Living Options Partnership

Involving Users in

EVALUATION

24 January 1995, Midland Hotel, Derby
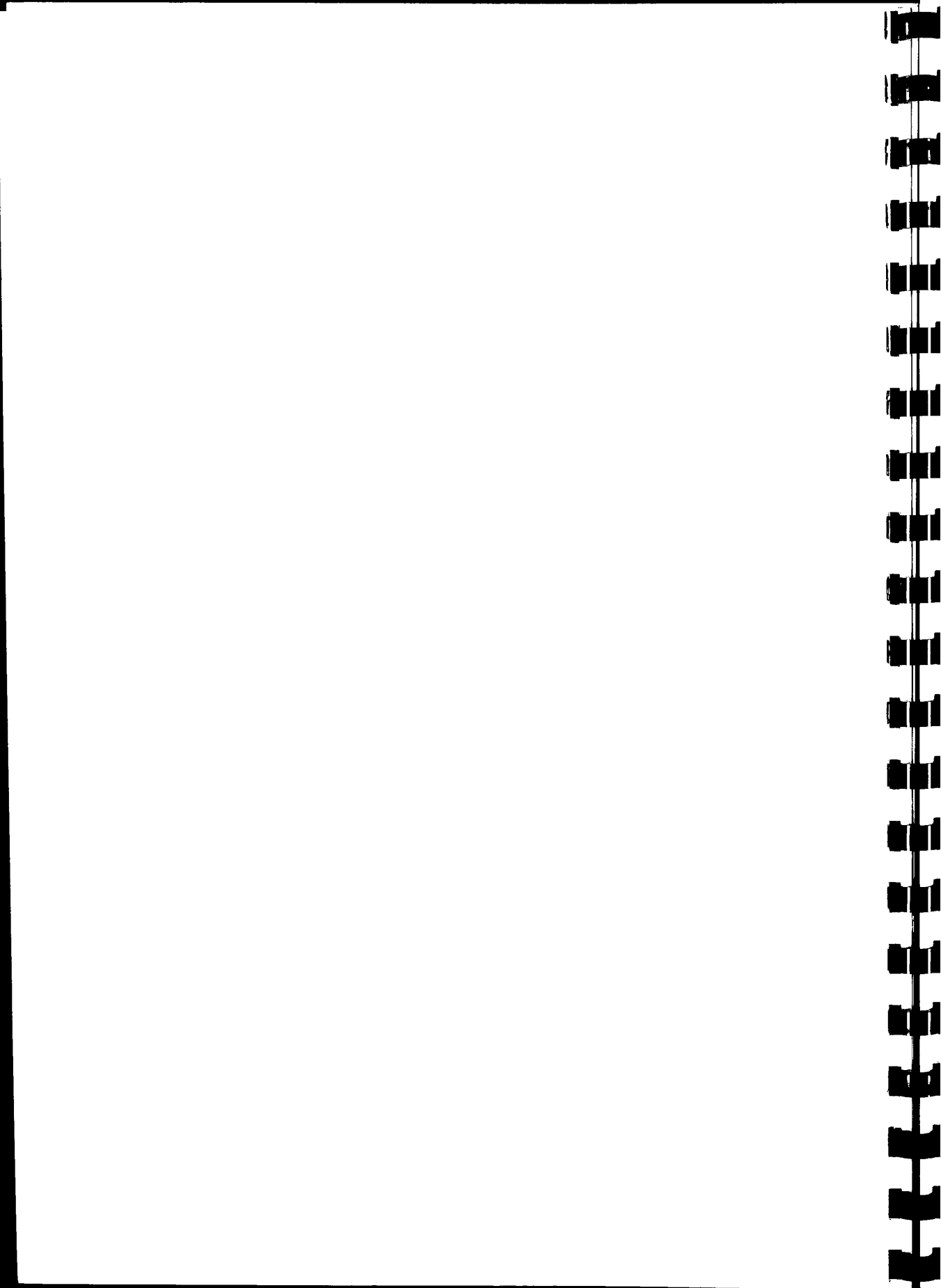
QBAA (Kin)

LIVING OPTIONS PARTNERSHIP

INVOLVING USERS IN EVALUATION

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements

Taking the mystery out of evaluation!

'How did that recipe work? What would make it better? What did the people who cooked or ate the meal think? What will I do differently next time?'

We evaluate all the time- it's an everyday part of life.

In the community care sector
* Users have the right to needs led services BUT many do not see positive changes, or feel listened to.
* Purchasers of services are struggling with too little money & new ways of working.
* Statutory,voluntary & private sector workers are often very committed, & are almost overwhelmed by change .....

SO, all three groups need to know :

What difference do the services make?
How can we know what is or is not being achieved?
What needs to change & how?

The answers to these questions are discovered through evaluation.

Evaluation is the drawing out, assessing & judging the value of a piece of work, an organisation or a service. Its main purpose is to help an organisation or service reflect on what it is trying to do, assessing how far it is succeeding, & identify required changes.

Evaluation answers questions like

Does all that hard work & money make any difference?
Who for & in what way?
How well is the service meeting the needs of users & potential users?
Does the service work properly? Is it effective? Whose views count?
How can we assess the quality of the service & make improvements?
Is this the best use of money & worker time?

Monitoring is the routine collection & recording of information about a piece of work or an organisation,& keeping track of day to day activities & operations, Its purpose is to provide regular feedback on how things are going & help the organisation make decisions.

Monitoring answers questions like

Who is/is not using the service? How are they using it?
What are the costs? How are things changing? (see attached listing)   2
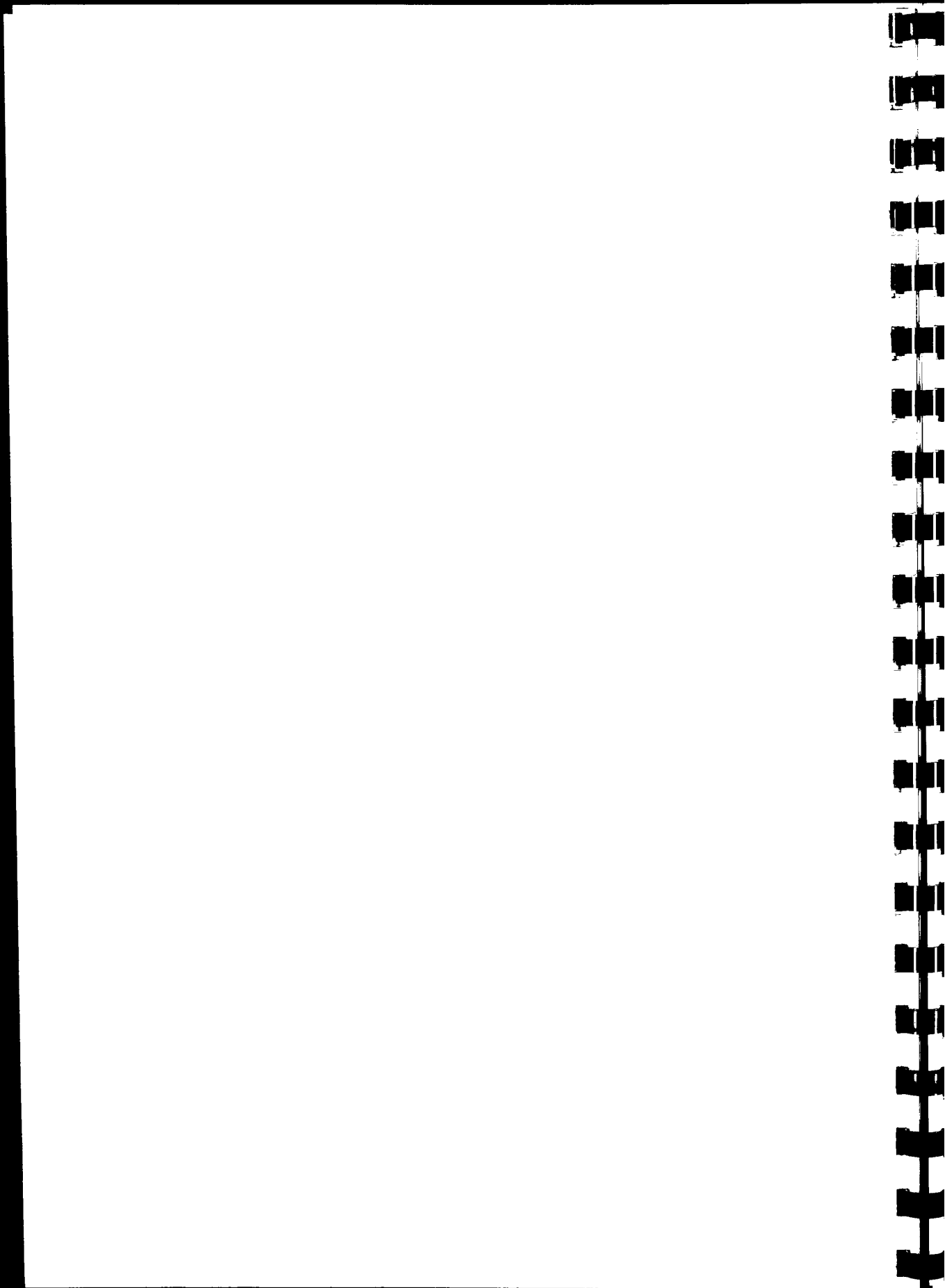
Monitoring is about accounting for work; evaluation about helping to judge it.

Self evaluation is evaluation which is owned, controlled, & partly carried out jointly by a services' key participants or stakeholders- including its users- primarily for their own learning, & as an integral part of the services' life. It is a participatory, inclusive process which actively involves all key stakeholders in reflecting critically on the service , & the issues to which it is responding, & identifying changes.
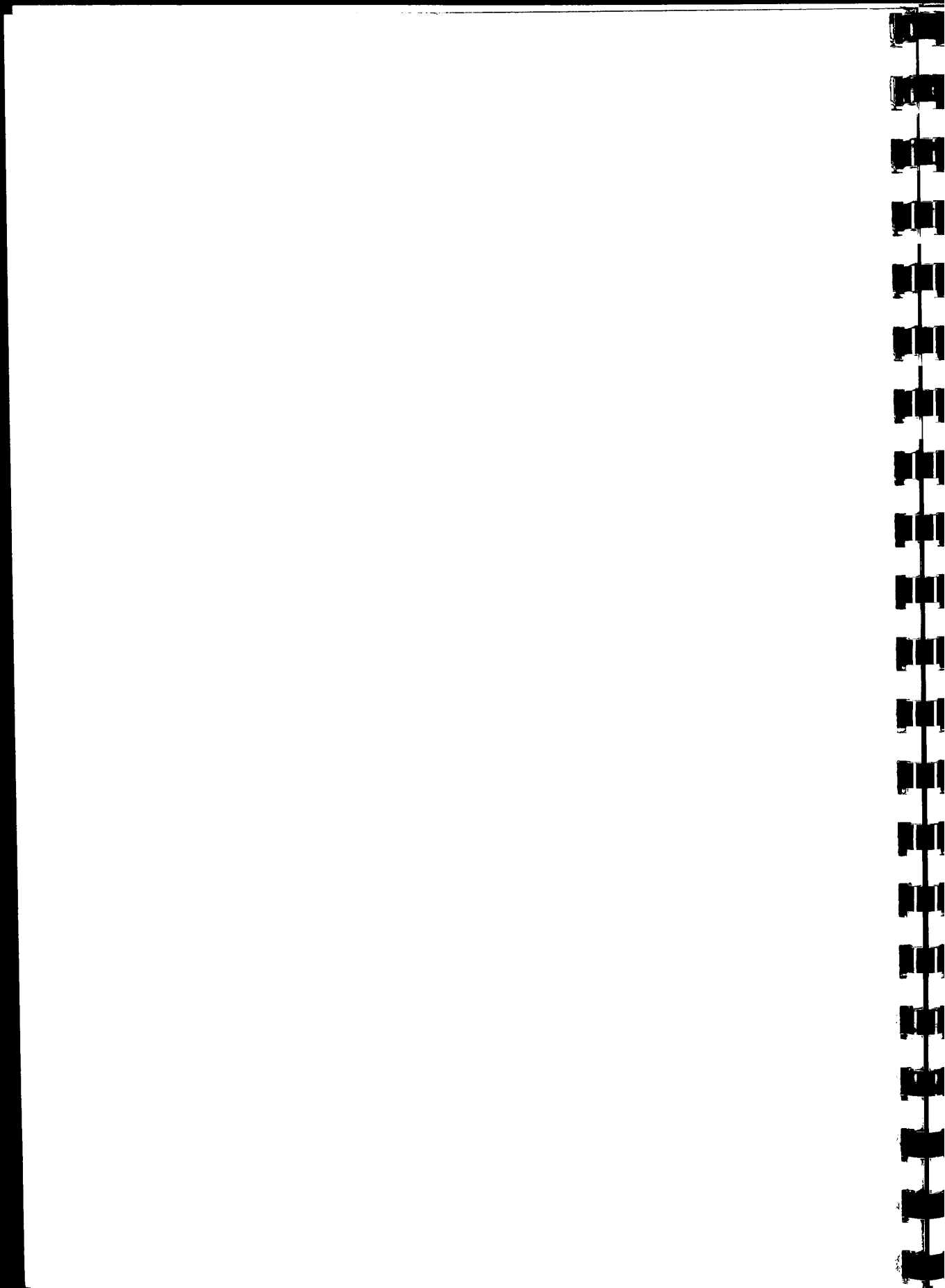
Monitoring- this is the kind of information a service should be collecting

* the scale & type of activities & services

* the characteristics of users & groups- who does not use?

* how do users reach the service & why they came?

*the patterns of usage by individuals or groups

* simple outcomes/gains for users & groups & impact on other groups/ services

* user/ group feedback- at least thank you letters & comments, complaints & informal evidence; preferably evidence on usefulness of service & users' feelings;   & any changes/ new services wanted

* feedback from other groups/organisations/ services- evidence of changes

* staffing & volunteers/ activists & manager characteristics- reflective of EOP

* some time usage information   * finance & other resources

    User Involvement in Evaluation- the spectrum

    * seeking individual & groups of users' views & feedback-
    essential in all types of evaluation.

    * involving users as equal stakeholders & full participants in planning & managing the evaluation process

    * users led- users acting as evaluators or commissioners of evaluation.

These three levels are part of the wider user consultation, user participation & user control activities of a service or organisation.   3

The Evaluation Circle

Undertake
planned change

Clarify purpose
and values

Ask evaluation
questions

Identify needs
and issues

Answer questions -
recording info

START

Make changes!
Act on learning

Analyse, reflect
and judge
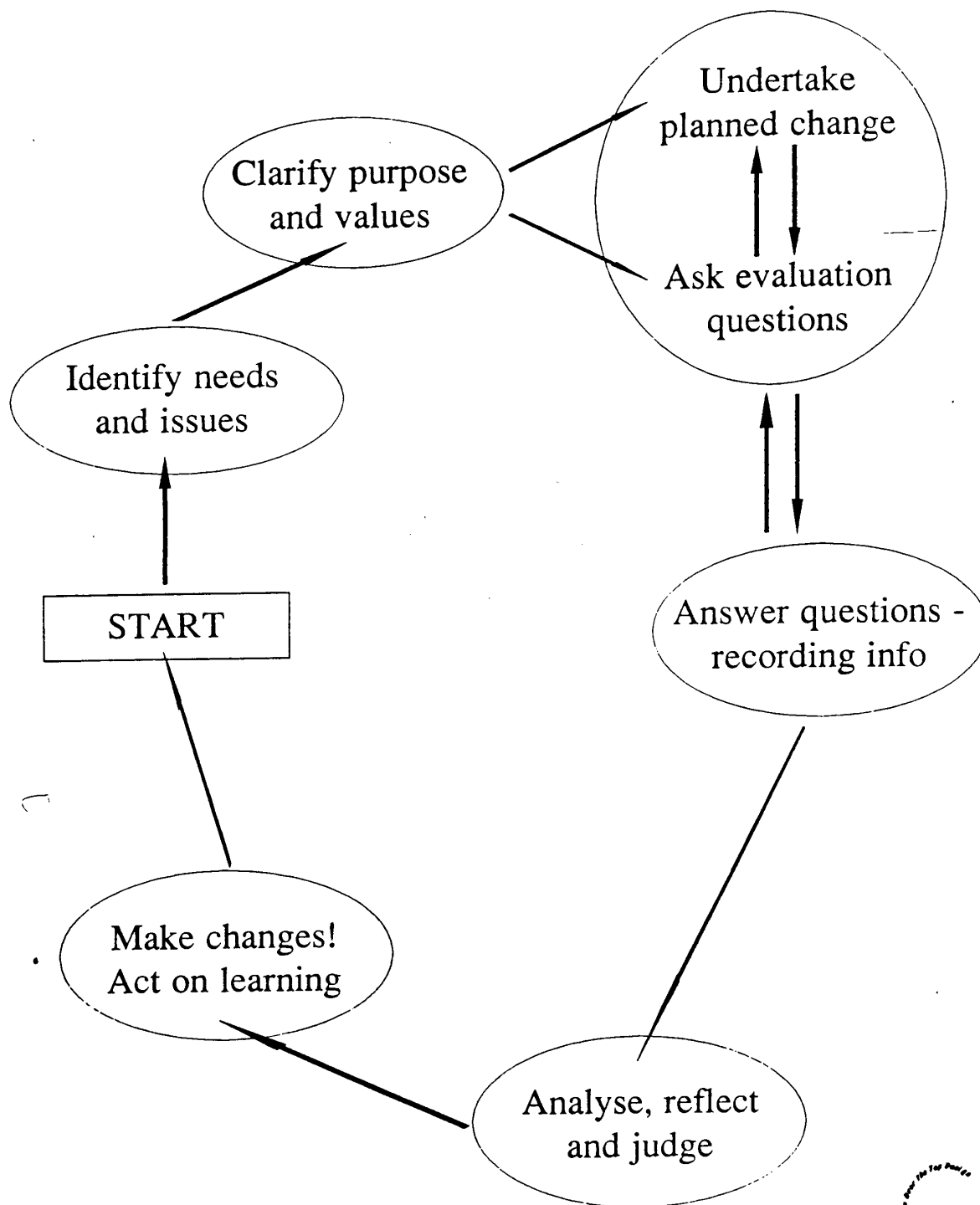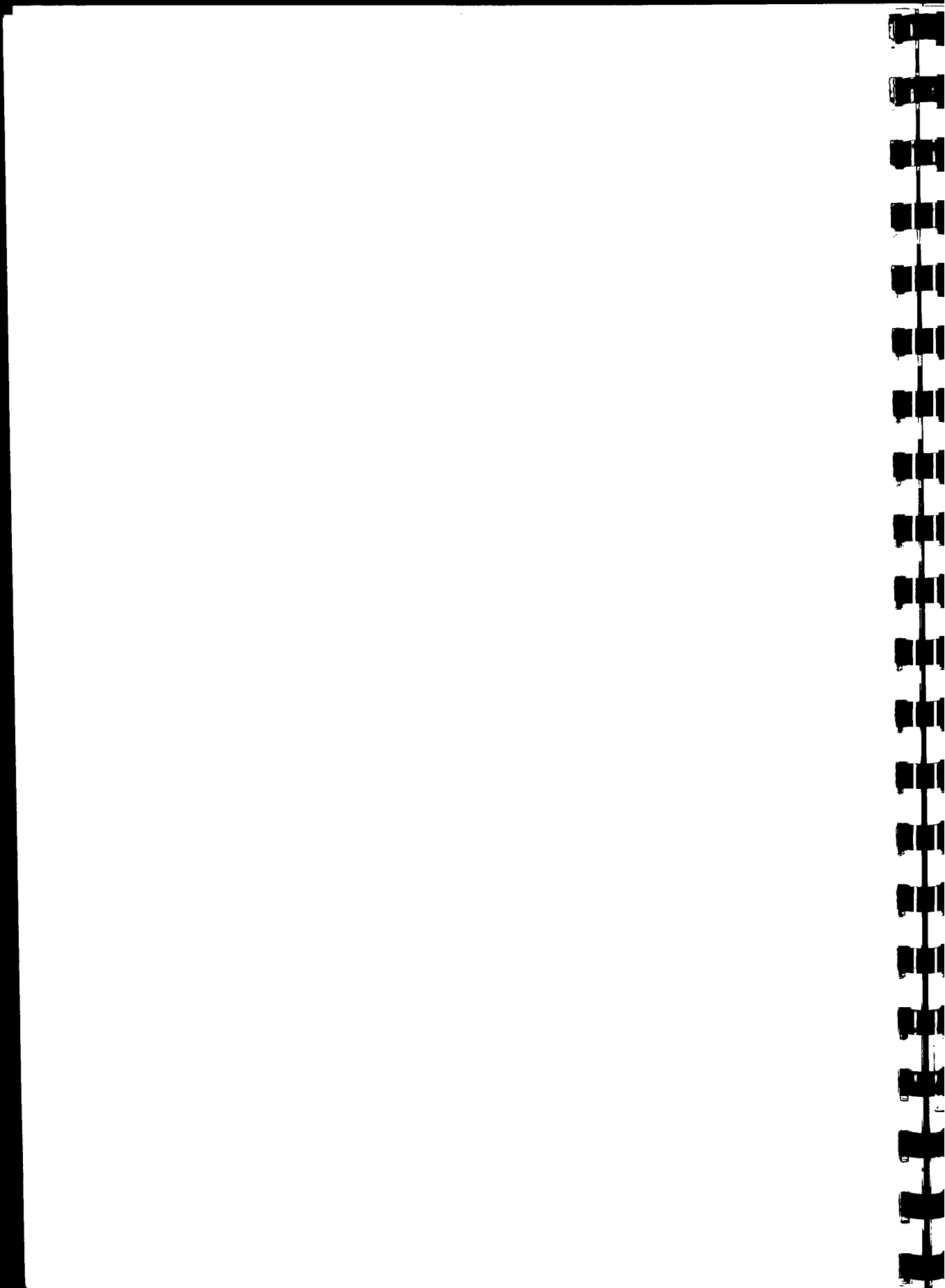
puts, outputs and outcomes.

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        │     Inputs      │
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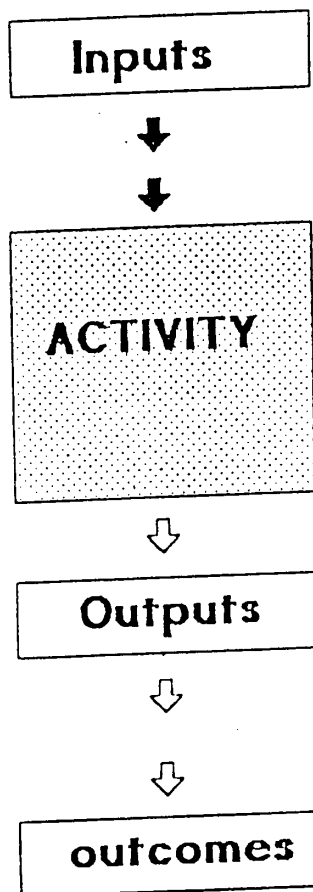
Inputs are money, time, equipment and other resources.
outputs are what the activity produces, delivers or does.
the outcome is the "difference" created by the output.

S
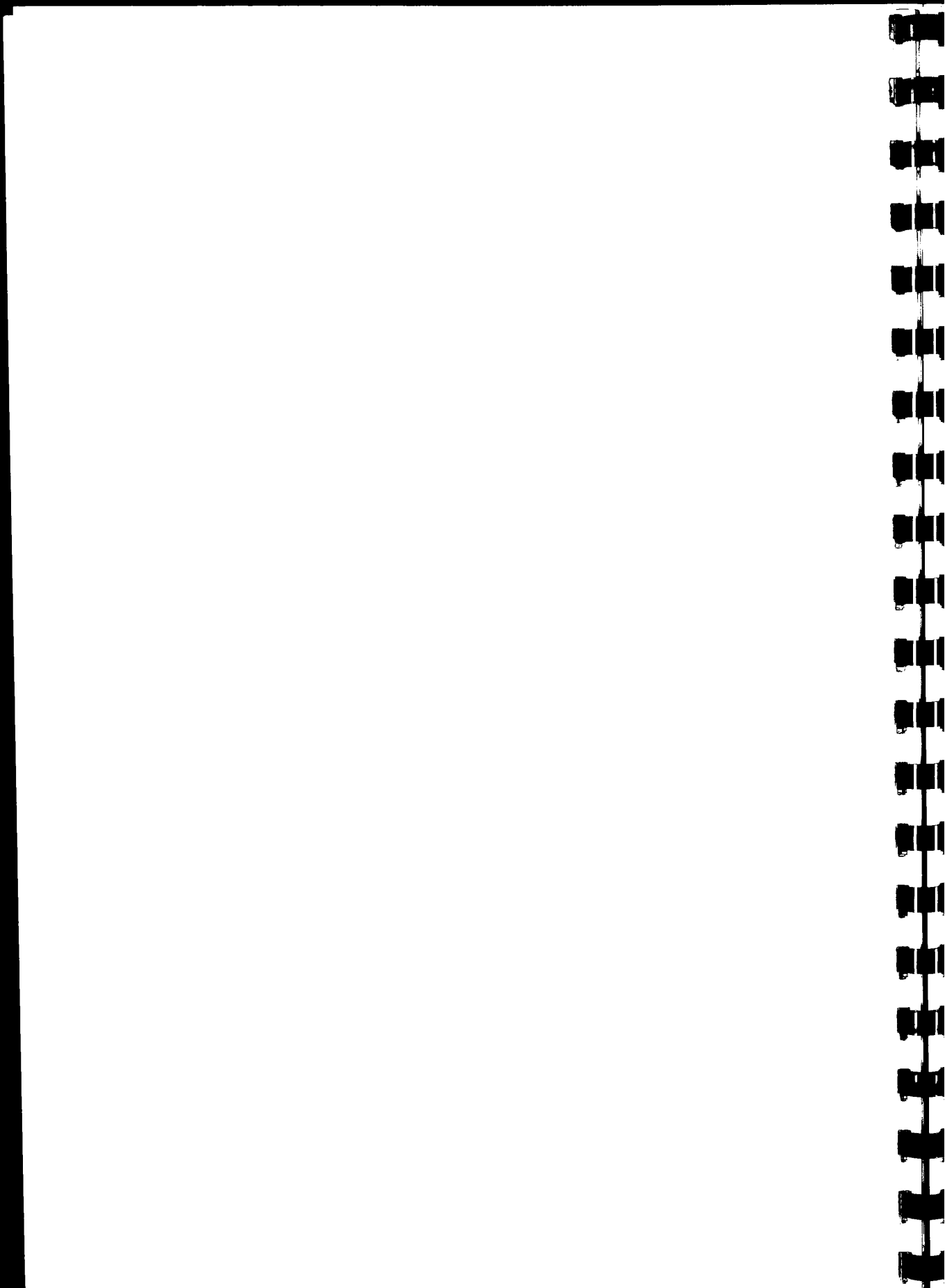
These are some of the reasons groups of users, providers (staff, volunteers & management) & purchasers give for undertaking evaluative work.

identifying areas for improvement

ensuring responsiveness

celebrating progress/ achievements

attracting resources

accountability to members/funders/ clients

WHY EVALUATIVE ACTIVITIES?

sharing experience and learning

negotiating agreed work programmes

allocating resources and seeing what they achieve

see if effort is effective

surfacing and resolving disagreements

feedback, appraisal, recognition

raising and maintaining standards; compare with other similar initiatives

deciding new directions/ change

setting priorities and goals

clarifying and tackling problems

BUT, every partnership needs to answer the question for themselves, really recognising the different purposes & gains of evaluation for the different groups with a stake in the organisation. Evaluative work surfaces these issues, conflicts & contradictions -that is why evaluation is so political!
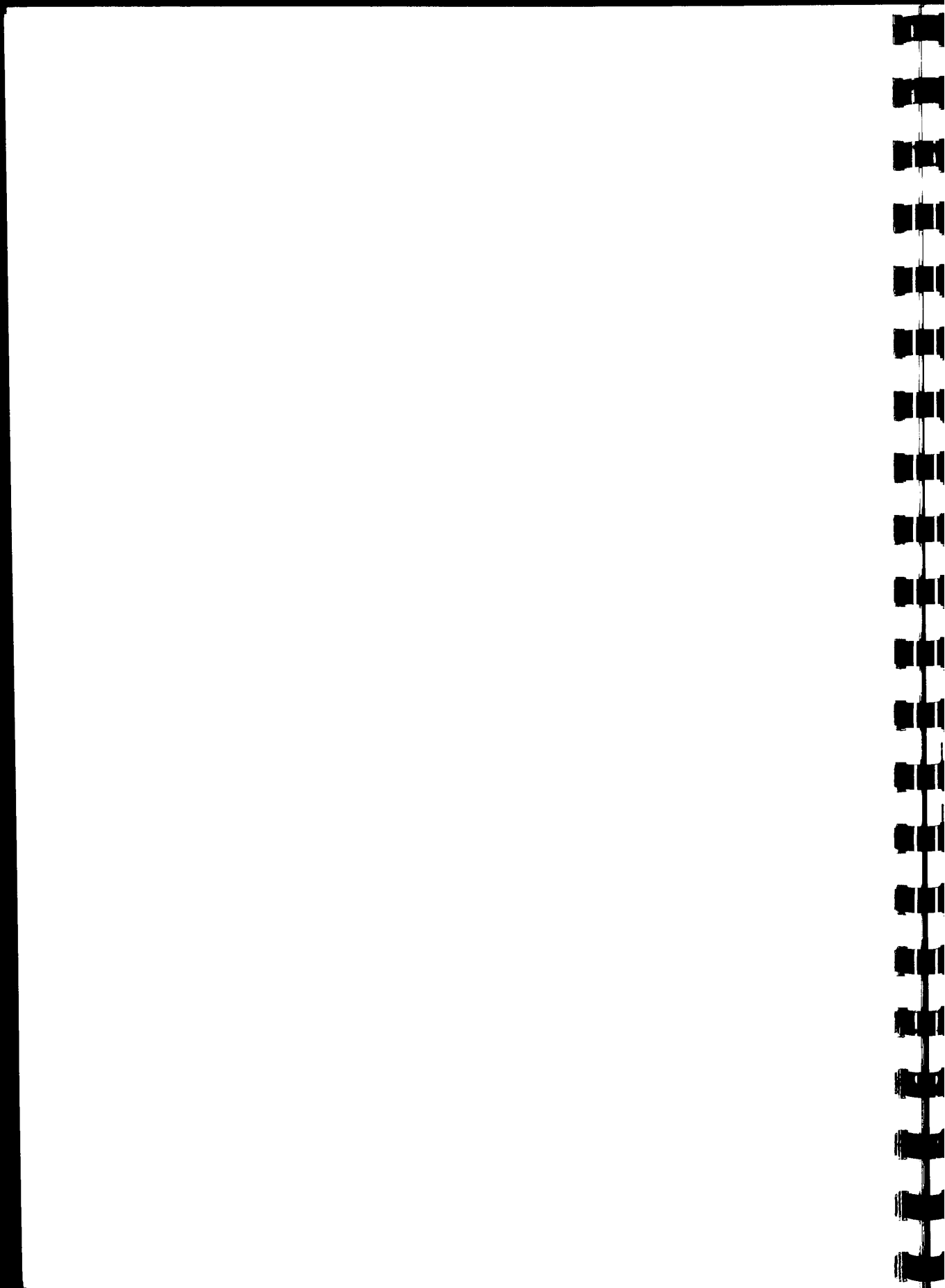
At its best evaluation has the potential of being:

> *a way of placing the needs & experiences of users & potential users at the heart of a service & assessing equal opportunity practice*
> *a tool of service management & organisational change*
> *a process of promoting effectiveness & assessing quality*
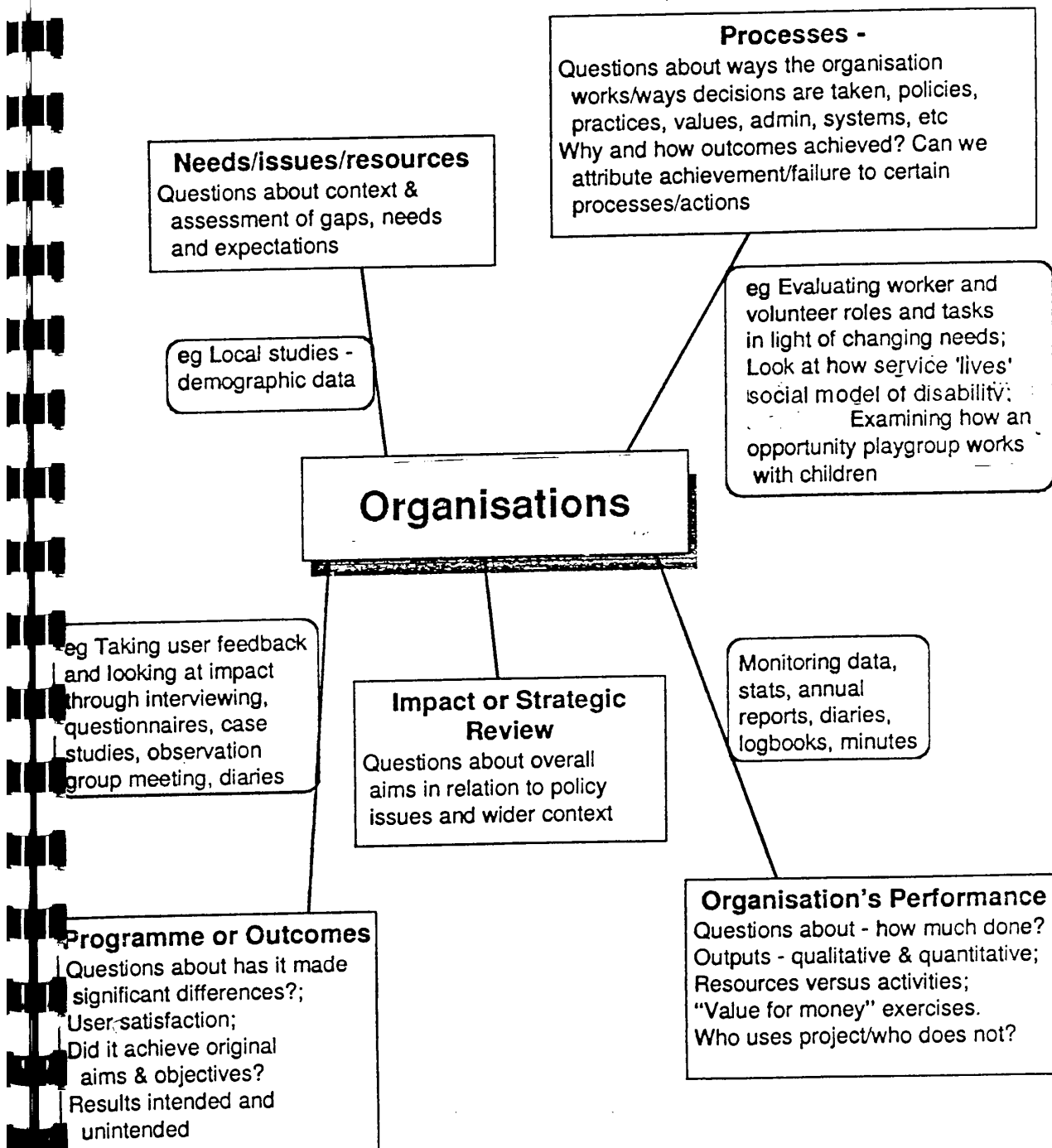> *exciting, energising & FUN!*

*WHEN is evaluation appropriate-when not?   What are the preconditions?
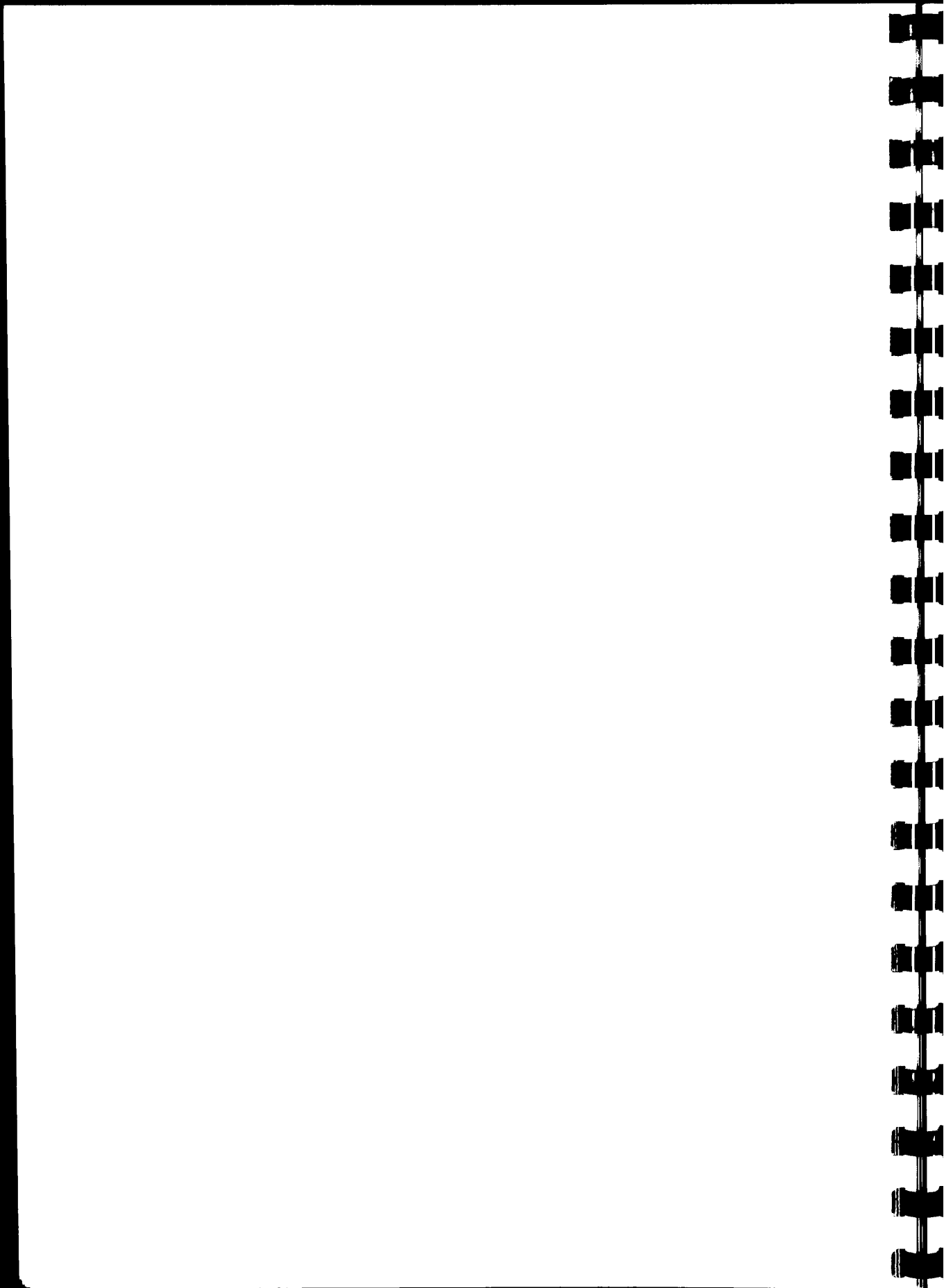
Most of these features need to be in place before an evaluation is appropriate- if they are absent, evaluative work may be a frustrating waste of time & money, & other action may be more appropriate.

* key stakeholder commitment to take users' needs, experiences & wishes seriously

* a willingness in at least some parts of service or organisation to learn & change in response to user views

* some valuing & support of the service or organisation from outside especially by users

* time, resources, & commitment to undertake evaluation involving all stakeholders

* ideally a lack of current crises

* clarity in service about its purpose & values: & about purpose & focus of the evaluative work

* contracts & job descriptions for staff;
  working financial systems; clear legal status

* basic policies & practices: EOP, Health & Safety, & criteria for access to services

* Stable leadership in service preferably shared in between users, staff & management groups

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WHAT *CAN* BE EVALUATED?

Processes -
Questions about ways the organisation
works/ways decisions are taken, policies,
practices, values, admin, systems, etc
Why and how outcomes achieved? Can we
attribute achievement/failure to certain
processes/actions

Needs/issues/resources
Questions about context &
assessment of gaps, needs
and expectations

eg Evaluating worker and
volunteer roles and tasks
in light of changing needs;
Look at how service 'lives'
social model of disability:
Examining how an
opportunity playgroup works
with children

eg Local studies -
demographic data

Organisations

eg Taking user feedback
and looking at impact
through interviewing,
questionnaires, case
studies, observation
group meeting, diaries

**Impact or Strategic
Review**
Questions about overall
aims in relation to policy
issues and wider context

Monitoring data,
stats, annual
reports, diaries,
logbooks, minutes

Organisation's Performance
Questions about - how much done?
Outputs - qualitative & quantitative;
Resources versus activities;
"Value for money" exercises.
Who uses project/who does not?

Programme or Outcomes
Questions about has it made
significant differences?;
User satisfaction;
Did it achieve original
aims & objectives?
Results intended and
unintended

Timing of evaluation
- before or at the beginning
- at regular intervals
- all the time
- at the end of the work

Different levels of evaluative activity in a service or organisation

* FROM- simple internal planning, monitoring & regular reviewing, linked to taking user or target group feedback.

* TO- self evaluation built into the life of the service, involving all key stakeholders- & often using independent resource people to facilitate the work & undertake direct collection of evidence.

* TO- external evaluators & quality consultants undertaking independent evaluative work.

Ideally facilitators & evaluators should be service users, as individuals or groups, even if they work in partnership with others.
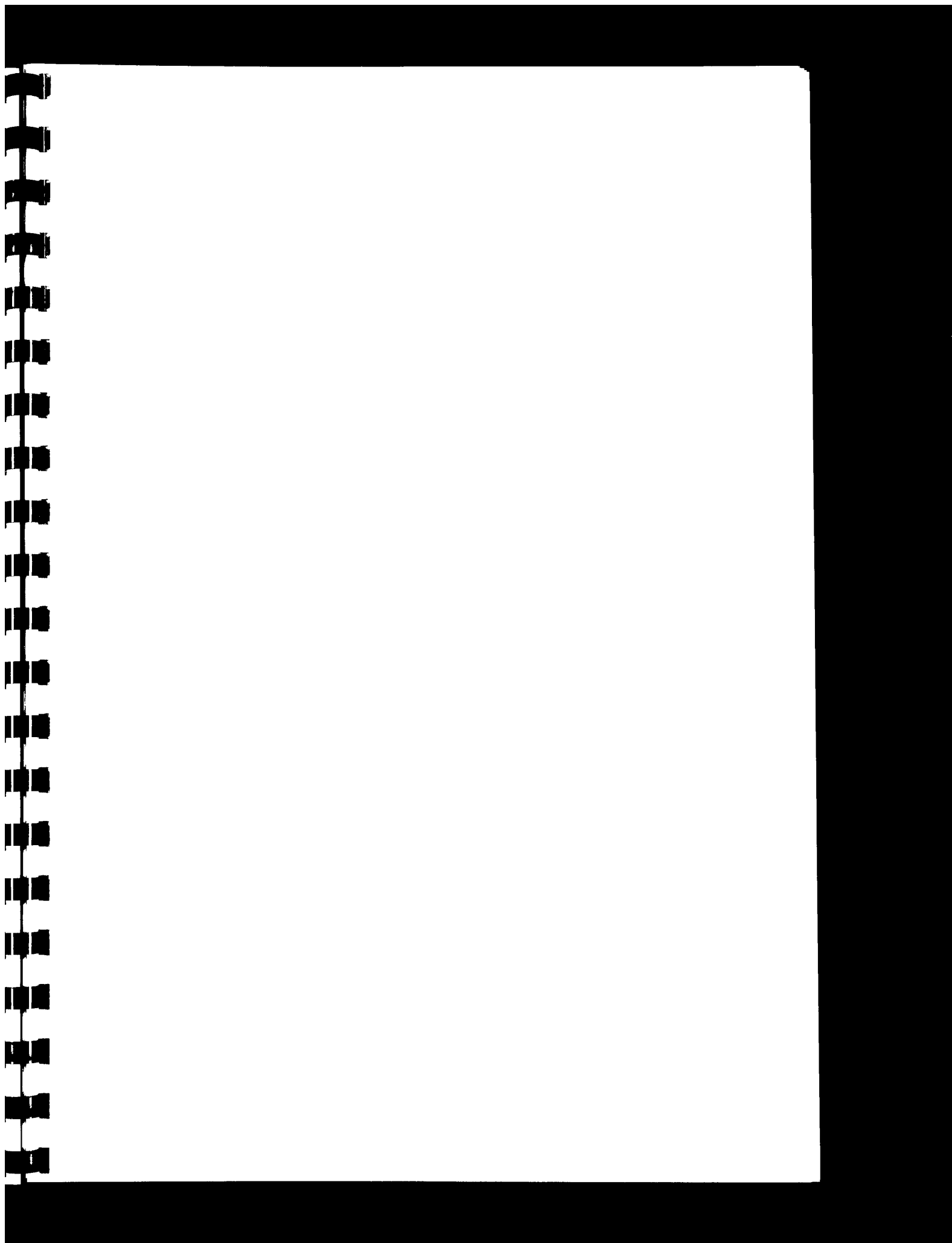
WHO needs to be involved in evaluating services?

Who has a stake in the service? Who are part of the jigsaw of interests?

Who would have something to loose from an evaluation? (an essential service; a job; power....)

Who has something to offer? (Experiences, needs, views, information, knowledge, questions, skills, time, resources....)

Key Stakeholders?

Users/ participants

Potential or excluded users

Funders or purchasers

Workers at all levels & volunteers

Managers &/or managing body (elected or appointed members or Trustees)

Local or interest community- especially user led organisations

Indirect users-carers & friends

Other providers, collaborators, referers

Any Evaluation worker or facilitator

User Involvement in Evaluation- the spectrum

* **seeking individual & groups of users' views & feedback-**
  Pro's- essential in all types of evaluation
  Con's- none as long as evaluation is appropriate & work undertaken well.

* **involving users as equal stakeholders & full participants in planning & managing the evaluation process**
 Pro's- gains for services & individuals; evaluation become a tool of change.
  Cons- like all participatory processes it takes time, money, facilitation, skills, commitment..

* **users acting as evaluators or commissioners of evaluation.**
  Pro's- it's using the experts, who are also in a good place to get others to speak
 Con's- involves time, money, skills, commitment, training, enabling........... 10
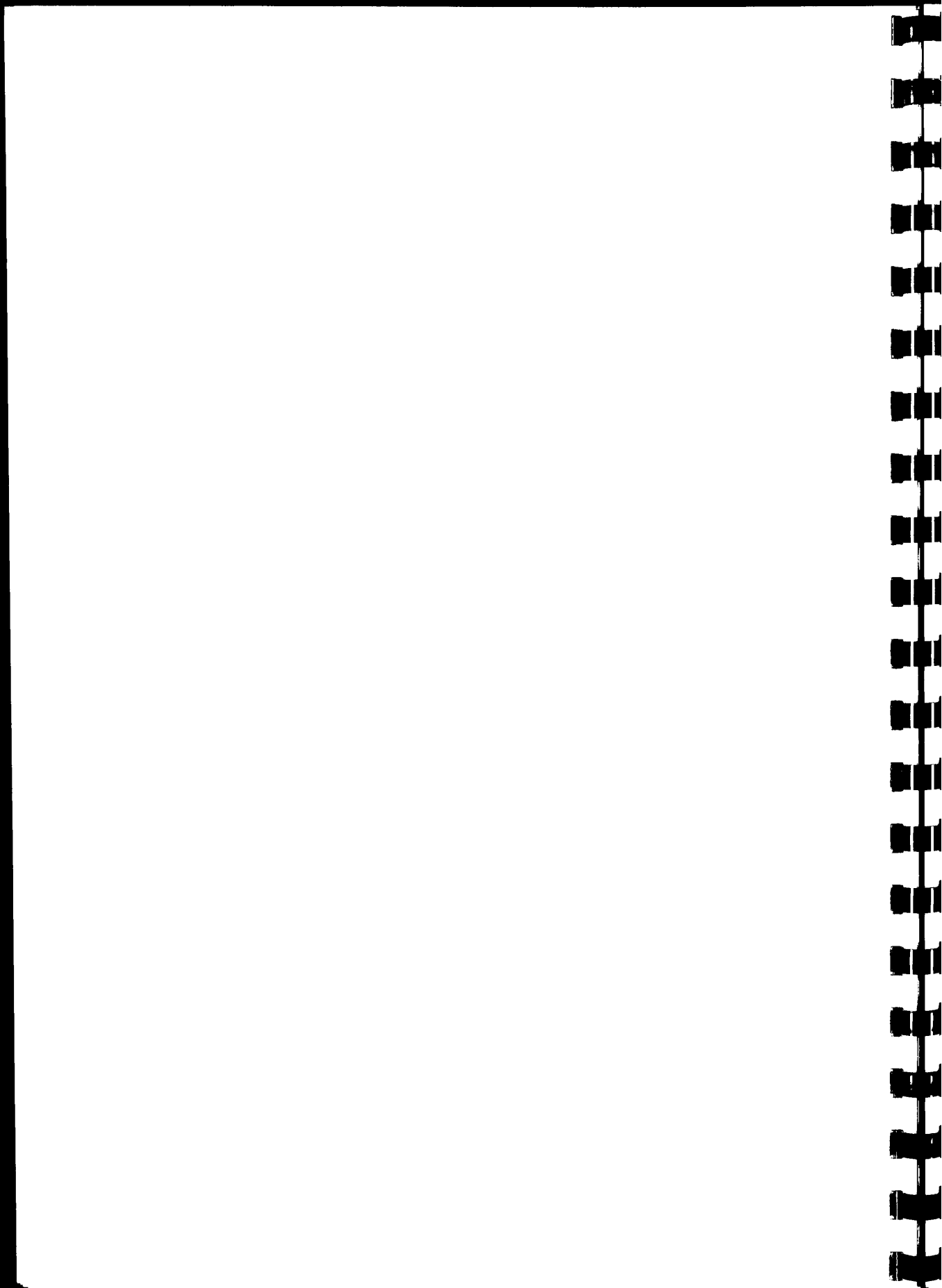
USER-LED EVALUATION

Purpose (and value)

- IDENTIFIES THE SUCCESSES

- ASSESSES THE WEAKNESSES

- CLARIFIES WHAT NEEDS TO BE CHANGED OR STRENGTHENED

- BECOMES IDENTIFIED WITH THE PROJECT AND HAS A PART TO PLAY IN ITS FUTURE

- HAS A POSITIVE EFFECT ON THE LIVES OF PARTICIPANTS

- HAS A POSITIVE AND LASTING EFFECT ON THE LIFE OF THE PROJECT

The Process

- RECOGNISES THE PRINCIPLES OF THE ORGANISATION/PROJECT (e.g. 6 principles of lifestyles)

- RECOGNISES THE PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE OF EMPOWERMENT

- INVOLVES ALL PARTICIPANTS AT WHATEVER LEVEL AND PACE THEY CHOOSE

- DEVELOPS THE SKILLS AND CONFIDENCE OF ALL PARTICIPANTS

- IS LOADS OF FUN!
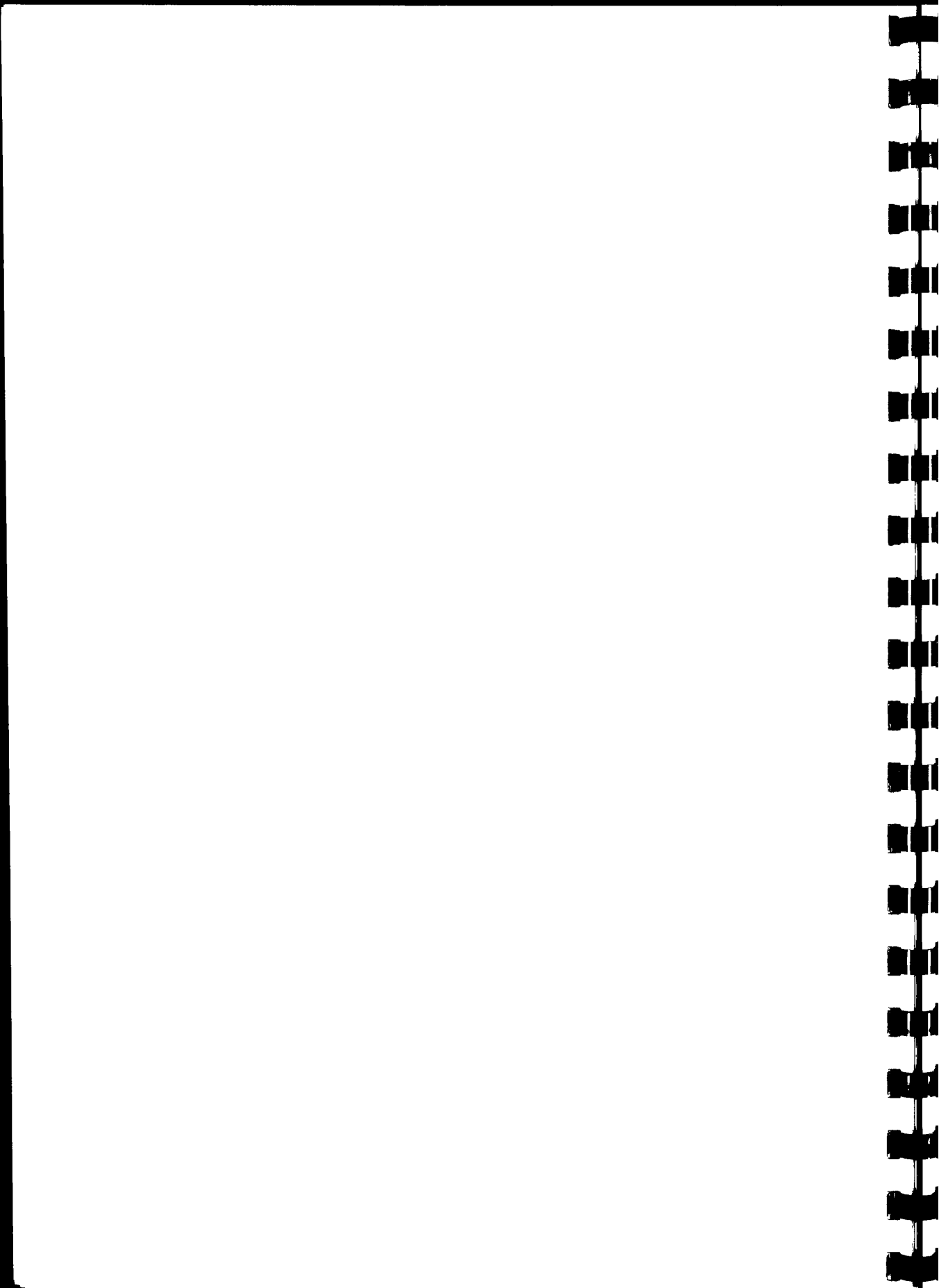
USER -LED EVALUATION

Developing the Process

Consideration must be given to:

- FACILITATION
- REPRESENTATION
- INTERVIEWS
- REPORTING BACK
- WRITING UP
- SHARING AND PRODUCT
- ENCOURAGING ON-GOING EVALUATION

The Product

- IS WHAT THE PEOPLE INVOLVED WANT IT TO BE
- MEETS THE NEEDS OF THE ORGANISATION
- MEETS THE REQUIREMENTS OF FUNDERS
- IS JARGON FREE
- IS EASILY READ (WATCHED, LISTENED TO) AND UNDERSTOOD
- BY THOSE NOT ALREADY INVOLVED
- CONTRIBUTES TO THE ON-GOING DEVELOPMENTS OF THE ORGANISATION/PROFECT AND ITS USERS
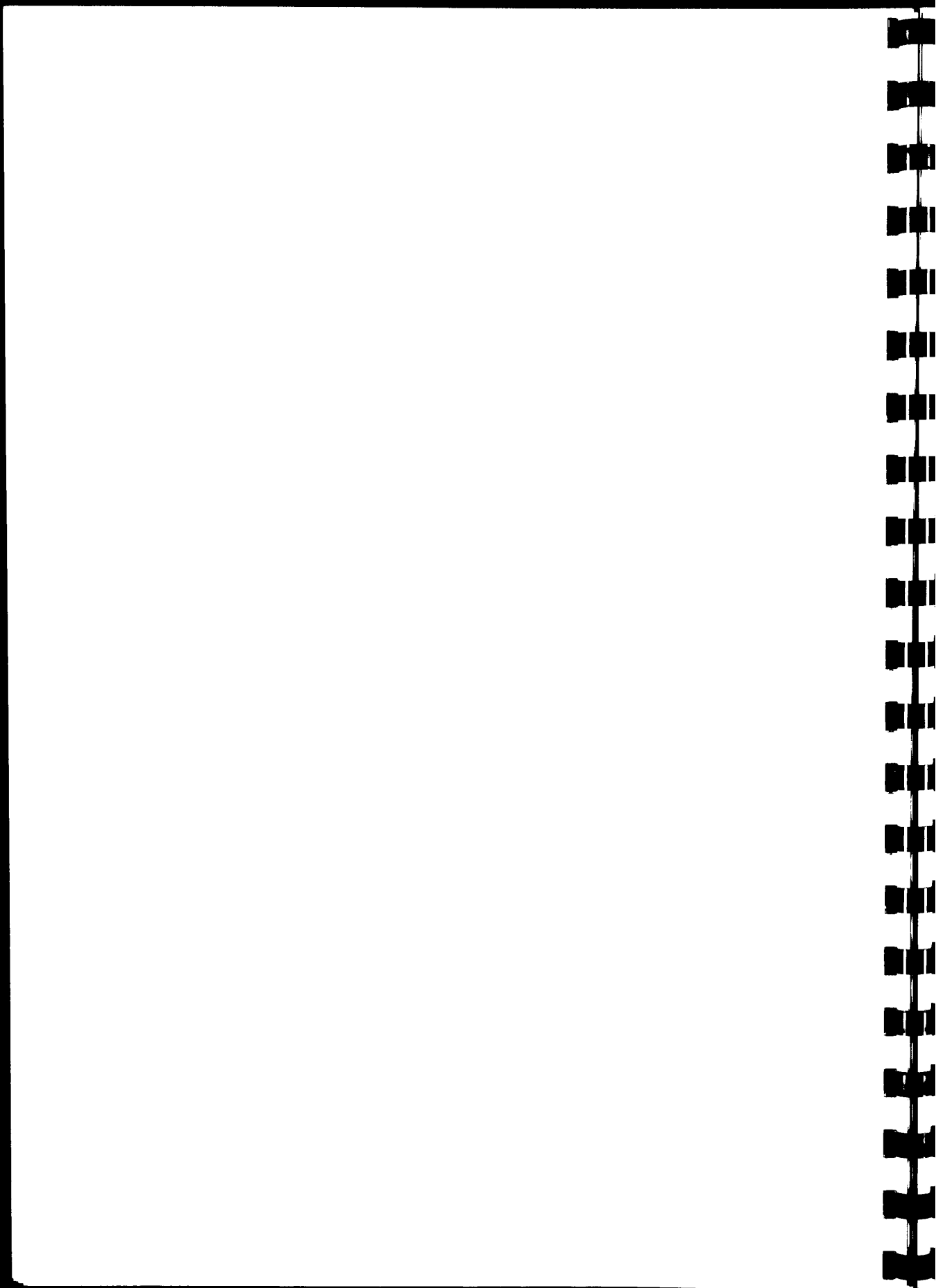
USER-LED EVALUATION

EMPOWERMENT

*   TRAINING

*   SUPPORT

*   RESOURCES

*   OPPORTUNITIES

*   AWARENESS

*   INFORMATION

*   USER INVOLVEMENT IN SERVICES

*   CHOICE AND CONTROL

*   EMPOWERMENT

Tipps for Change - February 1994

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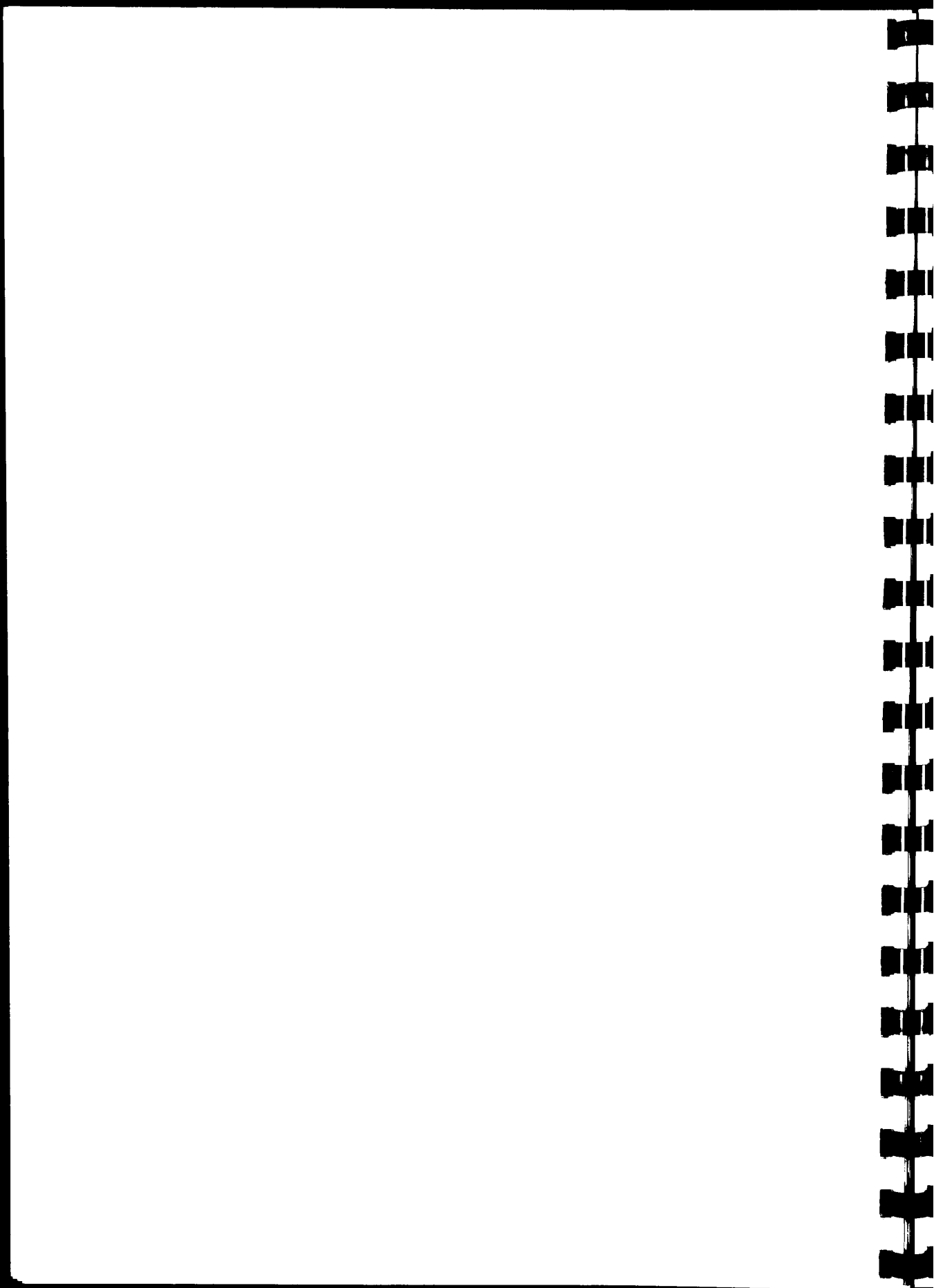
A Participatory Evaluation Process

Preparing the ground
* Individual evaluation initiator or group start to explore issues & needs around service, making Initial contacts & listening to others' experiences; they negotiate their role & entry into service; they start to identify resources- time, money, facilitator/ evaluator etc

*Initiators, with facilitator's help, start to define issues & needs, & question why they want to undertake evaluation? Is it appropriate?

Bringing people together in a stakeholder group, with full user participation; clarifying the purpose & values of evaluation
*Initiators identify the key stakeholders in the organisation/ service, prioritising users, especially those with least power; facilitators help initiators make wider contacts & bring together a stakeholder group to manage the evaluation.
Pre or parallel user & potential user group meetings may be needed.

* Facilitator motivates & galvanizes group to look at options & consider the value & costs of collaborative joint action around evaluation; they help build confidence & vision -individually & as a group- or in separate stakeholder groups.
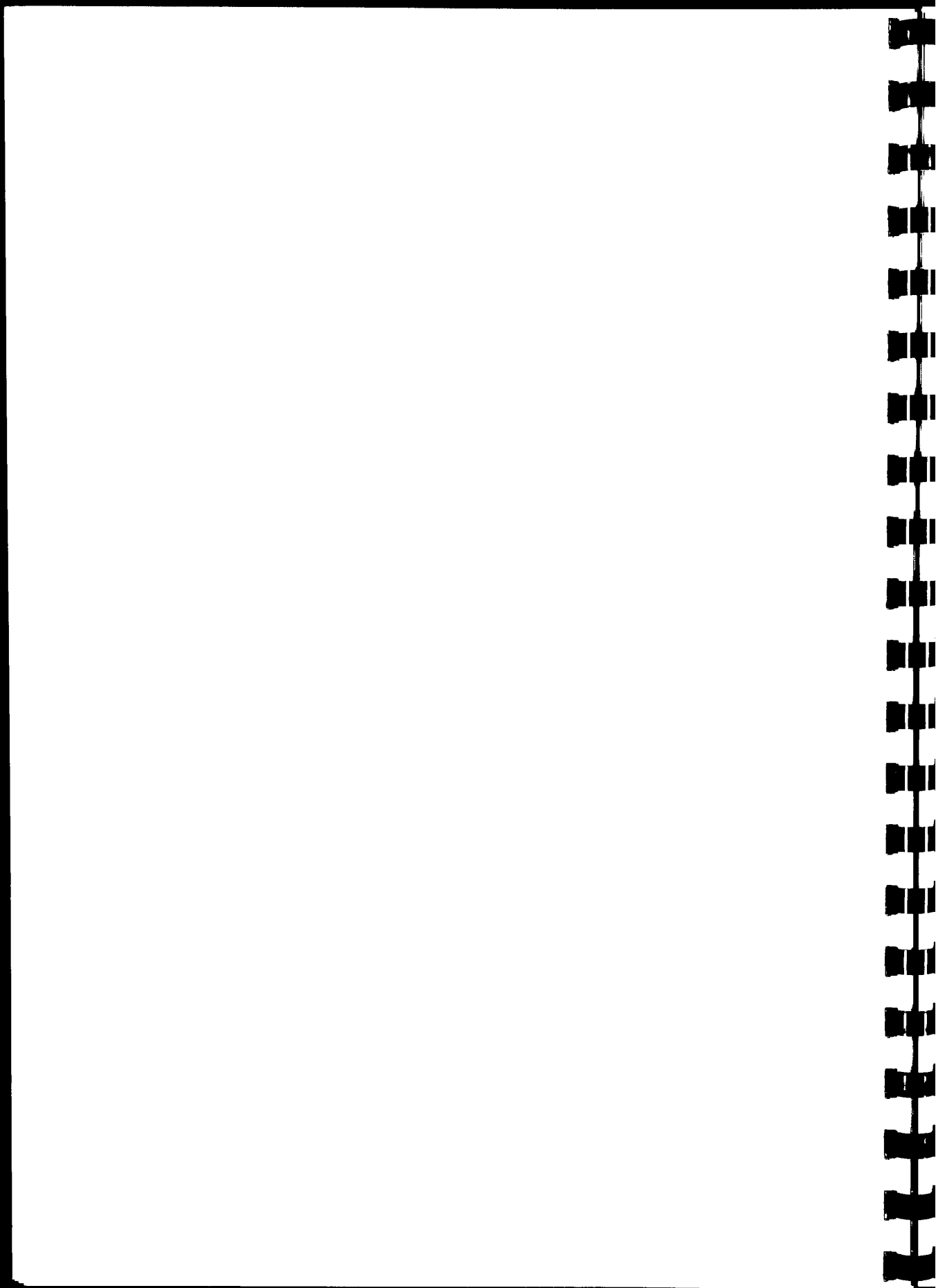
Asking the right Questions
* Facilitator works with stakeholder group, engaging them in describing & defining the issues & needs, building on their experiences, & identifying their key evaluative questions.
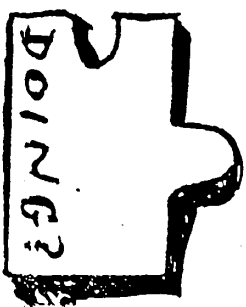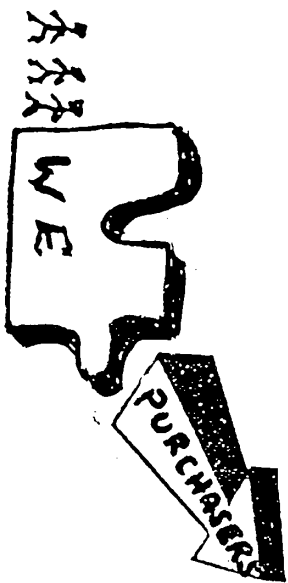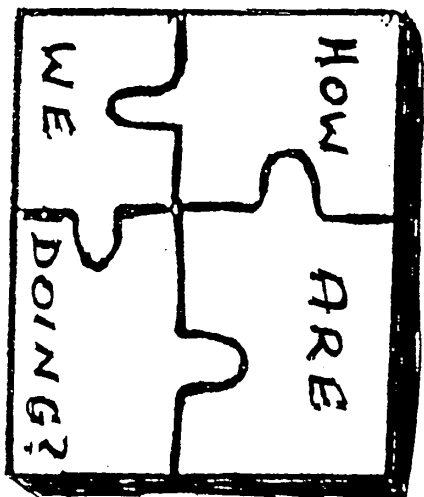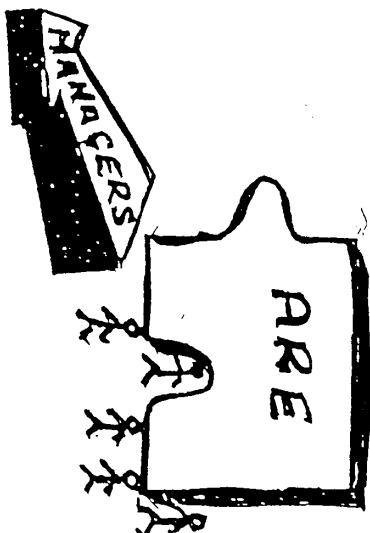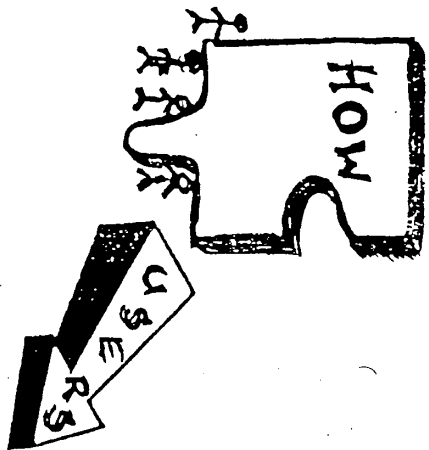Facilitator has role of surfacing conflicts of interest, & issues about whose values/ benefits/ experiences count; & confronting power differences, discrimination- race, class, gender,disability...- & promoting positive action in the group & their thinking.
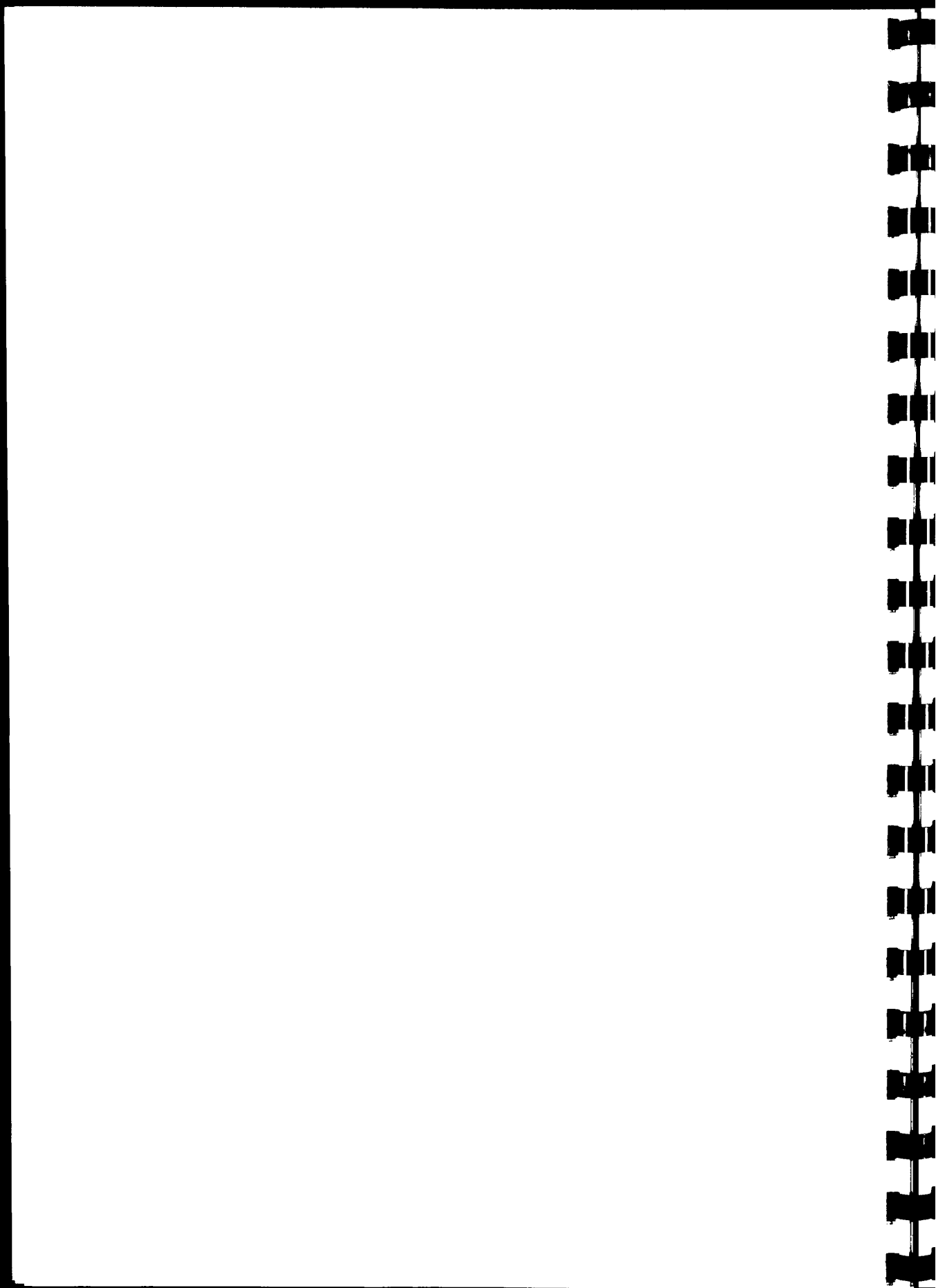
Answering the Questions- recording information
*Facilitator works with group to set achievable goals & priorities, & plan evaluation work, promoting participation in the work, ownership, & individual & group empowerment

*Facilitator supports group to engage wider organisation/ service in   14

How are we doing?

Puzzle pieces: HOW, WE, ARE, WE DOING?, HOW ARE WE DOING?, DOING?

Arrows: USERS, PURCHASERS, WORKERS, MANAGERS

evaluation work, building in organisational development & change through action/learning process

> eg * in jointly developing tools & sharing skills & co-working
> * in users & other stakeholders, undertaking direct evaluative work, thus extending & valuing their existing experiences /skills;
> * in living out new ways of working in the stakeholder group;
> * in developing leadership & improving communication

* Group commissions or uses facilitator to undertake independent evaluative work,

> * when work is too time consuming for group members
> (eg summarising qualitative data);
> * structurally difficult(eg finding out impact of users
> involvement on workers attitudes);
> * or inappropriate for group members to undertake(eg asking black people to share their experiences of services with white people)

Analysing, reflecting & judging the evidence
* Facilitator aids key stakeholders to jointly analyse & make sense of information collected; in light of learning, the group makes participatory decisions about change needed in organisation/ service

* Stakeholder group write up work (jointly if possible), or use facilitator to work through with them a number of drafts, consulting wider group of participants; stakeholder group disseminate learning widely, including feedback to all participants

Acting on the learning & making changes
* Facilitator aids stakeholder group build external links & use evaluation to influence power holders/ decision makers around key issues, priorities & the action plan;

* Stakeholder group evaluate the gains/losses of evaluation work for individuals & service, identifying the possibilities of building the stakeholder group into service's life;

* Stakeholder group may continue into implementation stage, turn its attention to new issues, or end, with individuals taking on new roles. 15
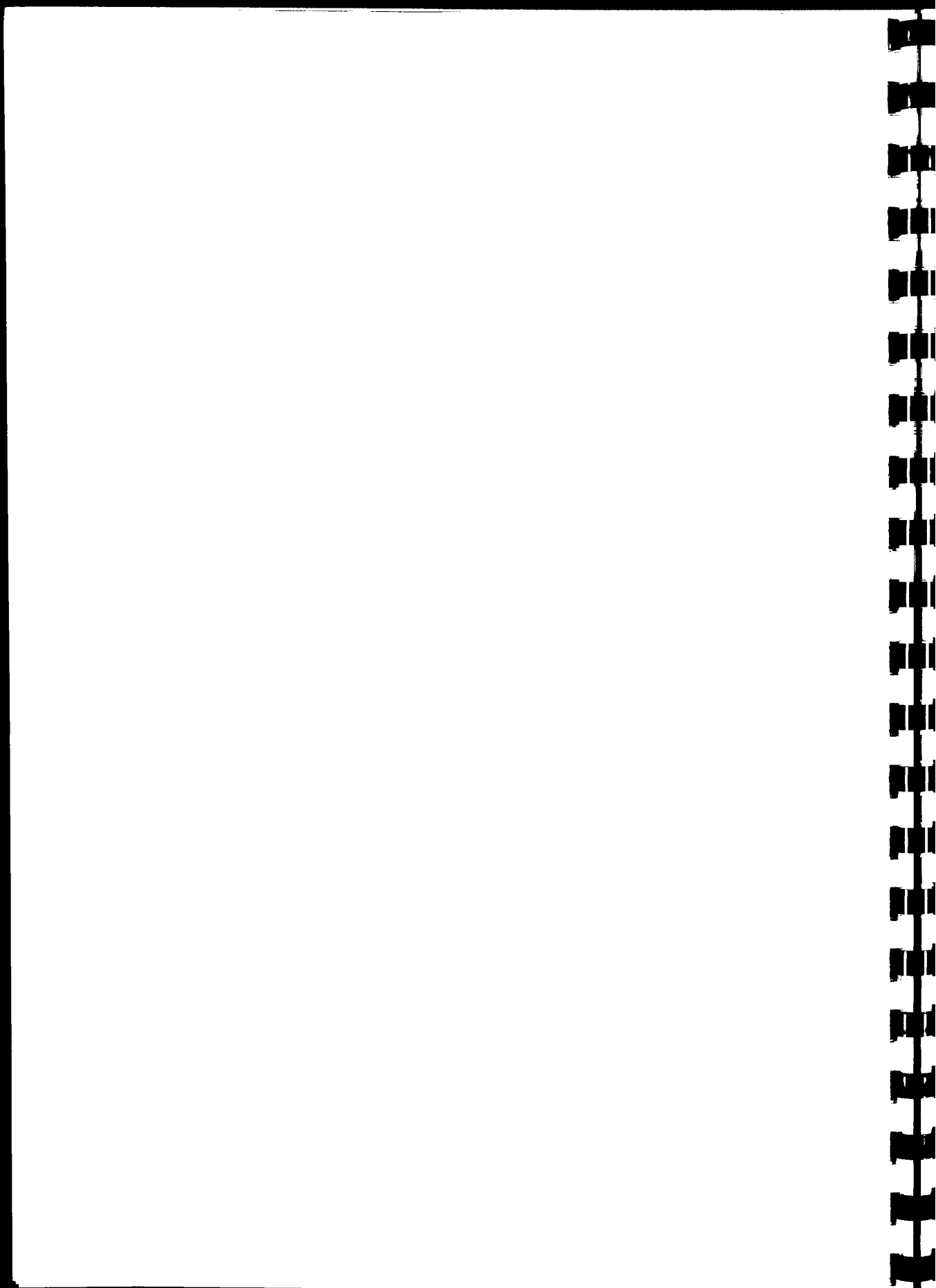
Seeking individual & groups of users' & potential users views & feedback-essential in all types of evaluation- a note for people who are not service users.

Using participatory, non discriminatory methods that deliberately include everyone can ensure that all users and potential users are involved if THEY wish. The challenge for us is to find methods that work, overcome fear & communication barriers, have wider payoffs, & if possible are fun!

There are some hard issues to face about who is appropriate to listen to users feelings & experiences in ways that are safe- users themselves or independent facilitators are usually best, though sometimes it can be very valuable for purchasers or senior managers to take feedback, with proper guarantees of confidentiality, anonymity, & the removal or disguising of anything that might identify an individual.

There is a minimum set of standards in evaluative work.

As evaluators/ commissioners of evaluation we need to be aware of our own values , recognising the requirement to question & challenge discriminatory & oppressive definitions of situations, attitudes & practices in the work, & to listen to the way users see things.

This affects how the the research questions are defined & the methods used .

* It involves valuing the views of users/participants, & seeking their co-operation, their involvement in defining the issues & concerns on which their views are being sought, & their ownership of the evaluation as far as possible

* It involves respecting their rights to define their own issues & take action, & the use of the evaluator's power/status to legitimate them speaking for themselves eg ensuring space/ 'platforms'

*It involves feeding back the results to participants individually & in groups & helping them identify how they can use them if they wish to effect change.

*It involves ensuring the work is not used against participants, with careful identification in the contract of actual & potential issues, conflicts of interest, & disagreements between all parties involved.

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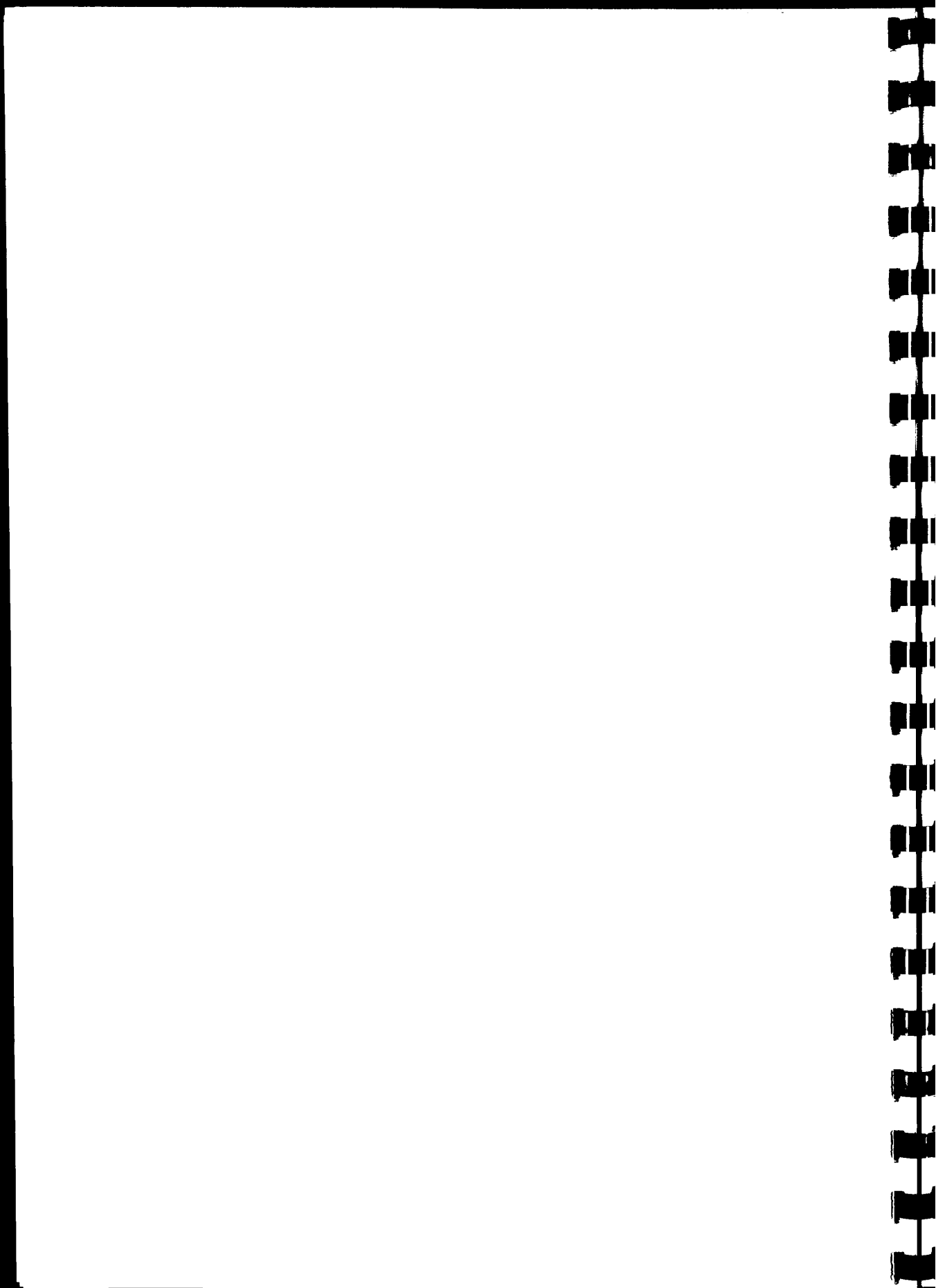
Key Questions to ask in any evaluation

*Why evaluate? Gains v. costs. Who wants it & why?

*Who needs to get involved in evaluating a service?

*Who should manage/ control the evaluation?

*Who defines the issues & agendas, & sets the evaluative questions

*Whose benefits, experiences, & needs count?
Who sets the criteria & defines what counts as valuable or quality?
Who sets the standards?

*Who decides what kind of evaluation?

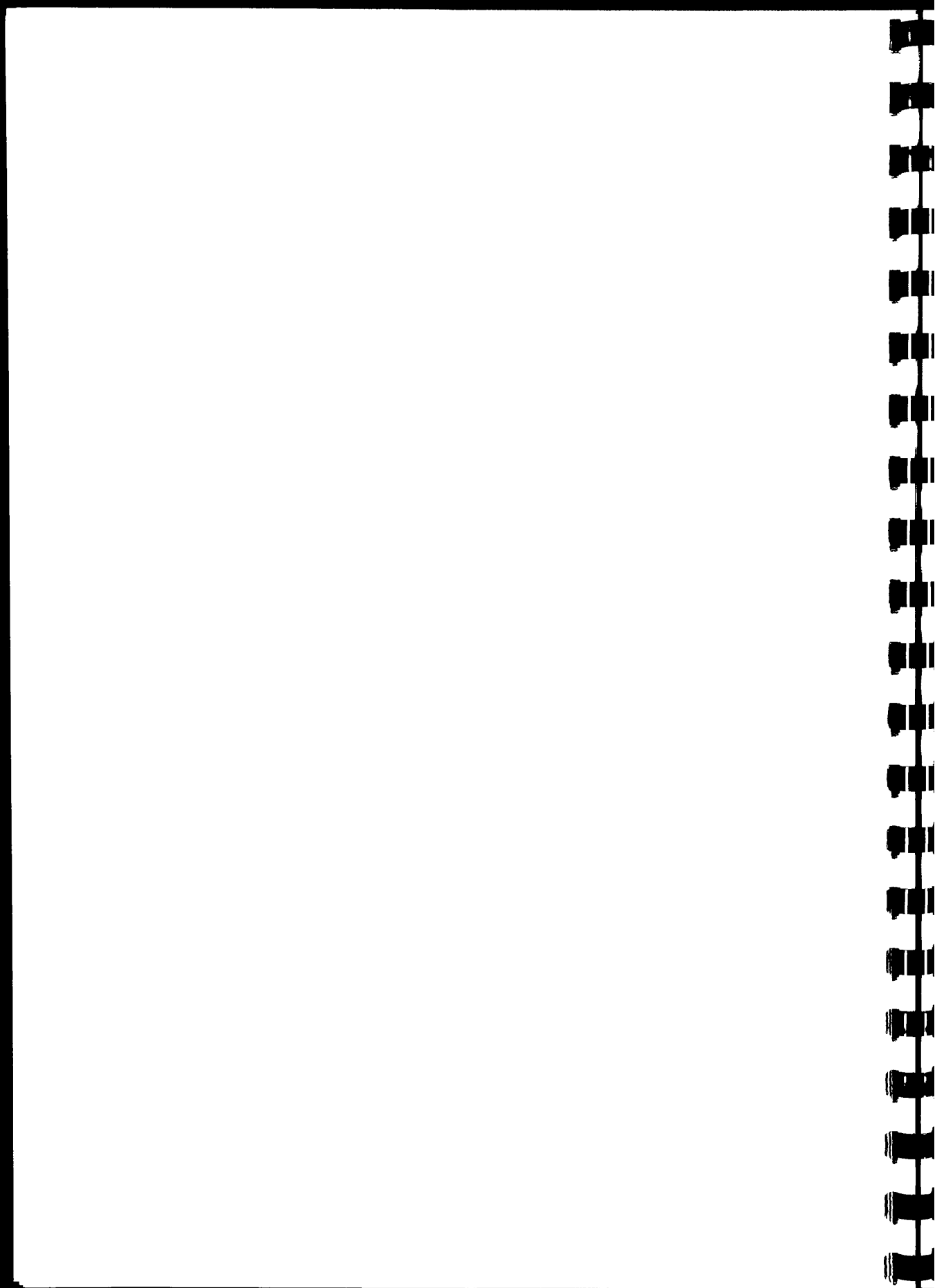*Who decides what are the methods & who undertakes the work?

*Who manages the evaluative process?

*Who analyses & interprets the evidence & makes the judgements?

*Who decides how to action the learning/ changes?

*Who gains/ benefits from the evaluation- what were ITS outcomes?

* AND FINALLY- WHO will fund it?

Methods & Tools

* Counting
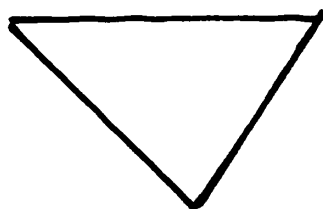
* Observation

* Looking at documents/ records

* Interviewing

* Case studies

* Group exercises & review meetings

* Questionnaires

* Projective techniques

Methods need to keep a balance between being

Diverse   Systematic

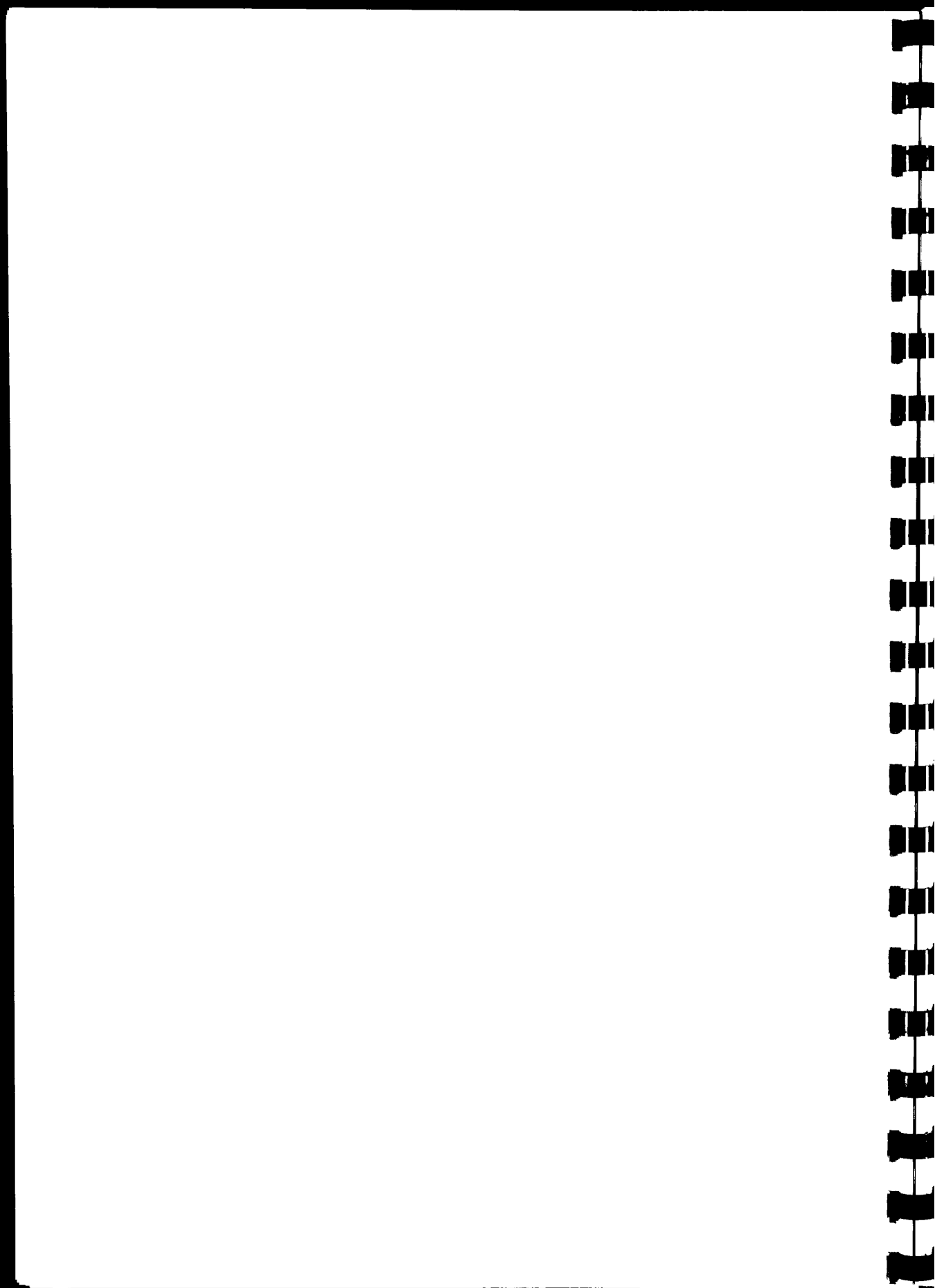Imaginative   Checkable

Insightful   Efficient

                        Appropriate

                        Relevant

                        Worthwhile

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Methods/Tools

Qualitative

Checklists
Opinion surveys/exit polls

Case studies
Oral histories
Diaries or logs

Visual materials:
* photos
* tapes
* drawings
* time usage

Comparisons between different methods or ways of working, or over time

Group interviews/discussions

Rating/self rating methods

User panels/peer group assessments testing:
* knowledge
* skills
* attitudes
* performance

Interviews:
* telephone
* face to face
* semi structured
* open

Document/record analysis

Participative methods including:
* group and organisational reviews
* prioritising and planning exercises
* quality circles

‹ Observation
* individuals
* objects
* groups

Psychodrama/story telling

Questionnaires - opening questions

Quantitative

Checklists
Surveys

Cost/activity ratio
(unit costs)

Counting

Cost - relationship of overheads to activity

Cost and other comparisons between different projects or different activities over time

Cost comparisons
Occupancy rates

Cost effectiveness studies

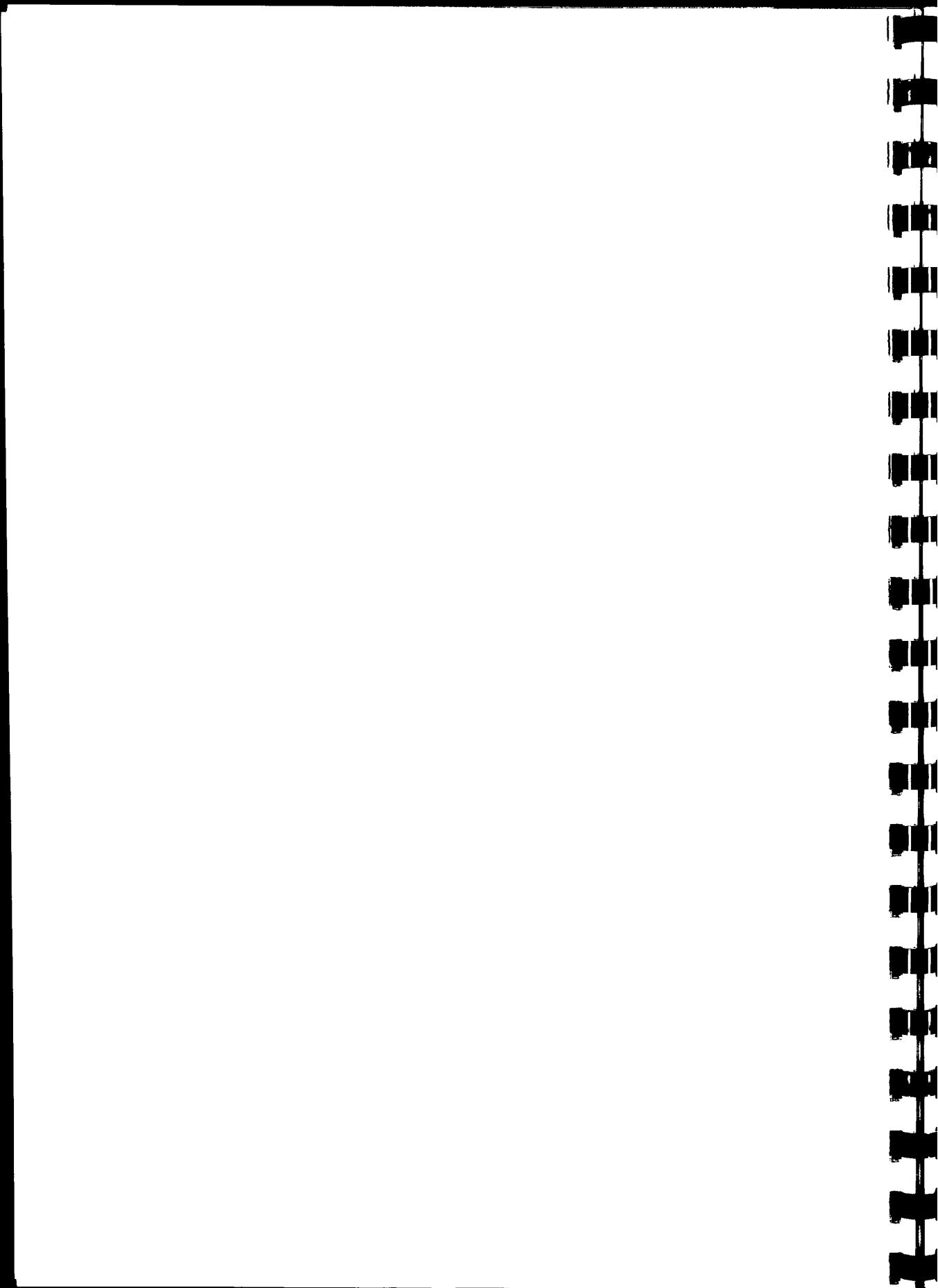Statistical analysis

Interviews - structured
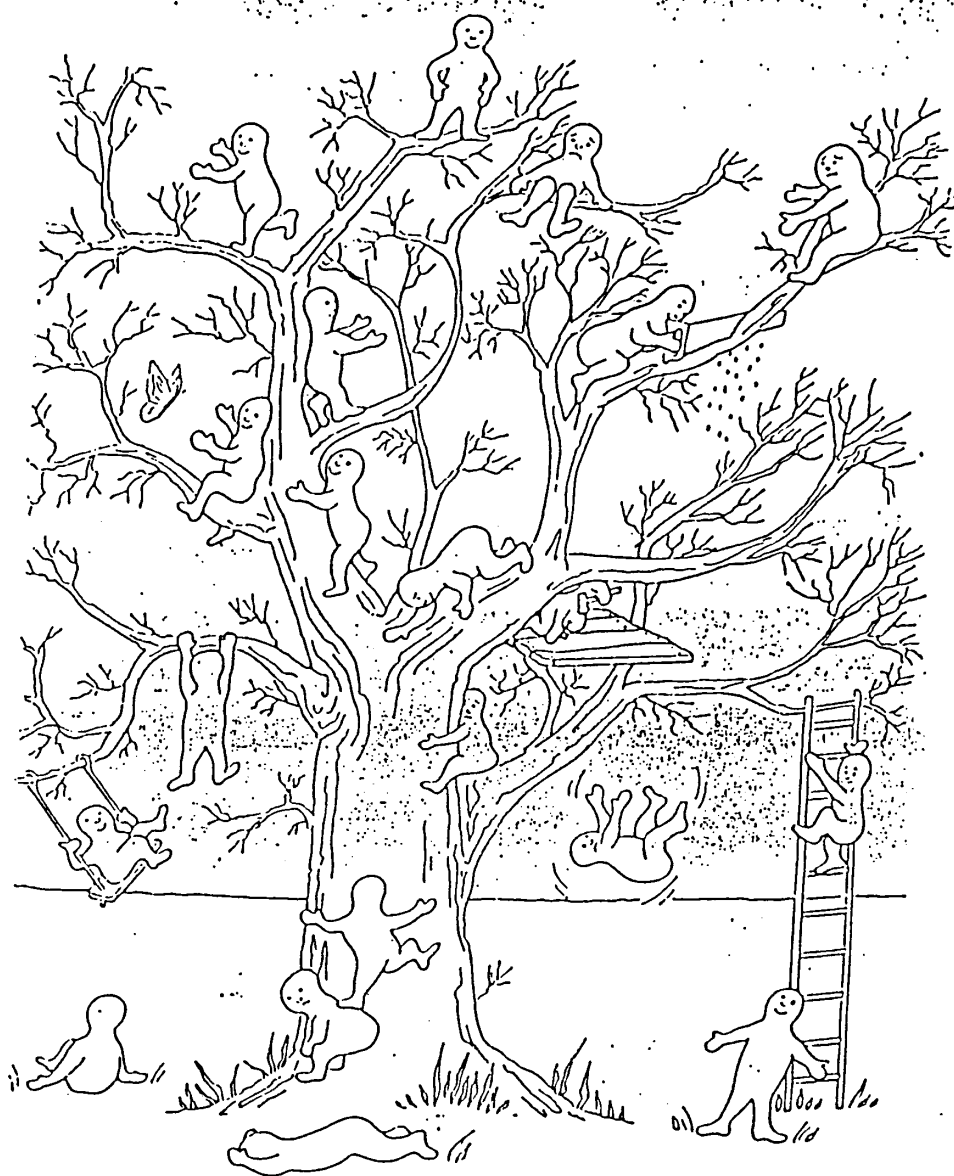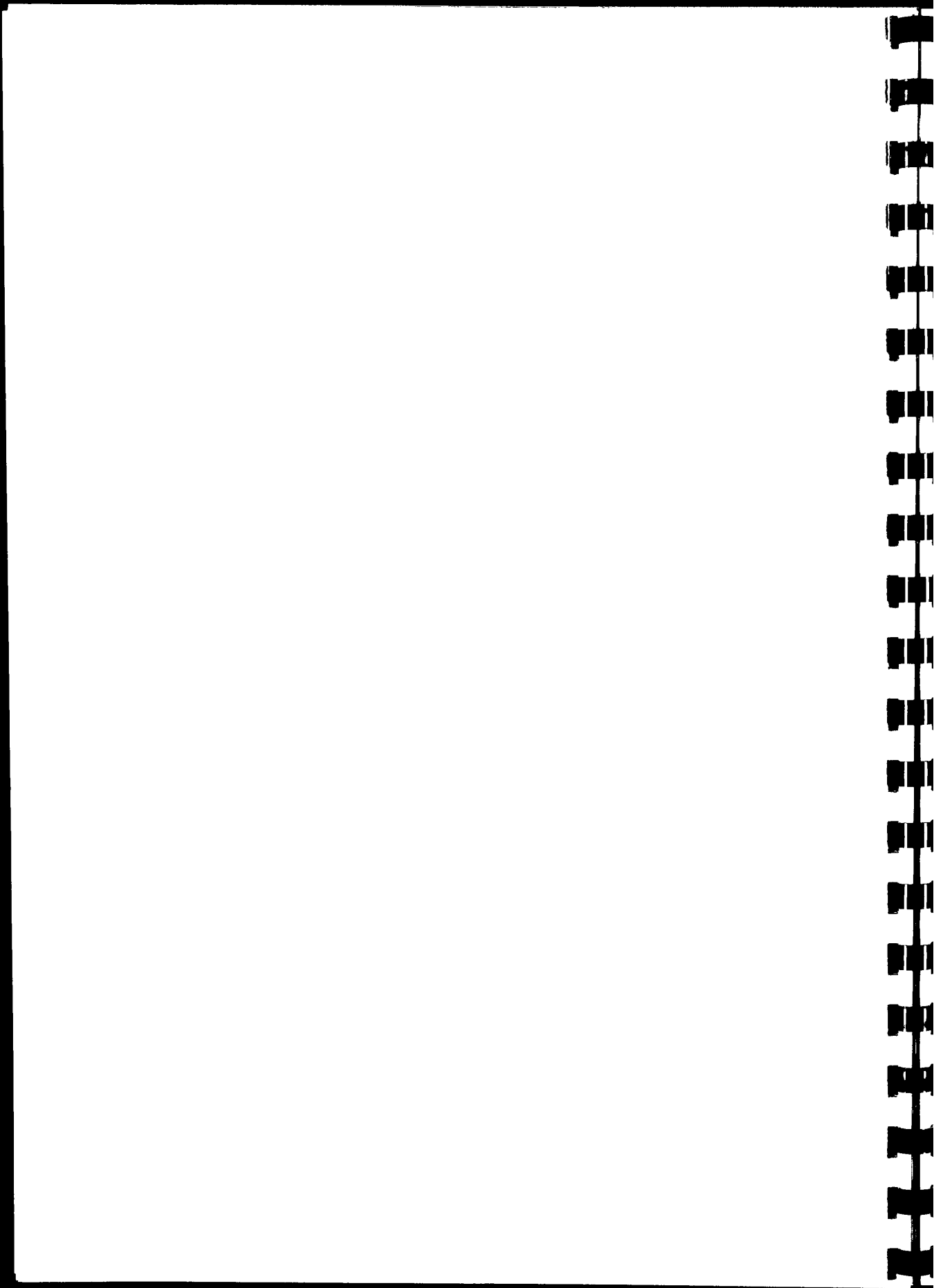
Document/record analysis
Time usage:
* staff
* volunteers

Observation using fixed checklists, eg behaviour or interaction

Structured Questionnaires

Dear Judy

The nice bit

Having a wonderful time. lifestyles has made such a difference since we were here last. Ramps and a lift have been installed, there are desk-lamps for easier reading, higher chairs and several bedrooms have been adapted for wheelchair users. There are grab-rails in the bathrooms and automatic doors to the dining area. The gravel drive and paths have been replaced with tarmac, so there are not many places we can't go. Several high benches have been positioned in pretty areas to rest or admire the view. Access in the town has also been improved.

Obviously, it's thanks to lifestyles giving us the courage to have a constructive moan to the management, which has brought this vast improvement to this now lovely hotel.

Weather is better too

Val, Sally, Sylvia & Alison

Dear Virginia Bottomley,

We belong to lifestyles it is a self-help organisation for disabled people which enables us to participate more fully in the ordinary pursuits that other people take for granted

lifestyles is a good thing but what happens to people when lifestyles is not around? A follow-up is needed.

Lifestyles could campaign for what is really needed by disabled people.

Our organisation needs funds which we feel ought to come from central government. As we live in a rural area we need transport, physical aids and a support worker who co-ordinates activities and who would disappear if funds run out.

Dear All

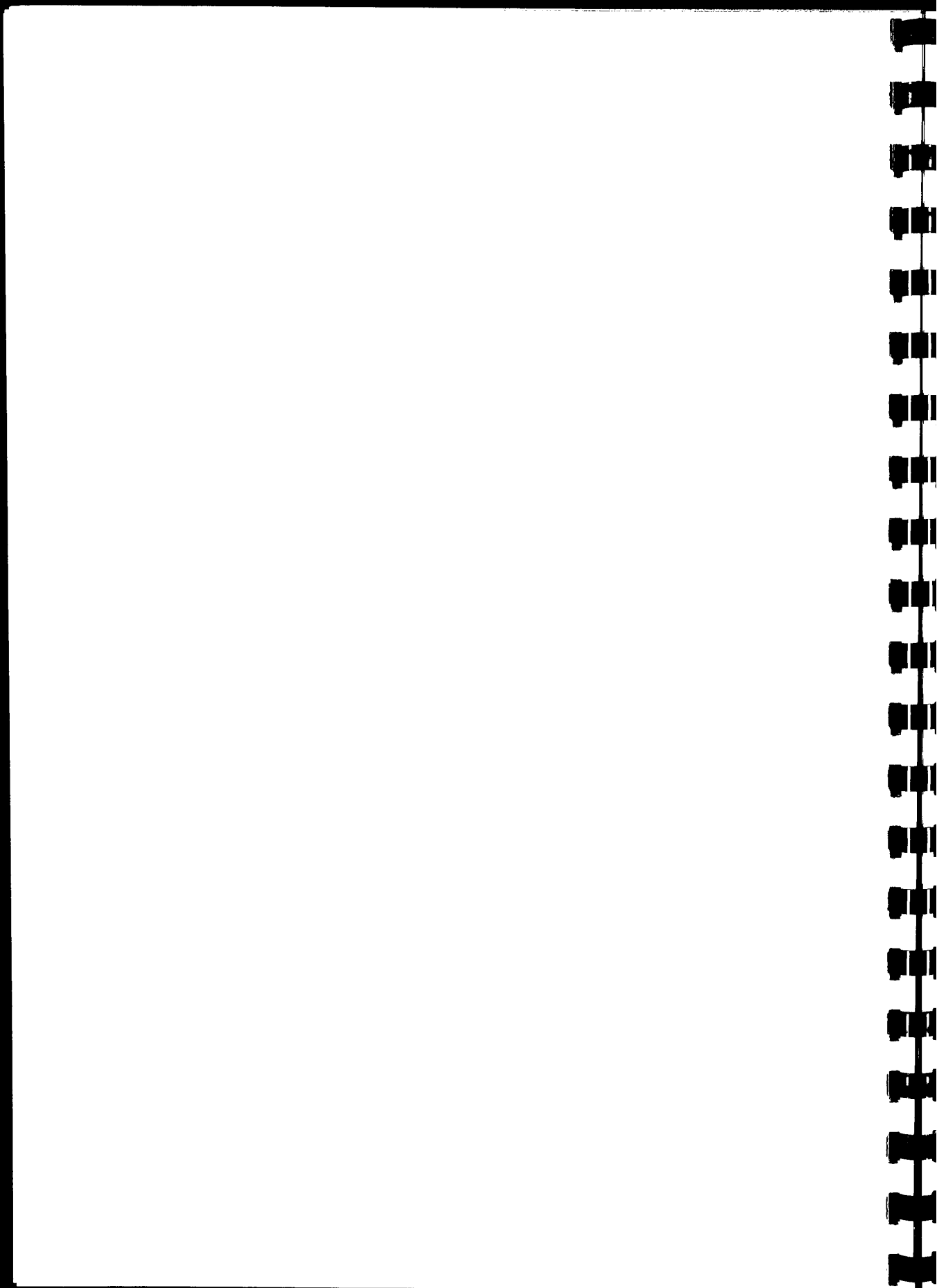New and old friends! Common interests!

Coffee nice, but food non-existent!

We talk and communicate (dynamically)

when you know people it can become deeper.

Some people's difficulty in communication overcome, _but_ others not acknowledged or misunderstood and taken the wrong way.

Whose responsibility is it?

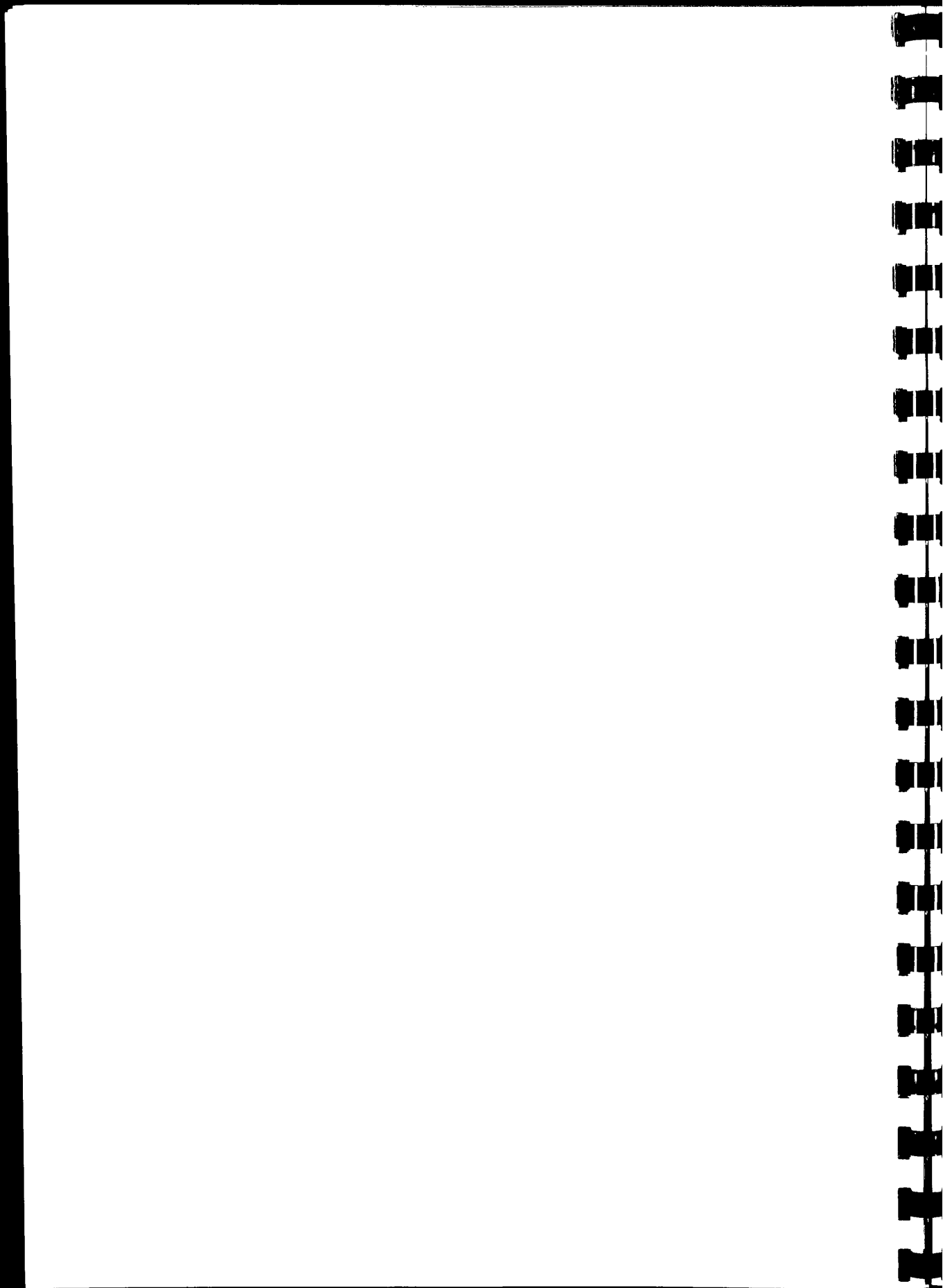## Learning about participatory research from the last four years work

o the time involved in engaging **whole** service or organisation-users, carers, purchasers, management, workers, volunteers, - in getting evaluation questions right, and finding methods that fit questions and organisation's values

o considerable resources are needed to enable participatory evaluation - especially time, facilitation, and skills

o that using participatory, inclusive and non discriminatory methods can ensure that all users and potential users can be involved if THEY wish; the challenge is to find the right processes & the right methods

o that the right kind of evaluation processes promotes change in the way a service or organisation works, before action has been taken on the recommendations i.e.is a community development process

o that controlling and being engaged in the evaluation process does seem to lead to active utilisation of the evaluation findings, however challenging they may be

o that engagement in evaluation work can involve considerable skill building in both individuals(users, volunteers, managers & workers) & in services

o self evaluation involves controlling and owning the process - and can be rigorous,challenging and independent, with the appropriate use of external resources

o many of the necessary research skills use existing user & worker skills and experiences in a more planned and rigorous way

o that there is almost as much work to be done after the production of the evaluation report to ensure utilisation as during the evaluation. Getting the contract right with any external research facilitator is crucial

o participatory evaluative research can be a very powerful tool of organisational change, because more than training or development work it puts the needs & experiences of users & potential users & the purpose & values of the service,at the centre of the change process

o evaluation can be very exciting, illuminating, and fun!   23

Evaluation as a tool of change?

* The facilitator as a resource to participants rather than expert/ controller/ owner of evaluation- new definitions of what counts for knowledge; user centered evaluation much less easy to ignore or suppress, than academic research or evaluation reports in filing cabinets

* Accountable to participants as the experts on themselves making sense of their own experiences; rather than as passive research objects, others having defined the issues; the strength, energy, power of users to speak for themselves & the challenge of disability/ user/ black/ women's groups;

* Actively promoting evaluation as a tool for social change/empowerment /challenge for those experiencing inequality & oppression; rather than a tool of mystification & control: ie evaluation with, not about or even for people

*Building on & valuing what people already know & can do, & using the evaluation process to help them reflect critically on their experiences, as a basis for action

* Recognising that for individuals, the learning, confidence building, skill development, & growth of critical perspectives is often transferable into new pieces of community action, as well as the creation of new employment opportunities.

* The opportunities (& threats) of community care & quality 'talk.' Key issues about how to make all this mystifying talk of funding quality & user outcomes real & useful. ie methods that find & make visible ways of working that deliver outcomes users value,

* Recognising that the best services understand about mission focussed organisations, flat hierarchies, focussed on user & worker/ activist/ management empowerment, with joint definitions of what counts as quality.

* Real evidence of changes in attitude & policy around methods & approaches.
> (eg Rowntree's requirement of user evaluation; Beresford & Croft's
> work; recent review of use of qualitative research in local govt.);

The limitations of positivistic, mainly quantitative approaches are increasingly recognised, but in many sectors anxiety & fear lead to use of inappropriate & unimaginative models & the lack of valuing of illuminative & qualitative methods including- observation; users talking to users; stakeholder or peer group audit
> groups; fun participatory approaches; drama; drawing ....

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