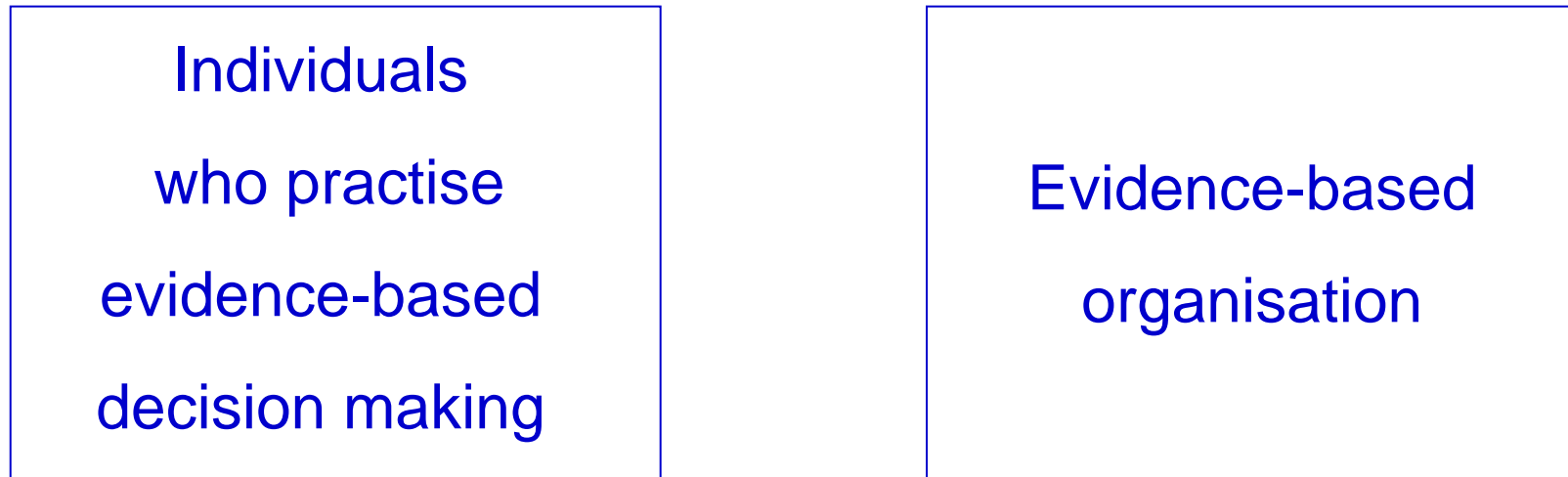
1970s

info@m-e-l.co.uk

1980s

1990s

Individuals shape organisations



Organisations facilitate the development of individuals

OBDM – opinion-based
decision making (values and
resources driven)

EBDM –
evidence-based
decision making

Data within SSLPs

- ◆ National data:
 - ◆ Progress against PSA and SDAs via variety of M forms (but requirements changed over time)
- ◆ National data – missing baseline data and gaps in M form returns make tracking difficult
- ◆ Data must be measurable and available from the start
- ◆ Local data variations:
 - ◆ On activities
 - ◆ Board and PF minutes
 - ◆ External evaluation
 - ◆ Internal evaluation
 - ◆ Costs data
- ◆ Local data needs to evidence aims and objectives of activities

Challenges within SSLPs

- ◆ Gaps in baseline data
- ◆ Reliance on other partners/providers for data
- ◆ Need for systems to monitor and track – data may be dispersed, not stored well
- ◆ Cause and effect/whole programme approach
- ◆ Definitions: monitoring, evaluation, outputs, outcomes
- ◆ SMART aim and objectives
- ◆ SMARTer costs data
- ◆ Evidence of learning from evaluation?

Practical examples

◆ Programme A:

- ◆ No comprehensive info on activities
- ◆ No data on publicity materials or costs
- ◆ Targets not updated when achieved/out of date
- ◆ Lack of monitoring of attendance at projects
- ◆ Lack of SLA for a key service
- ◆ Lack of monitoring data for that service

◆ Programme B:

- ◆ All documentation in one place
- ◆ SLAs all signed, all available
- ◆ Performance grids
- ◆ Projects decommissioned as result of underperformance
- ◆ Evaluation an active and ongoing way of working

Lessons for Children's Centres

- ◆ SSLP legacy of evaluation
- ◆ Embed a culture of evaluation from the start – it's everybody's job!
- ◆ Staff training and support in evaluation
- ◆ Clarity of definitions/terminology
- ◆ Set up systems to monitor and track (electronic and paper)
- ◆ Who is responsible? Make it organisation-based, not people-based (knowledge management)
- ◆ Baseline data must be available
- ◆ Indicators must be measurable
- ◆ Aim and objectives must be SMART

For further information...

- ◆ Fact sheet on evidencing outcomes
- ◆ Fact sheet on evaluation methods

Any questions?