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Defining the evidence purpose

A funder is considering collecting information across several services. One proposed use is to describe participants' experience; another is to compare outcomes between approaches. The collection plan has not separated those questions.

Illustrative industry scenario. Fictional example created to explain a decision; not a client case study.

The decision

The commissioning lead is asked to agree the intended use before committing to the collection plan. This example develops a descriptive brief. Choosing a comparative purpose would reopen the design and expertise required.

A practical next step

For a descriptive purpose, define whose experience matters, what the account should explain and how it will be used. For a comparative purpose, commission a methods review of the question, design and feasibility before assuming that the same collection is sufficient.

Illustrative commissioning brief

The question is how participants describe the information and support they receive at key service transitions. The intended use is to identify questions for service improvement. The proposed output is a descriptive account, showing who contributed, how information was collected and the limits on interpretation. No data have been collected or analysed for this example.

Limits and review

Participation may favour people with particular experiences; timing and collection methods may affect what is reported. The design review should address recruitment, burden, governance and interpretation. This account would not, by itself, establish that one service caused a better outcome.

Responsibility and review

The proposed owner is the commissioning lead. First, agree the question and intended use with relevant service and participant perspectives, then obtain the appropriate methods and governance input. Review before collection begins; reopen the brief if the intended inference, population or use changes.

Use this brief to agree the next decision with the responsible team.

Discuss your requirements: enquiries@iaeconsults.co.uk

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