Handout 4: The Role Of Research In Policy Development

Contribute to research for policy advice

Reasons why agencies collect data for research.

1. Planning purposes:
   - To identify current use of services by the agency
   - To identify the type of person using the agency service
   - To identify the needs of people using agency services
   - To identify what other agencies are doing
   - To identify improved ways of managing a task or incident.

2. Accountability purposes:
   - To ensure the agency services all the sections of the community for which it receives funding
   - To inform the funding body about who is using the services.

From the above list you can see that Coordinators and other staff in community services agencies are engaged in research on more or less a daily basis.

The gathering of information and consultation techniques may include:

- Interviews: structured, semi-structured unstructured, group and individual
- Conversation by phone or face to face
- Observation and listening
- Collecting of materials such as reports, policies, statistics
- Attendance at workshops, meetings and forums
- Questionnaires.

Survey

A survey is a term that describes one of the broad methods for the collecting of information for research. It involves selecting a group of people and asking them a set of questions. The questions are pre planned and you obtain the answers to your questions through interviews either face to face or over the phone or through questionnaires. Questionnaires are where there are a set number of written questions that people respond to.

Surveys have a number of advantages:

- You can collect a lot of information relatively easily
- The worker doesn’t have to be involved in the collecting of the information
- A wide range of answers can be collected
- The results can easily be compared with other results
Surveys can be cheap to carry out.

Areas on which data is collected

- Age
- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Socio-economic group
- Disability
- Area in which they live
- Services they use
- Client needs.