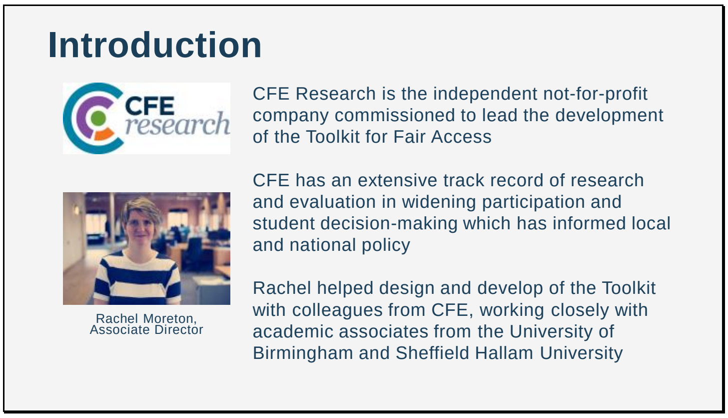
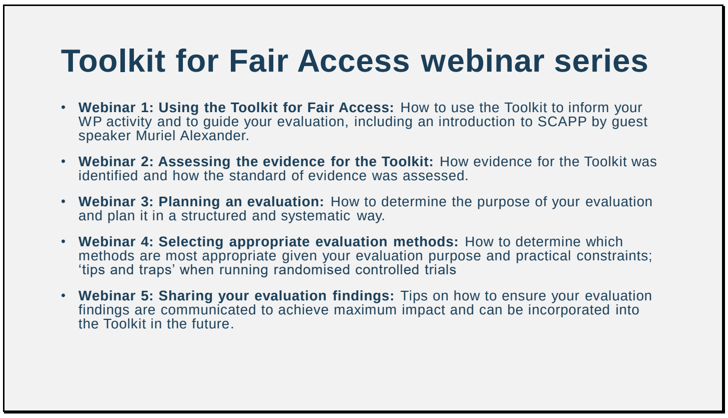
Hello and welcome to the fifth and final in a series of webinars designed to help widening participation practitioners, managers and researchers to get the most out of the Toolkit for Fair Access.



This series has been designed by CFE Research, the independent agency that led the development of the Toolkit on behalf of the Scottish Funding Council. My name's Rachel Moreton and I'll be delivering this webinar.



This is the final webinar in the series. The other four are available for you to download from the Framework for Fair Access website: fairaccess.scot

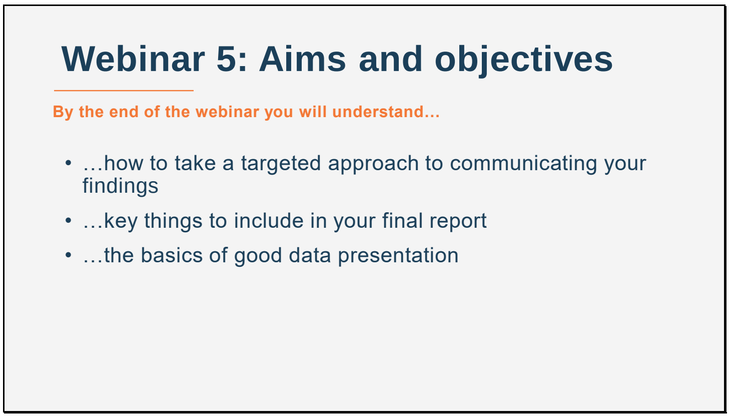
The first explains the background to the Toolkit, takes you on a tour of the website and provides an overview of SCAPP - Scotland's Community of Access and Participation Practitioners.

Webinar 2 describes how the evidence for the Toolkit was gathered and how the standard of that evidence was assessed to ensure the most effective practice was included.

The third webinar designed to help you plan your evaluation effectively and develop an approach that is proportionate to the scale of the intervention you are evaluating and the outcomes you are seeking to achieve.

The fourth webinar builds on this by exploring different evaluation methods you can use and the strength of the evidence produced using different research designs. We draw on our experience of running randomised controlled trials in a widening participation context in order to share some 'tips and traps' for those of you who may be considering adopting this approach for your own evaluations.

In this webinar, we provide advice on writing up and communicating your findings and how you can ensure your work is incorporated into the Toolkit in the future.



So, you've spent lots of time, effort and resource on planning and carrying out a great evaluation of your work. But none of that is of much use if the results are not read and used. In this webinar we'll be talking about:

- how to take a targeted approach to communicating your evaluation findings,
- what things to include in the write-up of your findings, and
- giving you a quick introduction to some basics of presenting data.

As we have hopefully made clear throughout this series of webinars, evaluating your work should be useful for you and others. We have talked in previous webinars about being clear about what you hope to achieve through your evaluation and how you want to use the results. Part of this is thinking about who needs to know what you find and how they will use that information.

Not everyone will have the time or inclination to search through a lengthy report to find the information that they need – they might not even realise the report has something of use to them.

We suggest taking a layered approach to communicating your evaluation results, with a suite of different outputs with different levels of detail for different audiences.

Think about the different potential audiences and the type of information they are likely to be interested in. Consider what their appetite might be for an evaluation report – will they want to spend time delving into the detail or just get the key messages.

Try to engage key audiences for your evaluation early on in the process so they can help shape the design of your evaluation in order to get what they need.

When you are writing up your findings, make it clear what you want the reader to do with the information too. Try and go beyond just reporting the results and suggest what the implications are, for example, does the choice of widening access activities need to be changed?

And think beyond the typical report format (although that has a role) – articles in newsletters or on websites, posters, infographics, presentations, toolkits and checklists, case studies, short films or animations can all be used to get your findings out to a wide audience.

A communication plan

Stakeholder	Format	Content / Focus	Priority
Outreach team	• Presentation at team meeting	• Overall impact – which activities are associated with better outcomes • Process – what went well / less well, what did learners enjoy	High
Senior managers	• Presentation • Three page report	• Indicators relating to brand awareness of institution • Impact on progression to HE (including institution) and retention	High
Academic collaborators	• Article in staff newsletter • Three page report	• Indicators relating to subject awareness, study-skills and aspiration	Medium
Schools and colleges	• Three page report • Video case studies	• Indicators relating to attainment, study skills and aspiration • Individual case studies	High

One way to bring all these considerations together is to develop a simple communications plan for your evaluation.

Identify the key audiences, how much of a priority they are and the content and format that will suit them best.

In this example, the outreach team delivering the activity are clearly interested in which aspects of their work have had the most impact and what elements of the process worked well or could be improved. Keeping them updated at regular team meetings is an easy way to ensure they know about the results.

Senior managers on the other hand are interested in how the activity has affected key performance indicators and other targets. They don’t have time to read a detailed evaluation report, so 3 pages of key messages may be more appropriate.

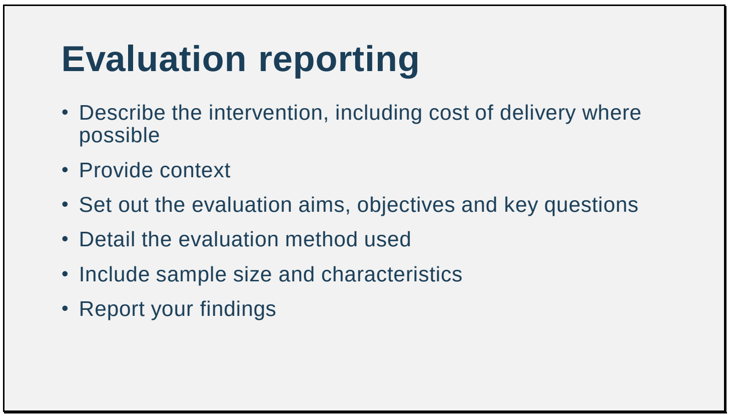
Don’t forget about participants either. In this example, the team plan to use evaluation findings, including video case studies to demonstrate to value of the project to schools and colleges they are seeking to work with.

In the previous section we talked about need to target findings to audiences. If you are hoping to submit your findings to the Toolkit or have then included in a similar evidence base, check out what they are looking for before you start planning your write up.

As we highlighted in Webinar 2, some of the submissions of evidence we received were difficult to assess and in some cases we couldn't include material at all because it was not an *impact* evaluation.

In order to assess the quality of the evidence, we need not just the findings but detail on the method.

As highlighted in the previous section, not everyone will need or want this level of detail, so it's OK to have a technical appendix, methods paper or detailed report alongside shorter, more engaging outputs for different audiences. In this part of the webinar we'll summarise the key things you need to include somewhere in your write up, so that it is of most use to external readers and particularly those undertaking reviews of evidence.



First of all – **describe the intervention** or activity that you have evaluated. It may seem obvious, but it is not always clear what a particular project or programme involves. Make sure you give sufficient detail for those who don't know anything about your work to be able to replicate it. Sometimes very different interventions use similar names, such as summer schools or mentoring, so don't rely on general terms or assume that readers will know what is involved. For example, if you are evaluating a mentoring project, who provided the mentoring, how often did they meet with their mentees and for how long, what training did mentors receive, what was the focus and purpose of mentoring discussion.

It's also useful to include information on the **cost of delivery** as this can be useful for those looking to replicate your intervention. Clearly, if you have done an economic or cost-effectiveness evaluation, this will be an essential element. If you do include cost information, be clear what it includes or excludes and on what basis you have calculated costs, for example, per participant, per activity, per year. Very few of the evaluations we reviewed for the Toolkit included this type of information. If you don't want to include exact cost details, providing an indication of the resources required can also be helpful, for example, the number of staff hours involved and the types of skills and expertise needed.

Tell the reader who took part, when and where. **Context** can make a big difference. If your project was supporting a very specific type of participant, it may not be possible to generalise the findings to other contexts.

Set out the **aims and objectives** of your evaluation and the key questions you were trying to answer. Be clear about what type of evaluation you were conducting - is this about impact or about the process? This type of information can be very helpful to others working through large volumes of evidence looking for answers to particular questions.

Detail your **methods.** As we described in previous webinars, the methods you use affect what you can claim based on your evidence. So being clear about your methods is important to enable others to judge how robust your results are. Which of the different approaches we outlined in webinar 4 did you use? How and where did you collect data? When was the data collected? When an evaluation was carried out is important if the context changes. For example, an evaluation of a project being delivered during lockdown may be different to one done beforehand.

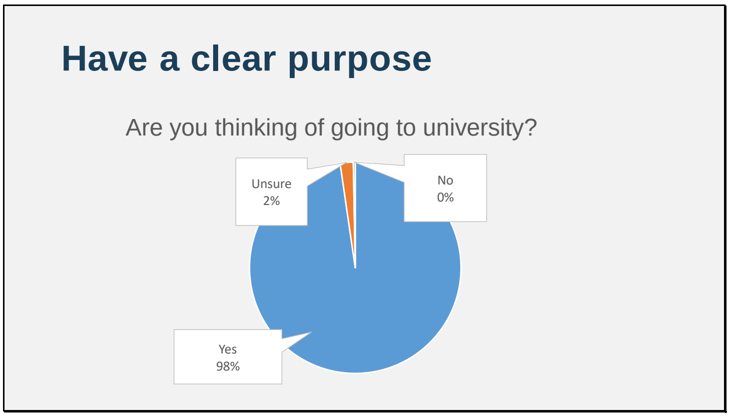
Include details of your **sample**. By sample, we mean the sub-set of participants you collected data from for the evaluation. Tell your readers who and how many people participated in the activity as well as which of them took part in the evaluation. In this way readers can make a judgement about how representative your results are likely to be. Include numbers and if possible their characteristics – for example, was the gender, ethnicity and background of your sample reflective of participants generally. Describe how the sample was chosen, for example, did you use random sampling, or ask for volunteers or other convenience methods, such as stopping visitors to an open day. Did people drop out and if so how many?

Reporting the **results or findings** from your evaluation if obviously key. Take care not to over-claim – listen to webinars 3 and 4 to understand more about what can be claimed based on your method. Your report will be more credible if you are honest and open about its limitations. Beware of confirmation bias - it's easy to see results and leap to desired conclusions. Consider what other factors may have influenced the result. Your logic model (webinar 3) may be useful here. Look to triangulate evidence from different sources to add weight to your conclusions – this could be from other evaluations such as those that are featured in the Toolkit.

If you are evaluating your own work, it can be difficult to be honest about things that didn't work as well as expected or where there was little or no impact. This shouldn't be seen as failure. That's why we evaluate! Do share where things haven't worked, this is useful learning and evidence for others so they do not make the same mistakes.

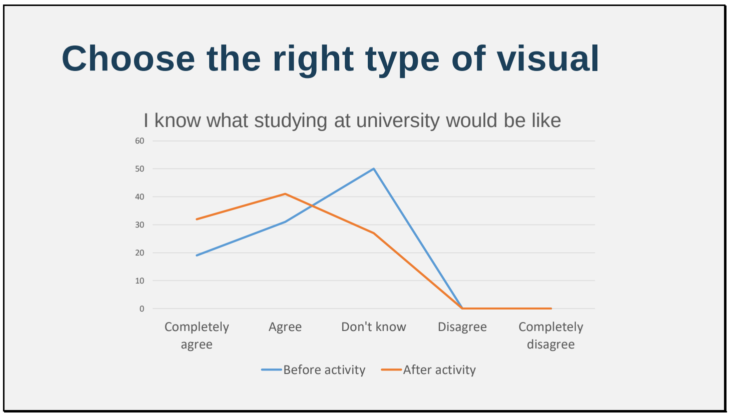
As part of communicating your findings, you may want to visualise some of your data. Data visualisation seems to have exploded in popularity in recent years and we are all more familiar with seeing graphs, charts and infographics in reports and across the media.

Presenting data in visual form can help to show patterns and trends in the data far better than just providing a table of figures, particularly if your data is complex. Visualisations can be very effective at getting a message across quickly and in a way that is memorable. But visuals can also be confusing, unnecessary or worse, inaccurate and misleading. There are lots of resources available, including guides and software, to help you visualise your data. In this final section of the webinar we are going to go over a few data presentation basics. We'll illustrate the points using made-up statistics, but the examples are all based on real life visuals that we have come across over the years.



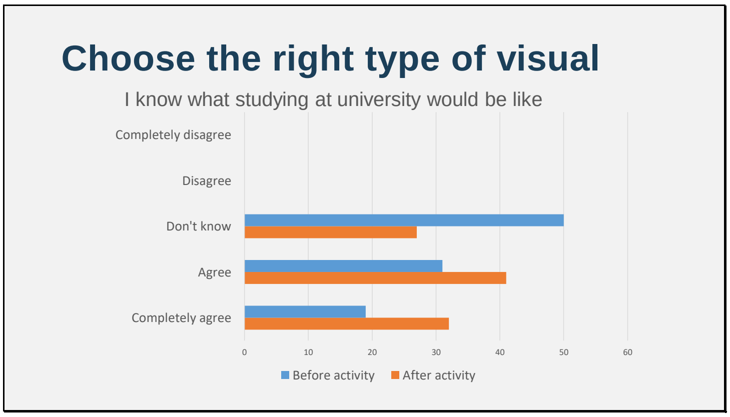
The first thing to think about is what point you want to make. You should have a clear purpose for including a visualisation. It's very easy to forget this step and go straight to creating a chart for every piece of data that you have. Choose which data to visualise with intention and because it helps to tell a story. If you have a very straightforward piece of information to convey, a chart or graph may add very little value.

For example, you may be delighted that most of your participants are considering going to university, but do you need a chart to demonstrate this? A simple sentence could do the job equally well if not better. Including a label for 0% is confusing. And yes, we have seen charts that look a bit like this before.

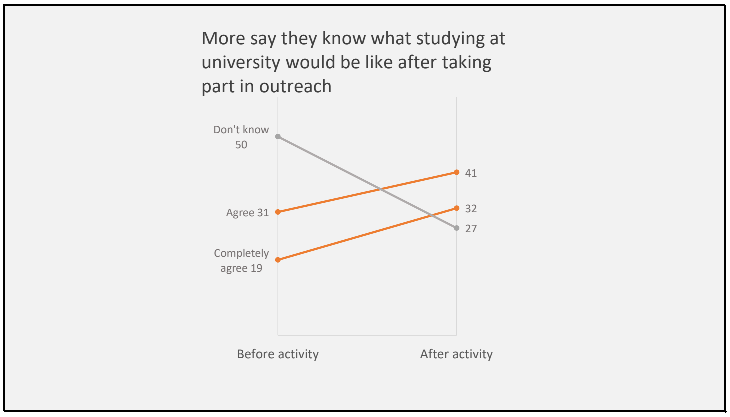


There are many different types of graph, each suited to particular types of statistic or the story you are seeking to tell. Identify what it is you want to show first, then choose the right type of chart. For example, do you want to show the size of something, compare two or more groups, show change over time or the relationship between two things such background and attainment. There are guides available online to help you choose the right chart for your data. We provide links to these in the accompanying notes.

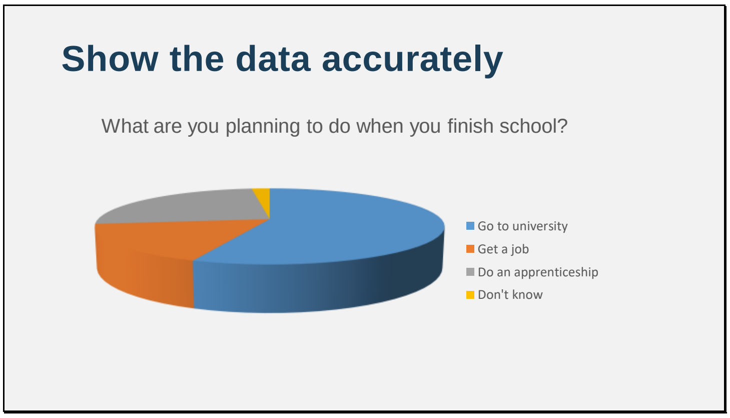
For example, in this chart the outreach team wanted to compare survey responses before and after an activity. However, a line graph like this with the categories across the bottom is not very easy to understand and doesn't tell the story well.



A bar chart with the before and after scores side by side for each response works better. It's much easier to see here that the number who say 'don't know' has gone down and the number who agree has gone up.



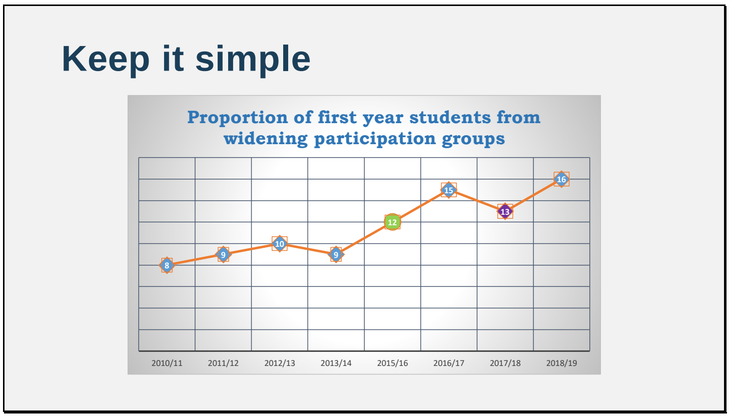
Or you could try a slope graph like this. Adding a title that spells out the key message makes it even easier to understand.



It's important that visualisations amplify you message but don't hide or skew the data. 3D charts are rarely a good idea, unless your data is also 3D. The third dimension only distorts the data and makes things harder to read.

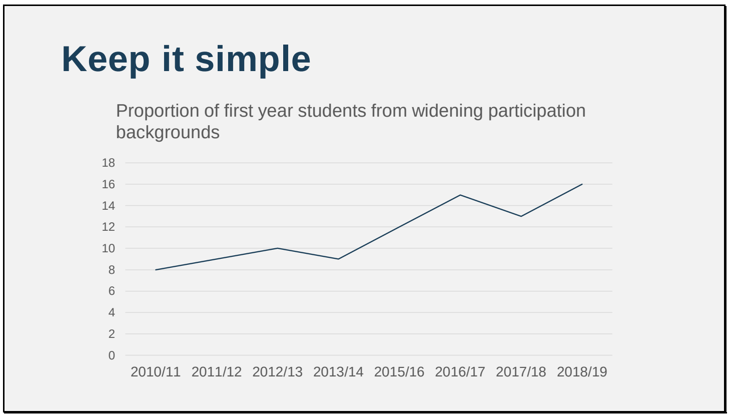
For example, in this pie chart, 25% of people plan to get an apprenticeship when they leave school (coloured grey) - a higher proportion than want to get a job. But the actual part of the pie that you can see coloured grey looks smaller. The 3D element makes the 'go to university' and 'get a job' segments look much larger than they should be.

A simple bar chart would show this data more accurately.

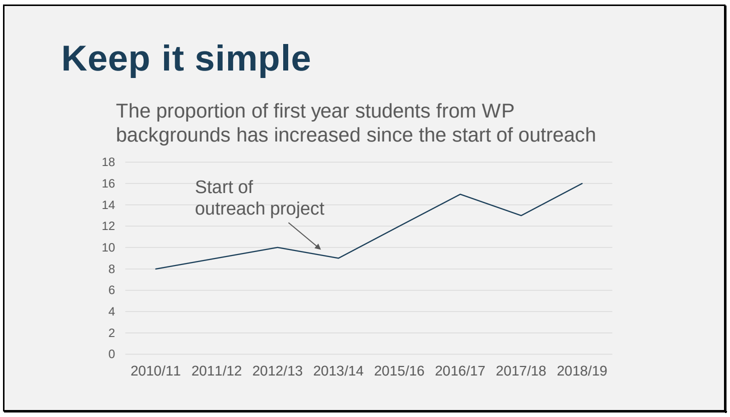


With so many different options to choose from: colours, fonts, styles and so on, it's easy to get carried away. Default settings in your software may not always be the ideal. Keep your data presentation simple and remove as much clutter as possible so your story is clear. Think about all the ink on your tables and charts and whether it is necessary for it to be there. Avoid using thick, dark gridlines and shading – subtle is better here. Don't decorate your charts with different colours, patterns, and shapes. Use colour sparingly and meaningfully – that is, to represent or highlight something. Ensure your colour pallet is accessible and works when printed in black and white.

Let's look at the same data in a simplified chart.



Much better. We're not distracted from the positive story here by all the colours and shading.



Make sure your graph includes clear labels so readers understand what is being presented. A title that points out the key message and annotations close to the data can also help you to tell your story.

As this is the final webinar in the series, I'm going to end with a few words about future plans for the toolkit.

The intention is that the toolkit will continue to be updated with new evidence at regular intervals. If you would like to submit evidence for consideration, you can do this via the website.

Scotland's Community of Access and Participation Practitioners, or SCAPP, have established an Evaluation and Research Working Group. This group will work towards to ensure widening participation practitioners have access to up-to-date evidence on the impact of activities to inform their work.

The community's purpose is to develop the capacity of practitioners working in the field of widening access to use evaluation and research to provide:

- better outcomes for students who are engaged with widening access activities
- a better understanding for practitioners, funders and stakeholders of what works in the field of widening access, and
- an understanding of effective implementation of projects and programmes

There will be a focus on enhancing current work, for example developing effective frameworks for evaluation and adapting evaluation as widening participation works to meet the challenges of the impact of the pandemic.

Ultimately the key aims will be to

- Develop links between WP practitioners and researchers
- Develop resources for the toolkit for fair access, and to
- Share practice widely through events

You can find out more about the work of SCAPP by listening to the first webinar in the series.

That's all for this webinar and the series of webinars as a whole. We hope you found them useful.