

EVALUATION TOOL 6:	PEN PORTRAITS		
OVERVIEW:	Asking young people is not the only way to find out if a programme has had an impact or not. The staff who know the young people from their organisation (i.e. the visiting staff) may well be able to give you a good indication of how the young people have grown over time. Pen portraits are quick and easy ways to show the changes that the young people have made. They are very useful on their own, and even more so alongside what the young people say. Using pen portraits values what visiting staff know and allows them to contribute. It can be a good way into conversations about tracking these young people, next steps and future programmes.		
WHAT YOU WILL NEED:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A copy of the programme outcomes • A conversation with the visiting staff • Pen and paper 	PREPARATION:	None
PROCESS:	<p>Step 1: At the very start, or before the programme, ask the visiting staff to write a paragraph (a 'pen portrait') that describes each young person as accurately as they possibly can. You may want to ask them to use the course outcomes as a guide writing frame.</p> <p>'X really struggles to communicate with staff and young people. They rarely make eye contact. They have little to say in group discussions and are often withdrawn.'</p> <p>Step 2: Ask them to repeat the exercise at the end of the programme and ideally three to six months afterwards as well. The 2–3 portraits will show what changes occurred, and how long they lasted.</p>		
ANALYSIS:	<p>Compare the descriptions of the young people. Highlight the changes that have happened.</p> <p>You can write about these as they are, for example:</p> <p>'X really progressed in their confidence to communicate as shown by the way they made eye contact with others.'</p> <p>You could also turn them into quantitative data by counting the occurrence of changes for individuals and groups:</p> <p>'X was seen to have made 3 changes over the programme'</p> <p>'The group overall had made 13 changes in their ability to communicate'.</p>		
EXAMPLE:	<p>Before: 'Attendance was very much hit and miss, due to a number of complex issues. It became apparent that as much as he said he wanted to change his life and criminal activity, his circumstance would not allow him to do so.</p> <p>Experienced a period of homelessness; a short sentence and abandonment from his parents. He was at the time living with a friend, on benefits and struggling with trying to live independently. Unfortunately Keita did not attend the residential.'</p> <p>After: 'Became the group's natural leader using natural humour. After a planned and pre-discussed intervention by staff from Brathay, he responded well and became a joy to work with. Attendance remained sporadic, but he continually focused on how he would make ends meet, and at the same time stay out of trouble.'</p>		
STRENGTHS:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to collect different perspectives • Good distance travelled data 	WEAKNESSES:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires staff to unite