In recent months, in the context of public presentations, Equilibrium's chairman, David Bisset, has been explaining the circumstances that provoked him to write a book about impact-based assessment of services for children and families.

This is, therefore, an abbreviated version of a far larger manuscript that contains detailed exploration of the subjects that are framed briefly in the following pages.

Our mission – expressed briefly – is to provoke a paradigm shift in monitoring and evaluation so that these exercises no longer focus on fault-finding involving pedantic reference to the minutiae of regulatory documents.

We focus on positivity and success orientation. We emphasize the right of skilled professionals to make autonomous decisions rooted in their own practical wisdom and analysis of the situations in which they find themselves. Guidelines can never be sufficiently comprehensive for the vagaries of real life. There is no universal formula.

We are grateful for the opportunity created by generous funding from the Bulgarian-Swiss Cooperation Programme.

We hugely appreciate the support provided by the Open Society Club – Ruse that has enabled the smooth implementation of the project.

At different times and in different ways we have received inspirational support from a number of very positive people. We have drawn from a diversity of positive literature and, more especially, positive experience shared with professionals working in Bulgaria's centres of social support. Thank you all.

This publication derives from actions undertaken within the project - **„ External / Self - evaluation in Childcare & Family-Support Services as a Means of Capacity-building" (Reg. No. CSP – 032)**.

Learning International

КЛУБ ОТВОРЕНО ОБЩЕСТВО РУСЕ

Проектът се реализира с финансовата подкрепа на Конфедерация Швейцария чрез Фонд за реформи, свързани с участието на гражданското общество

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БЪЛГАРО-ШВЕЙЦАРСКА ПРОГРАМА ЗА СЪТРУДНИЧЕСТВО

Evaluation of Childcare & Family Support Services focusing on the Impact on Beneficiaries

Inherent Difficulties, Ethics, Key Principles, Suggested Approaches and a Selection of Related Tools

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Introduction - The journey

Currently, social services in Bulgaria exist within a Compliance Culture dominated by two forces –

1. Focus on minimum standards and methodological frameworks in the context of evaluation and
2. Faith in bullet-pointed good practice models

Both are reductive and create rigidity. In Compliance Cultures, things improve slowly if they improve at all.

We hoped that the project would make a modest contribution towards conversion to a Learning and Improvement Culture in which monitoring and evaluation become more expansive and attention shifts away from good practice towards successful outcomes defined in terms of impact on the well-being of beneficiaries. These successful outcomes belong to the organizations that manage social services – success isn't transferable because it is not a mechanical component of any practice.

Our work focused on centres of social support (CSSs) – a territory we understand intimately. Additionally, CSSs play a critical role in meeting the challenges of deinstitutionalization and the impact of the work they do is critical to the success of this national programme.

The project was implemented over 21 months and it ends in April, 2015. We originally intended to create tools based on a technique known as Appreciative Inquiry as a means of helping the evaluation of childcare and family support services in Bulgaria become a more proactive and positive exercise involving improved cooperation between service providers and external monitors from the inspectorate of the Agency of Social Assistance and the State Agency of Child Protection. Appreciative Inquiry is a model for analysis and decision-making that looks for the best in organizations – success and effectiveness. It is totally possible to be compliant, efficient…..unsuccessful and ineffective.

Could the state monitoring of social services evolve to become a key component in a learning environment that acknowledges the broad diversity of social services? (There is no such thing as a typical CSS so why treat them as if they are the same?) Could it change to allow service providers reveal more about the particular environments they work in and the ways they respond to core issues (Relevance and Success)?

We have demonstrated the use of some tools. However, having adapted on the basis of lessons learned, we have done a great deal more.

Our action involved capacity building among CSSs and - hopefully - the creation of 4 success-focused regional centres with the ability to continue to communicate new thinking in self-

evaluation to other service providers. These centres are widely dispersed and very different from one anther – Ruse, Montana, Panagyurishte and Veliko Tarnevo.

We worked with the teams in these CSSs in 3 phases –

1. Extensive profiling of the CSS – its organizational approach and the environment in which it operated. Exploration of the team's experience of organizational performance evaluation. This experience is summarized in the text that follows.
2. Introduction to methods of continuous self-evaluation that is success-oriented and focuses on impact using informal methods of drawing down feedback from clients
3. Hosting focus groups for working partners and local stakeholders

We carried the experienced gained from our work and introduced the ideas to CSSs in Teteven and Razgrad.

Our work in the CSSs was supported by extensive desk research in two areas –

1. The experience of introducing impact-based assessment in public services in other countries
2. The practical application of positive psychology in organizational performance evaluation

The first area of research led to the identification of 5 significant areas of difficulty that could easily impact on any attempt to move towards impact-based assessment of social services in Bulgaria. These are identified in the text that follows.

Positive psychology revealed powerful, feasible alternatives to the Deficiency Model of performance evaluation. These are identified in the text that follows.

Signals from government revealed that a move towards impact-based assessment could be on the political agenda. We talk about these signals later in this publication. Additionally, we grew increasingly aware of the impact of the political climate on attitudes about social services. Deinstitutionalization is hotly debated as is the current capacity of child protection departments and service providers. On this basis, the development of community based services for children and families is a subject that is politically charged. In this climate, the evaluation of services can lose its status as a non-partisan, and totally objective exercise. Government experts, their advisors and lobbyists from among the NGOs seek leverage. Those doing performance assessment among social service providers are in no way encapsulated to isolate them from the prevailing mood or atmosphere.

The following statement from economist Paul Samuelson became increasingly apposite – "Good questions outrank easy answers."

We don't know how to introduce impact-based assessment for Bulgaria's social services. However, the work we did under the project showed us the right questions to ask.

Diversity and systems awareness

We worked extensively with centres of social support (CSSs) in Veliko Tarnevo, Panagyurishte, Montana and Ruse. The insights gained from these intensive periods of work were shared with the teams in the centres of social support in Razgrad and Teteven. In each of the six communities, we presented our work to representatives of the social sector.

Geographical dispersal was not the only criterion for targeting the municipalities in which we undertook the intensive studies. We expected organizational diversity and a number of differences were explicit even before we made the visits. However, we could not fully predict the impact over time of different working environments on operational approaches. This was something we were keen to explore and this provoked us to both compile very detailed profiles of the centres and also to work with the various teams to develop what management experts call “systems awareness”. When charting the working environment in which a social service is performed, we tend to focus on structures and organizations that have formal links with the service provider. Perhaps, we draw a diagram. However, this provides a grossly over-simplified picture of a complex community subject to social flux. **The more effort we put into systems analysis, the better our understanding of the myriad ways that system promotes or impedes the delivery of high-impact social services.**

Much of the time, people attribute what happens to them to events close in time and space, when in reality it’s the result of the dynamics of the larger system within which they are embedded.

(John Sterman, Director of Systems Dynamics Group, Massachusetts Institute of Technology)

The current experience of performance evaluation

Among the CSSs we differences in the past experience of performance evaluation that spanned the following categories –

- Monitoring visits by government agencies
- External evaluation: peers / other experts
- Internal quality control (incl. staff appraisal)
- Reviews undertaken in the context of projects or national programmes (eg the program for implementation of the National Strategy "Vision for deinstitutionalization of the children in the Republic of Bulgaria" (adopted in 2010)

We drew the following general conclusions about the extent to which evaluation processes (as experienced) were able to reinforce a sense of *achievement* or *success* –

Positive appraisal is good but…..

Personal achievement
Staff appraisal hasn't the same impact as the gratitude of clients (or their positive feedback)

Organisational achievement
Reference to organizational success in the context of formal evaluation is generally auxiliary to other bureaucratic purposes and, therefore, devalued.

Success is trivialized

Government inspection operates largely at the level of structures in the shape of documents and records (although inspectors are aware of procedures) and it is compliance-based. Inspectors may make verbal references to "good practice". They may congratulate and applaud. However, they are required to make reports contained within a certain format that only permits the identification of omissions or shortcomings and the provision of recommendations. If practitioners are made feel their good practice does not matter, there is an ethical problem with the monitoring process.

Success is purloined

Some teams at CSSs have hosted visits by groups of academics or representatives of peer organizations. These individuals have been invited to provide an assessment of the quality of the service by senior managers in the organization that is contracted to run the CSS. Alternatively, they have been contracted to study aspects of projects in deinstitutionalization. In both cases, good practice may be mentioned in evaluation reports

but only in so far as it serves a purpose from which the teams at the CSSs in question feel almost completely detached. The issue is one of *ownership*. When success is taken from those it belongs to and used to support someone else's agenda, there is an ethical problem.

Key elements of case management

We asked service providers to identify what, in their opinions, were the key areas in the sound management of social services cases. We then asked the following questions -

1. In your opinion, what are the main factors that ensure the quality of case management?
2. Based on your experience, does the evaluation process place adequate focus on these factors? *(Yes, Unsure/Somewhat, No)*

We compiled the following analysis **that graphically reveals the limited relevance of evaluation that focuses exclusively on tangible structure (documentation)** –

Case management – responses to question 1	**Supported by evaluation? – responses to question 2**
Professionalism (complex idea) – experience / qualification, attitude and approach	Somewhat
Personal qualities – morality, empathy, lack of judgementalism	No
Continuous professional development and training	Somewhat
Multi-agency cooperation – specific cases and larger strategy	No
Induce / sustain trust in the client	No
Methods of breaking down suspicion & resistance in client	No
Empowerment of the client (a spirit of partnership)	No
Good method – individual client plan	**Yes**
Realistic / attainable goals for client	Somewhat
Clearly defined goals for clients based on specific steps	Somewhat
Flexibility in approach / professional discretion	No

Resources and methods for dealing with difficult / intractable cases (intensification of effort + client involvement)	No
Good relations within professional team (incl. working partners) + mutual trust	No
Capacity to change roles / deputize	No
High standard of record-keeping	**Yes**
Freedom to express professional opinions within a team context	No
Capacity for "active listening" to clients and professional associates	No
Promote a sense of adult responsibility in guardians (avoid blaming the child)	No
Promote acceptance of the need for change / desire to change	No

Defining the quality of social services

The service providers we spoke to unanimously agree with the following statement -

A social service is of good quality when it positively influences the well-being of its users and has a real impact on the quality of their lives.

(Bulgarian Centre for Not-for-Profit Law – "Quality of the Social Services in Bulgaria, 2008)

There is a slight suggestion in the way the statement is worded that the service provider catalyzes change in a passive beneficiary. It is worth repeating the last entry in the list of the key components of good case management – the capacity to promote acceptance of the need for change and a desire to change.

Nevertheless, the statement leads us to the following assertion –

Good evaluation concerns itself with the impact of services on beneficiaries and this style of evaluation is far more difficult than focusing on tangible structures and observable procedures.

Impact-based assessment – areas of difficulty

In those countries that have attempted impact-based assessment of public services (social work, education. healthcare), difficulties have been encountered**.**

We would like to draw attention to five areas of difficulty that could exert a negative influence on attempts to measure the impact of community based services for children and families in Bulgaria –

1. Researchers from the London School of Economics refer to an **"attribution problem"** in measuring the quality of social care services in the United Kingdom that arises from complexity. The same is true of child protection in Bulgaria.

> ***(S)ervices are best described as 'performances', so their products are intangible and cannot be easily measured, counted, tested or verified; rather they are 'experienced' goods, which require first-hand contact to establish some of its most valued characteristics. Second, social care services are labour intensive, which can lead to a high degree of service heterogeneity. As a result, service performance can vary significantly from producer to producer, by producer from day to day, and by producer from consumer to consumer. Third, consumption and production of service goods is simultaneous and inseparable, and it is therefore difficult to disentangle the providers' influence on the quality of the service from that of users.***
>
> (Malley & Fernandez – Measuring quality in social care services: theory and practices, 2010)

2. It is essential for service providers to use **professional judgement.** Impact-based assessment should certainly allow for an evaluator to ask why a certain action was taken in the expectation of receiving a reasoned response and an explanation of the context in which the decision was made. **However, the evaluation process should never impinge on the right of service providers to exercise judgement because of formal attempts to determine in advance what actions should be taken**.

3. We try to elicit client feedback at intervals employing formulae that yield data meaning that we discriminate against those beneficiaries that are least able to express themselves. **This can lead either to the exclusion of these individuals from the groups whose opinions we seek or attempts to assist communication that are sometimes ethically questionable or lead to justifiable concern about whose opinions are being recorded – those of the beneficiary or those of the intermediary.**

4. Impact-based assessment can sometimes lead to the use of quantitative indicators in the targeting and celebration of conspicuous success in areas where it is relatively easy to achieve. The fact that higher levels of services are provided to individuals with greater needs (and potentially the worst raw outcomes) means that failure to take account of the level of client need can lead to a bias in the estimates of quality. Services provided to less needy clients can score more highly simply because the clients were less needy. This can have a very demoralizing effect on those working with the most demanding cases. It can lead to attempts by service providers to avoid working on certain cases that "don't suit their specialization".

5. The market in "models of good practice" helps sustain the illusion of universal formulae. An attempt to devise a one-size-fits-all model for impact-based assessment across a broad and diverse child protection system could have very negative consequences.

The idea (of a model of best practice) is to approximate the indeterminate real problem with one that is completely determinate and simple enough to permit the computation of a correct answer. But….the computed answer may be the correct answer to the problem in the model but the wrong answer to the problem in the world.

(John Kay – economist)

Impact-based assessment: allowing for diversity

The Social Assistance Act allows for social services to be provided by a broad diversity of organizations. If these organizations are well adapted to their environments and genuinely responsive to the needs of their beneficiaries, they will perform differently from one another even if, as a collective (service providers), they consciously pursue quality.

Coming to cope with organizational and operational diversity among service providers is a major challenge for those responsible for governance. The Agency of Social Assistance has published a catalogue[1] produced on the basis of research undertaken by the 28 regional social assistance directorates under an EC funded project (Footnote). It lists "social services" active in Bulgaria. However, these services are categorized on the basis of types of facility.

Focus on the proliferation of structures suggests something about the questionable nature of the parameters applied in the analysis of community needs. The profiling of the various communities has led to the application of a simplistic recipe delineated in terms of standard models for different facilities.

In its third monitoring report on implementation of the deinstitutionalization Action Plan, the government acknowledges a challenge in the way social services function and the fact that they are financed as centres or complexes and not types of activity. This has a negative effect on flexibility and the monitoring of the impact on beneficiaries.

Our research reveals that the focus on structures has not prevented the development of broad diversity among the countries centres of social support where integrated services as provided. (We cannot speak for more specialist facilities). However, those with responsibility for the monitoring of services – the Agency of Social Assistance or the State Agency of Child Protection (under Articles 17a 2&3 of the Child Protection Act) – cannot conceivably grasp the full implications of this diversity on the basis of past monitoring practice. **Any move towards impact-based assessment will, therefore, start from a very poor baseline**.

[1] Project „Development of the system for planning and provision of social services at regional level", BG 051PO001-6.2.13

Looking to service providers to help raise the baseline of knowledge

The delivery of community based services to children and families involves a series of performances that is often distributed across a significant period of time and involves two types of actors – providers and recipients. Like all performances, you really need to be a first-hand witness to fully appreciate the impact of what has taken place. The alternative involves placing faith in accounts provided by the actors or those who are close enough to them to qualify as having a stake in the process.

Assessing the impact of social services involves drawing inferences from stories told by the professionals who delivered those services or their working associates in the service sector. We refer to this process as **"being accountable"** for the professional performance. Alternatively, inferences can be based on stories from the beneficiaries of the services and those members of the community who are somehow related or in proximity to them. We call this **"seeking feedback".**

How can service providers improve the value of the stories they tell? Organization needs a structured method for reflection – it is time-tabled, it is a genuine learning process (eg it leads to new understanding and personal development), it guides decision-making and it is sufficiently expansive in scope to cover the whole range of operational activity.

For managers to stop the treadmill and ask workers to reflect on their work would be a very strange thing to do if it was not part of a larger facilitative approach to planning and decision-making that is used consistently. A technique known as **Facilitative Questioning** can help managers and their teams deal with the complexity of shaping the future of the organization. Facilitative Questioning is a tool that is effective in the context of a **participatory approach** to mapping the future. The use of the tool makes very little sense unless managers are genuinely committed to having workers participate in planning and decision making.

Facilitative Questioning should be built into the organizational schedule to drive a performance evaluation cycle. It should become a **habit** that allows organizations to nurture and develop areas of work that denote success and to identify those factors that render other areas of work problematic. On this basis, the organization can *continually be the best that it can be* with the resources at its disposal and in the circumstances in which it finds itself. The organization is self-aware and vigilant like the curator of an art exhibition who straightens pictures, adjusts lighting and refreshes the display area. In fact, we refer to this organizational approach as **Curatorship**.

Facilitative Questioning entails creating pictures of a successful future and devising sequences of questions leading to revelations that help define the decisions that need to be made and the changes that need to happen,

Seeking client feedback as a continuous exercise for service providers

Stanford professor Dev Patnaik encourages organisations to be empathetic towards their clientele. Nowadays, simplistic and abstract information carries authority and information drawn from informal sources attracts distrust. We try to obtain feedback from our clients formally and at intervals to yield standardized data. Information needs to be high-definition and specifically focused. Patnaik encourages greater awareness of the value of information provided spontaneously and voluntarily in informal contexts. It still constitutes feedback even if no attempt was made to elicit the information or regulate the way in which it is provided.

According to Patnaik, it is possible to retain the appropriate objectivity in dealing with clients while also committing yourself to the following undertakings –

1. Affirm your commitment to active, empathic involvement with clients
2. Understand the ways in which current procedures and systems mediate or interfere with empathetic interactions with clients
3. Promote the use of social events and informal gatherings to help clients tell their stories
4. Encourage and enable workers and managers to hear these stories

Social psychologists have long been aware of a phenomenon they call *"***ambient awareness"** through which members of social groups can sustain a sense of shared experience and connection when they are in separate locations by accumulating titbits of information and forming larger pictures that are meaningful on the basis of the intimacy they help sustain. Participation is optional (there are times when independent action and confidentiality are paramount).

It's not difficult to imagine how a team of researchers could analyse the Facebook postings of members of a defined group and, over time, compile a reasonably comprehensive picture on the basis of shared actions and habits so as to build a social profile of the group through the processes of accumulation and pattern recognition. Those researchers would be using a single information source that conveniently provides a stream of detail in consistently shaped packages involving text, images or both.

Can we apply a similar approach with the beneficiaries of social services? Can we usefully accumulate low-definition data to cast light on their opinions, preferences and needs and apply pattern recognition to help identify key issues?

We argue that this approach is feasible provided that service providers are inventive and consistent in providing their clients with platforms for self-expression and undertake detailed de-briefing exercises after these events allowing personnel to explore the lessons learned. Such a system should acknowledge the right of children (and adults) to express themselves non-verbally. The approach should allow for issues that are sensitive or threatening to be approached indirectly.

Our requests

- **We ask the Agency of Social Support and State Agency for Child Protection to openly acknowledge the weakness of their knowledge regarding the diversity of approaches to the delivery of community based services for children and families and the extent to which they are adapted to local needs.**

- **We ask the government to resist the idea that it is possible to introduce a universal formula for impact-based assessment. No single model could ever be sufficiently comprehensive or flexible.**

- **We ask government to grasp the opportunity to abandon an approach to inspecting social services that is based on the assumption that organizational development is best achieved through problem-solving – identifying errors, weaknesses and shortcomings and addressing them directly. There is another alternative – the visualization of achievable success and identification of those steps that need to be taken to reach this position**.

- **We ask inspectors to work proactively with service providers and to formally acknowledge work they have undertaken to assess the impact of the services they provide**

To reciprocate, service providers should do the following -

Strive to be the best that they can be…

in the circumstances in which they find themselves,

with the resources at their disposal

and benefiting from relationships that are supportive

Provision of integrated services for children and families - Organizational habits that suggest quality

In the context of providing integrated services for children and families it is extremely difficult to identify causal relationships between particular interventions undertaken by service providers and particular changes in the wellbeing of beneficiaries or their quality of life.

However, we believe there may be certain organizational habits that strongly *suggest* quality. The absence of these characteristics signals the weakness of the relationship between the organization and the community it serves. The relationship is rigid and bureaucratic instead of flexible and expansive. Alternatively, ideologies and working models defeat social attunement. We were reacting to such a lack of attunement when we wrote the following statement:

“The childcare system has to be understanding of minority practices in raising children “

(Transforming Lives: Teteven Deinstitutionalization Project, 2012)

You will note that the organizational habits listed relate to **Responsiveness to the Community**.

Equilibrium first started to think about this issue while participating in an international program in 2010 that focused on poverty alleviation. We received positive professional feedback during a global conference in Amsterdam.

(http://www.enothe.eu/cop/final_programme_copore-conference_april2010.pdf)

In 2011-2012, Equilibrium was represented among an expert group that helped identify key measures for inclusion in the national strategy for reduction of child poverty in Flanders. This enabled us to think about these issues in the context of policy development and to further check the reaction of international policy shapers.

(http://www.vlaandereninactie.be/en/topics/poverty-child-poverty)

- **Setting standards:** The organization clearly defines its own standards and designs its own tools using criteria that are explicitly linked to the profiles of its beneficiaries. National methodologies are localized and rigorously adapted.

- **Focus on the community:** The organization has a pronounced tendency to define its role in terms of its relationship to the community as opposed to its relationship to the institutional framework.

- **Decision makers are there when you need them:** Leaders are accessible and highly engaged. Decisions are made within small, fast, cohesive teams.

- **Making connections:** Purposefully, the organization acts as a community hub making connections between people, institutions and groups that have been kept apart on the basis of conventional practice, bureaucracy, prejudice or indifference.

- **Speaks to the community:** The organization is transparent and the community understands its activities and aims because they are customarily expressed in terms that are relevant and comprehensible.

- **Inspires loyal support:** The organization collaborates and forms strong coalitions of support in the community because its value as a social resource is recognized. It draws supporters and volunteers to itself.

- **Socially entrepreneurial:** Certain key staff members are charged with being socially entrepreneurial. They manage the organization's relationship to the community and how it responds to new challenges. By understanding the operating environment, they ensure that the organization reacts quickly and incisively to changing patterns of need in the surrounding community.

How can these qualities be revealed to an external observer in the context of a brief visit?

Setting standards

A large number of manuals and organizational publications circulate in the social services sector. They are given away during conferences, seminars and round table events. Evidence of this sort of literature at a CSS shows a desire to stay up to date and engaged. However, an evaluator should look for signs that an organization's training and professional development activities extends beyond accumulating these "giveaways" (but bearing in mind that the organization may not have much money to invest in training and educational resources). Are there books in evidence or articles downloaded from the Internet? How do personnel describe their experience of training, personal development and sharing knowledge? Has the organization introduced any tools or procedures of its own? Where were they sourced and how were they tested and adapted? Does the CSS have internal training capacity? Does it act as a resource centre or provide know how to other service providers? Is it engaged with local colleges and universities?

Focus on the community

An outward-focused organization will reveal its community-orientation in its manner of public communication. It will talk warmly and effusively about the work it does. It will be highly transparent. It will appear to be action-oriented in the community and doing a great deal. By way of contrast, an inward-focused organization will emphasize the activities and achievements of its prominent personnel and will reveal little community engagement.

A community-oriented organization will be talked about in the community. What does a Google search reveal?

A community-oriented organization will put effort into making its facility welcoming and comfortable physically and in terms of how all visitors are welcomed to the facility. In the larger publication, we talk about "greeting rituals" and methods of classifying personnel on the basis of social skills – natural ice-breakers, skilled facilitators, pied-pipers who are great with young children and those who are good at hanging out with teenagers. How quickly and effortlessly can managers classify their teams on this basis?

Decision makers are there when you need them

The accessibility and engagement of leaders is reflected by the way personnel talk about their work. There is likely to be a strong sense of shared purpose in an organization that is led by good decision makers that inspire trust. Employees will reveal that they own their work by using a wealth of personal vocabulary and modes of expression that show that they trust the leadership of the people they work for.

Ownership is signaled by the use of personal pronouns – *I, we* – and / or possessive adjectives – *mine* and *our*. When an evaluator provides a person or group with an open invitation to use this vocabulary and that invitation is not accepted, it may reveal a problem with the organizational culture or ethos that, in one way or another, does not encourage each individual's sense of ownership or his / her contribution to the organization. Ownership and personal responsibility are inextricably connected. An evaluator should, therefore, be wary of linguistic signals that indicate emotional detachment –

- Reference to this place: *Here* we do such-and-such…..
- Repeated use of the organization's name: It's *Equilibrium's* policy to do such-and-such….
- Detachment from the group: management and / or colleagues are referred to as *they*

Making connections

The strength and sustainability of these connections is tested quite easily.

Ask members of the team at the CSS to draw a map of the community that the CSS occupies (organizations or groups that they have some form of engagement with)

Here is a potential list of categories that the personnel may identify:

- Our community
- Managing organization (eg NGO / municipal authority)
- Peers and working partners in the social services network
- Other collaborators
- Governmental departments (national / local)
- Target group: children at risk and their families / Neighbours, friends and supporters
- Community groups, clubs and organizations
- Educational community (incl. arrangements for pre-school children and universities)
- Other institutional bodies – healthcare, employment, social welfare, housing etc
- General public (local / national)
- The business community
- Media

How comprehensive is the map? Does it suggest that the organization really understands the community it is part of and its interconnectedness?

Ask them to explain the extent of their connections and engagement with the various groups.

Does the formation of these connections seem arbitrary / accidental or are they based on strong reasoning and deliberate action?

Speaks to the community

Using the map produced in the above exercise, what methods are used to reveal organizational achievements to the different groups represented?

What are the ways that the various groups communicate their attitudes about the CSS?

Thinking of the above, do any methods stand out as being particularly attractive or useful?

Inspires loyal support

Ask to meet volunteers and supporters. Talk to them. What do they give? What is their motivation? What do they get out of the relationship with the CSS?

Socially entrepreneurial

The Skoll Foundation defines a social entrepreneur as "society's change agent: a pioneer of innovation that benefits humanity." According to Wikipedia: "A social entrepreneur is someone who recognizes a social problem and uses entrepreneurial principles to organize, create, and manage a venture to make social change".

How can an external evaluator quickly identify the existence of entrepreneurial capacity in an organization that provides social services? The clue lies in the reference to the use of "entrepreneurial principles" that allow the organization to break away from constraints imposed by ideology or normative practice to better serve the needs of their clients.
An example of entrepreneurial action is Equilibrium's use of its working relationship with Hope and Homes for Children (Bulgaria) to facilitate the use of ACTIVE family support to improve the effectiveness of our work on reintegration and prevention of abandonment via the complex for social support in Ruse.

Another good example comes from Montana where the CSS often accommodates young trafficking victims in its emergency placement unit who cannot safely attend school. They try to compensate for the educational deficit by having a local school cooperate in a system of distance learning supplemented by study support provided by teenage volunteers

Annex 1

Examples of Facilitative Questioning routines

These sequences are adapted from routines first developed by the business consultant Sharon Drew Morgen.

***A* Consolidating on success**

Take a look around your work environment. Think of your successes – those things you do for clients that show your organization at its best. Work backwards to look at the way they are achieved – the processes and human effort involved.

- **What are the key elements of those processes and human effort that generate the successful outcomes?**
- **What are the truly positive actions (eg excellent teamwork, great application of skills, people working to their strengths)?**
- **How do these actions show us how to be the best that we can be?**
- **Are there any (potentially) negative indicators (eg people working over and beyond the call of duty, depletion of resources or worries about sustainability / replicability)?**
- **How can success be sustained?**
- **Are there additional actions we need to take? Are there things we need to change?**

The following additional questions are useful.

- **You've identified success. What indicators are you using?**
- **Are those indicators likely to be meaningful to or usable by an external observer (someone who did not take part in the work but understands its function)? Would that observer draw similar conclusions?**

***B* Extending the pattern – creating a vision for success in areas of work that are currently problematic**

Take another look around your work environment. Think of those areas that you wish were more successful – those things you do for clients that you wish your organization could do better. Work backwards to look at the way you approach these issues – the processes and human effort involved.

- **What issues do you see ongoing that you have not fully got to grips with managing yet? (These areas of work contrast with your successes.)**
- **Has anything changed to become inappropriately managed or unmanageable?**
- **What has stopped you from managing them until now?**
- **What has changed to cause a managerial problem?**
- **Are there external factors at play over which you have limited or no control?**

Look back at your successful areas of work and, once again, consider the key elements of the processes and human effort that help generate the successful outcomes.

- **Thinking of the above, what do see/hear/feel that helps you recognize that it is time to change the approach in the more problematic areas of work?**
- **What will success look like? (in terms of changed outcomes for clients)**
- **What criteria will you use to decide what aspects of the situation need to be changed (procedural approach, leadership, team members or resources)? What would you prioritize?**
- **Which aspects of this area of work should stay the same? Why? What is there value?**
- **What is the actual difference between what you want to keep and what you want to discard or alter?**
- **How will you know if you've prioritized the appropriate elements for change?**
- **How will you decide who would need to be brought into the 'change' conversation to ensure you have buy-in from the staff and other stakeholders?**

- **How do you plan on involving them into the decisions you need to make?**
- **How will you know that they are actually supportive of your change issues?**
- **How will you know if they are not supportive?**
- **How will you manage the situation if they believe their interests would be jeopardized by the change?**
- **How will you and your decision partners determine all of the aspects that need to be managed? What elements of the situation need to be altered first?**
- **What elements of the situation need to be altered second, third…?**
- **How will you handle differences of opinion about the change process?**
- **How will you monitor the process from start to finish?**
- **How will you know if/when you are going off course (eg the change is taking too long, the change has unforeseen consequences for other areas of work)?**
- **How can you be sure that the problem will remain solved over time?**
- **What do you do to follow up?**

The final questions*:*

- **Does the organization provide an adequate feedback loop (operating in the long-term) so that personnel can directly experience the consequences of their real work – how it has impacted in the lives of clients?**
- **Are we making good decisions on the basis of this feedback?**

Annex 2

Framework for presenting successful practice

Below, we talk about success which is different from the traditional idea of "good practice". The success we talk about is YOUR success. It belongs to your organisation and it isn't necessarily transferable because it isn't a technical component of an operation or practice.

We invite you to describe an area of work you consider to be successful and to help us understand why it works in your particular operational context.

We ask you to consider whether the approach could be transferable to other service providers and other local contexts. What components do you imagine they would need to have in place to be reasonably sure of success?

Defining QUALITY

"A social service is of good quality when it positively influences the well-being of its users and has a real impact on the quality of their life."

(BULGARIAN CENTRE FOR NOT-FOR-PROFIT LAW – 'QUALITY OF THE SOCIAL SERVICES IN BULGARIA', 2008)

Successful practices in community-based services for children and families are those that, in one way or another, have "real impact" on the lives of children and their families**.**

In a single paragraph, please *define* your SUCCESSFUL PRACTICE. Provide key characteristics that will enable the reader to grasp the essence of what you do.
In what way(s) does the practice you've described transform the lives of your target group (children, families)? What benefits do these clients enjoy that would not have been available to them had the SUCCESSFUL PRACTICE never started?

Pursuing QUALITY

What were the circumstances that provoked you to establish this SUCCESSFUL PRACTICE? Briefly describe the context from which the SUCCESSFUL PRACTICE emerged. **What are the key resources that you use in the delivery of this SUCCESSFUL PRACTICE (those that help ensure success)? What currently assures the availability of these resources?**

Achieving QUALITY

Your SUCCESSFUL PRACTICE shows you (and your working partners) at your / their best. Can you describe a (potential) method of showing the impact that would leave the observer in no doubt of the value of your practice? Have you used this method? **How is your SUCCESSFUL PRACTICE seen in the community? Can you describe a (potential) method of showing an observer the extent to which your SUCCESSFUL PRACTICE is understood, accepted and appreciated? Have you used this method?** **Have you engaged with your target group(s) to find out their opinion about your SUCCESSFUL PRACTICE? IF so, can you briefly explain the approach you took and tell us in what ways (if any) you used the feedback. Is this engagement continuing?**

Confirming QUALITY

You have described (potential) methods of showing the impact of your SUCCESSFUL PRACTICE. Has this impact ever been confirmed by an independent and objective evaluator? If so, can you tell us a little about that person / organization? Did their approach acknowledge or make use of the methods you have suggested? Did they do anything extra and / or anything different?

In the foreseeable future, can the key resources you need to deliver this SUCCESSFUL PRACTICE continue to be available? If so, what assures this availability?

What are the assets and strengths of your organization that allowed you to devise this SUCCESFUL PRACTICE and establish it as part of your operational performance?

Do you think that other organizations working in your sector have these characteristics as well as access to the key resources? How can this SUCCESSFUL PRACTICE become a replicable model in your region or country?