

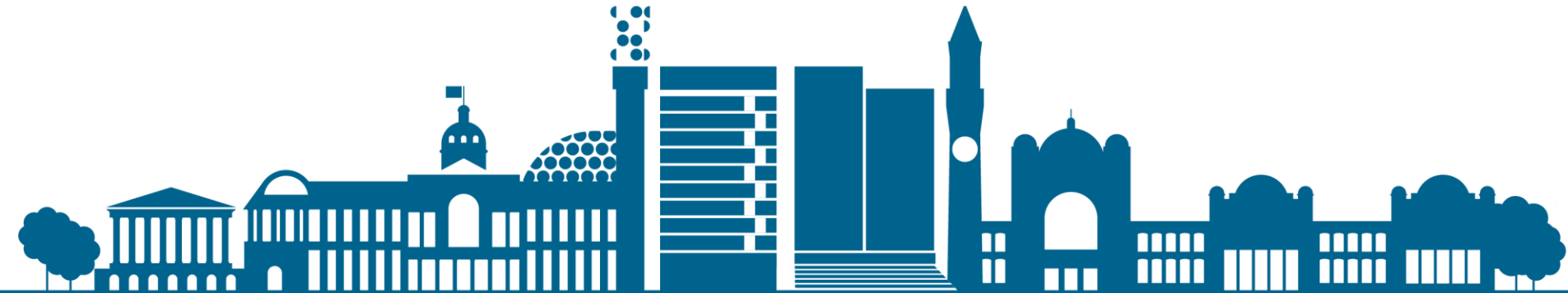


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Rapid Evaluation in Healthcare: opportunities, need and challenges

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What do we mean by 'rapid' evaluation?

Can be defined in several ways:

- **Timescale:** e.g. 12 months or less, although this could be misleading as the primary definition
- **Design:**
 - *Rapid start:* getting evaluation project under way quickly
 - *Rapid completion:* short timescale from design → dissemination
 - *Rapid cycle:* longer evaluation, with early and/or ongoing reporting, on-going learning and feedback of findings
- **Purpose:** e.g. real-time or 'alongside' evaluation, to support innovation development and implementation



Why do rapid evaluation?

- To support learning and improvement as innovations are tested out in real-world settings where practitioners and policy makers are hungry for evidence
- Because innovations and contexts change during implementation – ongoing feedback of findings ensures relevance and usefulness
- To generate evidence to sustain innovations beyond initial pilots (and where timescales for decisions are often tight)
- To provide timely information about potential (or not) for scale up/roll out across the wider system
- Practical considerations – e.g. funders may not be able to commit resources for longer-term assessments



Why not?

- Pressure to work quickly (especially at the early stages) can affect:
 - Local buy-in and relationship building, including public and patient involvement
 - The quality of evaluation design
- Short projects cannot capture the full range of impacts; many key outcomes (e.g. health improvements, financial savings) are long-term
- There can be dangers with early assessment – judgements made before innovations have had a chance to succeed
- **The key issue is evaluability; what innovations, contexts, outcomes are suitable for rapid evaluation?**



Can you be both rapid and rigorous?

- Funders don't want to trade rigour against rapidity, but will accept the need therefore to be selective about scope/focus
- Design and preparatory work take time, whether the evaluation is rapid or longer in timescale
- You have to understand what is (really) required – sites often want learning to help them improve; a rapid evaluation can work well where this is the case
- Managing expectations is equally important: be clear (and consistent) about what is realistic in the timescale available
- It can be very helpful to co-design a longer term approach to monitoring, to leave as a rapid evaluation ends
- Additional specific skills are needed by evaluators



Our approach in BRACE

- **Responsive:** timely and rapid working
- **Relevant:** working with stakeholder groups across all stages of the evaluation lifecycle
- **Rigorous:** theoretical and methodological rigour
- **Theory-based approach** to evaluation: if something works, how; if it doesn't, why not?



Thank you

BRACE Rapid Evaluation Centre:

www.birmingham.ac.uk/BRACE



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Department of Health Disclaimer:

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