Making it Happen

Collecting and sharing stories for the evaluation

Guidance for CDWs
March 2023

collaborate
for social change

"Stories shape how we understand the world, our place in it, and our ability to change it"

Ella Saltmarshe

Contents

This guide is intended to support MiH Community Development Workers to identify, collect and share stories for the MiH Evaluation.

For more information, please contact angie.greany@sussexcommunity.org.uk

Essential info

Key documents

We've tried to make the process as streamlined as possible and avoid introducing more steps or processes than are necessary to collect what we need for evaluation purposes. We've also tried to design the process to ensure that you get something out of it as well, rather than just extracting information from you. Our hope is that writing these stories will create time and space for you to reflect, capture and share your thoughts, and that this will support your development and planning, help to capture the value of what you do, and motivate you to keep going.

We welcome stories in whatever format is most convenient for you. We have developed a Word document template based on feedback at the co-design workshop, but if there are other formats you would prefer to use (e.g. a form, slides, voice notes), please let us know.

What to do: Step 1

Spend about an hour working on your story using the Word template, writing 5 - 10 sentences per question.

Use the prompt questions (in *italics*) if they're helpful; don't worry about them if they don't seem relevant, just tell us whatever you think is important.

*Start with what is interesting and significant to you: if you see a connection to the framework, please tell us about it/mark it somehow. If you don't see a connection between your story and the framework, that's fine — we're just as interested in the story.

1 2 3

What to do: Step 1

Use the Word document template at:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/11ZKYzGQsMp2iivXfzbRnEN
dXKojeXCYH?usp=share_link

You can also access this via Trello at:
Trello; Reporting Deadlines and
Documents; Other Reporting Documents

MiH Story Collection Template

Step 1: Complete the template below (type directly into the boxes).
Step 2: Mark on the Excel grid the areas/indicators the story relates to — or add your own.
Scroll down (or click here) for more information about how to use this template and Q&A.

1. **Describe the activity / conversation / event / project.**
What happened? Who was involved? How does this fit into the wider context of the project / MiH?

2. **What did you notice about the people who took part or were present?**
Who did you try to bring in or expect to take part? Were they effectively engaged? Who was or wasn't present? Did anything surprise you about that?

3. **What were your reflections on the key outcomes from this activity / conversation / event / project?**
You might reflect on what you thought might happen at the beginning, and whether that is still true or has changed. You might want to think about outcomes in different parts of the system:
- *For individuals:*
- *Person to person:*
- *Between people and services:*
- *Between services and services:*

4. **Why is this story significant to you?**
What made you choose to capture this story? Why does it feel remarkable?

5. **What did you personally learn through this experience?**
What will you take away from this into future work? It could be something about your practice or approach that you're proud of, or something that you'd do differently next time. Or, it might be a new idea or insight that this work has sparked for you about ABCD and MiH.

6. **What lessons are there for the wider system? [OR What does this story tell us about the wider system?]**
You might think about how this story relates to the four shifts we're focussed on in evaluating MiH:
- *From central to local*
- *From isolation to collaboration*
- *From assuming & prescribing to learning & responding*
- *From deficits to strengths*

7. **Who would you like to share this story with? Why?**
Are there people (participants, frontline workers, decision makers etc.) who might be moved (emotionally or moved to action) by this story?

Type your responses to the questions directly into the boxes

1   2   3

What to do: Step 2

Then, mark on the Excel sheet which areas/indicators your story relates to.

Annotate with your own additions if the current indicators don't capture what your story is about or you want to make new/different connections.

*Reviewing the framework is deliberately the last step in the process rather than the first. You don't need to refer to the framework to choose what story to tell and it's fine if your story doesn't fit neatly into the framework, as we expect to adapt and grow it over time.

1 — 2 — 3 →

What to do: Step 2

Fill in the Excel grid at

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/11ZKYzGQsMp2iiv XfzbRnENdXKojeXCYH?usp=share_link

You can also access this via Trello at: Trello; Reporting Deadlines and Documents; Other Reporting Documents

Highlight / tick the indicator(s) your story relates to and add additional notes

1   2   3

What to do: Step 3

Email your completed Word template and Excel spreadsheet to Angie Greany (angie.greany@sussexcommunity.org.uk)

No need to wait until a reporting deadline - send your stories as and when they are ready.

*Submit at least three stories between now and the end of September (e.g. one per quarter as part of quarterly reporting, replacing the need to submit reflection notes).

1 — 2 — 3 →

How this fits with other MiH processes

The Story Collection template replaces the need for you to submit a Reflection Note as part of your quarterly reporting (although you may wish to continue using the Reflection Note as part of your personal reflective practice). Our suggestion is that you weave the process of identifying and writing stories into the wider reporting/reflection processes as follows:

Capture significant moments or interactions in a brief form day to day through the Meaningful Connections spreadsheet.

(You can continue capturing personal notes and next steps in a Reflection Note but it is not required since the new template takes its place.)

Once per quarter, review the Meaningful Connections spreadsheet and any notes to identify a story worth telling in more detail via the Story Collection template.

| Delivery plan | Reporting spreadsheet | Reflection note | Additional evidence (photo, map, etc.) | Grant review/ How and Why convo | Equalities mapping table |

Detailed instructions

1. Identify the story you want to tell

Hopefully you've been using the Meaningful Connections spreadsheet to identify significant moments in your work over the past couple of months. To choose a story you want to tell in more detail using this template, we suggest reviewing your recent entries and choosing one you think you have more to say about or would like to write about in more depth.

There is no set formula for the sorts of story we're looking for. As we discussed in the workshop, stories can serve a number of different purposes in the context of evaluation and system change, and can be powerful in different ways.

STORY AS GLUE   **STORY AS LIGHT**   **STORY AS WEB**
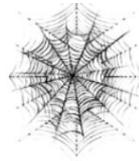
Read more about different kinds of stories in Ella Saltmarshe's article in the [*Stanford Social Innovation Review*](Stanford Social Innovation Review)

Top tips for identifying stories

Write about what interests you: If you feel passionate about or moved by the story, it's likely that you will find it easier to write in a compelling way, which will also make it powerful to the reader. Write stories about things that are interesting or meaningful to you.

Capture the small moments/events: Small interactions and moments can have big ripple effects and often we get a sense of something being 'powerful' even if it's not a big thing in itself. These moments often tell us something important about the bigger system, or send an important message.

Think about process as well as outcome: We're interested in the process of MiH as well as the outcomes. We'd love to hear stories about the practices, behaviours, skills and tools used in your work and how you're developing them over time — and to know what's working as well as what doesn't work as planned, or what you've learned.

Consider your perspective and authenticity: We're inviting your perspective on these stories as CDWs. We recognise that your perspective might be different from that of the people who you're working with and perhaps writing about. If you think there are likely to be big differences in perspective or this is a sensitive issue for someone on the ground, consider whether/how you acknowledge this in your telling of the story and if it's possible to invite a contribution from someone with another perspective alongside your own. If you don't feel you can authentically represent the story/experience in a way that the people it is about would recognise, you may not be best placed to tell the story and we could look at different options for capturing it.

2. Read the questions and write your answer into the box on the template

Reading over the questions once or twice with your story in mind and taking a few moments to think about what you want to say will likely help make the writing process smoother. You might want to make some bullet point notes or talk it through with a colleague before you start. But writing your story shouldn't be a long winded process — we'd expect it to take no more than an hour of your time to go from choosing a story to completing the write-up.

Your responses don't need to be lengthy. Although it might vary for different questions, we're hoping for about 5 - 10 sentences (around 150 - 200 words) per question.

The additional questions in italics are prompts and probes to help you think about what you might say in response to the questions. They are intended as an invitation or a guide to what we're interested to hear about, rather than a prescriptive set of questions you must answer or constraints on what you tell us. If they don't seem relevant to the story you're telling, don't feel you have to answer them. If there are other things beyond the scope of the prompts that you do think are important, please do include them.

Specific details about which places or projects stories relate to are important for us to keep a record of, so we can understand the context around them which has a bearing on us being able to understand if, how and why MiH works and for whom.

However, we do not need to collect the names of individual people who the stories might be about, so individual community members should be anonymised.

3. Mark on the Excel grid the indicators or areas your story relates to

As the final step in your story writing process, refresh your memory of four shifts we're hoping MiH will contribute to and their definitions. Think about whether and how these shifts relate to the story you have written, and at what level your story relates to — the level of an individual (within a person); in a group of people or community (person to person); between a person/people in a community and an organisation or statutory services (between people and services); or between services/organisations or other levels of the system (between services and services, and beyond).

If you do see a connection between your story and a particular shift or level, mark this in some way on the Excel grid. We suggest:
- Mark with a Y (for Yes) to the left of the areas/indicators your story relates to, and/or
- Add a new indicator in the 'New additions' column, and
- Add any notes in the same cell as the indicator

If it's easier, you can print off the Excel grid or the web version, write directly onto it by hand or add post-its and then take a photo and save this alongside your story template.

You can find the web version in the Google Drive.

The Four Shifts

Deficits to strengths	Individuals and communities are recognised for their strengths, and supported to build on these, rather than focusing only on the individual's or place's needs and deficits.
Central to local	Moving from one-size-fits-all approaches at large geographic areas to a relational neighbourhood-based focus. Understanding the value of relationships and connections on the ground within a community and how that can share the operations within it, rather than a blanket approach across a large area.
Isolation to collaboration	Individuals, groups and organisations work collaboratively rather than in isolation from each other, making the most of the resources available and enabling better, joined-up provision within communities.
Assuming & prescribing to learning & responding	Professionals start with what's happening on the ground, rather than prescribing or imposing projects or solutions. Lived experience is valued alongside learned (professional) experience, and community voices shape both what and how services are delivered in a community.

4. Share your story ready for analysis

Once your story is completed, please email both the Word template and the Excel grid to Angie Greany (angie.greany@sussexcommunity.org.uk)

If you have feedback about the template and/or how it fits with other processes or reporting tools, please share this with Angie in the first instance. She will collate and share this with us in June when we will be reviewing all the evidence collection methods that we have updated/introduced to see if they are working as intended. At this point, we can make adjustments to the process if needed or offer further support and guidance to help with collecting and writing stories. We'll also review at the start of next year when we begin collecting evidence for the second year of our evaluation contract.

We're also keen to incorporate visual evidence such as photos and videos, so please collect and share these as well.

5. What happens next

The stories shared are one type of evidence that we will use to help understand if, how, and why MiH works, and for whom, within the areas it is happening in.

The Evaluation team from Collaborate CIC will review all of the stories collected so far at the start of the analysis and sensemaking phase in September. We will start to identify themes and questions for further exploration from the stories and the other evidence that has been collected. At this stage, we might ask you for a bit more detail or to clarify something about one of the stories you've shared with us.

We will then work with CDWs and other people involved in MiH to understand what these stories and other evidence are telling us and what insights we can draw for the evaluation. As part of this, we might share your stories with other people to read, and/or ask you to re-read some of your stories or those written by your colleagues.

The stories may also be adapted for other uses or formats such as monthly reporting or wider communications about MiH and its impact.

We're not planning to publish the stories publicly at this stage; however, extracts from the stories or adapted versions may appear in public documents or be shared more widely with partners etc. If you are concerned about this or would like to discuss further in relation to a particular story, please contact us.

We'll review the first set of stories that are produced and give feedback/further guidance if needed, including sharing good examples.

Answering further questions and queries

Index of questions

In this section, we've tried to pre-empt any questions you may have or give further detail we think you might need. The hyperlinks below will take you to the questions and answers.

If you have other questions or concerns please contact Angie.

How many stories am I expected to contribute?

We're aiming to collect around 30 stories in total for each full year of the evaluation, so we'd like each CDW to contribute three stories between now and October as a minimum.

If you'd like to create and share more stories, you are very welcome to.

The most important thing to us is that you are sharing stories about things that are significant to you and that you think will contribute to our understanding of MiH, so as long as we receive the stories before we start the analysis and sensemaking phase in October, it doesn't really matter when you write them. However, to help spread the load and keep the process ticking on, it may be helpful to plan to write one story each time you do your quarterly reporting.

What if I want to submit my story in a different format?

We welcome stories in whatever format is most convenient for you. We have initially developed a Word document template as this was the suggestion from the co-design workshop, but if there are other formats you would prefer to use (e.g. a form, slides, voice notes), please let us know and we can look into it.

If you would prefer to mark up the web version of the Excel template, you can find this in the Google Drive and print a copy to make your annotations. Then take a photo and email this to Angie along with your Word template.

We're also keen to incorporate visual evidence such as photos and videos, so please collect and share these as well.

What if I want to work with others to write a story?

We'd really encourage (but don't require) that you make storytelling a collaborative process. Talking about the stories with your colleagues or with the people you're working with will likely make it easier to write the story and capture nuance and learning that you might not have identified alone. You may also be able to identify learning and actions that you can put into practice now, rather than waiting until the outcome of the evaluation.

Particularly when telling stories of individual change, it would be great to involve the people you're writing about in the process. This could be sitting down to discuss the questions before you put pen to paper, or giving them a chance to read what you've written and add their thoughts after you've done a first draft.

However, we recognise that this collaborative approach can take more time, so didn't want to make this a requirement of the process. We actively encourage you to work with others if you have the time and inclination to do so, and invite you to make this process your own. As long as the stories are submitted to us at the end of the process, we don't really mind how you reach that point.

Will I get feedback on the stories I contribute?

Between now and June, Collaborate will review all stories as they're produced, and if needed offer feedback and support to CDWs as a group or individually to ensure we're able to collect the evidence we need for the evaluation. Look out for the monthly evaluation bulletin emails for more top tips and ideas. After this point, we will review the stories during the analysis and sensemaking phase in September each year.

If you have questions about the story collection or any element of the evaluation process, you can contact Angie who will be able to pass your question onto us and share a response, or join one of our evaluation drop-in sessions to discuss further.

If you produce a really great story, we might ask for your permission to share it with other CDWs as a good practice example.

Will the stories be treated anonymously?

Specific details about which places or projects stories relate to are important for us to keep a record of, so we can understand the context around them which has a bearing on us being able to understand if, how and why MiH works and for whom.

However, we do not need to collect the names of individual people who the stories might be about, so individual community members should be anonymised.

So that we can find out more information or clarify details if needed, we will keep track of which CDW has written which story, although this information will not generally be shared beyond the Evaluation team and MiH programme manager.

Will the stories be available to the public?

We do not intend to publish them publicly at this stage, and so generally we would suggest that you treat these as internal documents.

However, extracts from the stories or adapted versions may appear in public documents or be shared more widely with partners etc. If you are concerned about this or would like to discuss further in relation to a particular story, please contact us.

A word of thanks…

We cannot effectively evaluate MiH without input from CDWs. You are the ones on the ground doing the project, and therefore have the best sense of how it is working and why. So we want to thank you for your support and engagement in the evaluation work.

We don't feel that previous evaluation work has paid enough attention to the stories, experiences and reflections you have and share, and so we want to make these a key component of our evidence collection.

We also recognise that you're already incredibly busy and we don't want to take more time than is absolutely necessary away from your work with communities. We're therefore working hard to prioritise and balance what we ask of you.

We've really enjoyed working with you over the last 6 months and have found the stories about your work and your thoughts about your role that you've shared with us inspiring and powerful. Thank you for all your participation so far and we look forward to reading more of your stories.

From Ellen, Leigh & Lewis
(Collaborate CIC)

Collaborate CIC

March 2023

collaborate
for social change