



National Children's  
Bureau



# Putting Outcomes Based Accountability into Practice

How NCB is helping the South Eastern Health  
and Social Care Trust to deliver better outcomes

June 2018



“NCB introduced and helped educate us on OBA and the support they provided has been fantastic. Their knowledge and understanding of OBA is second to none and the way they are able to translate that into a language that everyone is able to understand – working from the Chief Executive down it really makes sense to people. The passion NCB has for OBA really shines through”



## About this case study

NCB's task was to help the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust drive forward the planning and delivery of health and social care using the Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) model. It charts the impact that the process has had on the Trust and its staff; outlines some of the early successes; provides key learnings about using OBA for the benefit of others; and explains how the Trust plans to embed the process long term.

NCB would like to thank SJC Consultancy for undertaking the interviews and analysis involved in developing this case study. We would also like to thank the staff at the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust who took part in interviews. Their valuable time and expertise is very much appreciated.



The Trust is a large, complex integrated organisation, providing acute hospital services, community health and social services. It employs more than 10,000 staff who work to deliver safe, high quality and compassionate care for a population of approximately 354,500 people with a budget of almost £500million. The Trust covers the local government districts of Ards, North Down, Down and Lisburn.



National Children's Bureau

NCB has pioneered the use of OBA in Northern Ireland, initially through its own work: putting improved outcomes for children and families at the heart of decision-making. It led a successful campaign to persuade government to adopt the OBA framework and has been a critical friend in the development of the Programme for Government<sup>1</sup> (PfG). It now provides training and implementation support to a range of public bodies and organisations in the voluntary and community sector that work with them. This case study outlines how NCB has worked with the Trust to help it to rise to the challenge of change.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/newnigov/draft-pfg-framework-2016-21.pdf>

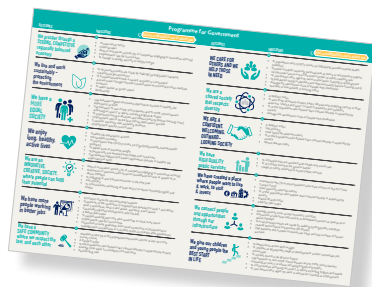
# Putting Outcomes Based Accountability into Practice

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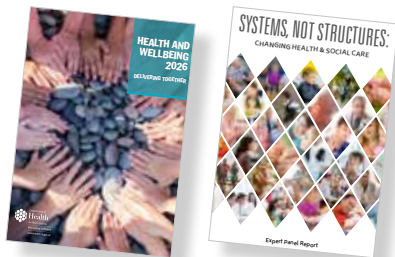
## The challenge

The central aim of the PfG is to improve wellbeing for all. Health bodies have an important role to play in this. The PfG asserts that citizens should lead long, healthy and active lives through prevention and early intervention, improving access to health and social care services, tackling health inequalities and delivering better outcomes from the investment in health and social care.



To achieve this the health service in Northern Ireland needs to undergo the most radical and fundamental transformation since its foundation in 1948.

The route map is laid down in "Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together" a 10-year plan for transformation which was published in 2016. It was the government's response to the Bengoa report: "Systems not Structures"



Delivering Together spells out the task ahead:

***"The current spread of HSC resources, too often committed to buildings rather than outcomes for patients, is a central challenge we must address. If we persist with our current models of care, even with the best efforts of all staff and more investment year on year, waiting lists will continue to grow, our expertise will continue to be diluted, and the best possible outcomes for patients will not be realised. This is both unsustainable and unacceptable<sup>2</sup>"***

The challenge therefore was to assist the Trust as it set about adopting OBA methodology in order to progress on its transformation agenda.



## OBA: a brief outline

Outcomes Based Accountability was adopted by the Programme for Government (PfG) as the means by which all public policy is to be developed, planned and implemented. It applies to all public bodies and every organisation which supports them by delivering publicly funded programmes. OBA marks a radical change to previous methods and its successful implementation is imperative.

OBA is a disciplined way of thinking, taking action and embedding impact. It supports evidence based decision making, collaboration and co-production, to plan and deliver better services for people<sup>3</sup>.

In simple terms it involves the following:

1. Outcomes: identify what you want to achieve, the high-end targets
2. Choose what indicators best measure these outcomes
3. Identify how to change these measurements, making progress towards the desired outcomes – "Turning The Curve" is the phrase used.
4. Decide what works / what is working, using analysis of indicators' data ensuring a flexible and dynamic approach, evolving and adapting in accordance with the evidence.

It is a simple and powerful approach, but not simple to implement, as it requires significant cultural and organisational change. It requires the input of independent experts, to guide, encourage and where necessary, challenge existing practices, and that's where the NCB came in.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/health/health-and-wellbeing-2026-delivering-together.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Mark Freidman, "Trying Hard is Not Good Enough – How to Produce Measurable Improvements for Customers and Communities"

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## The outcomes to be achieved

Since 2015, the Trust has been cascading the OBA approach throughout its directorates with a focus on maximizing its contribution to a set of agreed outcomes. These are:

In the SEHSCT area, all.....

- ✓ Children in need experience stability.
- ✓ Children looked after experience stability.
- ✓ Children experience the best start in life.
- ✓ Adults experience improved quality of life.
- ✓ Older people experience physical and psychological well-being and live well until the end of life.

## Impact



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## - The impact of OBA on working practices

### Enabling a collaborative and inclusive approach

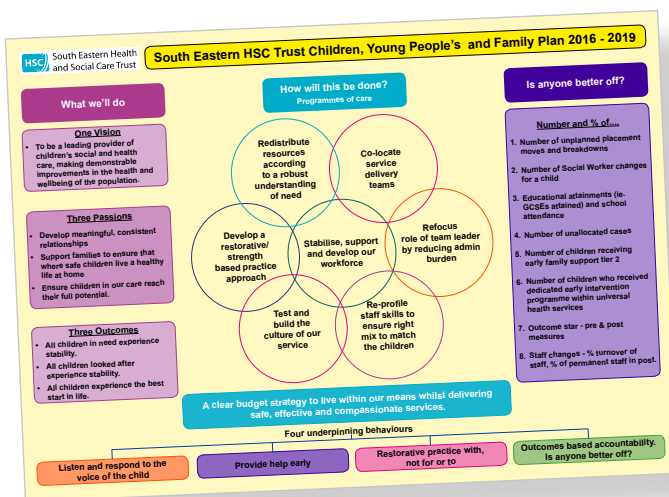
- OBA has facilitated partnership working within the Trust and enhanced collaboration between the Trust and external partners. The use of simple language and step-by-step processes has enabled partners to identify actions and priority areas therefore getting from talk to action quickly.
- Turning the Curve thinking has allowed staff within and across various Directorates of the Trust to come together with a common purpose to collectively identify outcomes and indicators and to see how these align with wider agendas for change in Northern Ireland such as PFG.

*“OBA has unlocked a lot of potential, a lot of transferability and support and recognising that we [various Directorates] are much more the same than different. We get much more out of working collaboratively than in isolation”*

*“On a wider level in the overall Directorate it really brought a sense of community – as although we sit within a wider directorate normally we are very much focused on our sub-directorates but OBA allowed us to come together and recognise the mutual issues between us all and the learning that came from that”*

*“OBA helps to simplify our language so it is a better platform for intra governmental and interagency working”*

*“The rigorousness of the process, that we have been supported through by NCB, has really encouraged those conversations with other partners and a different way of thinking”*



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## Supporting a vibrant workforce

- The OBA framework motivates staff as they can see the impact of their own practice. Working with data and giving staff the time and space to consider the story behind the data helps them think and understand their individual and collective contribution to improving outcomes.

*“Outcomes resonate with staff better – nobody comes into healthcare because they want to meet targets, they want to make a difference, they want to help people. We need to show staff the difference they are making rather than just focusing on targets”*

*“Previously a negative thing for staff is when they are over-performing and yet the trend line only told one story. This approach demonstrates that we are very effective in our performance and issues are related to capacity”*

*“OBA has been key in my service area for driving change and innovation and although we do not have additional resources for increasing staffing levels we have been able to create a huge amount of change and a willingness to change from staff. Staff morale has really increased because they are getting the recognition of what they provide and it isn't just about the numbers but the story behind the numbers”*

*“The process itself is helping staff to see that what they do in their particular service and how it links right back up to the PfG. Individuals can see their contribution to the bigger picture”*

- The Trust is piloting the use of OBA as part of staff performance appraisals, which now incorporates the OBA question relating to 'Is anyone better off?' This helps to review and recognise the contribution that staff are making to outcomes.

*“The process is very energising, very refreshing and staff have been feeding back that it is reconnecting them with why they came into the professional job in the first instance”*

*“I feel so reassured and delighted to hear staff standing up to say – ‘wow, I get it’”*



## Promoting data driven decision-making

- The Trust is now using data more meaningfully to improve service delivery and planning.

*“We have historically collated lots of data and information – where OBA could bring us to is a more purposeful collection of our data so that we use it in a way that helps us to be better, ask the right questions, do the right thing”*

*“OBA has made us improve our data sets and question them and what we are collecting, and the purpose of collecting data, do we need that, is that really important”*

- The Trust is using available and reliable data to evidence impact and building confidence in the use and interrogation of data. In instances where gaps in information have been identified, systems and processes are being developed to address these.

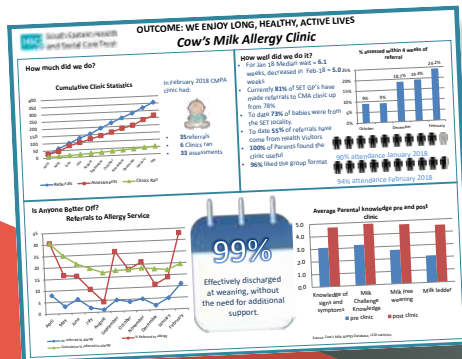
*“We will, for the areas where we have reliable data, use those areas to progress and then use that expertise and confidence to build up and identify the measurement tools and the systems - that is part of the journey that we have mapped out”*

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## Examples of where curves are being turned



### Example 1

As part of Paediatrics' services, the Dietician Led Cow's Milk Allergy Clinic aims to assess all babies within four weeks of referral to the service. OBA has helped to focus attention on how to meet this aim by monitoring performance more effectively. This has led to the identification of better ways of working and cost savings.

*"It [OBA] helped us to identify issues very quickly - that we weren't measuring what we should be measuring for example our percentage assessed within 4 weeks of referral was only 9% at the start of the process (October) but by doing OBA we were able to identify that this is far too low and what we need to do to change that - so we implemented partial booking at the end of December and our referrals are now sitting at 25% seen within 4 weeks - so it has been a major improvement"*

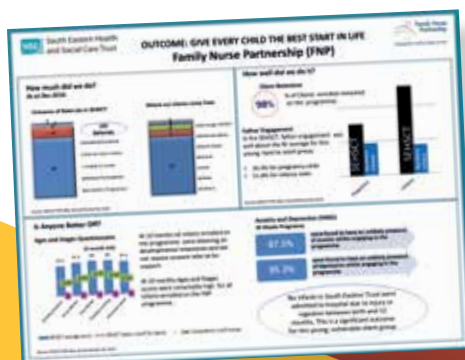
*"It helps that it is very visual you can see how referrals are increasing and how we are meeting demand from referrals by putting on extra clinics"*

*"It has led to a spin-off project which is looking at the different infant formulas and the cost savings that could potentially be made"*



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## Example 2

The Family Nurse Partnership (FNP) is an early intervention and preventative programme for first time teenage mums. FNP aims to improve child health and development, and to improve the economic self-sufficiency of the parent. OBA forms part of a continuous quality improvement process. It also allows nurses to understand and appreciate the progress they are making and the benefits for the end-user.

*“OBA allows family nurses and the FNP in general to be able to see the progress they are making, it is visible and they feel more valued. They can share the progress with their clients as a continuous quality improvement strategy and process – and it works. It means that you can tweak your programme to make improvements or changes which are going to benefit clients and build retention benefits for clients and the outcomes you are trying to achieve”*

*“At the end of the year none of our babies on the programme needed referral to specialist services – which was a big improvement and a big indicator for family nurses to see the progress that had been made and the quality of the programme they are delivering and really making a difference”*

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## Example 3

The Trust's Recovery College vision is to be an educational centre of excellence that nurtures recovery. It offers educational courses about mental health and recovery which are designed to increase knowledge and skills and promote self-management. Each course is co-produced and co-facilitated by Recovery College Tutors.

OBA has created an informed dialogue between all key stakeholders, including tutors, carers, service users and board members of the Recovery College. It has created a focus on outcome measures and the difference that is being made as a result of various interventions, which has energised tutors and service users.

*"The benefits of using OBA at the Recovery College have been so exciting. Whenever we introduced OBA to our board and also to our students and people coming through the college they have a real interest in knowing that not only are we counting numbers of people going through the college but we are actually starting to demonstrate how the Recovery College is making a difference"*

*"A 'Recovery stories' project has come about as a result of 'how do we know we are making a difference' part of OBA. We have a rich variety of stories – in written format, poetry, photography, documentaries, movies etc. It has been really good at bringing data to life and demonstrating the effect of the Recovery College, which has been hugely beneficial"*

*"It has been brilliant in terms of motivating people and people like getting the information [data] and we want to see this rolled out through all of Mental Health services"*

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## Ingredients for success: learnings for others

Key lessons, recounted by the Trust, to aid the implementation of OBA include:

### Having strong leadership

- Strong, visionary leadership and support from Directors and Heads of Service underpinned the process of implementing OBA.
- Multi-layered leadership is important, achieved by empowering all staff to adopt an OBA approach and to understand how their own practice contributes to the wider Directorate, Trust and PfG outcomes.

***“The key drivers for implementation for OBA at a service level are very much that it is led and that you have the knowledge and skills and belief about what it can do and that you lead it and embrace it and that you communicate it very clearly to your staff. From doing that you will get the buy-in from staff because they will openly embrace the breadth and depth which OBA brings – and that it can really bring change”***

### Challenging organisational culture

- Recognising that the adoption of OBA is a cultural and an organisational change process, requiring the necessary time and resources to implement.

***“OBA is simple but it is not simple to do as it is about cultural change and organisational change”***

***“The cultural change is important - what are you going to do, how you are going to do it and how you bring an organisation with you to do it”***

***“It is about joining it all up to everything else that is going on – as opposed to that you have the OBA work and then you have the day job”***

***“For me and the team it was unlocking the big, enormous job into component parts so you can start. Then the realisation that you cannot do it in isolation, the organisation in its entirety needed to be bought into it – the organisation has to have cohesion”***

- A changing culture in terms of system change, for example the type and level of data collated and interrogated. In many instances this involves changing systems in order to address data gaps, which can be challenging, time-consuming and resource intensive. However investment in this stage will create a better means of demonstrating what works and the impact of services on users.

***“It has been a big cultural change over the last 18 months for staff, it has enabled them to really move away from the focus on the numbers to actually what are we providing. We are a lot more focused on our standards of practice and a big drive in embracing evidence based practice, which has led to a lot of new initiatives in our service which staff have really embraced because they are focused now and aware that each contact matters”***



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## Getting the right external support



- The Trust greatly welcomed the external support provided by NCB. Fundamental to the process was **the independent voice, challenge function and expertise** that NCB brought to nurture the process of transformation.

- The Trust has complete confidence in NCB's approach, and appreciates having access to an organisation with the relevant expertise and technical ability to apply OBA in different settings.

*"We would have struggled and it would have taken a lot longer if we hadn't used an external provider"*

*"This framework and how solid NCB were in their knowledge was fundamentally very important at the time that we set off – because we wouldn't have that expertise internally"*

*"NCB has worked with us to improve practice, they provided support, practice development and training"*

*"NCB as an organisation brought expertise not just of the OBA framework but the application of it"*

*"It has been a journey of discovery, of training and learning and NCB has certainly been helpful in assisting us with that journey because they have the expertise"*

*"It became very apparent that NCB's confidence in the OBA approach felt very reassuring. It was a very integrated and lived approach that NCB were able to convey in an uplifting and fun way – which is really important in terms of engaging the team"*

*"NCB introduced and helped educate us on OBA and the support they provided has been fantastic. Their knowledge and understanding of OBA is second to none and the way they are able to translate that into a language that everyone is able to understand – working from the Chief Executive down it really makes sense to people. The passion NCB has for OBA really shines through"*

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- NCB challenged the Trust to think differently and helped to push boundaries in the development of outcomes, indicators, action plans and service performance measures.

***“What is good about an external person is that they can challenge – which was particularly helpful. NCB challenged but weren’t challenging and people worked well with that approach and trusted NCB in their knowledge of the process”***

***“NCB brought a healthy challenge and when you are external you can do that, so they could ask the questions or pose the challenges – NCB made us think differently”***

***“It was a nice balance between gentle challenge and a significant amount of support. Having that challenge approach and independent view was very helpful “***

***“NCB’s approach has been very helpful and constructive stepping us through the process of cultural change and technical ability to adopt OBA”***

- Having a tailored package of training and implementation support, provided by NCB, proved to be of great benefit to the Trust in the implementation of OBA. NCB helped to inspire and motivate staff to embrace change as a means of improving practice and ultimately outcomes.

***“NCB was excellent at adapting it to our circumstances and trying to simplify the process”***

***“NCB is great at inspiring people and encouraging a degree of enthusiasm. NCB has credibility around the process which is important”***

***“NCB helped make the complex simple, which is actually part of the challenge, but they also made it fun, engaging and uplifting because it could be quite difficult when you are at the beginning and want to be at the end”***

- Having one external provider supporting various Directorates across the Trust has helped to cement a common and consistent adoption of OBA.

***“It is helpful to have the consistency of the support provided being from the same organisation [NCB] to elements of the Trust so that they can bring their learning and that there is a consistency to the approach”***



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## Embracing partnership working

- The Trust emphasised the importance of dedicating sufficient time and involving as many partners as possible throughout the process, for example in the Turning The Curve workshops to support shared ownership of the approach.

*“It has really encouraged us to think about the importance of engaging with our other partners - we can't do this on our own and it has reinforced how the whole is greater than the sum of the parts”*

*“Working across the divisions, boundaries, working across organisations isn't easy – and it would be easier to knuckle down and say this is my world. If it is going to be adopted by PfG and if it is going to be embedded by community plans then we are all signing up to this”*

## Engaging staff

- It is important to gain the buy-in of the Senior Management Team and Executive and Non-Executive Directors of the Trust, particularly at the outset of the OBA journey to gain the level of support required to aid implementation, mainstreaming and sustainability of the approach.

*“It is important to ensure that your whole management team, to include your non-executive directors, has a level of understanding about OBA and to get them on board early in the process”*

- To listen to and engage staff on an ongoing basis is considered one of the key success factors in the adoption of an OBA approach. Investing in their training and development and to ensure there is a common understanding of the OBA language.

*“This directorate undertook a listening exercise with all levels of staff at the beginning of the process. That really directed the process and it helped give more ownership to staff”*

*“People can work in very isolated positions and that they are working on the peripheral, but if they know what their contribution is to the bigger picture – that is fulfilling, which is what OBA is about”*

*“Some of the change makers will always be the staff that are delivering the job every day because they are the people that interface with our service users – so the most significant thing is that sense of ownership achieved through staff engagement and for them to be in a room to determine what will make the difference”*



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## Understanding the long-term commitment involved

- While OBA can appear initially to be a simple approach for focusing on outcomes, fuller engagement with the approach showed that it is complex. Consequently, it is evident that in adopting OBA, time is needed to understand fully the concepts and terminology and to ensure these are mutually understood.
- OBA performance accountability is regarded as being easier to implement than population accountability, as it focuses on services delivered. However, population accountability is a much more strategic and longer-term commitment that requires service delivery teams and senior leaders in the Trust to move beyond their own services and directorates, out of silos and engage in collaborative work with other organisations and agencies who have a role to play in improving people's health and well-being. The Trust recognises the importance and long term nature of this more strategic work and is on a journey towards achieving better outcomes at a wider population level.
- It is important to recognise the need for a transition period in the short to medium term to allow for internal and external processes to align. The Trust has created a full-time post to support the implementation of OBA, to include the development of report cards. Having a dedicated resource highlights the commitment made by the Trust to the process. This dedicated resource will also provide a further champion to encourage the wider rollout of OBA across all Directorates. The Trust has also created and supported a number of OBA champions across Directorates to help drive forward the new way of working.

***“Part of the dilemma in adopting a different framework is that you still have to do a transition journey and that’s where we have to bring our commissioners with us so that we reach a stage where we are not duplicating work”***

***“This is not a quick or a fast track thing because it is about a culturally different way of working and reframing our approach”***



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## Sustaining the change

The Trust is committed to implementing OBA across all Directorates, providing the relevant training and support. The Trust appreciates that it is an ongoing process, requiring time and resources to transform ways of working leading to improved services and enhanced outcomes.

*“It is too early in the journey to state the difference OBA has made. There is a timeline that we can reasonably expect to see the difference and in some cases it will be generational”*

An important next step is **embedding OBA into the commissioning of services**, achieved by identifying what works and how to evidence outcomes.

*“We lead through a contracting culture to ensure that the services that we contract also begin this similar journey so that we are able to, for all of the funding that we have, evidence that we are working to outcomes”*

*“We are beginning to weave conversations about outcomes based approaches into commissioning contracts in terms of how we collate data and how we standardise measurement tools. Partners are very receptive, some are already OBA informed and some have a good degree of knowledge. It is important that all are aware of the process”*

*“Producing the evidence around outcomes is important – leading to a more informed approach to commissioning”*

Full implementation will occur when this new way of working becomes ‘the norm’, when practitioners, commissioners and senior managers are all using the Turning the Curve approach, working with partners to plan and improve services for people in the area.

*“To keep the momentum it has to be mainstreamed rather than an add on – so it has to be in the DNA of how you do business”*

*“Where we get to the utopia of this is when it becomes an organisational wide approach across the Trust and we are still to a significant extent doing this in our own silos”*

*“In the first year and half we may not be able to look at the data and see progress improvement but we can now use the data to inform the right sort of conversations around the senior team and then within the service areas about how does that change the way we work. The next stage is how we get this data and OBA currency out into the individual teams to use”*

*“For OBA to be at its strongest you need the whole thing to line up between government, policy, commissioners, providers and then within providers the various departments – working one with the other – that is the ideal world”*



### How NCB can help you

**NCB has unrivalled experience and knowledge of OBA and we are the only certified provider of OBA training and implementation support. Our OBA support can be tailored to the specific needs of organisations across the statutory, voluntary and community sectors. Support packages can include:**

#### **Introductory OBA workshop**

This one day workshop introduces participants to the Outcomes Based Accountability framework including its core concepts and principles and its uses in improving quality of life conditions at the population level and in the performance management of programmes, services and agencies.

#### **OBA Train the Trainer Course**

This intensive, two-day workshop prepares participants to teach the concepts of OBA and coach others in its implementation. Participants will learn how to:

- Conduct their own OBA workshops
- Lead training exercises
- Help organisations and their leaders put these practices into operation

*"Great session and very interactive with a good mix of activities. Excellent facilitators"*

#### **Bespoke capacity building support packages**

Packages are tailored to focus on an organisation's specific strategy, programme or service and can include a mix of practical onsite workshops, one-to-one sessions and desk based support.

Support can focus on:

- 1 Identifying appropriate and meaningful measures of performance that focus on service user outcomes
- 2 Facilitating 'Turning the Curve' exercises and co-producing action plans with partner organisations and service users to improve well-being
- 3 Building consensus across multidisciplinary partners on the focus of population based service improvement strategies, keeping the well-being of service users at the centre
- 4 OBA reporting: examining ways of communicating progress using concise, transparent and robust reporting mechanisms

*"NCB is passionate about real outcomes which makes real difference in lived experience of children. This is at the centre of ethical and expert support it provides to our organisation in delivering effectively on the outcomes we claim for our work. So, we are pleased to be supported and challenged by our relationship with NCB"*

# Putting Outcomes Based Accountability into Practice

How NCB can help you

## **Information, management, technical assistance and reporting support**

Organisations capacity to understand measurements of performance, use appropriate tools for capturing data, and communicate performance data electronically is critical to the success of OBA.

NCB has significant experience of providing direct support to organisations to implement an end-to-end solution to enable organisations to:

- Identify meaningful measures of performance
- Develop measurement tools
- Establish appropriate systems for managing performance data
- Design effective templates for the reporting of performance data

## **Outcomes Based Government Policy and Service Planning**

NCB has provided support to NI Executive Departments, Local Government, HSC Trusts & children's services teams in NI and beyond to use the OBA framework as a way of fostering collaborative and outcomes based leadership and practice.

Sustained focus on achieving outcomes requires meaningful measurement by which progress is tracked. Being accountable for the well-being of populations requires indicators that can adequately describe the status and needs of these populations.

NCB can support in identifying outcomes and indicators and the in development of co-produced strategies with partners to improve them.

**For more information on support and pricing please contact Frances Lyons at [flyons@ncb.org.uk](mailto:flyons@ncb.org.uk)**

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