



# **Theory-based Evaluation: Options and Choices for Practitioners**

**Course Tutor:**

**Prof. David Parsons ([drdj.parsons@gmail.com](mailto:drdj.parsons@gmail.com))**

## Practical Exercises

*Exercises will be by group work and will last for around 30 mins in total (each) to include feedback and discussion in a 'plenary' session at the end of each exercise.*

- Exercise 1: Conjecturing 'assumptions' and 'expectations'
  
- Exercise 2: A stakeholder engagement and testing plan.

## Exercise 1: Conjecturing 'assumptions' and 'expectations' for a gambling harm minimisation initiative

**Scenario:** The UK's Gambling Commission (regulator) has worked with the sector, harm minimisation and support charities and others to introduce a Multi Operator Self Exclusion Scheme (MOSES) across Britain. MOSES provides an opportunity for any gambler to self-exclude themselves from multiple gambling premises and from online gambling to help them control gambling addiction, address and reduce the harms they cause to themselves and affected others. Some sectors had 'single operator' schemes but these were seen as lacking in effectiveness and reach; the multiple operator scheme will provide for a simple, one-stop-shop approach which is expected to be more effective in reducing harms. MOSES aims to provide:

- A simple, easy to access, consistently use cross-sector voluntary (self) exclusion scheme
- A self-directed (by gambler) and operator enforced ban from gambling for registering individuals for a min. (extendable) period of six months
- Active signposting at registration for self-excluders to charitable and other support services.

The effectiveness of MOSES will be measured by take-up, compliance and self-excluders accessing support services which can contribute subsequently to a reduction in gambling related harms among users and others at risk and those additionally affected. MOSES is currently being trialled at scale and will be rolled out shortly as part of the *National Strategy to Reduce Gambling Harms*. The roll out will be evaluated using a TBE approach.

As a preliminary the Commission, working with GambleAware, is to produce an initial working paper to set out early thinking on assumptions and expectations behind MOSES, and as an input to a subsequent development of a first draft theory of change.

**The exercise:** The group exercise will set out 'bullet points' for each of 'assumptions' and 'expectations' as a starting point for a theory of change, and where:

- Expectations are defined as the anticipated measurable consequential changes (short and longer term) expected from the intervention if it is to be successful.
- Assumptions involve assumed transformation needs and processes in the initiative (tangible and hidden) for the self-exclusion scheme to be implemented across the sector and to be effective in meeting its aims and wider aspirations

**Issues for exercise:** Review this scenario and from this the group will need to:

1. Make a preliminary assessment of assumptions and expectations (for ToC)
2. Report back after the breakout group to the plenary session.

**Format:** Small group (breakout) discussions and plenary feedback.

## **Exercise 2: MOSES TBE evaluation – stakeholder engagement and testing plan**

**Scenario:** A 3 year theory-based evaluation is to be conducted of the introduction and efficacy of the MOSES initiative (as Exercise 1 scenario). It has been accepted by the joint Gambling Commission-GambleAware partners group leading the initiative, and to whom the external commissioned and independent evaluation will report at the end of each of the three years. It is anticipated that this will require a co-production approach, open, wide and active stakeholder engagement for the TBE process, design and findings to be robust and credible across the sector and support organisations.

Co-production involvement has been agreed to help steer the development of an appropriate ToC, set up and conduct of the evaluation. This will involve the current partners group of the Commission (policy and planning teams), GambleAware, DCMS, key stakeholders, the appointed (independent) evaluation team and an academic experts. External stakeholder engagement will be an important part of this with arrangements for this integrated with the evaluation plan.

The evaluation will be externally contracted with the evaluation specification including the theory of change published in six months time. The engagement plan will start with an initial ToC kick start briefing and meeting of the partners and stakeholder in six weeks, with the ToC for inclusion in the invitation to tender (ITT) due to be concluded in 16-17 weeks (ie two weeks before the ITT is published). A TBE engagement plan is now needed to set out:

- a) what stakeholders might be appropriately invited to be involved and when;
- b) What staged engagement activities are needed to form, test and review the ToC.

**The exercise:** A draft TBE stakeholder engagement plan is needed now and where:

- Engagement breadth and processes should be staged and proportionate to needs
- It will make best use of key stakeholders but not over-burdening 'key people'
- It will involve an appropriate range of stakeholders concerned with effective implementation and successful outcomes.

There is to be no provision for time/travel costs of stakeholder contributions inputs; stakeholder engagement will be self-funded.

**Issues for exercise:**

1. Review needs for a proportionate approach to external stakeholder engagement
2. Prepare a loose TBE engagement plan to identify which key stakeholder groupings are to be involved
3. Indicate what engagement methods (eg events) will be used for what in puts/outputs for the TBE, and at what stages of the intervention.

**Format:** Small group (breakout) discussions and plenary feedback.