



Research, Monitoring and Evaluation (RME) Strategy

The RME Strategic direction is designed to deliver Objective 6 of the Strategy of Solva Care 2019 – 24.

It states: "We will continue our commitment to RME and pursue the following priorities:

1. Develop a core set of indicators from the objectives set out in section 4 of this strategy
2. Update our RME strategy by 2020
3. Consolidate ongoing in-house action research as our main focus in RME
4. Evaluate all new activities and regularly review existing ones
5. Collect stories and case histories to identify the most significant factors in Solva Care succeeding
6. Seek research funding for a major study in partnership with the academic sector
7. Continue to invest in training our own community researcher".

(Solva Care Strategy 2019:6)

The Strategic Plan for RME 2020-2024 outlines how each of the above priorities will be achieved, acknowledging the constraints impacting during 2020¹.

Background

Following the establishment of Solva Care and the award of initial funding, a RME group was convened drawn from the community and Board. The group subsequently developed a Solva Care RME strategy (2016) and divided the foreseeable future intent into phases. This earlier Strategy outlined the approach to monitoring and evaluation, the questions of interest to Solva Care and the research, monitoring and evaluation carried out up to 2019. Many of the stated activities and processes continue based on the following core principles.

Principles of RME

The work of the RME group is based on,

- applying a philosophy of **action research** which seeks transformative change through the process of acting and doing research at the same time, linked by reflection and application of the outcomes.
- promoting a process of **Co-production** with people from Solva and other partners and external bodies as required.
- focussing on areas that are important to the **sustainability** of Solva Care.
- evaluation which is both **informal and formal** with internal reflection and study being favoured in advance of external review.

¹At the time of writing the work and activities of Solva Care were affected due to the COVID 19 Pandemic. This made future planning a challenge as many core activities which had been planned were postponed or stopped.



Solva Care remains committed to monitoring and evaluating its activities to enable the charity to be more effective and meet the expressed needs of the people it serves. In addition, it is required to provide evidence to funders of what works, making fund raising more effective and enabling the sharing of experiences.

The Strategic Plan 2020-2024 provides the overview of delivery of each of our priorities and will be monitored and updated annually as required.



Strategic Plan for RME 2020-2024

1. Develop a core set of indicators

A set of key performance indicators were approved in April 2020 covering; care and support services; social connections; recreation and leisure; physical and mental health activity; health and wellbeing, and relationships.

Our performance against these indicators will be monitored periodically.

2. Update RME strategy by 2020

Completed December 2020.

3. Consolidate ongoing in-house action research as our main focus in RME

The work of Solva Care is based on village wide surveys conducted bi-annually. The survey seeks to establish to what extent activities are meeting needs, to generate increased interest in volunteering and to support future planning. The survey planned for 2020 was delayed due to COVID restrictions but will be conducted when possible.

We will continue to research the experiences of our volunteers and collate their ideas to improve our service and to support their needs.

All activities involving the bringing together of residents are evaluated informally at the end of each session and formally on designated forms. Unfortunately, all activities were postponed during most of 2020. The process will recommence when possible, with results being acted upon as required.

4. Evaluate all new activities and regularly review existing ones

In the absence of a separate Solva Survey, we have continued to work with the Solva Community Land Trust to help develop their survey with questions of relevance to Solva Care. This survey did proceed during 2020 and results have been analysed in relation to relevance to Solva Care.

New activities for Solva Care e.g. dancing and exercise as well as a further mosaics project were planned prior to the lockdown arrangements in March 2020. When restrictions are eased, activities will resume albeit in a revised approach, as necessary. Evaluation forms specific to the new activities will be developed.

5. Collect stories and case histories to identify the most significant factors in Solva Care succeeding

In September 2019, Solva Care hosted a workshop with key members and partners to examine the value of using storytelling approaches in evaluation and learning. In particular the 'Most Significant Change' technique, and the learning from magic and tragic moments approach. These approaches will be applied in future studies when face to face contact is deemed safe for interviews.



6. Seek research funding for a major study in partnership with the academic sector

The RME group acknowledge that working collaboratively with the public, statutory and third sectors is of equal importance to working in partnership with the academic sector. Therefore, in addition to seeking funding we are also keen to promote opportunities to gather evidence from other communities and organisations to add value to existing activities and share experiences and best practice. Our aim is to encourage, and support more sustainable community led initiatives to promote the wider aspects of wellbeing.

In relation to funding, following the development of the Solva Care Tool kit, application was made for finance to share the learning with other local groups and to work together to deliver a model for evaluation of social enterprises.

We were successful in securing funds from the National Lottery to disseminate the tool kit throughout Pembrokeshire and offer targeted support to communities who request. This project was commenced in March 2020, when the Tool kit was launched in a focussed conference.

We were also successful in working locally to agree a consultancy project called CardiCare, based on face to face mentoring to introduce an approach to activities to meet the needs of the community in Cardigan. Unfortunately, this project was put on hold until face to face support could be resumed.

In March 2020, the pandemic and lockdown arrangements led to the setting up of numerous new community support arrangements to meet local needs. As a result the RME group applied to extend the dissemination of the tool kit in order to support and coordinate new and other existing groups to understand the breadth of services offered, together with the support needed to continue any future intentions. The variety of approaches could also be evaluated with the support of an academic partner. Furthermore, attempts would be made to bring together statutory and voluntary sector organisations to ensure good practice is enhanced and becomes sustainable to provide a social model of wellbeing.

Following the award of additional funding, the project has been finalised and work commenced summer 2020. Aims and outcomes are detailed elsewhere and are available on request.

7. Continue to invest in training our own community researcher.

A new community action researcher was appointed in March 2020 for a 2-year period. Support for funded studies will also necessitate the appointment of new staff.

Conclusion

The Terms of Reference for the RME subgroup are at Appendix 1, outlining the responsibilities and tasks of the group to achieve the objectives stated in the strategic plan. In addition, each funded research project is subject to detailed planning and recording of actions and outcomes.



The RME subgroup also make available as much information as possible on the Solva Care website, and regularly circulate published research studies. We continue to be a member of the Small is Beautiful Community Network and the Coproduction Research Network working with Cardiff and Swansea Universities as key partners in delivering the research and evaluation requirements of Solva Care.

This plan will be monitored and updated annually as required.

Terms of Reference of the Solva Care Research, Monitoring and Evaluation (RME) Sub-Group

Introduction

The RME Sub-Group is a sub-group of the Solva Care Trustee Board, (hereafter referred to as 'the Board'). The Board is accountable for making strategic decisions on the work of Solva Care and reporting to the Charity Commission. The RME Subgroup is required to meet the evidence requirements of the charity.

Purpose

This Terms of Reference updates and replaces versions prepared for the Management Board of Solva Care in 2016. It takes into account a new governance structure of Solva Care, and its charitable status.

Responsibilities

- To regularly review the needs of Solva Care in relation to research, monitoring and evaluation to meet the strategic priorities set by the Board, and to develop a flexible research, monitoring and evaluation plan.
- To make applications to funding bodies to support the ongoing and future requirements of Solva Care.
- To commission studies when appropriate and work with research partners in a co-productive way throughout the research process.
- To undertake in-house research projects as required.
- To cooperate with academic researchers in studies that will assist in the understanding and dissemination of successful community led initiatives in Wales and beyond.
- To plan, monitor and report on all research projects as required by funding bodies and the Board, establishing small task and finish project teams to take the work forward as required.
- To consider and make recommendations on the progress of studies and implications of findings.
- To integrate monitoring and management data into assessments designed to assess progress of activities.
- To inform the Board of relevant published evidence that may be useful in ensuring the success of Solva Care.
- To develop partnerships in research and development to draw on and share skills and expertise and to develop and where necessary recruit additional internal capacity to meet requirements.
- To ensure that research and evaluation results are disseminated locally in appropriate formats and presented to relevant audiences.
- To quality control all projects, ensuring that ethical considerations are considered.



- To carry out all activities in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation with respect to how users, volunteers, Trustees partners and participants' personal data is handled.
- Report to the Board of Trustees on a quarterly basis.

Membership

Sue Denman (Chair – voted in 14.1.2019)
Barbara Bale (Vice-Chair – voted in 14.1.2019)
Sarah Burns
Lena Dixon
Lesley Robertson Steel
Jessie Buchanan
Mollie Roach (Co-opted member)
Maria Jones (Co-opted member)

Meetings

Meetings are held bi-monthly in advance of Board meetings. Reports/updates are provided from the Operational and Finance Sub-Groups of Solva Care. Additional communication by email, telephone, and extra meetings are called as required.

September 2020.