



Overseas Development
Institute

Making the Policy- Research Connection for Development

Using Research-Based Evidence to
Improve Policy, Programs and Practice.

A Workshop for CIDA Policy Analysts

June 5th – 6th, 2006.
IDRC, Zone 3,
250 Albert Street,
Ottawa

John Young – j.young@odi.org.uk
Louise Shaxson - louise@shaxson.com



A Workshop for Canadian International Development Agency Policy Analysts June 5 and 6, 2006. IDRC, Zone 3, 250 Albert Street, Ottawa

Introduction

There is an increasing emphasis on evidence-based policy making and implementation in developed and developing countries around the world. This workshop on the policy-research nexus for Canadian International Development Agency policy analysts will provide some underpinning theory and practical guidance on how to use research more effectively for policy and practice specifically:

- The latest research on the research-policy interface:
- Some analytical tools
- An overview, and some specific examples of evidence-based policymaking in the UK
- An example of evidence-based policy processes in Canada from the Canadian Health Services Research Foundation
- Practical exercises exploring research priorities for current policy issues within CIDA
- Some practical tools.

Background

Evidence-based policy is a key principle of the New Labour Government in the UK, which has established systems to improve the use of research-based and other forms of evidence at all levels of government, including within the Department for International Development¹. ODI's Research and Policy in Development Programme² has been working on the research-policy nexus in development policy processes in the UK and developing countries for a number of years, has developed a conceptual framework and practical tools and has run a number of training courses for researchers and policy makers in developing countries and the UK. Within the UK, ODI is working with The Research Unit for Research Utilisation at St Andrews University and the Centre for Economic Policy Research on a series of workshops on these issues bringing together UK and International experience³. ODI has also been following closely the development of The Department for the Environment and Rural Affairs in the UK's Evidence & Innovation Strategy, a pioneering initiative to develop practical tools for improving evidence-based policy.⁴

Facilitators

The workshop facilitators will be:

John Young: Director of the Partnerships and Communications Department in ODI. He also leads the RAPID Programme and manages the [Civil Society Partnership Programme](#). He has over 20 years experience in Africa, Asia and the UK, working on livestock services, government service reform, sustainable livelihoods, community development, participatory approaches, communications and information, research-policy links, institutional development and capacity-building.

Louise Shaxson: An independent consultant specialising in science policy and strategy, and evidence-based policy making. Louise has 15 years experience in Latin America, Africa and the UK, initially as an economist on pest management programmes, but subsequently focusing on managing interdisciplinary research for DFID. For the past three years she has led Defra's project on evidence-based policy making, and regularly lectures on the subject to senior policy makers and analysts.

¹ See <http://www.odi.org.uk/RAPID/Projects/PPA0117/Index.html> for more information

² See www.odi.org.uk/rapid for more details of the RAPID Programme, and www.odi.org.uk/rapid/meetings for details of workshops, seminars and training courses.

³ See http://www.odi.org.uk/RAPID/Meetings/Impact_Insight/Index.html for further information.

⁴ See <http://www.defra.gov.uk/science/how/evidence.htm> for more information and the consultation document.

Contents

	Page
▪ Introduction	1
▪ Contents	3
▪ Programme	5
▪ Presentation Slides	7
▪ Selected Readings:	
○ Bridging Research and Policy in International Development. An Analytical and Practical Framework. A RAPID Briefing Paper, ODI, October 2004 ⁵	17
○ How to use the RAPID Context, Evidence and Links Framework. Extract from Tools for Policy Influence: A Handbook for Researchers, ODI, October 2004 ⁶	21
○ An Introduction to A Toolkit for Progressive Policymakers in Developing Countries Sophie Sutcliffe and Julius Court ODI, January 2006 ⁷	25
○ Evidence-based policy at the Cabinet Office, Phil Davies, Deputy Director, Government and Social Research Unit, UK Cabinet Office. A transcript of a talk at ODI, Impact and Insight meeting, 17th October 2005 ⁸	33
○ Conceptualizing and Combining Evidence for Health System Guidance, Jonathan Lomas, Tony Culyer, Chris McCutcheon, Laura McAuley, and Susan Law, The Canadian Health Services Research Foundation May 2005 (Key Points and Executive Summary) ⁹	39
○ Improving the Evidence for Policy Making. A draft internal guidance document produced by the Science Strategy Team of the Department for the Environment and Rural Affairs, Government of the UK.. ¹⁰	49
○ Ensuring evidence is robust: questions for policy-makers and practitioners, Louise Shaxson (2006). This paper examines the reasons we need evidence for policy, discusses where evidence is needed in the policy making process, and the nature of the evidence base for strategy and policy. ¹¹	59
○ Part 1 of the UK Department for Environment and Rural Affairs Consultation for its Evidence and Innovation Strategy 2005–08 ¹²	69
○ An extract from Part 2 of the DEFRA Consultation: Strategic Outcome 5: Reduction in UK's greenhouse gas emissions. Reduction in the UK's contribution to global climate change by cutting our greenhouse gas emissions. ¹³	77
○ Understanding Risk in Everyday Policy-Making, Dr Kevin Edson Jones, DEFRA September 2005 ¹⁴	87
▪ Some blank pages for notes	97

⁵ http://www.odi.org.uk/RAPID/Publications/RAPID_BP_1.html

⁶ http://www.odi.org.uk/RAPID/Publications/Tools_handbook.html

⁷ http://www.odi.org.uk/RAPID/Publications/Tools_EBP_handbook.html

⁸ http://www.odi.org.uk/RAPID/Events/Impact_Insight/Presentation_1/Davies.html

⁹ http://www.chsrf.ca/other_documents/pdf/evidence_e.pdf

¹⁰ Will be published at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/science/how/evidence.htm>

¹¹ <http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/tpp/ep/2005/00000001/00000001/art00006>

¹² <http://www.defra.gov.uk/science/how/documents/PDFs%20in%20Parts/Part%20I.pdf>

¹³ <http://www.defra.gov.uk/science/how/documents/PDFs%20in%20Parts/Part%20II%20in%20sections/5.pdf>

¹⁴ <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/risk/policymaking0509.pdf>


Programme

Day 1:

- 12.00-12.30: Introductions (John)
- 12.30-13.15: Buzz Groups on EBP, problems and difficulties and current topics (John)
- 13.15-14.00: Intro to Res-Pol links & the RAPID framework (John)
- 14.00-14.30: *Tea*
- 14.30-15.15: Group Exercise using CEL framework on CIDA policy issues (John)
- 15.15-15.45: Feedback
- 15.45-16.00 Introduction to the 5-Whys (Louise)


Day 2:

- 9.00 - 9.30: EBP in the UK (John - based on the Toolkit & Phil Davies stuff)
- 9.30 - 10.00: EBP in DEFRA (Louise)
- 10.00-11.00: Group Exercise the 5 whys (Louise)
- 11.00-11.30: *Coffee*
- 11.30 - 1.00: EBP in Canada (CHSRF)
- 1.00 - 2.00: *Lunch*
- 2.00-2.15: Introduction to the Policy Mapping Tool (Louise)
- 2.15-3.00: Group Exercise Policy Mapping Tool (Louise)
- 3.00-3.45: Feedback (Louise)
- 3.45-4.15: *Tea*
- 4.15-5.00: Feedback and Evaluation (Both)
- 5.00 - 5.15 Wrap-up (John)





Progressive Policymaking

A Workshop on evidence-based policymaking for CIDA Policy Analysts


Workshop Overview

- Introductions
- Is policy evidence-based in CIDA?
- ODI's "RAPID" Approach
- Groups: Analysing the context in CIDA
- EBP in the UK/DEFRA
- Groups: Policy in CIDA - the 5-Whys?
- EBP in Canada (CHSRF)
- Groups: Policy in CIDA – Policy Mapping
- Next steps
- Evaluation

Definitions

- Research: *“any systematic effort to increase the stock of knowledge”*
- Policy: *a “purposive course of action followed by an actor or set of actors”*
- Evidence: *“the available information supporting or otherwise a belief or proposition”*
- Evidence-based Policy: *“public policy informed by rigorously established evidence”.*



Policy in CIDA:

- Is it evidence-based?
- Why not?

Research-Policy Links: The RAPID Framework

John Young



Overseas Development Institute

- Development Think Tank
- £8m, 60 researchers
- Research / Advice / Public Debate
- Rural / Humanitarian / Poverty & Aid / Economics / Policy Processes
- DFID, Parliament, WB, EC
- Civil Society



For more information see: www.odi.org.uk

RAPID Programme

- Research
 - Literature
 - GDN Case Studies
 - ODI Case Studies
- Advisory work
 - Projects
 - Organisations
- Workshops and Seminars
- Think Tank Programme

for further information see: www.odi.org.uk/rapid

The linear logical model...

Identify the problem

```

  graph TD
    A[Identify the problem] --> B[Commission research]
    B --> C[Analyse the results]
    C --> D[Choose the best option]
    D --> E[Establish the policy]
    E --> F[Implement the policy]
    F --> G[Evaluation]
  
```

...in reality...

- “The whole life of policy is a chaos of purposes and accidents. It is not at all a matter of the rational implementation of the so-called decisions through selected strategies”¹
- “Most policy research on African agriculture is irrelevant to agricultural and overall economic policy in Africa”²
- “Research is more often regarded as the opposite of action rather than a response to ignorance”³

¹ Clay & Schaffer (1984), Room for Manoeuvre: An Exploration of Public Policy in Agricultural and Rural Development, Heineman Educational Books, London.
² Oimamo (2003), Policy Research on African Agriculture: Trends, Gaps, and Challenges, International Service for National Agricultural Research (ISNAR) Research Report No 21
³ Surr (2003), DFID Research Review

Existing theory

- ~~1. Linear model~~
2. Percolation model, Weiss
3. Tipping point model, Gladwell
4. 'Context, evidence, links' framework, ODI
5. Policy narratives, Roe
6. Systems model (NSI)
7. External forces, Lindquist
8. 'Room for manoeuvre', Clay & Schaffer
9. 'Street level bureaucrats', Lipsky
10. Policy as social experiments, Rondinelli
11. Policy Streams & Windows, Kingdon
12. Disjointed incrementalism, Lindquist
13. The 'tipping point', Gladwell
14. Crisis model, Kuhn
15. 'Framework of possible thought', Chomsky
16. Variables for Credibility, Beach
17. The source is as important as content, Gladwell
18. Linear model of communication, Shannon
19. Interactive model,
20. Simple and surprising stories, Communication Theory
21. Provide solutions, Marketing I
22. Find the right packaging, Marketing II
23. Elicit a response, Kotler
24. Translation of technology, Volkow
25. Epistemic communities
26. Policy communities
27. Advocacy coalitions etc, Pross
28. Negotiation through networks, Sebatier
29. Shadow networks, Klickert
30. Chains of accountability, Fine
31. Communication for social change, Rockefeller
32. Wheels and webs, Chapman & Fisher

Existing theory – a short list

- Policy narratives, Roe
- Systems of Innovation
- 'Room for manoeuvre'
- 'Street level bureaucrat'
- Policy as social experiments
- Policy streams and windows, Kingdon
- Disjointed Incrementalism
- Social Epidemics, Gladwell
- The RAPID Framework

An Analytical Framework

External Influences
Socio-economic and cultural influences, donor policies etc


The political context
political and economic structures and processes, culture, institutional pressures, incremental vs radical change etc.

The links between policy and research communities
– networks, relationships, power, competing discourses, trust, knowledge etc.

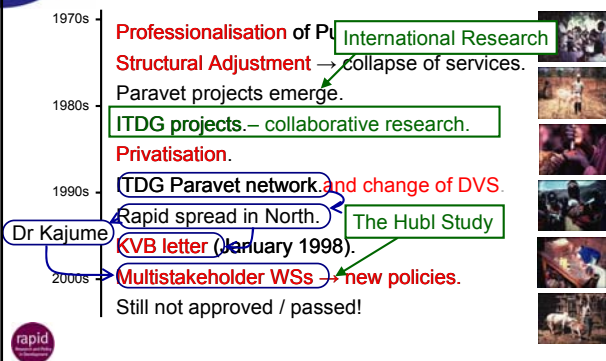
The evidence – credibility, the degree it challenges received wisdom, research approaches and methodology, simplicity of the message, how it is packaged etc

Case Studies

- **Sustainable Livelihoods:** The Evolution of DFID Policy
- The **PRSP Initiative:** Research in Multilateral Policy Change
- The adoption of **Ethical Principles in Humanitarian Aid** post Rwanda
- **Animal Health Care in Kenya:** Evidence fails to influence Policy
- **50 GDN Case Studies:** Examples where evidence has or hasn't influenced policy



Paravets in Kenya



1970s: Professionalisation of Paravets, International Research

1980s: Structural Adjustment → collapse of services. Paravet projects emerge. ITDG projects – collaborative research.

1990s: Privatisation. TDG Paravet network and change of DVS. Rapid spread in North. The Hubli Study

2000s: Dr Kajume (KVB letter January 1998). Multistakeholder WSs → new policies. Still not approved / passed!

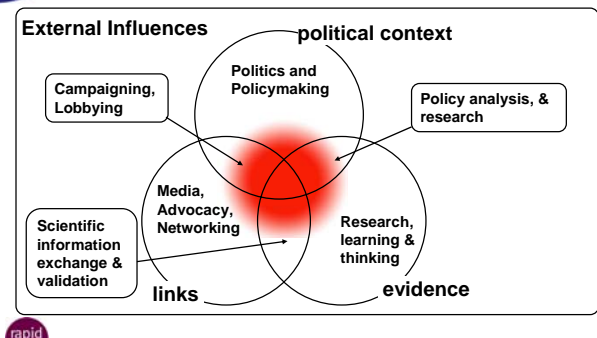
Other models

- 1. Ideal model** (Venn diagram: Context, Links, Evidence)
- 2. Delay-chain model** (Venn diagram: Evidence, Links, Context)
- 3. Islands model** (Venn diagram: Context, Links, Evidence)
- 4. Technocratic model** (Venn diagram: Context, Links, Evidence)
- 5. Ivory tower model** (Venn diagram: Context, Links, Evidence)

Other models

- National Systems of Innovation (Hall)
see: http://www.idrc.ca/fr/rev-85054-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html
- Knowledge Economy (WB Knowledge for Development Programme)
see: <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/WBI/WBI/PROGRAMS/KFDLP/0,,menuPK:461238~pagePK:64156143~piPK:64154155~theSitePK:461198,00.html>
- Drivers of Change (DFID)
see: http://www.grc-exchange.org/g_themes/politicalsystems_drivers.html
- Spiral Dynamics (Don Beck)
see: <http://wie.org/spiral/?fr=af>

A Practical Framework



External Influences: Campaigning, Lobbying; Scientific information exchange & validation

political context: Politics and Policymaking; Policy analysis, & research

links: Media, Advocacy, Networking

evidence: Research, learning & thinking

What you need to know


- **The external environment:** Who are the key actors? What is their agenda? How do they influence the political context?
- **The political context:** Is there political interest in change? Is there room for manoeuvre? How do they perceive the problem?
- **The evidence:** Is it there? Is it relevant? Is it practically useful? Are the concepts familiar or new? Does it need re-packaging?
- **Links:** Who are the key individuals? Are there existing networks to use? How best to transfer the information? The media? Campaigns?

What researchers need to do


What researchers need to know	What researchers need to do	How to do it
Political Context: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who are the policymakers? Is there demand for ideas? What is the policy process? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get to know the policymakers. Identify friends and foes. Prepare for policy opportunities. Look out for policy windows. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with them – seek commissions Strategic opportunism – prepare for known events + resources for others
Evidence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the current theory? What are the narratives? How divergent is it? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish credibility Provide practical solutions Establish legitimacy. Present clear options Use familiar narratives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build a reputation Action-research Pilot projects to generate legitimacy Good communication
Links <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who are the stakeholders? What networks exist? Who are the connectors, mavens and salesmen? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get to know the others Work through existing networks. Build coalitions. Build new policy networks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build partnerships. Identify key networkers, mavens and salesmen. Use informal contacts

Policy entrepreneurs


Storytellers




Networkers



Engineers



Fixers



Practical Tools

Overarching Tools

- The RAPID Framework
- Using the Framework
- The Entrepreneurship Questionnaire

Communication Tools

- Communications Strategy
- SWOT analysis
- Message Design
- Making use of the media

Policy Influence Tools

- Influence Mapping & Power Map
- Lobbying and Advocacy
- Campaigning: A Simple Guide
- Competency self-assessment

A Toolkit for Progressive Policymakers in Developing Countries

Stephen Scalet and Julia Court

Edited by ODI and the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)

Groundwater in India

- to maximise impact of DFID forest/ground water research project in India
- Researchers, policy makers and activists
- Used framework to analyse factors in water sector in India
- Developed strategy for final phase:
 - Less research
 - More communication
 - Developing champions in regional and national government
 - Local, Regional & National advocacy campaign







SMEPOL Project Egypt

- An IDRC project to improve small and medium scale enterprise policy in Egypt
- Policy analysts & researchers
- Used a range of tools:
 - Policy Process Mapping
 - RAPID Framework
 - Stakeholder Analysis
 - Force-Field Analysis
 - SWOT
- To develop action plans for more evidence-based policy development





DFID Policy Processes

- To explore how policies formed and promoted in DFID.
- Small, informal workshop:
 - 7 staff
 - Identified 8 recent policy initiatives
 - pair-wise ranking of success factors.
- Key factors in DFID:
 - Intellectual coherence & "evidence"
 - Congruence with White Papers
 - High-level support
 - Follow-up






Exercise: using the RAPID Framework on CIDA policy issues

Day 2

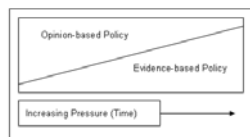
- EBP in the UK/DEFRA
- Groups: Policy in CIDA - the 5-Whys?
- EBP in Canada (CHSRF)
- *Lunch: The GDN Bridging Research and Policy Project*
- Groups: Policy in CIDA – Policy Mapping
- Next steps
- Evaluation

Evidence-based Policy in the UK

John Young

What is it?

- From medical research → practice
- New Labour “Modern Government” 1997
- *“putting the best available evidence from research at the heart of policy development and implementation”¹.*

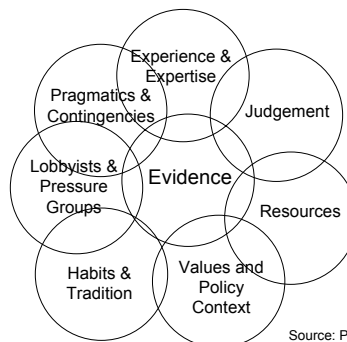


¹ Phil Davies Is evidence-based government possible? Jerry Lee Lecture, 4th Annual Campbell Colloquium, Washington DC 2004

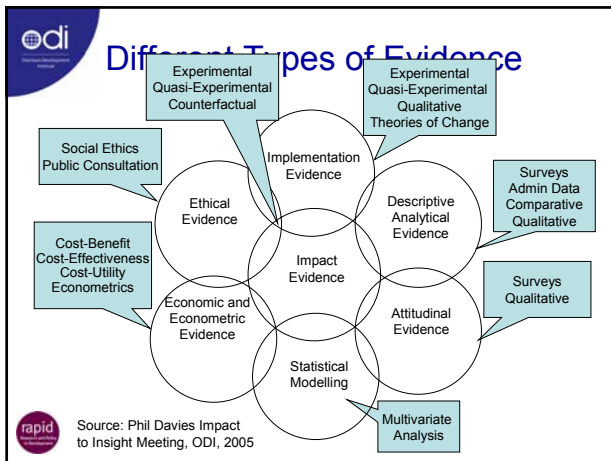
Why?

- **Effectiveness** - ensure we do more good than harm
- **Efficiency** - use scarce public resources to maximum effect
- **Service Orientation** - meet citizen's needs/expectations
- **Accountability** - transparency of what is done and why
- **Democracy** - enhance the democratic process
- **Trust** - help ensure/restore trust in government and public services

Factors influencing policy making



Source: Phil Davies Impact to Insight Meeting, ODI, 2005



- ## Different Approaches
- Increasing the pull for evidence
 - Require the publication of the evidence base
 - Require spending bids to provide evidence base
 - Submit government analysis to external expert scrutiny
 - Provide open access to information
 - Facilitating better evidence use
 - Encourage better collaboration across analytical services
 - Co-locate policy makers and internal analysts
 - Integrate analytical staff at all stages
 - Link R&D strategies to departmental business plans
 - Cast external researchers more as partners than as contractors
 - Second more university staff into government
 - Train staff in evidence use
- Source: Abstracted from PIU 2000, Bullock et al (2001)

- ## UK Government “Tools”
- Overview and Checklist**
1. Impact Assessment and Appraisal
 2. Strategy Survival Guide
 3. Magenta Book: Guidance notes
 4. Green Book: Appraisal and evaluation
 5. Regulatory Impact Assessment
- Ensuring Key Perspectives are Taken into Account**
6. Incorporating regional perspectives
 7. International Comparisons in Policy
 8. Gender Impact Assessment: a guide
 9. Managing risks to the public: A guide
- Testing Policy Ideas**
10. Policy Pilots
- Public-orientated Tools**
11. Concern Assessment Tool
 12. Community Engagement How to Guide
 13. Connecting with Users and Citizens
- Getting Better Advice and Evidence**
14. Expert Advisory Bodies for Policy
 15. Improving Standards of Qualitative Research
-

- ## Regulatory Impact Assessment
- Aims to improve evidence and advice
 - Must be completed before changes
 - Process:
 - Purpose / intended outcomes
 - Policy problem
 - Options & evidence
 - Impact & evidence
 - Results of consultation
 - Published
- More at: http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/regulation/ria/ria_guidance/index.asp
-

- ## Assessing Research Quality
- A framework developed by the Cabinet Office / National Centre for Social Research
 - Based on review of 29 existing frameworks (esp from medical/health)
 - Four principles. Research should be:
 - contributory;
 - defensible in design;
 - rigorous in conduct;
 - credible in claim.
 - 18 Questions, with criteria
 - Recognises need for:
 - Policymakers to have necessary expertise
 - New approaches to research

- ## Assessing Research Quality
1. How credible are the findings?
 2. How has knowledge or understanding been advanced?
 3. How well does the evaluation address the policy question?
 4. How well is the scope for the evaluation defined?
 5. How clear is the basis of evidence?
 6. How defensible is the research design?
 7. How well defended are the cases/documents?
 8. How well is the eventual sample defined?
 9. How well was the data collected?
 10. How well has the approach been justified?
 11. How well are the contexts defined?
 12. How well has diversity of perspectives been included?
 13. How well has detail, depth and rigour been demonstrated?
 14. How clear are the links between the data and the conclusions? How well can the route to a conclusion be traced?
 15. How clear and coherent is the analysis?
 16. How clear are the assumptions that have shaped the form and output of the analysis?
 17. What evidence is there of the quality of the research?
 18. How adequately has the research been evaluated?
- More at: http://www.policyhub.gov.uk/evaluating_policy/qual_eval.asp
-

Evidence-based Policy in DEFRA

Louise Shaxson

Drivers of change

- Increasing emphasis on the quality of evidence and its use (Modernising Government);
- To underpin & inform strategy, policy, regulatory work, foresight; and to mitigate risk;
- Importance of challenge to evidence (BSE inquiry, Science Advisory Committees)
- Depth and breadth of future evidence needs will increase given complex and overlapping strategic priorities

Evidence for policy is...

- *...any robust information that helps to turn a Department's strategic priorities & other objectives into something concrete, manageable and achievable.*
 - evidence as data
 - analytical evidence
 - evidence of stakeholder opinions
 - is 'good science' the same as 'good evidence for policy'?

Why do we need evidence & analysis?

To:

- **Confirm** what we think we know
- **Enrich** our understanding
- **Explain** complex issues
- **Challenge** received wisdom
- **Scope** opportunities for change

Components of robust evidence & analysis (supply side)

- Is the evidence **credible**?
- Can we make **generalisations** from it?
- Is it **reliable** enough for M&E or impact assessments?
- Is it **objective**? How do we account for bias?
- Is it **rooted** in an understanding of the framing assumptions?

Components of robust evidence & analysis (demand side)

- Is the evidence **policy relevant**?
- Is it **timely**? Has it been delivered fast enough to inform policy decisions?
- Is it **accessible** to all key stakeholders, not just researchers?
- Is the evidence **cost-effective**?
- Is it **interdisciplinary** enough to address cross-cutting issues?

Evidence-based policy making is not a sacred cow:

There are policies that:

Use good information... → ...and use it well...

Use poor information... → ...and use it poorly...

odi *rapid*

Analysis & evidence for policy

Longer-term policy and strategy development

Procuring, managing and carrying out research to provide new evidence

Interpreting & applying new or existing evidence, monitoring & evaluating the policy once implemented

Scoping the issue, asking the question, deciding what sort of evidence is needed

Evidence and analysis needed rapidly to answer pressing policy questions

odi *rapid*

EBPM in practice

- **Defra's Evidence & Innovation Strategy:**
- Putting policy in the lead;
- Developing a clear 'line of sight' between policy priorities and evidence provision;
- Constructing lines of argument with stakeholders (how to keep them current?);
- Analysing in relation to the policy cycle - policy mapping tool;
- Being very clear that 'good science' is not the same as good evidence for policy.

odi *rapid*

EBPM in practice – 'five whys'

Constructing a line of argument against which to assess policy's needs for evidence & analysis:

- Why is this issue important?
- Why are things changing, for better or for worse?
- Why does Government need to intervene?
- Why do we need a policy on this issue?
- What evidence do we need to develop policy?

odi *rapid*

Exercise: Evidence-Based Policy Mapping in Practice

Evidence-based Policy in Canada
CHSRF

The GDN Bridging Research and Policy Project

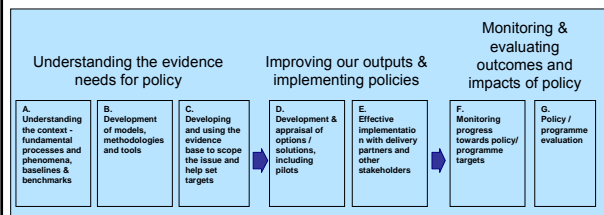
The Policy Mapping Tool

EBPM in practice: the policy mapping tool

- *Given the line of argument about why we need evidence & analysis for this policy issue:*
- What evidence & analysis already exists and can be used immediately?
- What evidence & analysis exists but needs to be synthesised or redirected towards this particular issue?
- What new evidence & analysis do we need to gather?

EBPM in practice: the policy mapping tool

Map against different policy processes to see where we are in the 'policy cycle' (NB this isn't the perfect cycle!)



Exercise: Applying the Policy Mapping Tool to CIDA Policy Issues

Selected Reading

- Bridging Research and Policy in International Development. ODI PP 2004
- How to use the RAPID Context, Evidence and Links Framework.
- An Introduction to the Toolkit for Progressive Policymakers in Developing Countries
- Evidence-based policy at the Cabinet Office, Phil Davies 2005
- Improving the Evidence for Policy Making. DEFRA, UK, 2006.
- Ensuring evidence is robust: questions for policy-makers and practitioners, Louise Shaxson (2006)
- Part 1 of the DEFRA Consultation for its Evidence and Innovation Strategy 2005–08
- Extract from Part 2 of the DEFRA Consultation: Strategic Outcome 5.
- Understanding Risk in Everyday Policy-Making, Dr Kevin Edson Jones, DEFRA September 2005

Further Information

- ODI Working Papers
- Bridging Research and Policy Book
- Meeting series Monograph
- Tools for Policy Impact
- RAPID Briefing Paper
- RAPID CDROM
- www.odi.org.uk/rapid



Bridging Research and Policy in International Development An Analytical and Practical Framework

The RAPID Programme

The RAPID Programme ODI's Research and Policy in Development (RAPID) programme aims to improve the use of research and evidence in development policy and practice through research, advice and debate. The programme has four main themes:

- The use of evidence in policy identification, development and implementation;
- Improving communication and information systems for development agencies;
- Better knowledge management to enhance the impact of development agencies;
- Promotion and capacity building for evidence-based policy.

We would like to acknowledge support for this work from: the UK Department for International Development, the Global Development Network, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, and the Merck Foundation.

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The Issue in Brief

Better use of research-based evidence in development policy and practice can help save lives, reduce poverty and improve the quality of life. But for this to happen more effectively researchers need to do three things:

First, they need to develop a detailed understanding of i) the policymaking process – what are the key influencing factors, and how do they relate to each other? ii) the nature of the evidence they have, or hope to get – is it credible, practical and operationally useful? and iii) all the other stakeholders involved in the policy area – who else can help to get the message across?

Second, they need to develop an overall strategy for their work – identify political supporters and opponents, keep an eye out for, and be able to react to policy windows, ensure the evidence is credible and practically useful, and build coalitions with like-minded groups.

Third, they need to be entrepreneurial – get to know, and work with the policymakers, build long term programmes of credible research, communicate effectively, use participatory approaches, identify key networkers and salesmen and use shadow networks.

Based on over five years of theoretical and case study research, ODI's Research and Policy in Development programme has developed a simple analytical framework and practical tools that can help researchers to do this.

Why Research-Policy Links Matter

Often it seems that researchers, practitioners and policymakers live in parallel universes. Researchers cannot understand why there is resistance to policy change despite clear and convincing evidence. Policymakers bemoan the inability of many researchers to make their findings accessible and digestible in time

The Problem

The Policy Process: 'The whole life of policy is a chaos of purposes and accidents. It is not at all a matter of the rational implementation of the so-called decisions through selected strategies' – Edward Clay, 1984

Relevance: 'Most policy research on African agriculture is irrelevant to agricultural and overall economic policy in Africa' – Steve Were Omamo, 2003

Policy Uptake: policymakers 'seem to regard "research" as the opposite of "action" rather than the opposite of "ignorance".' – Martin Surr, 2002

Cost Effectiveness of Donor Resources: 'Donor countries spend over US\$2bn annually on development research. Is this value for money?' – RAPID Programme, 2003

for policy decisions. Practitioners often just get on with things.

Yet better utilisation of research and evidence in development policy and practice can help save lives, reduce poverty and improve the quality of life. For example, the results of household disease surveys in rural Tanzania informed a process of health service reforms which contributed to over 40% reductions in infant mortality between 2000 and 2003 in two districts.

Indeed, the impact of research and evidence on development policy is not only beneficial – it is crucial. The HIV/AIDS crisis has deepened in some countries because of the reluctance of governments to implement effective control programmes despite clear evidence of what causes the disease and how to prevent it spreading.

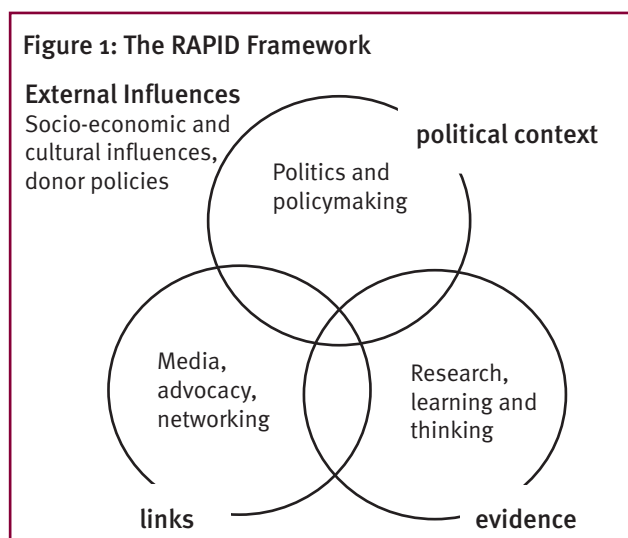
What Influences Research to Policy Uptake? The RAPID Framework

Often, the link between research and policy, or evidence and practice, is viewed as a linear process, whereby a set of research findings or lessons shift from the 'research sphere' over to the 'policy sphere', and then has some impact on policymakers' decisions and practical programmes. Reality tends to be much more dynamic

and complex, with two-way processes between research, policy and practice, shaped by multiple relations and reservoirs of knowledge.

The traditional question ‘How can research be transported from the research to the policy sphere?’ has been replaced by a more complex question: ‘Why are some of the ideas that circulate in the research/policy networks picked up and acted on, while others are ignored and disappear?’.

ODI’s theoretical, case study and practical work has identified a wide range of inter-related factors, which determine whether research-based and other forms of evidence are likely to be adopted by policymakers and practitioners. These factors can broadly be divided into three overlapping areas: the political context; the evidence; and the links between policy and research communities, within a fourth set of factors: the external context. The interplay of these four areas is laid out in Figure 1: The RAPID Framework. The framework should be seen as a generic, perhaps ideal, model. In some cases there will not be much overlap between the different spheres; in others the overlap may vary considerably.



Political Context: Politics and Institutions

Research-policy links are dramatically shaped by the political context. The policy process and the production of research are in themselves political processes from start to finish. Key influencing factors include:

- The extent of civil and political freedoms in a country;
- Political contestation, institutional pressures and vested interests;
- The attitudes and incentives among officials, their room for manoeuvre, local history, and power relations.

In some cases the political strategies and power relations are obvious, and are tied to specific institutional pressures. Ideas circulating may be discarded by the majority of staff in an organisation if those ideas elicit disapproval from the leadership.

Evidence: Credibility and Communication

Our findings and experience suggest that the quality of the

research is important for policy uptake. Policy influence is affected by topical relevance and, as importantly, the operational usefulness of an idea; it helps if a new approach has been piloted and the document can clearly demonstrate the value of a new option. A critical issue affecting uptake is whether research has provided a solution to a problem.

The other key set of issues here concern communication. The sources and conveyors of evidence, the way new messages are packaged (especially if they are couched in familiar terms) and targeted can all make a big difference. For example, marketing is based on the insight that people’s reaction to a new product or idea is often determined by the packaging rather than the content in and of itself. The key message is that communication is a very demanding process and it is best to take an interactive approach. Continuous interaction leads to greater chances of successful communication than a simple or linear approach.

Links: Influence and Legitimacy

Third, our work emphasises the importance of links; of communities, networks and intermediaries (for example, the media and campaigning groups) in affecting policy change. Some of the current literature focuses explicitly on various types of networks, such as policy communities, epistemic communities, and advocacy coalitions. While systematic understanding remains limited, issues of trust, legitimacy, openness and the formalisation of networks have emerged as important. Existing theory stresses the role of translators and communicators. It seems that there is often an under-appreciation of the extent and ways that intermediary organisations and networks impact on formal policy guidance documents, which in turn influence officials.

External Influences

Finally, a synthesis of the RAPID experience emphasises the impact of external forces and donors actions on research-policy interactions. While many questions remain, key issues here include the impact of international politics and processes, as well as the impact of general donor policies and specific research-funding instruments. Broad incentives, such as EU Accession or the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) process, can have a substantial impact on the demand for research by policymakers. Trends towards democratisation and liberalisation and donor support for civil society are also having an impact. Much of the research on development issues is undertaken in the North, raising concerns of relevance and beneficiaries’ access to the findings. A substantial amount of research in the poorest countries is funded by international donors, which also raises a range of issues around ownership, whose priorities, use of external consultants and perceived legitimacy. As policy processes become increasingly global, this arena will increase in importance.

However, although evidence clearly matters, there has been very limited systematic understanding of when, how and why evidence informs policy. This Briefing Paper

provides a synthesis of the main conclusions of recent ODI work in this area and makes recommendations for how research can better contribute to pro-poor policy and practice.

PRSPs: A Case Study of Research-Policy Linkages

In September 1999, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) adopted a new approach to aid – Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). How did the idea of the PRSP come to be adopted? What was the role of research in this process – both ‘academic research’ in general and the ‘applied policy research’ within the World Bank and IMF? An ODI case study traces the various factors that contributed to this far-reaching policy shift.

Political Context: The most important contextual factor that shaped the PRSP initiative was the convergence of debates and controversies in the field of international development in the late 1990s. This led to a widespread sense of there being ‘a problem’ within the international development policy field even though policymakers did not agree on the exact nature of the problem. The challenges that needed to be addressed – particularly by the World Bank and the IMF – included:

- The questioning of the mandates of the IMF and World Bank – in the light of the 1997 Asia Crisis and the failure of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) to resolve Africa’s development problems;
- The 1999 Review of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative and the campaign to make debt relief ‘broader, deeper, faster, better’;
- The need to operationalise the new conceptual framework for aid put forward by World Bank President James Wolfensohn’s Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF).

The PRSP initiative can be viewed as bringing together all these interlinked concerns, and providing answers or at least partial solutions to the issues that needed to be addressed. It therefore received broad-based support from many different parties.

Evidence: There were three main types of evidence that influenced the emergence of the PRSP initiative. First, academic research contributed, often indirectly, to the major shifts in international development discourse towards poverty reduction, participation, and aid effectiveness. Second, there were important pieces of applied policy research undertaken in the late 1990s, in particular the research related to the ESAF reviews, the HIPC review, the Strategic Partnership with Africa (SPA) Working Groups, and the NGO research on debt relief. This evidence focused more on providing policy recommendations and operational solutions. This was seen as particularly credible when it was commissioned by the IFIs themselves or other donors, demonstrated analytical rigour, and was communicated in a language that was accessible and relevant to World Bank and IMF staff and other donor agencies. Third, an extremely powerful demonstration effect was provided by the

Examples of ODI Work on Research-Policy Linkages

ODI has used this framework extensively in its research and advisory work, including:

- to analyse four major policy events: the adoption of PRSPs; the development of an ethical charter by humanitarian agencies; animal health policies in Kenya; the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach;
- to analyse 50 summary cases studies as part of Phase I of the GDN Bridging Research and Policy Project (Court and Young, 2003);
- to structure literature reviews focusing on communications issues, knowledge management, the role of Civil Society Organizations, and how networks work;
- in a study of research-policy interaction in HIV/AIDS in developing countries;
- in evaluations of the impact of internal policy papers on bilateral donor policy; and
- in workshops and seminars with researchers, practitioners and policymakers in Botswana, Morocco, India, Moldova, Kenya, UK and USA.

For more information on projects, publications and lessons, please visit: www.odi.org.uk/rapid.

positive experience of Uganda in drafting the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP). This did much to convince policymakers of the feasibility and merits of the poverty reduction strategy model.

Links: The PRSP story is characterised by a multitude of links between policymakers and researchers in main institutional actors – the World Bank and IMF, Strategic Partnership with Africa (SPA), UK and US governments, and the NGO movement. As one interviewee put it, ‘none of the players is more than two handshakes away from any of the others’. The formal and informal networks contributed to the speed with which the PRSP ideas were spread and accepted in international development policy.

When Does Evidence Influence Policy?

Emerging results from this and a synthesis of the other ODI studies seems to indicate that research-based and other forms of evidence is more likely to contribute to policy if:

- It fits within the political and institutional limits and pressures of policymakers, and resonates with their assumptions, or sufficient pressure is exerted to challenge them;
- The evidence is credible and convincing, provides practical solutions to pressing policy problems, and is packaged to attract policymakers’ interest;
- Researchers and policymakers share common networks, trust each other, and communicate effectively.

But these three conditions are rarely met in practice. Although researchers and practitioners can control the credibility of their evidence and ensure they interact with and communicate well with policymakers, they often have limited capacity to influence the political context within which they work. Resources are also limited, and researchers and practitioners need to make choices

Table 1: How to influence policy and practice

What researchers need to know	What researchers need to do	How to do it
<p>Political Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who are the policymakers? • Is there policymaker demand for new ideas? • What are the sources / strengths of resistance? • What is the policymaking process? • What are the opportunities and timing for input into formal processes? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get to know the policymakers, their agendas and their constraints. • Identify potential supporters and opponents. • Keep an eye on the horizon and prepare for opportunities in regular policy processes. • Look out for – and react to – unexpected policy windows. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the policymakers. • Seek commissions. • Line up research programmes with high-profile policy events. • Reserve resources to be able to move quickly to respond to policy windows. • Allow sufficient time and resources
<p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the current theory? • What are the prevailing narratives? • How divergent is the new evidence? • What sort of evidence will convince policymakers? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish credibility over the long term. • Provide practical solutions to problems. • Establish legitimacy. • Build a convincing case and present clear policy options. • Package new ideas in familiar theory or narratives. • Communicate effectively. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build up programmes of high-quality work. • Action-research and Pilot projects to demonstrate benefits of new approaches. • Use participatory approaches to help with legitimacy and implementation. • Clear strategy for communication from the start. • Face-to-face communication.
<p>Links:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who are the key stakeholders? • What links and networks exist between them? • Who are the intermediaries, and do they have influence? • Whose side are they on? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get to know the other stakeholders. • Establish a presence in existing networks. • Build coalitions with like-minded stakeholders. • Build new policy networks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships between researchers, policymakers and policy end-users. • Identify key networkers and salesmen. • Use informal contacts.
<p>External Influences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who are main international actors in the policy process? • What influence do they have? • What are their aid priorities? • What are their research priorities and mechanisms? • What are the policies of the donors funding the research? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get to know the donors, their priorities and constraints. • Identify potential supporters, key individuals and networks. • Establish credibility. • Keep an eye on donor policy and look out for policy windows. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop extensive background on donor policies. • Orient communications to suit donor priorities and language. • Cooperate with donors and seek commissions. • Contact (regularly) key individuals.

about what they do. By making more informed, strategic choices, researchers can maximise their chances of policy influence.

What Can Researchers Do?

Evidence from ODI's work so far provides preliminary recommendations in four areas, which are laid out in Table 1.

RAPID has been testing and developing the practical applications of this framework through a series of case studies and international workshops. It is clear that the conditions of the political context, the evidence, the links and the external factors vary greatly according to the particular situation. Further information on the use of the framework in a variety of specific contexts will be presented in subsequent Briefing Papers.

Source Material

This Briefing Paper is based on work conducted in the RAPID Programme at ODI, and particularly draws on the book *Bridging Research and Policy in International Development: Evidence and the Change Process* by Julius Court, Ingie Hovland and John Young (ITDG, 2004).

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The RAPID Context, Evidence, Links Framework for Analysis

The RAPID framework can be used as a conceptual framework to help researchers and policy entrepreneurs understand the role that evidence-based research plays, amongst other issues, in influencing policy. The four components of the framework can provide the user with in-depth and valuable information regarding policy windows, key policy actors and networks, gaps in the existing evidence, alternative means of communication and trends and changes in the external environment. Unfortunately, addressing all these issues can prove a daunting task. This tool can be used to ease the process. Thus, it presents some of the key questions that the researcher or policy entrepreneur should answer.

Detailed outline of the process

This is a very flexible tool. The questions provided are only intended to guide the user in the process. It is the user who must assess whether the answers to these questions paint the whole picture or if other important questions remain unanswered.

Context

1. Who are the key policy actors (including policymakers)?
2. Is there a demand for research and new ideas among policymakers?
3. What are the sources of resistance to evidence-based policymaking?
4. What is the policy environment?
 - a. What are the policymaking structures?
 - b. What are the policymaking processes?
 - c. What is the relevant legal/policy framework?
 - d. What are the opportunities and timing for input into formal processes?
5. How do global, national and community-level political, social and economic structures and interests affect the room for manoeuvre of policymakers?
6. Who shapes the aims and outputs of policies?
7. How do assumptions and prevailing narratives (which ones?) influence policymaking; to what extent are decisions routine, incremental, fundamental or emergent, and who supports or resists change?

Evidence

1. What is the current theory or prevailing narratives?
2. Is there enough evidence (research based, experience and statistics)?
 - a. How divergent is the evidence?
3. What type of evidence exists?
 - a. What type convinces policymakers?
 - b. How is evidence presented?
4. Is the evidence relevant? Is it accurate, material and applicable?
5. How was the information gathered and by whom?
6. Are the evidence and the source perceived as credible and trustworthy by policy actors?
7. Has any information or research been ignored and why?

Links

1. Who are the key stakeholders?
2. Who are the experts?

3. What links and networks exist between them?
4. What roles do they play? Are they intermediaries between research and policy?
5. Whose evidence and research do they communicate?
6. Which individuals or institutions have significant power to influence policy?
7. Are these policy actors and networks legitimate? Do they have a constituency among the poor?

External Environment

1. Who are main international actors in the policy process?
2. What influence do they have? Who influences them?
3. What are their aid priorities and policy agendas?
4. What are their research priorities and mechanisms?
5. How do social structures and customs affect the policy process?
6. Are there any overarching economic, political or social processes and trends?
7. Are there exogenous shocks and trends that affect the policy process?

Once the questions have been answered the researcher or policy entrepreneur should consider what roles can the different policy actors (including him or herself) play. For instance:

- Is there a need for more and/or different evidence? How can this new evidence be produced? Should NGOs, grassroots organisations or think tanks and research centres be doing things differently? If there is sufficient evidence, does it need to be re-packaged and presented differently?
- Are the existing networks sufficient to carry research findings into the policy process? How can they be supported to improve their impact on policy? What new roles should these and new networks play?
- Are policymakers and policy structures supportive of evidence-based policymaking? If not, how can they be made to be so? What capacities and skills do they need to use evidence and link with researchers? How can policymakers promote the production of more and more relevant and useful research?
- How can the external forces be used to promote evidence-based policymaking? Should the support networks and/or CSOs promote the supply of evidence? Or should they work with policymakers to promote the demand of evidence?

A good example

The RAPID programme has used this tool in its analysis of various policy processes. The three examples below can be read at the following link: <http://www.odi.org.uk/rapid/Projects/R0040a/Summary.html>.

Poverty Reduction Strategies

The case study aims to answer how, during 1999, the international discourse about the Common Development Framework became linked to the adoption of the Enhanced HIPC framework by the G8, and then translated into the process of preparing the first interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers. What happened in between? Who influenced whom, on what and how? What was the specific contribution of research-based knowledge, and what conditions enabled this influence to be exercised in such a striking way?

Humanitarian Aid

One of the most significant policy shifts in the international humanitarian sector in the last decade has been the move to strengthen the accountability of humanitarian agencies and to find ways of improving performance in humanitarian response. One of the key policy initiatives, representative

of this shift, was the decision to launch the Sphere project in 1996, in the wake of the much-criticised international humanitarian response to the Rwanda crisis. Sphere resulted in the publication of a 'Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards for Disaster Response' in 2000. This case study explores the process that led up to this policy initiative. For example, how significant was the Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda? What were the other key factors that triggered the launching of Sphere? How significant was the policy context, in which humanitarian agencies were subject to harsh and public criticism?

Livestock Services

This is an interesting case study because it is one in which a policy change was absent, even when evidence wasn't. Livestock services have long been regarded as an easy target for reform and privatisation, first under structural adjustment programmes in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and more recently, as part of re-orientating agricultural services under poverty reduction strategies. Veterinarians and governments in most countries, however, have been very reluctant to liberalise the policy framework to allow private and especially para-professional services to flourish, despite good evidence that paravets can provide an effective, cost-efficient and safe service. This research identifies the critical factors and the relevance of research in the evolving livestock service policies particularly in Eastern, and the Horn of Africa.

Further information and resources

RAPID has produced a series of resources that can be accessed through its website at <http://www.odi.org.uk/rapid/>. RAPID's Briefing Paper on bridging research and policy offers a good introduction into the subject. On page four, the Briefing Paper presents a table that can help move from the questions to an action strategy – it is available in English, French and Spanish (http://www.odi.org.uk/rapid/Publications/RAPID_BP_1.html). Similarly, other institutions working on similar issues can offer alternative and complementary frameworks to understand the links between research and policy (<http://www.odi.org.uk/rapid/Links/>).

Evidence-based Policy: Importance and Issues

1. Introduction

What is the purpose of the toolkit?

Over the last decade the UK government has been promoting the concept of 'evidence-based policy' (EBP). We are constantly asked by our partners in the South about what is happening in the UK regarding EBP and what can they learn from the UK experience. The aim of this toolkit is to identify lessons and approaches from EBP in the UK which may be valuable for developing countries. The approaches and tools presented are based on the assumption that the reader is a progressive policymaker in a developing country, and one who is interested in utilising EBP. The intended audience is made up of policymakers and policy advisers in the public sector, rather than those working within the private sector or civil society.

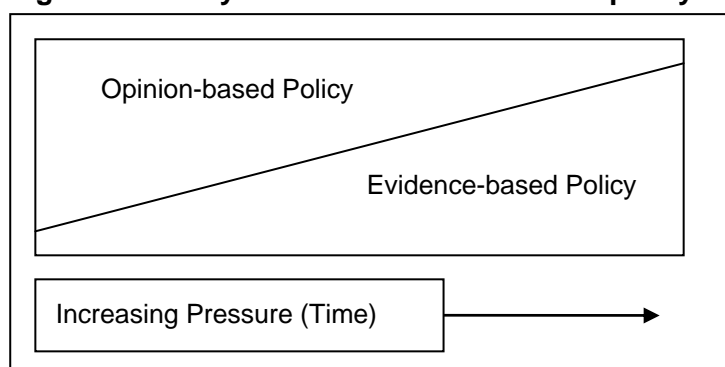
Where does EBP come from?

Using evidence to inform policy is not a new idea. What is new and interesting, however, is the increasing emphasis that has been placed on the concept in the UK over the last decade. The term evidence-based policymaking (EBP) has gained political currency under the New Labour governments since 1997. The emphasis was intended to signify the entry of a government with a modernising mandate, one committed to replacing ideologically driven politics with rational decision making. EBP has now become a focus for a range of policy communities, whether government departments, research organisations or think-tanks.

What is EBP?

EBP is an approach that 'helps people make well informed decisions about policies, programmes and projects by putting the best available evidence from research at the heart of policy development and implementation' (Davies, 2004: 3). EBP is a discourse or set of methods which informs the policy process, rather than one which aims directly to affect the eventual goals of the policy. It advocates a more rational, rigorous and systematic approach. The pursuit of EBP is based on the premise that policy decisions should be better informed by available evidence, and should include rational analysis. This is because policy and practice which are based on systematic evidence are seen to produce better outcomes. The desired progression is showed in Figure 1 below. As Davies notes (ibid) 'The diagram shows a shift away from opinion based policies being replaced by a more rigorous, rational approach that gathers, critically appraises and uses high quality research evidence to inform policymaking and professional practice.'

Figure 1: The dynamics of evidence-based policy



2. Key issues surrounding EBP¹

What evidence is used in the policymaking process?

What is clear from the literature is that evidence is an ambiguous term. We take the view that evidence-based policy should be based on systematic evidence; that is, research-based evidence. The key to this is that we adopt a very general, though widely accepted, definition of research as 'any systematic effort to increase the stock of knowledge' (OECD, 1981). Thus we include all kinds of evidence, provided they have been collected through a systematic process. This may include critical investigation and evaluation, theory building, data collection, analysis, and codification related to development policy and practice. It also includes action research, i.e. self-reflection by practitioners orientated towards the enhancement of direct practice. In effect, we are talking about research-based evidence-based policy – for ease, we stick to the term evidence-based policy.

It would be a mistake to assume that in reality all forms of evidence share equal importance, relevance or weighting. Departments and units within the government tend to make hierarchical judgements in choosing what evidence to use, where and how – these decisions are often deeply embedded in assumptions regarding validity and power. Often, it is only hard evidence (or empirical data) that is used. This is often narrow-minded: tacit forms of knowledge, practice-based wisdom and, perhaps most importantly, the voices of ordinary citizens – the 'voices of poor' – are often equally useful. The implication is therefore that an EBP approach should take into consideration a wide breadth of sources of research, not just hard evidence.

What issues should governments consider when trying to identify what evidence is useful? Recent work (Court, Hovland, and Young, 2005; Shaxson, 2005) suggests that governments should consider:

- **Accuracy:** Is the evidence correctly describing what it purports to do?
- **Objectivity:** The quality of the approach taken to generate evidence and the objectiveness of the source, as well as the extent of contestation regarding evidence.
- **Credibility:** This relates to the reliability of the evidence and therefore whether we can depend on it for monitoring, evaluation or impact assessments.
- **Generalisability:** Is there extensive information or are there just selective cases or pilots?
- **Relevance:** Whether evidence is timely, topical and has policy implications.
- **Availability:** The existence of (good) evidence.
- **Rootedness:** Is evidence grounded in reality?
- **Practicalities:** Whether policymakers have access to the evidence in a useful form and whether the policy implications of the research are feasible and affordable.

How evidence is incorporated into policymaking

Policy processes ideally involve different stages: agenda setting; formulation; implementation; and evaluation. Evidence has the potential to influence the policymaking process at each of these stages. Different types of evidence are often needed for different parts of the policy process, and time considerations are likely to influence the mechanisms available to mobilise evidence.

For each different part of the policy process, we revise the work of Pollard and Court (2005) to outline some specific issues regarding use of evidence.

¹ For a detailed discussion, please refer to the paper by the authors at: www.odi.org.uk/Rapid/Projects/PPA0117/.

Table 1: Components of policy process and different evidence issues

Stage of the policy process	Description	Different evidence issues
Agenda setting	Awareness and priority given to an issue	The evidence needs here are in terms of identifying new problems or the build up of evidence regarding the magnitude of a problem so that relevant policy actors are aware that the problem is indeed important. A key factor here is the credibility of evidence but also the way evidence is communicated.
Formulation	There are two key stages to the policy formulation process: determining the policy options and then selecting the preferred option (see Young and Quinn, 2002: 13-14)	For both stages, policymakers should ideally ensure that their understanding of the specific situation and the different options is as detailed and comprehensive as possible; only then can they make informed decisions about which policy to go ahead and implement. This includes the instrumental links between an activity and an outcome as well as the expected cost and impact of an intervention. The quantity and credibility of the evidence is important.
Implementation	Actual practical activities	Here the focus is on operational evidence to improve the effectiveness of initiatives. This can include analytic work as well as systematic learning around technical skills, expert knowledge and practical experience. Action research and pilot projects are often important. The key is that the evidence is practically relevant across different contexts.
Evaluation	Monitoring and assessing the process and impact of an intervention	The first goal here is to develop monitoring mechanisms. Thereafter, according to Young and Quinn (2002), 'a comprehensive evaluation procedure is essential in determining the effectiveness of the implemented policy and in providing the basis for future decision-making'. In the processes of monitoring and evaluation, it is important to ensure not only that the evidence is objective, thorough and relevant, but also that it is then communicated successfully into the continuing policy process.

Source: Adapted from Pollard and Court (2005).

Evidence is not the only factor which influences policymaking

It is important to acknowledge that at each stage of the policy cycle a number of different factors will also affect policy. This occurs both at an individual level, e.g. in terms of a policymaker's own experience, expertise and judgement, and at an institutional level, e.g. in terms of institutional incentives, interests and capacity. There are also a number of constraints that will limit the extent to which evidence can affect policy, e.g. the pressure to process information quickly. Policymaking is neither objective nor neutral: it is an inherently political process. Nutley (2003: 12) highlights the fact that the interaction between policymakers and researchers is limited by the divergence of these two worlds. They use different languages and have different priorities, agendas, timescales and reward systems. As a consequence, a communication gap often exists.

There are clearly challenges here, but the consensus among researchers, policymakers and practitioners is that more evidence-based approaches to policy and practice are a positive development.

3. The implications of EBP for developing countries

Why does EBP matter for developing countries?

We are convinced that that EBP approaches have the potential to have even greater impact on socioeconomic outcomes in developing countries. This is because EBP tends to be less well established in developing countries than in developed ones. Indeed, better use of evidence in policy and practice could help dramatically reduce poverty and improve economic performance in

developing countries. Two cases highlight the value of EBP in developing countries – one where evidence dramatically improved lives, the other where the lack of an evidence-based response has caused widespread devastation. In the first case, the government of Tanzania has implemented a process of health service reforms informed by the results of household disease surveys; this contributed to an over 40% reduction in infant mortality between 2000 and 2003 in the two pilot districts. On the other hand, the HIV/AIDS crisis has deepened in some countries because governments have ignored the evidence regarding what causes the disease and how to prevent it spreading.

Translation of EBP to developing country contexts

Increasing the use of evidence-based policy approaches in developing countries undoubtedly introduces new challenges. It is important to note that there is considerable diversity in terms of cultural, economic and political contexts, which makes it difficult to make valid generalisations here. Below, however, we try to highlight a few of the key differences that exist across the developing world and that would affect the effective use of EBP approaches (as based on Court, 2005).

A few of the issues that may matter in some countries include:

- Weaker economic conditions: resources for research and policy are scarcer.
- Difficult political environments: there are many places where political freedoms are limited and public accountability systems are weak, even in countries where elections occur (Hyden, Court and Mease, 2004). Political volatility tends to have a negative impact on the use of evidence in policy processes.
- It is often in the implementation component of policy processes that barriers to evidence use are largest. Many commentators note problems with accountability, participation, corruption and lack of incentives/capacity to draw in evidence in policy implementation.
- Academic freedom, media freedom and civil society strength matter for effective EBP. This is also a key factor in communicating ideas into policy and practice.
- Capacity is more limited with regards to generating rigorous evidence and formulating policy.
- Conditions of conflict: civil wars or low intensity conflicts limit the application of evidence-based policy.

As a result of research on Sri Lanka, Hornby and Perera (2002) argue that there are a number of factors that make using EBP in developing countries more challenging. These include the lack of performance management within many developing countries; the lack of indicators at the political level or which monitor service provision; the lack of institutional mechanisms; and the lack of ongoing evaluation.

These factors affect evidence-based policy on both the supply and demand side, as well as the relationship between the two. In terms of the supply of evidence, stable and open political systems allow evidence to be freely gathered, assessed and communicated. In terms of demand, democracies imply a greater accountability of governments and therefore a greater incentive to improve policy and performance. Democratic contexts also imply the existence of more open entry-points into the policymaking process and there are fewer constraints on communication. In contrast, autocratic regimes often tend to limit the gathering and communication of evidence and have weak accountability mechanisms. For example, a case study from Uruguay charted the negative effect the dictatorship had on the use of research in health policy (Salvatella, Muzio and Sánchez, 2000: 67-76).

It is clear that in some contexts, the real challenge is not about evidence-based policymaking but instead about the general challenges of a troubled political context. In an increasing number of countries, however, the context is improving. And in many, there are thresholds that have been reached which merit a greater focus on evidence-based policy. Chile, for example, in many ways

provides an 'ideal' case, where research and local technical expertise often contribute to improving policy frameworks within the context of a democratic polity. This is also the case in Tanzania, which has often used the evidence base to improve policy and practice despite its very low income (one good example is mentioned above). In such contexts, many of the tools and approaches we propose are worth considering. These would, of course, need to be adapted to make them relevant to local context.

4. Summary of main points

We have identified some important considerations. It is clear from the literature that:

- Evidence use does matter: better use of evidence in policy and practice can help reduce poverty and improve economic performance in developing countries.
- Policy should be informed by a wide breadth of evidence, not just empirical data. Key issues include the quality, credibility, relevance and cost of the policy.
- Evidence is needed in all the different components of policy processes – and in different ways in each component.
- Various constraints (time, capacity, cost) will affect the mechanisms available for mobilising evidence for policy in developing countries.
- Policy processes are inherently political: although some developing countries have troubled contexts, an increasing number should explore EBP approaches.

The next challenge is to analyse the conditions facilitating evidence-informed policymaking (Nutley, 2003) and translate these into practical tools for the governments of developing countries.

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Getting Evidence into Policy: Approaches and Tools Used in the UK

1. Approaches

Having highlighted the central debates surrounding the issue of EBP, we now focus on the practical means existing in the UK to integrate evidence into policy. This section puts forward some general approaches promoted in the UK. In Section 3, we reveal some more specific tools that are used in the UK. Neither of these two sections is exhaustive; only some of the possible approaches and tools available are represented. This is very much a work in progress and feedback is therefore welcomed. These tools are targeted at progressive policymakers: this section assumes that the reader is in an amenable context and interested in implementing EBP.

What can policymakers do to increase the use of EBP? To change the *status quo* towards EBP within government departments, policymakers need to understand the value of evidence; become more informed as to what research is available and how to gain access to it; and be able to critically appraise it (Davies, 2004: 18). The relationship will only work if researchers and policymakers work more closely together to ensure that there is an agreement, between them and within the research community, as to what constitutes evidence (ibid).

One possible way of achieving the increased use of evidence is by getting policymakers to 'own' evidence and therefore gain commitment and buy in at appropriate levels: 'in central government this usually means getting Ministers and senior policy officials to sign up to the ownership of a project and the evidence that goes to support it' (ibid: 19). Importantly, this involves making a commitment to using findings whether or not they support the project, and therefore not continuing with the policy or programme if the evidence reveals that it is ineffective. This is most likely to occur in organisational structures that are non-hierarchical, open and democratic (ibid: 18).

Better incentives also need to be established to encourage the use of evidence. For example, at the level of central government departments in the UK, Public Service Agreements (PSAs) and Service Delivery Agreements (SDAs) coupled with the biennial Spending Reviews by HM Treasury, provide some incentive to establish evidence of effectiveness and efficiency. Davies (ibid: 21) also highlights the use of tools such as delivery and service agreements, national and local targets, and triennial spending reviews in the UK. At local level, the devolution of budgets to frontline agencies and decision-making bodies such as hospital trusts, primary care teams, local education authorities and school governors, has provided a similar incentive to summon and use sound evidence in resource allocation and service development (ibid: 18).

Clearly, the onus to improve the availability and dissemination of sound research lies not only with policymakers but also with researchers. The development of research syntheses by groups such as the Cochrane and Campbell Collaborations, the Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centre (EPPI-Centre), and the Economic and Society Research Council (ESRC) Evidence Network, has shown that there is often a lack of sound, conclusive evidence even when there has been considerable research activity on some topic or problem; therefore, what is perhaps needed is systematic reviews of what we already know and the increased use of routine assessments and audits (ibid). Hornby and Perera (2002: 171) reinforce this argument, drawing on their experiences in Sri Lanka and arguing that there is a need for the ongoing evaluation of health system and health policies. They do, however, highlight that this would necessitate substantial organisational support.

Fundamentally, there needs to be increased communication and interaction between the research and policy worlds in order to strengthen the integration of policy and evidence. This can be achieved by setting up mechanisms that will facilitate greater use of evidence by policymakers.

Means by which to increase the 'pull' factor for evidence, such as requiring spending bids to be supported by an analysis of the existing base, are outlined in Box 1.

There is a need to build Institutional bridges which facilitate greater sustained interaction between researchers and research users. One suggestion has been to encourage the early involvement of in-house and 'outside' researchers in the policymaking process. More integrated teams would help researchers better to understand the sorts of questions that they need answered. An example of this is the team used at the design stage of the Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA) demonstration project (Davies, 2004: 18). Another suggestion is setting up intermediary bodies. In the UK, a new set of institutions now exists to organise and create knowledge in health. These include the National Institute for Clinical Excellence; the NHS Centre for Reviews and Dissemination, and the Cochrane collaboration (Mulgan, 2003: 3). Another possible response is the co-location of policymakers and internal analysts, although Nutley (2003) questions whether this is a necessary precondition for sustained interaction. A further potentially important mechanism is the use of secondments to encourage the exchange of staff between government departments and universities. Other possible means by which to increase the level of communication include: learning each others languages; more fora for discussion; and joint training and professional development opportunities for policymakers and researchers (Davies, 2004: 18).

Box 1: Encouraging better use of evidence in policymaking

Increasing the pull for evidence

- Require the publication of the evidence base for policy decisions
- Require departmental spending bids to provide a supporting evidence base
- Submit government analysis (such as forecasting models) to external expert scrutiny
- Provide open access to information – leading to more informed citizens and pressure groups

Facilitating better evidence use

- Encourage better collaboration across internal analytical services (e.g. researchers, statisticians and economists)
- Co-locate policymakers and internal analysts
- Integrate analytical staff at all stages of the policy development process
- Link R&D strategies to departmental business plans
- Cast external researchers more as partners than as contractors
- Second more university staff into government
- Train staff in evidence use

Source: Abstracted from PIU (2000) and Bullock et al. (2001), in Nutley (2003).

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Impact and Insight Workshops

[<-- Back](#)

Phil Davies, Deputy Director, Government and Social Research Unit, UK Cabinet Office

A transcript of a talk at ODI, Impact and Insight meeting, 17th October 2005 (Click on the images to see his presentation)

Evidence-based policy at the Cabinet Office

I was asked to talk about evidence-based policy at the Cabinet Office. When I looked at this last week, I thought, it could be a very thin talk if I only talked about the Cabinet Office. Not a lot happens there in terms of getting evidence into policy except for the Government and Social Research Unit's job of analysing policy, and the work of the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit which, as it says on the tin, is trying to think more strategically about policy in five, ten and fifteen year cycles. The Strategy Unit should, therefore, be more evidence-based than other areas of government - or at least as evidence-based. So since I thought the title 'evidence-based policy at the Cabinet Office' may not be too fulfilling for you, I decided to change it to 'making public policy more evidence-based'. That seems to be what we are interested in around this table, and it is certainly what we are trying to do. It means identifying the opportunities for doing this, as well as the barriers and how to overcome them.

I will give you a brief outline of what I want to talk about. Firstly, I want to give you the reasons why I think we need evidence-based policy. Secondly, I want to talk about factors other than evidence. Appreciating the complexity of the things which compete with evidence is one of the most important things I have had to learn since transferring from academic life to working in government. (I have been working in government for five years now.) I also want to talk a little bit about different kinds of evidence because there is a huge contested field about what counts as evidence, particularly research evidence. Lastly, I have identified four major problems and I will offer some solutions.

The first reason why I think we should be interested in evidence-based policy is above all for improving effectiveness. It would be very good if in government we did more good than harm. I take that to be fairly self-evident, but there is sometimes an assumption in government circles that policy is about absolute good - and that any policy idea you came up with must be good because you came up with it. As we know that is not always all the case. We can all cite chapter and verse about policies which have gone disastrously wrong, and just the notion that we not only may be ineffective, but may actually cause more harm than good, is an important thing for us to consider. This is a concept which I have borrowed from twenty years in evidence-based medicine. We discovered in the 1990s that medicine could often do more harm than good and often the best way to intervene was by doing nothing.

The second reason is efficiency. We are all using scarce public resources and therefore trying to get the maximum effect from them. I will come back to that in a moment. Certainly, within the rhetoric of the Blair administration, we are supposed to have a service orientation: we should be meeting citizens' needs and expectations. Indeed, something which we are working on at the moment is a customer satisfaction index for the whole of government, which is quite interesting (though I will not go into it here).

There is also an accountability issue. I think that accountability is one of the major advantages of having a more evidence-based approach. Whatever the area of policy, whether it is medicine, education, international justice, social welfare or international development, it is very nice to know what people do and why they do it. One of the major developments in this respect has been the Freedom of Information Act. Our department gets many enquiries from the public wanting to know why the government has done x, y or z. It has been really positive to see the level of public involvement over the first nine or ten months. I am sure that individual departments get enquiries as well. It is important that people are aware of what government is doing and of the effectiveness and efficiency criteria. This is an important part of the democratic process. Given that we are trying to enhance or restore more trust in government (which seems to be yet again in doubt), I think that this can enhance the establishment of trust by making government more open, transparent, service-oriented and efficient.

To me, evidence-based policy is in essence quite straightforward and the driving reason behind why we want evidence-based policy is that it is about helping people to make well informed decisions by putting the best available evidence from research at the heart of development and implementation. It does not matter whether the decisions are in government, in practice, or any other decision-making context, nor whether they are at the local, national, or supranational levels. The two words which are contentious within that definition are 'from research'. The problem I think we have is that people want to use evidence, but they do not necessarily want to use research evidence. That has been one of my problems working in government. Research evidence is not as valued as much as perhaps some of us around this table would like it to be.



I want to consider some of the other factors that influence policy making. When research evidence is not a factor, what else is driving policy? Governments, departments and the civil service are like many other organisations. They are full of people who claim - and indeed may have - expertise and experience which they often feel trumps the evidence. At one level I think that this is right - it is important not to disregard the experience which people have, whether that is substantive expertise or the kind of tacit knowledge which many people believe is at the heart of good practice. This kind of knowledge is about knowing when to do things and what to do and it does come with experience. Similarly, judgement is very important. It is what politics and good decision-making are about and skills of good judgement are developed over time. But it would be nice to see that judgement based not just on expertise but also on research evidence.

The issue of efficiency is also at the heart of another very real problem which we are likely to be facing over the next few years, which is the problem of declining resources. It has been a relatively good time since 1997 and there has been a pretty much year-on-year increase in public expenditure in the areas of interest to those around this table. It will probably not be like that for a few more years given the slowing down of the economy. As we know, in the 1980s and 1990s, the availability of resources to many of the programmes that we are interested in was very sharply defined.

When people say that evidence-based policy is about what works, I am not sure that is quite true. It is about what works, at what cost and with what outcomes. It would be extremely myopic, if not stupid, not to realise that politics is also about values and about political contexts. There is an excellent piece in the Journal of International Development, which John Young and others shared with me, in which this point is made very clearly. The policy context, and indeed the political context, is highly important to understanding when and how you can use evidence. John's own paper was talking about international development, but I would say that it is just as important in the domestic context. We need to acknowledge that people have fought pretty hard to get into power, based largely on values and beliefs and self-beliefs. I would put these near the top of the list of factors which are competing with evidence and with trying to get people to think in a more evidence-based way.

Habit and tradition are things which most organisations have to deal with, but believe me, in the civil service, parliament and government, there is a very habitual and traditional way of doing things. When we sometimes ask why we are doing things in the Cabinet Office, the answer is 'because we have always done them that way'. Very often that is how organisations function. One of the tasks of any evidence-based practitioner should be to challenge that and to suggest another way of doing it. I worked as a lecturer in a university for twenty years which, as many people here will know, is an extremely habitual and tradition based university. With two new vice chancellors in recent years they are starting to think about things in a different way.

Lobbyists and pressure groups play a crucial role. I am beginning to think that if, as evidence-based policy practitioners, we want to get things done, we ought to become a lobby group or a pressure group, or certainly to learn some of their tricks. I am amazed at how good they are at getting very simple messages into practice very quickly, and we are not. So I am trying to learn more about how it works.

My final factor is sheer pragmatics and contingencies. Things just happen and when something like Foot and Mouth or bird flu breaks out, we find that no one had really thought about it. People start doing unproven things, or doing nothing at all. Nobody really imagined that two planes would fly into the side of a building in New York, or that people will put bombs on the Underground, but once that happens, the whole prioritisation and modus operandi of government changes and you have to be very careful not to lose track of what the government was trying to do. This is true for other organisations as well; most organisations had to change dramatically in light of those major national incidents. The Iraq war happened and as a consequence of that we now have yet another fuel crisis, which in my estimation is likely to get worse before it gets better. That undermines the whole basis on which the overall five or ten year programme of government was built. Whilst every government has contingencies, it is very easy to go outside those contingencies and to have to think again.

My view is that it is when these things happen that is when we should turn to evidence. Most people in government say that that is when you cannot use evidence; you have to be a decision-maker, use judgement, expertise. That is true, but if you think of two of the highly chronicled disasters of policy in the last ten years, BSE and Foot and Mouth - BSE was independently reviewed by the Phillips enquiry and Foot and Mouth by the Royal Society - and they made almost identical critiques of what went wrong. Both of them said that we should have looked at the evidence in a more systematic and analytical way, rather than trying to 'wing it' or listen to pressure groups such as the National Farmers' Union or whomever was advising (in that case wholly inappropriately). Rather than abandoning evidence, these are precisely the situations where you need to have evidence most.

This leads to the issue about what types of evidence we need for policy and practice and what types of evidence we actually use in government. A lot of government is, or should be, about trying to establish the impact of something - and whether the government's policy is going to have an impact over and above doing something else, or doing nothing at all. This goes back to my point about trying to do more harm than good. I passionately believe that in order to do that, we need experimental or quasi-experimental studies, where these can be done appropriately. I am talking about studies which include a counterfactual comparator and which can tell us what would happen if we did something else, or did nothing.

However, a whole lot of government is not just about determining what the impact of a policy would be, it is also about how to implement it and how to get it to work on the ground in very varied circumstances. Most of



you here today work in the international arena, but even within Britain we often find that the implementation strategies which we need for a welfare to work policy, or a health or education policy, may be massively variable across the country. We have very varied demography, labour markets and culture across Britain. For this, again, I think we need experimental and quasi-experimental research, but we also tend to need much more qualitative and descriptive work, interview work and focus group work. We certainly need ethnographic work, and we do not use good ethnographic work in government nearly as much as we should. We spend a lot of money on qualitative research, possibly around half of the total amount we spend on external research in a year, and I have to say I am less than impressed with the quality of much of it. I am also less than impressed with what is done with it, but the two are no doubt somewhat related.

I also think that we need to be very clear about what the theory of change is that is that we are trying to use and that is being pursued between policy inputs and policy outcomes. This is my fifth problem: that policy-makers tend not to think in terms of the theory of change. The very word theory often closes policy-makers down and they do not want to know, so I often use the term 'logic model' or some sequential model. How do you expect making children do homework for two hours a night to raise literacy standards? That is government policy, but what is the logic by which we ask children to do homework? We need to unpack the logic by which we are asking kids to do homework, particularly when it is not always clear that it works. Of course if you ask some children to do their homework in twenty minutes they will do it all absolutely fine, but other children will take a lot longer and need a lot more help with it. We need to unpack the theory of change at that level, and at the outset of making policy.

We do need descriptive analytical evidence and we utilise it a great deal in government. The government sponsors dozens of major surveys and are now pushing for one much more coordinated survey which will bring together a number of other government surveys. The government owns acres of administrative data and it is nice to be able to view this in a comparative context. Once every year or two years the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit does a strategic audit for Number Ten, where we look at the range of things going on in British society and compare them with other countries of comparable economic development.

I think we also need attitudinal evidence, by which I mean gauging roughly what the limits to government are, how far governments can go with public policy and how far they can take the electorate. You can always challenge the electorate and try to go beyond that, but if you do not even know 'where the electorate are at', you can find yourself in dire trouble, as I believe the Thatcher administration discovered over the Poll Tax. The Poll Tax was clearly never going to work from day one, partly because they had piloted it in Scotland and it had not worked there and partly because of historical reasons, but it was quite clear that it simply did not go down well with ordinary voters. They could see through it very easily.

We do need to know a bit about numbers, what would happen if we did x and y and z. We need scenario planning, statistical models and various aspects of multivariate analysis. Because of the resource issue which I mentioned earlier and concerns about efficiency, we do need cost-benefit data, cost-effectiveness data and cost-utility data. We also need at least a few people who are able to do and understand the econometrics of that and use some of the statistical modelling techniques to see what sorts of outcomes we are going to get with different scenarios for public expenditure.

My last point about the types of evidence we need relates to a broader issue to which we give far too little attention in government and that is ethical evidence. We need to consider in ethical terms the rights and wrongs, pros and cons, and advantages and disadvantages of doing various things. Given that most of the task of government is about allocating scarce resources and making trade-offs, there is a question about the basis on which those trade-offs are made - not just a technical or technocratic basis, but an ethical one. Whether we are looking at decisions concerning road versus railways versus other modes of transport, or whether you are looking at the care of the elderly or the care of very young children, we are invoking certain models of how we value life and resources. This begs the question of who is making those decisions. There have been a lot of attempts in various areas of public policy to carry out public consultation, such as the Oregon method in United States' healthcare, the town hall community methods, citizens' juries that have been tried in Britain, and various public consultation mechanisms. My point is that these decisions and issues are not just for decision-makers in Whitehall or in local authorities, PCTs [Primary Care Trusts] or education authorities to make; they are issues we should be addressing in a more collective way. I am not sure of the best ways to do that, but I do think it is important that we take into consideration ethical evidence.

I want to avoid the notion that all you need to have is a set of randomised control trials and the world will be a better place, or the idea that if we had the most definitive ethnography of how to make Easterhouse a nice place to live in we would be alright. I think that those single discipline, single methodology arguments are pointless, erroneous and do not help us to build the balanced evidence-base that we need for decision-making. You have to decide in each case what types of evidence you need for each type of question.

We have five problems in terms of how we get from opinion-based models to evidence-based models of policy making. First of all, social scientific knowledge is often not up to the challenge. Not all the social scientific research that is done is of sufficient quality. In doing quite a lot of systematic review work, the specific problems I have found with it are: unclear objectives, poor research designs, bad or selective data reporting, methodological weaknesses, unsupported conclusions and the sheer uncertainty of unscientific knowledge. In some areas of public policy, the political and social scientific knowledge is very uncertain. In some areas of government you get moves towards evidence-based policy. The Royal Society's review of the Foot and Mouth outbreak of 2001 showed that some of the policies of the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA had an evidence base something like this [see graph]. DEFRA is now

building up its social and economic capacity and improving the evidence-base of its policies There may be other departments trying to develop an evidence-base, such as the Department of Education and Skills trying to find out the most effective ways to teach mathematics and science. We know a lot more than we did ten years ago but there are still a lot of areas which remain highly contested and uncertain. On the other hand some of the Welfare to Work and the New Deal policies which have been introduced by DWP started from a high evidence-base from the outset which left little scope for opinion-based policy. These scenarios can be built both within and between departments. We have a very variable social scientific data and knowledge base.

The second problem is that there are often very different notions of what counts as evidence between policy-makers and researchers. These findings [see [slide 11](#)] come from Jonathan Lomas' work in Canada, but I will also report to you the findings of some work which we have just finished on the Analysis for Policy project which has come to almost identical conclusions. Lomas found that policy-makers are quite prepared to look at evidence which is colloquial and highly contextual - sometimes referred to as anecdotal evidence. They will accept anything which seems reasonable. They want it to be policy-relevant and timely and they want a clear message with low contestation. In our study we have come to almost identical conclusions. Researchers' evidence tends to be obsessed with being scientific, context-free, rule-bound, empirically proven or demonstrated, theoretically driven and conducted within as long a timeframe as necessary. We social researchers tend to emphasise the caveats and qualifications, but often tend to forget that getting a clear message across is just as important. These are two very different worlds competing with each other. We are now trying to bridge these two communities and doing so is about knowledge translation.

In the work which we were doing on the Analysis for Policy project, we asked over fifty senior policy-makers across various government departments about the types of evidence which they used. They wanted quantitative and statistical evidence, economic evidence, qualitative and survey evidence. The most interesting finding was that a common type of evidence they used could be described as anecdotal evidence, including anything which could give them 'a finger to the wind' or a 'good intuitive instinct' to indicate whether they were heading in the right direction. They wanted both hard and soft evidence, from national and international sources. Two types of evidence which they did not mention were experimental evidence (which most had never heard of and did not want to know about) and systematic reviews of evidence. I mention that because in the Cabinet Office, we are currently putting a significant amount of resources into developing these two areas, only to discover that not only have most people not heard of them, but they possibly care about them even less.

If you ask policy-makers where they go for their evidence, they will tell you that they go first to their special advisors, then to people who are called experts (in whom I have little faith), then to think-tanks and opinion formers, lobbyists and professional associations, media, their constituents, consumers and various users of services and only then, if they bother, will they turn to academics and research evidence. This point was also made by an internal piece of research in the Department of Trade and Industry in which a survey of their decision-makers found that academic research was not even mentioned. Our job in the Government Social Research Unit is to try to get academic research much further up the evidence chain.

Another point, which I can only illustrate, is about the uncertain logic and theory of change. Some of you will know about the 'Scared Straight' programmes. These are juvenile awareness programmes which are supposed to reduce offending by exposing young would-be criminals to prison life. The theory is that this exposure will frighten them so that they will not commit crime. The programme evidence suggests that this does not work. Experimental evidence shows that kids who go through the programme not only do no better, but actually do a lot worse, and tend to commit crime much more than those who had not gone through the programme. The qualitative evidence which has been done on the programme is even more interesting, because it tells us why. It suggests that kids find prisoners to be positive role models of the people they want to be: tough, hard and the kind of guys that people are scared of. This in fact stimulates them to be criminals (and probably teaches them how to do it as well!). So it is not surprising that in the randomised control trials, the experimental group tended to go on to live lives of higher levels of crime. This research has been available for five years or more and has been accumulating for twenty years, and still people are using these programmes.

Another issue is the accessibility of research evidence. We asked those senior policy-makers who had used research evidence to tell us what they thought about its accessibility. They found research evidence too long, too verbose, too detailed, too dense, too impenetrable, too full of jargon, too methodological, too untimely and, above all, either non-relevant or irrelevant. These are their perceptions of what we provide in the social research industry. Again, we are going to do some follow-up work to test this out in a more survey-based way across government, as these findings were based on qualitative interviews with fifty senior policy-makers. If this turns out to be the case, you can see some of the problems which we are facing.

We are working on a number of solutions. Firstly, we are trying to integrate research planning into policy planning across government in a strategic way. CRAG stands for the Coordination of Research and Analysis for Government. It is a fairly high-level initiative which seeks to bring all government departments together at the level of senior civil servants (which includes chief scientists, chief social scientists, chief statisticians, chief economists and Permanent Secretaries) to try to plan policies across a five or ten year time-span and to plan the research that is need to support these policies. Above all, to make sure that the policies and evidence are joined up and coherent.

Secondly, the PSG (Professional Skills in Government) initiative is now giving policy-makers some incentives

for evidence-based policy by requiring them to demonstrate in their annual performance reviews that they can and have used evidence. This means that if they cannot do this, they may forfeit any personal bonuses. The idea is to give people actual incentives to get involved in using evidence, including taking part in some of the training initiatives that have been established.

We need to establish the signed-up ownership of the evidence by the senior policy-makers who often commission research. When these people move on, quite often no one wants to know about the research that has been commissioned. When we are spending half a million pounds (or even lesser amounts) on research, we cannot afford simply to walk away saying that it was the interest of the previous minister or official. It is unacceptable.

Researchers need to qualify these policy and practice issues at the outset. What is it that policy-makers want to know? What is their theory of change? What evidence is important for us to gather. This means establishing a theory of change or a logic model upfront and trying to get answerable questions. Questions such as 'do prisons work?' are not answerable questions, they are too simple questions. A question which we were asked recently by someone in government was about what evidence we had on the relationship between globalisation and crime - and whether they could have it by four o'clock! We asked more about what they actually wanted to know and it turned out that what they really wanted to know was how use of the internet had increased credit card fraud, which is an answerable question. We could find out the answer to that in two or three days, but the first question was an unanswerable question.

We in the research community must understand the policy timetable. Colleagues in the University of York recently suggested that I should try to slow down the policy process, but my job is to work to it and not against it. We need knowledge translation and to find a signal through the noise of research, even if that is a weak signal. Now that I have turned from poacher to game keeper, I get sent a lot of reports from across government, many of which I haven't a clue what they are about. I should not have to dig for four days to find out what a report which has cost us a lot of money is telling us. Various formats for good reporting are available and there are people around this table who have devised them. I like the Canadian Health Services Research Foundation format, which requires that every report which comes to government must have a one page bullet-pointed message, a three page executive summary and a final report no longer than twenty-five pages - if only because no one ever reads reports longer than twenty-five pages in government. If we want to write a 250 page book about something, that is fair enough, and it is good to have a copy and know that someone has done that work, but I can assure you that no one in government will read it.

Lastly, I want to make a point which I have borrowed from Matthew Taylor, who spoke at one of your earlier seminars. Matthew makes most of the points which I have made above, but one argument which I did not think of is one which came from IPPR (the Institute for Public Policy Research) and from that think-tank mentality. The argument is that whatever your message, if you want to convey it, you have to be consistent and to keep hammering on about it time and time again - as indeed Labour did just to get into power. Their strategy was to always keep giving the same message (even if it was the wrong one) and never go off-message.

The other side of that is about being opportunistic. The Campbell Collection's systematic review has just been published on counter-terrorism. It could not have come at a better time. After the July 7th bombings, suddenly the whole of government wants to know what to do about terrorism. On my desk lands the first review that I have seen from Campbell in a year and it goes straight to the heart of what we need to know. But it also took me two days to decipher the key findings and when I checked it with the author she confirmed that the basic conclusion was that, when it comes to counter-terrorism, not a lot works. Nonetheless, the report is now with various decision makers in government and this is probably the first time a Campbell review has ever been read by someone outside the Campbell Collaboration, and it was entirely opportunistic.

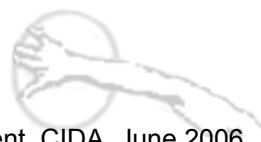
Comments and questions from the floor included:

- To the question on whether beliefs can be considered evidence, Phil Davies responded that it is important for decision makers to know what the public's beliefs are in order to understand the context in which they are making policy.
- Instead of talking about 'Theories of Change' to describe the change narratives that policymakers have about the solutions to particular problems, it was suggested to call them 'Lines of Argument'.
- It was agreed that it is also very important to consider the demand for evidence: what research is actually needed.
- Although the presentation focused on the policymaker's perspective, it was considered important to think about the incentives for researchers to develop policy relevant research
- It was emphasised that researchers need to make sure that they make their evidence more accessible. Often, academic research does not meet the requirements to satisfy the demand for evidence.

[Back to Impact and Insight Meeting 1](#)

[Top](#)

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- Final Report -

**Conceptualizing and Combining Evidence for
Health System Guidance**

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Table of Contents

Main Messages.....	1
Executive Summary.....	3
The Issue.....	7
The Approach.....	7
Section 1: What Counts as Evidence?.....	7
Two Views of Evidence — Colloquial versus Scientific.....	7
Common Themes from either Colloquial or Scientific Views of Evidence.....	8
Two Views on the Role of Scientific Evidence — Context-free versus Context-sensitive.....	10
Dimensions of Context and Scientific Evidence.....	13
What to do about Colloquial Evidence?.....	15
Section 2: Deliberative Processes for Combining Forms of Evidence.....	17
Why Use Deliberative Processes?.....	17
What is a Deliberative Process?.....	17
Two Examples of Deliberative Processes.....	19
Design Issues.....	20
Do Deliberative Processes Work?.....	22
Conclusion.....	24
Appendix 1 — Methods and Results.....	31
Appendix 2 — Articles Passing Screen and Final Review for Question 1.....	39
Appendix 3 — Articles Passing Screen and Final Review for Question 2.....	43

Main Messages

- At a basic level, the notion of evidence concerns facts (actual or asserted) intended for use in support of a conclusion.
- Most decision makers view evidence colloquially — “anything that establishes a fact or gives reason for believing something” — and define it by its relevance. Most researchers view evidence scientifically — the use of systematic, replicable methods for production — and define it by its methodology.
- Scientists’ views on the role of evidence divide into those who emphasize more context-free universal truths (identified closely with “evidence-based medicine”) and those who emphasize a context-sensitive role for evidence in a particular decision (identified closely with the applied social sciences).
- The appropriate methods for obtaining scientific evidence on context factors are not the same as those for obtaining scientific evidence on program or intervention effectiveness — but this makes such evidence no less “scientific.”
- Scientific evidence on context can usefully be divided into evidence about attitudes, implementation, organizational capacity, forecasting, economics/finance, and ethics.
- Colloquial evidence can usefully be divided into evidence about resources, expert and professional opinion, political judgment, values, habits and traditions, lobbyists and pressure groups, and the particular pragmatics and contingencies of the situation.
- These three different forms of evidence — colloquial evidence, scientific evidence on effectiveness, and scientific evidence on context — will not combine of themselves to produce health system guidance; combining and interpreting them requires a deliberative process.
- A deliberative process is participative and often follows a period of consultation with relevant stakeholders; it entails both the eliciting and the combining of various types of evidence in order to reach an evidence-based judgment.
- There is little evidence on the effectiveness of deliberative processes, though there is much to be said in favour of them on grounds of principle.
- The design of a deliberative process is not neutral and may well influence the relative weights assigned to each of the three forms of evidence, thus influencing the extent to which guidance is “evidence-based.”
- Characteristics of a deliberative process likely to ensure evidence-based guidance include consultation with all parties affected by the outcome, fair representation of scientists and stakeholders, high-quality syntheses of the scientific evidence, and skillful chairing.

Executive Summary

The worthy objective of introducing more science into decision-making started with evidence-based medicine and has spread to management of the health system and policy-making by government. As more activity in the health system is linked to the evidence-based imperative, health system stakeholders are being challenged by ambiguity surrounding the term “evidence.” It is wise, then, to ask the question “what counts as evidence for health system guidance, and how can different types of evidence be combined to produce that guidance?”

The Canadian Health Services Research Foundation undertook a systematic review to examine how the concept of evidence is treated by those who produce scientific evidence, those who formulate guidance — guidelines, standards, benchmarks, targets, advisory reports, and so on — and those who make decisions. An additional review was conducted that examined deliberative processes for combining different forms of evidence to produce health system guidance.

Views of evidence

Evidence can be considered either colloquial or scientific. Outside the research community the colloquial definition of evidence dominates; that is, evidence is “anything that establishes a fact or gives reason for believing in something.” Researchers tend to be more restrictive, confining the term evidence to information generated through a prescribed set of processes and procedures recognized as scientific. In this case, evidence is knowledge that is explicit (codified and propositional), systemic (uses transparent and explicit methods for codifying), and replicable (using the same methods with the same samples will lead to the same results). Decision makers are more likely to use the broadly inclusive, colloquial definition of evidence, though the evidence-based decision-making movement has engendered a greater regard for scientific forms of evidence.

When evidence is defined as science, its inclusion as part of guidance is determined through methodological tests. When it is defined colloquially, its inclusion is determined through relevance. Despite these differences, most authors covered in the review agreed that there is a need for evidence to be interpreted; the interpretation of evidence depends on who does the interpreting; and the legal definition of evidence is not very helpful for evidence-based health system guidance.

There are two distinct views on the role of science in health system guidance. One view is that science reveals universal truths (identified closely with evidence-based medicine). This view provides a glimpse of what might be achieved under ideal circumstances and creates context-free guidance.

Context-sensitive guidance, on the other hand, is embedded more strongly in the social sciences. This view of science is that evidence has little meaning or importance for

decision-making unless it is adapted to the circumstances of its application. In this view, scientific evidence on what works should be combined with scientific evidence on context.

In other words, context-free guidance indicates what we know works in general. Context-sensitive guidance shows both what works and how (or whether) it might be implemented in the specific circumstances under consideration. Thus the answer to “what is evidence?” depends on whether the objective of guidance is to create a context-free aspirational standard or context-sensitive actionable steps.

The methods for obtaining scientific evidence on context factors are just as challenging as those for obtaining scientific evidence on program effectiveness. Scientific evidence on context can be divided into evidence about implementation, organizational capacity, attitudes, forecasting, economics, and ethics. So given the complex elements of context, a multiplicity of methods might be needed to create scientific evidence.

If the goal of a given guidance-producing exercise is not the creation of a “pure” aspirational standard but the development of context-sensitive guidance, a significant challenge remains — how to combine colloquial evidence with the scientific evidence to enable a final conclusion to be reached in a way that gives due weight to each of the different forms of evidence. Technical approaches do exist, but they are unlikely to fairly balance different forms of evidence because they build in biases regarding which forms deserve more or less weight. What is needed rather than technical weighting is some form of deliberative process with appropriate representation of interests made explicit for the categories of evidence. The relative weighting of forms of evidence is left to these participants, within whatever structures or constraints are provided by the process.

Deliberative processes for combining the different forms of evidence

Our review of the literature on deliberative processes used for combining different forms of evidence led to the conclusion that little research has been done in this area beyond descriptions and assertions of “best practices.” However, the descriptions do suggest that a deliberative process would be an effective tool for generating evidence-based, context-sensitive guidance, and they point to design features that are likely to be successful.

Deliberation is commonly used when there is uncertainty and the issues at stake are seen as debatable. Participative and consultative, a deliberative process “has clear objectives; is inclusive and transparent; challenges science; promotes dialogue, and directly impacts [sic] on the decision itself.” Using such a mechanism elicits and combines the various types of evidence to reach an evidence-based judgment to increase the likelihood of making solid decisions.

How a deliberative process is designed undoubtedly will affect the outcome of how the evidence is considered. Important design features include consideration of topic selection, size of the group, participants, chair, types of meetings, scientific evidence inputs, framing effects, and “publicness” of the process. To get the most meaningful results, the

deliberative process includes consultation with relevant parties, fair representation of scientists and other stakeholders, high-quality syntheses of the scientific evidence, and skillful chairing.

By design, a deliberative process is not neutral and may influence the relative weights assigned to the three types of evidence — context-free, context-sensitive, and colloquial — thereby influencing the extent to which guidance is seen to be evidence-based. Thus, this process is likely to yield a judgment that is evidence-informed, better matched to the context of application, more efficiently implemented, and more widely acceptable.

Conclusion

There are differing views on what the “evidence” in evidence-based healthcare should be. This systematic review uncovered three categories of evidence: medical effectiveness research (context-free scientific evidence); social science-oriented research (context-sensitive scientific evidence); or the expertise, views, and realities of stakeholders (colloquial evidence). These views of evidence are not incompatible and each has a role to play in producing evidence-based guidance for the health system.

Under usual circumstances, there are no magic technical processes available to combine these different forms of evidence to create health system guidance. Thus each form of evidence must be entered into a deliberative process, with representation from both the scientific and stakeholder communities, if they are to be converted into a final consensus around appropriate, feasible, and realistic guidance for the health system. To date, there is little research to prove the promise held by the deliberative process. Nevertheless, there are enough investigations to suggest some design parameters that are likely to create a balanced consensus — that is, guidance that respects both scientific integrity on the one hand and its implementability in a specific health system context on the other.

IMPROVING THE EVIDENCE FOR POLICY MAKING¹

Introduction

The key benefit of evidence based policy making is better policy. Without good evidence we do not have a strong rationale for policy intervention. Improving the evidence base strengthens our understanding of why we may need a new or revised policy. It also helps us think through the context within which the policy will be implemented. This guide will help you structure the evidence base for your policy area so that you can:

- understand what makes a good evidence base for policy and strategy
- recognise the value of different types of evidence and work out how they support each other
- respond effectively to EU and international events or policy changes, as well as new or revised domestic policy
- focus on the key information you need so that you can prioritise your resources for collecting evidence
- identify SMART targets for the policy cycle
- support policy implementation by answering the question “is it working and if not, why not?”

What is evidence?

A robust evidence base supports good decision making². Decisions are influenced by a wide variety of factors (including Ministers’ values, experience and political judgement); which means that even for individual policy areas the evidence base must be both broad enough to develop a wide range of policy options, and detailed enough for those options to stand up to intense scrutiny. It also means that you are likely to share evidence needs with others where your policy goals may be similar, or where you may be targeting the same range of stakeholders or delivery partners. Sharing evidence with stakeholders early in the policy cycle also helps you build support for your policy direction.

Evidence is used throughout the policy cycle (see figure 1). A strong evidence base has breadth:

- demonstrates a clear understanding of context
- has wide enough coverage to be able to generalise from its conclusions
- shares evidence with linked policy areas and with key stakeholders & delivery partners

And it also has depth:

- draws on detailed knowledge
- is systematically built up over time, relating closely to the policy goals that have been set and the intermediate targets along the way.

¹ This is a draft internal guidance document produced by the Science Strategy Team of the Department for the Environment and Rural Affairs, Government of the UK. Do not quote or distribute. When finalised it will be available at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/science/how/evidence.htm>

² Refer to the one-page chart to see what makes evidence robust.

Innovation is about getting to where we want to go quicker, cheaper or more efficiently. Figure 1 shows the questions you should be asking throughout the policy cycle to help you identify the key issues to address, to make the process of developing and implementing policy as cost-effective as possible.

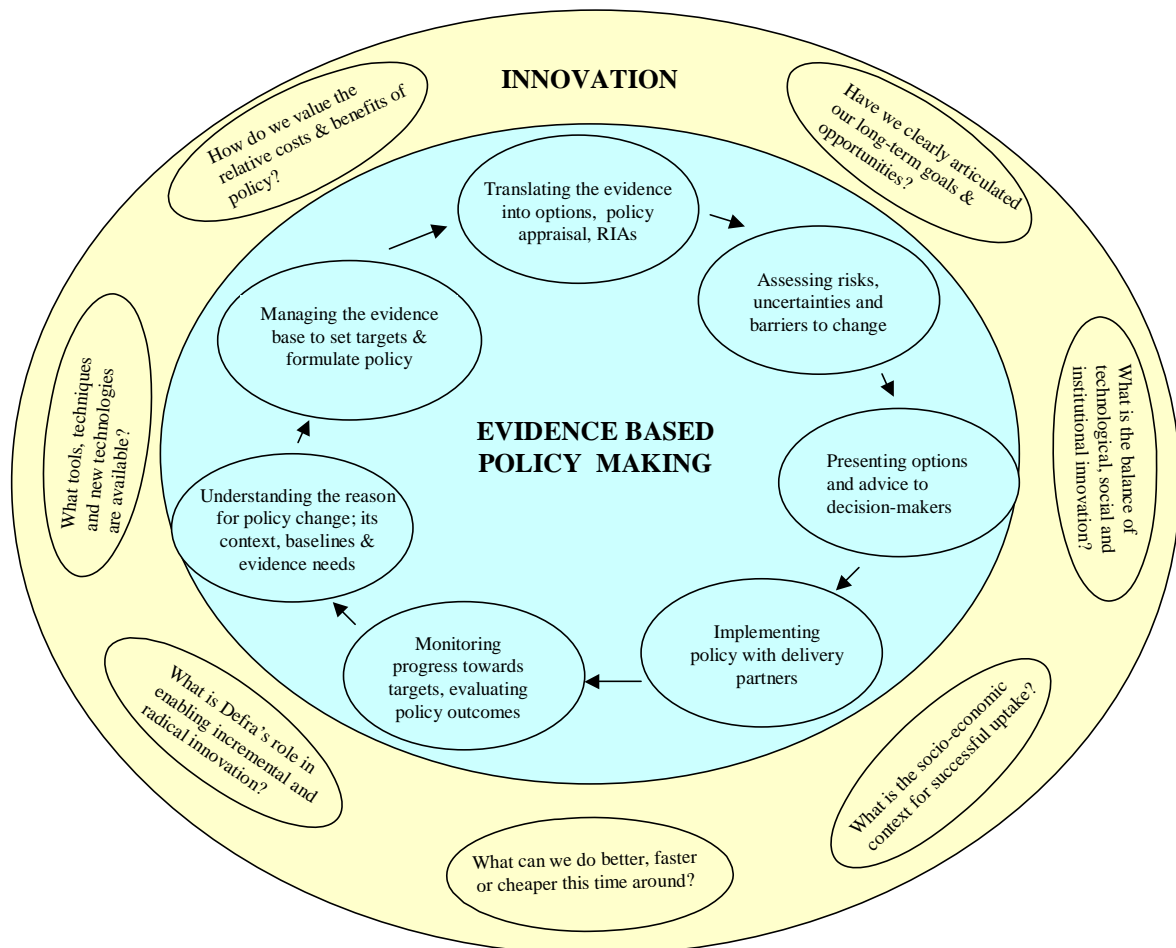


Figure 1: evidence & innovation in the policy cycle

Different types of evidence

The Regulatory Impact Assessment is the main tool for developing and expressing the evidence base for policy. This section examines the types of evidence you should consider using, and how to go about sourcing them.

Evidence for policy making comes from a variety of sources at different times in the policy making process. It includes:

- expert knowledge, including both published / peer reviewed and critical evidence held by individuals in departments, agencies and local authorities and those to whom the policy is directed;
- existing research and statistics (including economic advice, social research and the evaluation of previous policies);
- new research commissioned specifically to inform the development of policy

- options;
- the results of horizon scanning and foresight work;
- formal stakeholder consultation.

Using several different types of evidence and several different sources means that you are less likely to use over-simplified numbers which give spurious precision to the information and distort the drivers for policy. It also means that you are less likely to follow the wrong track, or focus on narrow options. It can be tempting to see hard numerical data as the pinnacle of robust evidence and to use numbers in ways that may be inappropriate. The desire to have objective evidence for decisions – and for that evidence to lead to certain conclusions – can lead policy makers to ask for a level of precision that isn't actually there. (see Box 2)

Don't misuse numbers...

- Quoting percentages is misleading when the raw numbers are very small, and using numbers without an appropriate context does not allow you to judge proportionality;
- Only presenting the evidence for a case is misleading (Chelsea scoring 8 goals is very impressive unless you also mention that Dundee United scored 10, with two fewer players, in the same period);
- Trends do not necessarily describe causality: it is often more accurate to think in terms of a range of variables each contributing to, but not defining, the causal links. E.g. people recycle because they want to *and because* the Local Authority provides kerbside recycling *and because* they receive council tax rebates *and because...* The range of causality elicits the behaviour, and reliance on any one statistic does not describe it well.
- Quantitative data cannot describe context, which may be extremely important in explaining behaviour (see the climate change example below).

To develop a high quality evidence base you need to adopt an approach that is rigorous in three ways. You need to scope the policy questions thoroughly, to use best practice as you source the information you need, and to ensure that the evidence is appropriately interpreted to inform and develop policy options. Defra has clear guidelines on processes for sourcing high quality evidence³ -- this note is concerned with scoping the issue and interpreting the evidence for policy.

Scoping the issue:

Consider both the breadth and the depth of the evidence base for your particular needs. Do you need a better understanding of the *context* for the policy decision? Can you draw robust conclusions with only a small amount of information on the issue, or do you need to improve your *coverage* and *detail* so that you understand the full range of possible impacts? To what extent can you use *shared* evidence from another policy division or from other bodies such as OGDs, other Member States, NGOs or professional groups? Is the evidence base systematic or a collection of random pieces of information?

- ▶ Discuss the scope of the issue with your in-house analysts to ensure that you address the full breadth of the issue efficiently. Talk to your economists, social scientists, statisticians, scientists and other specialists about how to collect sufficient evidence given time and resource constraints.

³ See http://intranet/sid/science_handbook.as;

- ▶ Begin the Regulatory Impact Assessment early in the policy making process to give you enough time to talk to all the analysts about your detailed evidence needs.
- ▶ Talk to other policy makers about sharing evidence bases, particularly those who share some of your policy goals.
- ▶ Develop joint funding opportunities with both internal and external stakeholders.

Interpreting the evidence for policy:

There is little point collecting detailed evidence if you do not understand how the conclusions affect policy. Developing a strong line of argument about why policy change is needed will help you think through the sort of evidence you will need to explain, confirm, enrich, challenge or scope the policy options you put forwards.

At all stages you need to ensure that your evidence providers understand the policy relevance of the question and are asked to interpret their conclusions against the policy issue that you have scoped.

- ▶ Maintain an active role in your relationships with researchers and other evidence providers to ensure that they are able to take account of any changes in the policy environment.
- ▶ Ask to see interim or draft reports to check that the evidence is targeted to your needs, and to ensure that you are informed of any emerging results that could affect your choice of policy options.

Breadth and depth in the evidence base: an example from climate change.

Defra's 'Quality of Life Survey' conducted across England between January and April 2001 used a quantitative methodology to find that 68% of respondents agreed that 'the recent floods in this country were due to climate change'. However another survey in March 2001 in York, which used using different methods, did not point to global climate change as the cause but saw the floods as local issues (e.g. planning, flood defence) that aggravated the natural incidents of flooding that occurred in the area. The implication of this is that the majority of the public associate extreme weather events with global climate change *only so long as they do not directly experience them*. People with direct experience tend to point out other factors as being major contributors at the local level.

It is important to use different methodologies – in this case both quantitative and qualitative research – to ensure that the research methods use reflect the breadth and depth of the policy issue.

See <http://defraweb/environment/climatechange/pdf/cc-app1.pdf>

Ask your specialist advisers, and policy makers in related areas, to help develop your lines of argument about why policy change is needed. This will help you improve your understanding of the assumptions you may be making about the intended impacts of your policy, and to explore any unintended consequences.

- ▶ Ask your in-house analysts to help you monitor the quality of the evidence, and to help you interpret it correctly, identifying any gaps and making sure that it is not used out of context.
- ▶ Don't rely on one specialism alone (e.g. scientist) to do this: though it may take more time, you will develop a richer understanding of the issue if you discuss it with economists, social scientists, and other advisers.

Handling a dynamic evidence base under time & resource constraints

The evidence base is not static: economic, social, environmental, technological and political drivers change, and these change our understanding and interpretation of what is happening. New information may come in which may deepen our awareness of issues we previously thought had little connection, and we are constantly developing new ways of using and interpreting information that we already have. As we monitor progress towards targets and evaluate impacts, we may need to change policies or develop new ones. All this means that any new evidence needs to be handled systematically so that it directs the use of evidence towards your policy goals clearly and efficiently. Defra's Evidence & Innovation Strategy consultation document⁴ sets out a narrative or 'line of sight' between the Department's current policy goals and a proposed set of evidence & innovation inputs to policy; which policy makers saw at that time as most relevant to delivery of their policy priorities.

Policy makers work quickly and under pressure, but research takes time and cannot necessarily be adjusted to fit in with short-term demands. Actively managing the evidence base will help you reconcile this discrepancy.

Use the attached chart to improve the robustness of your evidence base. Seek out different types of evidence from a variety of sources so that you can *confirm* what you already know, *enrich* your understanding about a topic, *explain* complex issues, *challenge* received wisdom or *scope* opportunities for change.

Dynamic evidence bases: reasons for change

Analysing evidence needs against the policy cycle shows how the evidence base differs between new and more mature policy areas, highlighting places where the evidence base needs strengthening. Examples from the Evidence & Innovation Strategy document include:

- *Sustainable Consumption & Production* is a highly cross-cutting policy area with links to other well-established areas such as climate change and waste. A key issue for the SCP programme is therefore to determine the best means of drawing relevant evidence from the existing research base before commissioning new primary research.
- *Natural Resource Protection* is developing a more integrated and co-ordinated approach to the valuation and protection of natural resources. Evidence is needed to (see p88):
 - Ensure that we can recognise environmental limits and develop acceptable approaches to protecting natural resources within a context of sustainable development;
 - Closely monitor new policy instruments such as Environmental Stewardship, to ensure they deliver their objectives.

If you are working in a relatively mature policy area, refer back to your policy goals and strategic objectives to ensure that you are not focusing too heavily on commissioning one type of evidence and missing the information that another type of evidence could give you. Refer back to your risk register for the policy – do you have sufficient evidence to help you address all the risks you have identified? If the risks change over time, then so should your evidence base.

- ▶ Understanding your long-term policy goals will help you develop an evidence base that underpins all shorter-term policy work. Work with your in-house analysts to develop clear long- and medium-term objectives and associated targets, and discuss with them what evidence you will need to show that you have achieved them. Who will collect the necessary evidence for monitoring and evaluating progress? Who will fund its collection? How will you best be able to interpret the findings for policy?
- ▶ Review your future evidence needs well in advance. Ask researchers to design and specify research so that emerging findings can feed into the policy making process as soon as they become available.
- ▶ Minimise the effects of time and resource constraints by seeking joint funding opportunities with other policy divisions or organisations, by influencing the research programmes of others, and by reviewing existing analysis.

⁴ See <http://intranet/sid/ChangeManagement/EvidenceInnovationStrategy/Consultation/default.asp>

- ▶ Your in-house analysts will be able to advise you on the most cost-effective ways to make use of your scarce time and research resources.

Dealing with uncertain evidence

Evidence can be uncertain in several ways: the level of statistical confidence may be low, the lines of argument may be opaque, cause and effect may not be well established, or the conclusions may be very sensitive to changes in emphasis. It is also tempting to let the numbers make the decision, but developing a robust evidence base for policy means that we need to be clear about what to do when the data or numbers are not as precise as we would like; or when it's just not possible to put numbers to an issue (see Box 2).

We often have to rely on making assumptions about the issues we are dealing with, particularly where there is little evidence on a newly emerging issue (such as the extent of diffuse pollution from agriculture). In these cases we need to be very open about the assumptions and uncertainties in our evidence base, openly present them to stakeholders, and work with them to strengthen our lines of argument about the issue so that we can understand how to prioritise our evidence needs. Doing this helps make your overall analysis more robust, and helps you develop more confidence in the data you use as the basis for policy.

Work with your in-house analysts to ask:

- What are the major uncertainties in the evidence? Could others help you better understand them?
- How sensitive are your decisions or options to these uncertainties?
- How far are you likely to be able to reduce the uncertainties before having to make a decision? What level of uncertainty can stakeholders live with?
- Can you do some research to reduce uncertainty while making an interim decision, or should you accept that you'll have to live with uncertainty and make the decisions accordingly?
- What will you do if new information changes the basis for your decision? What sort of information would change your decision? Have the potential sources of this information been adequately explored?
- How robust is your choice of policy options to these uncertainties? How robust will any evaluation be?

Summary

Good decision-making rests on robust evidence. Developing breadth and depth in your evidence base means making full use of your in-house analysts and consulting early & widely with key internal & external stakeholders. These people and organisations need to remain involved throughout the policy cycle: helping you identify the need for new or revised policies, scoping the issue, interpreting the results of research for policy, and identifying any uncertainties or assumptions along the way.

Take a strategic approach to managing the evidence base for policy: ideally you should actively manage the evidence base for policy at all times. Use horizon scanning techniques to anticipate strategic changes in direction: where is new evidence likely to emerge from? How robust will it be and how could it be made

more robust? Who will be interested in it? Might it suggest a radically new approach to a policy question? Use both internal and external analysts to develop an evidence base that is robust from all angles.

Consult early and widely with key internal and external stakeholders. This will help you ensure that your lines of argument about the evidence base for policy can withstand challenge and alternative interpretation. Be particularly open when the evidence is uncertain, and consult broadly so that you are aware of all shades of opinion on the issue.

Time and resource constraints inevitably mean that a degree of compromise is necessary. Take a systematic approach to managing the evidence base for policy, involve your internal analysts throughout the policy cycle and consult widely and often. This will help you identify and prioritise your major evidence needs, and suggest the most cost-effective ways of sourcing and improving the evidence base for your policy.

FIVE PRINCIPLES FOR IMPROVING THE EVIDENCE BASE FOR POLICY

Work with your in-house analysts to scope the policy issue, and to develop both breadth and depth in the evidence base for policy.

- ▶ Take a rigorous approach to agreeing your long-term policy goals, shorter-term policy outcomes, and the evidence you will need to demonstrate that policy benefits have been achieved. Involve all your in-house analysts in these discussions (economists, statisticians, social researchers, scientists, etc.), as well as other policy makers who share some of your goals.

Discuss resource constraints with your in-house analysts, to work out the most efficient way to gather robust evidence.

- ▶ Discuss how resource constraints might affect the amount and type of evidence you will be able to collect.
- ▶ Develop joint funding opportunities with other stakeholders.
- ▶ Begin the Regulatory Impact Assessment as early as you can in the policy cycle. Use this to assess your detailed evidence needs for each policy topic. Involve your in-house analysts as soon as you begin the RIA.
- ▶ Talk to your evidence providers to ensure that they fully understand the policy relevance of the issue.

Maintain a close relationship with all your analysts and evidence providers throughout the policy cycle.

- ▶ Make sure that your evidence providers are able to take account of any changes in the policy environment.
- ▶ Ask to see interim or draft reports to check that the evidence is targeted to your needs, and to ensure that you are informed of any emerging results that could affect your choice of policy options.
- ▶ Ask your in-house analysts to help you monitor the quality of the evidence, and to help you interpret it correctly for policy; identifying any gaps and making sure that it is not used out of context.

Be open about uncertainty in the evidence base.

- ▶ Work with your in-house analysts to understand the major uncertainties and assumptions in the evidence, their effect on policy, and what can be done about them.
- ▶ The nature of the evidence you need is directly related to the nature of the risk inherent in any decision that is taken. Refer back to your risk register for the policy – do you have sufficient evidence to help you address all the risks you have identified? If the risks change over time, then so should your evidence base.

Use the five tests of robustness to develop evidence that *confirms* what you already know, *enriches* your understanding, *explains* complex issues, *challenges* received wisdom or *scopes* opportunities for change.

- ▶ See attached chart.

Five Tests of Robust Evidence

Do you believe that the evidence for this policy is well **rooted** in a wider understanding of the issue?

(rootedness: how we frame issues & question assumptions)

- Have you fully explored the issue or are there other aspects that you could/should have covered? (Be honest with yourself!)
- Have all key stakeholders been involved in a meaningful way? Can you show that they are satisfied with their involvement? Have diversity issues been similarly explored?
- Do you need to explain how the history of the evidence affects the policy issue? Has the history been contentious or relatively easy?
- People will bring their own perspectives to their reading of the evidence base. Have you encouraged others to challenge your assumptions? Can you use other information to confirm, enrich or explain your conclusions?

Do you believe that the way information has been sourced, analysed and synthesised gives you **credible** evidence for policy?

(credibility: how we source & analyse information)

- Can you show that good practice has been followed, both in sourcing the information; and in analysing and synthesising it?
- Is there a clear line of argument between the evidence and the options?
- Do the policy recommendations emerge logically from the evidence and are the findings resonant with other knowledge and experience? If not, why might this be?
- Is the evidence presented clearly in language that allows non-specialists to see how it has been used to inform the development of options and to discriminate between them?

Do you believe that the evidence in front of you is **objective**?

(objectivity: how we deal with potential bias in the evidence base)

- Are you sure that the evidence has been gathered and analysed with the minimum of bias from researchers, policy officials and decision-makers?
- If you feel that the evidence is biased in any way, have you discussed this bias and accounted for it in the way you present the options? Will the bias affect your recommendations? How can you be sure?
- Have any stakeholders suggested that the evidence is biased? How have you dealt with this in presenting the evidence and options?

Can you make **generalisations** from the evidence you are using?

(generalisability: relates to the way we make inferences from evidence)

- Have you taken account of the context in which the study was conducted to allow generalisations to other circumstances?
- Which bits of the context are important, either to the options or to your recommendations? Why? How might the context affect deliverability?
- Are you rolling out after a pilot phase? Are you sure that best practice has been followed in scoping the pilot in relation to the intended roll-out?

Is the evidence **reliable** enough for monitoring & evaluation, or for impact assessments?

(reliability: whether we can use the information for M&E or impact assessment)

- Have you considered what evidence you might need to collect *now* to support future monitoring, evaluation and impact assessments? How will you track and explore unintended consequences?
- If the wider context of your policy is important will you be able to track this sort of information in a regular and meaningful way?
- Do the methods used allow judgements to be made about attribution?
- Have you shown how the argument has evolved over time? This is important for evaluating qualitative information or developing a line of argument.

Use evidence to **enrich** your understanding, **explain** complex issues, **challenge** received wisdom, **confirm** what you think you know, and **scope** opportunities for change. Take a proportional approach to robustness in your evidence base: what characteristics does the evidence need to have? Which aspects are important for which pieces of evidence, and why? How can you best improve robustness given time and resource constraints? Use sensitivity analysis – on both quantitative and qualitative information – and consult, consult, consult.

Ensuring evidence is robust: questions for policy-makers and practitioners

Louise Shaxson¹

Abstract

This paper examines the reasons we need evidence for policy, discusses where evidence is needed in the policy making process, and the nature of the evidence base for strategy and policy. Working relationships between policy makers and their advisers are key: as policy makers come from a variety of backgrounds, developing a common language helps set discussions about the robustness of the evidence base on a sound footing. The paper identifies five components of robustness, proposes a series of questions that could be used to address them and discusses the implications for the processes of policy making.

Keywords: evidence-based, policy, processes, robust

Introduction

This discussion paper began as a tool for Government policy makers to help them communicate better with their advisers.¹ I sat in meetings wondering if they were all speaking the same language and if not, the implications for the policy making process. What follows are my reflections on implementing an evidence-based approach to policy making; most of it gleaned from discussions with people working within, and as advisers to, Defra (the UK's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs). My conclusions reflect helpful comments from people with both policy and advisory backgrounds.

Why do we need evidence for policy?

In 1999, the Modernising Government White Paper noted that Government must 'produce policies that really deal with problems; that are forward-looking and shaped by the evidence rather than a response to short-term pressures, that tackle causes not symptoms...' (Cabinet Office, 1999). The accent on what works led to an emphasis on data rather than dogma, and on the development of various tools (such as the Regulatory Impact Assessment²) to improve the chain of causality between evidence and advice. The phrase 'evidence-based rather than evidence-backed' was born.

But is evidence based policy making a distinct approach? Davies, referenced in Cabinet Office (n.d.) calls it 'the integration of experience, judgement and expertise with the best available external evidence from systematic research' and notes that it involves a shift away from opinion-based decision making towards decisions based on 'the opinions and judgements of experts (that) constitute high quality valid and reliable evidence'. There are several unanswered question in this statement, however. How do facts sit with opinions and judgements? What makes evidence high quality, valid and reliable? Some of these are addressed in the Office of Science & Technology's Guidelines 2000: the processes of science advice, peer review and other high-level challenge functions have been greatly strengthened by the application of their principles. On the other hand there is no firm guidance for policy makers as they discuss with their advisers which bits of the vast soup of potentially relevant information they should use in preparing policy submissions. This discussion paper was prepared to assist that process.

¹ Shaxson, Louise (2005) Is your evidence robust enough? Questions for policy makers and practitioners. *Evidence & Policy: A Journal of Research, Debate and Practice*, Volume 1, Number 1, January 2005, pp. 101-112(12)

Evidence is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for any decision-making process: the ways that policies are developed, implemented, monitored and revised are always shaped by the wider social and political contexts. More specifically, we need evidence to:

- Understand the policy environment and how it's changing;
- Appraise the likely effects of policy changes so we can choose between different policy options & subsequently assess their impacts;
- Demonstrate the links between strategic direction, intended outcomes and policy objectives to show that there are clear lines of argument and evidence between what we're aiming for and what we're doing now;
- Determine what we need to do to meet our strategic goals or intermediate objectives;
- Influence others so that they help us achieve our policy goals and take them through to delivery;
- Communicate the quality (breadth & depth) of our evidence base to meet the open government agenda.

What is evidence?

Chambers English Dictionary (2000) defines evidence as: 'that which makes evident: means of proving an unknown or disputed fact: support for a belief: indication: information in a law case: testimony: a witness or witnesses collectively.' This is fine, but it tells us little about how to value the different types of evidence; and for policy purposes I think Michael Harrison has come up with a better definition. In a draft of this paper he suggested:

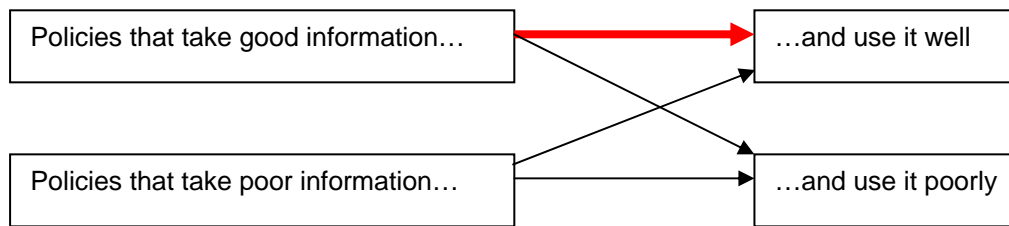
Evidence for policy making is any information that helps to turn a department's strategic priorities and other objectives into something concrete, manageable and achievable.

For Defra, and for Government more widely, these strategic priorities are very broad indeed (see for example Defra, n.d.) and most of them overlap. Defining evidence in relation to how we make strategic priorities operational emphasises the importance of internal processes that turn the soup of information into an evidence base upon which decision-takers can make reasonable and defensible judgements.

However, the evidence base is dynamic. People's understanding and interpretation changes, new research results come in, we deepen our awareness of issues we previously thought had little connection, and we develop new ways of using and interpreting information that we already have. If the evidence base is changing, then so must the ways in which we manage, filter and use it for policy: good evidence-based policy making is not simply about creating a vast database of everything and then cherry-picking the best, or most accessible or most immediately relevant information. The remainder of the paper discusses what does constitute good evidence-based policy making, but it is important to note up front that the term 'evidence base' relates just as much to the processes of using information as it does to the quality of the information itself.

Figure 1 shows a very simple schema: if evidence-based policy making relates as much to processes of using information as it does to the quality of the information itself, then we can represent it as...

Figure 1: A simple schema of evidence-based policy making

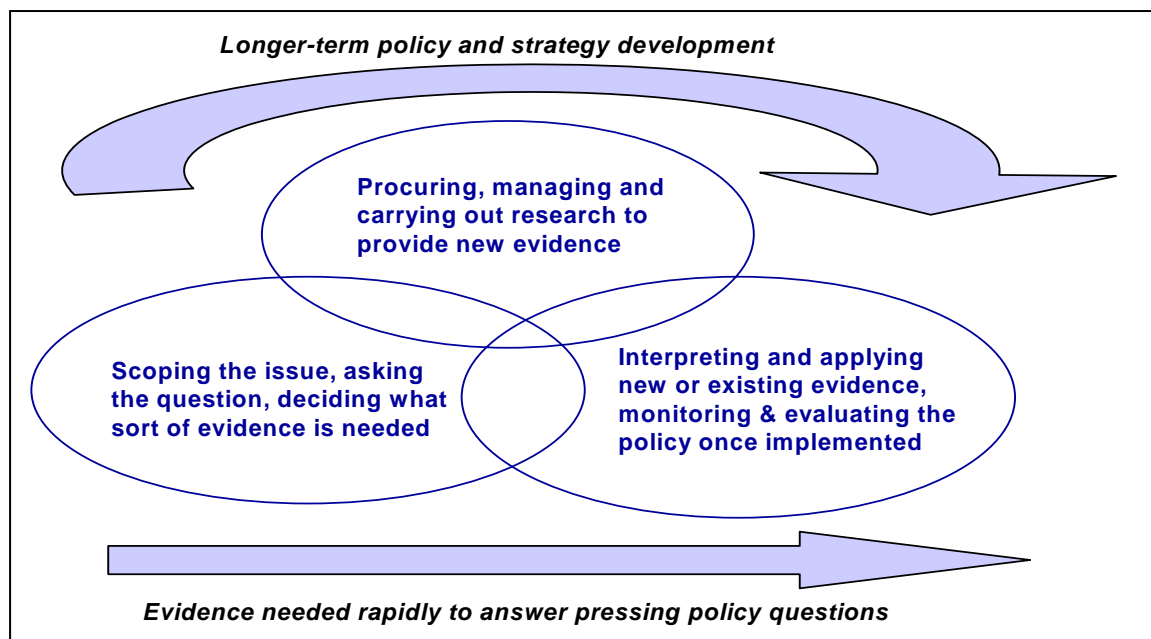


Evidence and the policy making process

Evidence for policy making comes from a variety of sources at different times in the policy making process, and departments use many approaches to filtering evidence and synthesising it into a coherent basis for policy decisions. Some of the literature on evidence based policy making (see Garrett & Islam, 1998; Were Omamo, 2004) sets out different models and it appears that researchers are almost universally frustrated that every time they come across a new policy environment or policy question, none of the models appears to operate. Levitt (2004: 14) has probably the best description of the process as a constantly shifting jigsaw, and her analysis demonstrates why trying to quantify the impact of research on policy is almost impossible (viz. Ryan & Garrett 2003).

However discussions with Tony Taig have produced a far simpler model which encompasses all those referenced above, and is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: The flow of evidence in the policy process



Evidence is needed both in response to time-sensitive requests for information, and to support longer-term strategy and policy development. Steven Were Omamo (2004: 30) notes that '...the issue is how to promote 'evidence-readiness' among inherently conservative and pragmatic policy makers and practitioners and 'user-readiness' among inherently abstraction-oriented researchers' and suggests that neither individual policy makers nor individual researchers will ever be ready to 'send and receive signals from one another'. While the former statement is undoubtedly true, I wonder if the general air of gloom in his second statement comes from a rather one-sided view of policy making.

Research results are undoubtedly important to policy, but research is essentially a long-term process. Tony Taig, in a personal communication, points out that much policy making happens in response to very short-term pressures, where the need for evidence can be nicely summarised as 'please synthesise current knowledge to answer my pressing policy question'. For many policy makers, being able to produce options to place before a decision-taker needs to happen in a few days or (in some cases) a few hours. Big slowly-evolving decisions that involve a good deal of strategic thinking are relatively rare, compared with the smaller (but no less important) issues that are constantly nipping at policy makers' heels.

This creates an obvious tension. Buried on page 4 of the paper by Nutley et al. (2002) is the question: 'How can the need for rigour be balanced with the need for timely findings of practical relevance?' I increasingly believe this is the key to improving evidence based policy making: how do we correlate policy makers' need for a rapid turnaround with the no less important need to provide evidence that is robust in the long term; that can be used to rigorously appraise policy options and for future monitoring and evaluation? Shortening the time frame does not mean we should cut corners: we still need to ensure that both policy makers and those who provide the evidence share a common understanding of the question, agree on the robustness of the evidence they need to answer it, and agree again how to interpret this to generate policy options.

This is becoming increasingly important for a science-heavy department such as Defra as it works through both the demands of Government in relation to science, and the changing interface between science and society. Defra needs a very broad evidence base indeed – partly because the departmental goal is broad in scope, partly because of the wide range of policy objectives, and partly because of the diverse array of conflicting interests and perspectives on what constitutes 'evidence'. The nature of the issues Defra is addressing inevitably requires questions to be framed in ways that bring together all the advisory disciplines – including the natural, engineering, social and economic sciences; statistics, legal advice and probably more – to develop practical management options. This means we need an approach which covers all possible evidence – opinions, judgements and analyses as well as 'hard' facts (see Levitt 2004: 29) – and which is based on a common understanding of what we mean by 'robust evidence'. But do policy makers and advisers have this common understanding? Are they talking the same language? What do we mean by 'a robust evidence base for policy'? Figure 1 demonstrates that there is no absolute answer to this last question: in part it depends on the way the question is asked (which shapes the information that emerges); but it also depends on the working relationships between policy teams and their advisers (which shapes how that information is used).

Building a consensus around 'robust' evidence

There is a well-established literature (see Spencer et al, 2003 and Marsland et al, 2001) which analyses what we mean by 'robustness' and helps us think about how to improve the evidence base for policy making. While most of what follows is not new (see for example Spencer et al, 2003; Crewe & Young, 2002; Court & Young, 2003), I have extracted words from this literature that I believe make the most sense across the disciplines, resonate with

people who are not completely familiar with the concerns about quality of information, and have direct relevance to issues that are important to policy makers as they try to develop policy options under constant time pressure. It builds on work by Marsland and colleagues (2001) to synthesise some of the more abstract academic analysis that has been done elsewhere and make it more accessible for policy makers and natural scientists, some of whom are unfamiliar with social science. The idea is to compose a language that can be shared by interdisciplinary teams of advisers and policy makers so that they can develop and present coherent messages and options to decision-takers.

The framework is presented as a series of key questions around the five themes. There is no right or wrong answer for any of them, but as we develop a shared understanding of what we mean ('we' includes policy makers, advisers, disciplinary specialists, generalists, the public, other professional bodies) we begin to understand more about the policy goals and objectives, and about what others can bring to the policy making process.

The four well-understood components of robustness are credibility, generalisability, reliability and objectivity (and see Spencer et al, 2003). I suggest that there is a fifth –rootedness – which has direct and profound relevance for policy making. This is also defined as 'authenticity' and is examined to a degree in the qualitative literature, but has been ignored in the quantitative literature.

Credibility

This relates to the processes of analysing and synthesising information – often referred to as 'internal validity' in the quantitative literature. Credible evidence relies on a strong and clear line of argument, on tried and tested analytical methods, on analytical rigour throughout the processes of data collection and analysis, and on clear presentation of the conclusions. Key questions would include:

- How confident are we that these conclusions flow from this evidence? Would others come up with the same results?
- Does it matter whether a particular piece of evidence is sourced from expert or lay knowledge? How does it matter?
- Are our methods appropriate to the quality of the evidence? Does the evidence we are able to collect limit the question we are able to ask?
- Does the evidence make sense to the people we consulted, be they internal advisers, external experts or other stakeholders?
- Would involving our critics in gathering and analysing the evidence deepen its credibility?

Generalisability

Generalisability (also called transferability) refers to the way we make inferences. Can we take this evidence collected for a specific purpose and use it in a different context or to answer a different question? For some types of information, generalisability will refer primarily to sampling procedures; for others it will be more about our understanding of context: it is particularly applicable when pilot studies precede a wider roll-out (see GCSRO 2003). Key questions could include:

- Are the findings widely applicable or context-specific? Is this to do with sampling techniques or with the broader framing of the issue and the policy question?
- Could it be that the arguments are generalisable even if the specific findings are not? Why?
- Which bits of the context matter or change the findings? Why?

Reliability

The standard literature on social research methods discusses reliability in a broad sense, treating it mainly in terms of the ability to replicate a study. For information from research, Departments formulate guidelines on procurement and review procedures to ensure that accepted best practice has been adhered to in (for example) sampling, analytical methods and other questions relating to the quality of research processes. However for policy making the issues are different: we can't replicate policies in a similar way. Extending the results from pilot areas raises considerations that are dealt with under generalisability, so I propose that for policy making, we should take a fairly narrow view of reliability, relating it to whether or not we can depend on the evidence for monitoring, evaluation or impact assessments. If this is overlooked at the beginning of policy work – if baseline information is not collected before policies are implemented – then impact assessments will be meaningless. The Government's emphasis on 'what works' means planning for a lessons-learned approach by asking such questions as:

- Does the evidence form a sound basis for future monitoring, evaluation or impact assessment?
- Will the initial framing of the question hold up over time?
- What sort of contextual information will we need to monitor over time?
- For qualitative evidence in particular, is there a clear evidence trail that can be followed?

Objectivity

Again, there is an extensive literature on the various methods for reducing bias in the evidence base, but again I think it useful to relate questions of bias specifically to the policy making process. We need to explore bias in the evidence base for two reasons: first because what we say is bounded by the assumptions we make or the restrictions we impose as we ask policy questions and by the values we assign to different aspects of the evidence as we interpret it for policy (while social scientists are generally familiar with this argument, some policy makers and people with a natural science background may need help exploring it). The second reason for exploring bias (and I am grateful to Andy Stirling for this point) is that any weakness of a policy in relation to future events may lie in an implicit bias: one that we alone can't currently see, but that conditions policy outcomes. We need to explore bias in the evidence base and deepen our understanding of how it conditions our interpretation of the evidence for policy using questions such as:

- Have all possible techniques been used to remove bias from the evidence and from the analytical methods?
- Has any residual bias been acknowledged and accounted for in presenting the options to decision-takers?
- Are we certain that the findings have been determined by the subjects and context of the inquiry rather than the biases, motivations and perspectives of the investigators, policy makers or decision-takers?

Rootedness

The answers obtained from even the most well-documented body of knowledge will always reflect the particular questions that are asked, the way they have been posed and the use to which the answers are likely to be put. If questions are narrowly defined by those with a narrowly specialist knowledge of the subject, they will lead to narrow answers: the relationship between the evidence we have gathered and the conclusions we draw is inevitably sensitive to the processes we have used.

Rootedness is about more than context, process, bias and the quality of information. It is about understanding the nuance of the evidence, exploring assumptions with an open mind,

encouraging others to question the status quo as we see it, and thinking about who uses what evidence for what purpose. We can address this by asking:

- Different evidence may have different meaning and value to different stakeholders: have all the viewpoints been negotiated, both in framing the question and gathering the evidence?
- Does the question truly represent the fullness of the issue or are there other aspects that could and should be explored?
- What is the history of the evidence? How does this affect the question?
- Have the assumptions been examined by people with different specialist knowledge? Have the different implications been explored?
- Do the results stimulate action and empower people to act? Who is empowered? How are they empowered?

A summary question, adapted from Marsland et al. (2000) is:

- Could the initial question, the evidence, the analytical methods, the conclusions and subsequent action be confirmed, refuted, explained or enriched by information from other sources?

Taking a proportional approach

Taking a proportional approach means screening the evidence (as well as the processes of gathering, analysing, interpreting, prioritising, and communicating it) against the five components of robustness; deciding which ones are important for each particular policy question, and working out how to achieve them given the inevitable time and resource constraints. It does not mean waving this paper at colleagues and point-scoring for credibility or reliability in a particular part of the evidence base. It means sensitivity analysis; not only within the standard numerical framework to see what happens to costs when a parameter is changed, but also by relaxing some of the softer assumptions and then following the line of argument through to the end. It means deciding which aspects of robustness are important in which situation and why, and then working out how to achieve them given the inevitable time and resource constraints. It means cultivating an interdisciplinary approach to the evidence base, and working out how to foster these sorts of working relationships.

It is fairly clear that what I have separated out as five components of robustness are all linked to each other to varying degrees. This is partly because of the complexity of the evidence base and partly because there is a circular relationship between question, information and analytical method. It is obviously impossible for all evidence in all policies to be completely robust all of the time. There will be times when different characteristics will be key: the importance of each characteristic may rise or fall during the policy making process and in proportion to the perceived risk or the anticipated impact of a policy.

Next steps

This is very much a work in progress. While the wording of the questions has been developed and tested with economists, social researchers and natural scientists; some policy makers have asked that the questions be made even simpler; more immediately relevant to the way they work and their short-term policy making horizons. We will do this in the near future, by developing an easy reference system that helps policy teams think about who can best help them answer some of these complex questions about robustness.

Getting back to the first statement from the *Modernising Government* White Paper; we do need evidence that supports policy making in response to short-term pressures: we need to recognise that these pressures exist and greatly shape the way policy makers work.

However, at the same time we need to ensure that the questions are relevant to the entire evidence base – including the evidence for strategy and longer-term policy options. My hypothesis is that we can do this by working through the process of developing an operational strategy, establishing a clear line of argument and evidence between long-term strategy, medium term intended outcomes and short-term policy outputs. At the same time we need to agree what are the indicators of success. Given the overlapping nature of many of these strategic priorities we need to also agree who ‘owns’ the indicators at each level: who is responsible for delivering the outputs and who needs to ensure that aggregating the outputs leads you in the direction of the intended policy outcome. At all levels we can test our statements for robustness, using the framework outlined in this paper.

We can and should be refining the tools to help this process: my experience with logical frameworks shows that a group of people with very disparate backgrounds and experience can be drawn together around a mutual understanding of what the goals are and how each can contribute to their achievement. There may well be other tools, but they will need two defining characteristics: first, they need to offer enough flexibility to encourage Omamo’s ‘user-readiness’ in researchers by encouraging them to focus on the real short-term pressures that policy makers face. At the same time the tools must let researchers encourage policy makers to lift their eyes from their desks, so that they are better able to understand how emerging evidence can be incorporated into their longer-term policy and strategy plans (Omamo’s ‘evidence-readiness’). Second, but perhaps more importantly, these tools must help us turn our strategic priorities into something concrete, manageable and achievable. They need to ensure that the evidence base for policy emerges from the evidence that underpins strategy.

Finally, (and I owe this insight to John Holmes) developing this dialogue between policy maker and adviser in a spirit of open enquiry will result in a stimulating and innovative process which ensures that the issues are well explored; and that all the various perspectives enable questions to be well focused and the answers to be effectively interpreted and applied to policy.

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Notes

¹ This is a discussion paper, not a statement of Defra policy or processes. Thanks are due to Michael Harrison, Miles Parker, Christian Hudson, Andy Stirling, Andy Dobson, Lindsey Poole and John Holmes for their comments on earlier versions of this paper. All errors and omissions are mine alone.

² see <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/regulation/index.asp>

1. Aims of the consultation

1. As explained in Defra's Five-Year Strategy,¹ progress towards our policy goals depends, perhaps more than in any other department, on working with or through others. The application of knowledge – natural and social sciences, economics, engineering, statistics and others – to deliver evidence-based policy and innovative solutions, is fundamental to the successful delivery of our challenging Strategic Outcomes.
2. **Through this consultation, we wish to develop a good, shared understanding of where we need to invest now in order to deliver our current priorities and to identify our future needs.**
3. We are seeking:
 - feedback on whether we have identified the right priorities for the evidence and innovation activities needed to deliver our Strategic Outcomes and policy goals. Specific questions relating to this are contained in the individual sections for each of our Strategic Outcomes.
4. We are also taking an overview of the approach we have used to develop our Evidence and Innovation Strategy. We are looking for:
 - feedback on the approach we have used, and suggestions for tools to facilitate this work in future
 - improved understanding about how Defra should work with other organisations (including our delivery/statutory bodies) to deliver evidence and innovation in support of our policy goals
 - views on the effectiveness of our consultation processes.
5. The results of this consultation will be analysed, published and fed into planning for the procurement of all Defra's evidence and innovation activities in the first part of 2006. We also aim to publish next year a final version of Defra's high-level evidence and innovation strategy, setting out our approach to evidence and innovation on the issues covered in Part I, in the light of this consultation.
6. In line with Defra's policy of openness, at the end of the consultation period copies of the responses we receive will be made publicly available through the Defra Information Resource Centre, Lower Ground Floor, Ergon House, 17 Smith Square, London SW1P 3JR. The information they contain will also be published in the summary of responses as failure to make material available may be incompatible with Open Government and Freedom of Information provisions.
7. If you do not consent to this, you must clearly request that your response be treated confidentially. Any confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system in e-mail responses will not be treated as such a request. You should also be aware that there may be circumstances in which Defra will be required to communicate information to third parties on request, in order to comply with its obligations under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations.

¹ HM Government (2004), *Delivering the Essentials of Life: Defra's Five Year Strategy* (HMSO: Norwich). Available at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/Corporate/5year-strategy/index.htm>

8. The Information Resource Centre will supply copies of consultation responses to personal callers or in response to telephone or e-mail requests (telephone 020 7238 6575, e-mail: defra.library@defra.gsi.gov.uk). Wherever possible, personal callers should give the library at least 24 hours' notice of their requirements. An administrative charge will be made to cover photocopying and postage costs.

2. Introduction

9. Defra's job is to devise and deliver policies to meet government priorities. We use knowledge to: understand the policy context and use this to formulate our **policy goals and targets**; develop **practical solutions** to meet them which command support from others (including innovative approaches when needed); and **monitor and evaluate** the effectiveness of our chosen policies in delivering our goals.
10. Defra has a complex and diverse knowledge base that includes the expertise of its employees, the Defra family and external partners, and a variety of networks, databases and other systems. Within this wider context, we have set out to understand the specific nature of the evidence base. This will enable us to make good policy choices and deliver the outcomes sought in both the short and long-term, also paying attention to the scope for innovation to deliver new solutions.
11. We analysed our needs using the generic evidence-based policy model (Figure 1) which we developed.

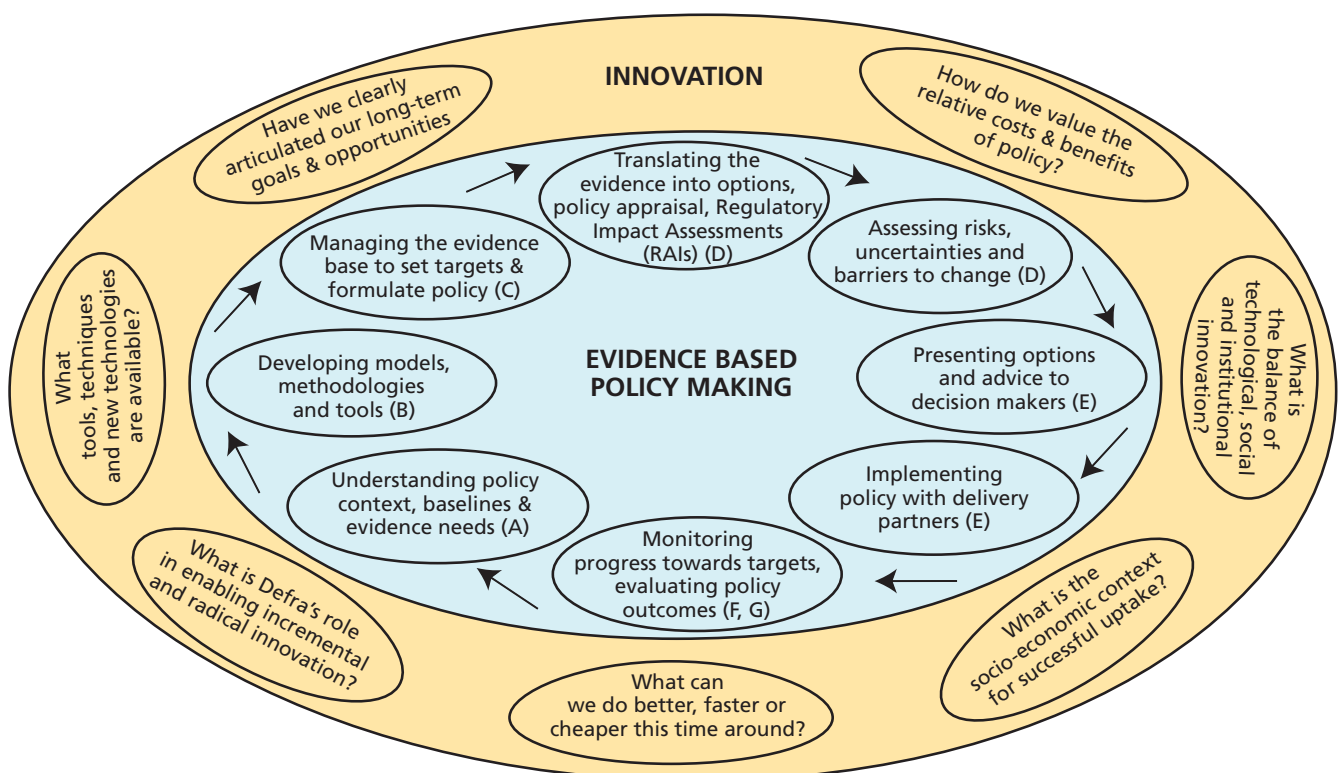


Figure 1: Evidence-based policy model

12. All of the above takes place within ongoing processes of policy negotiation between Government and stakeholders, and wider social and economic processes. Integral to our evidence-based policy model is the need for engagement with stakeholders on the evidence behind policy goals and targets, the development of solutions and their monitoring and evaluation. Much of Defra’s ongoing policy-making and strategy activities involve consultation or engagement based on or around evidence, and innovation is an unpredictable and dynamic process mostly outside our control.
13. The purpose of the Evidence and Innovation Strategy is therefore not to constrict the way in which future policy solutions will be delivered through the production of evidence, or to define future innovation pathways, but to provide a tool to help us handle the complexity of the evidence-based policy process. It sets out a narrative or ‘line of sight’ between our current policy goals and a proposed set of evidence and innovation inputs to policy, which Defra policy teams see as most relevant at present to delivery of our policy goals. Such inputs should acknowledge explicitly the key areas of uncertainty and ignorance, and take account of diverse viewpoints and future possibilities. We recognise also that the position will change constantly, and our assessment will need to be kept under more or less constant iteration, reflection and challenge. However, it is essential that we have a strategic mechanism for determining and planning the procurement of our evidence and innovation needs.
14. Earlier this year, Defra’s policy teams assessed their knowledge needs in terms of the evidence and innovation required to deliver each of Defra’s Strategic Outcomes. These were then mapped onto a slightly modified version of the model in Figure 1, thus straightening out the circle, as in Figure 2). This ‘mapping’ enabled us to understand where the balance of effort currently lies in the policy cycle.

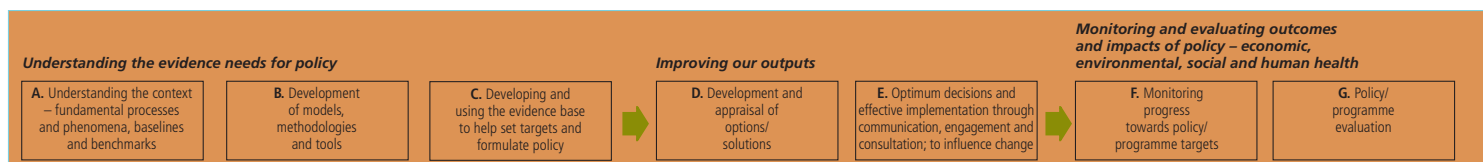


Figure 2: Modified evidence-based policy model

15. We also considered whether these needs were currently funded (coloured blue), or new (to Defra) needs or gaps that we have to fill with additional knowledge (coloured yellow). Boxes coloured blue/yellow represent needs that are only partially met at present. We recognise that much relevant research may exist elsewhere, but the emphasis is on what Defra needs to access in a useable format. The results are set out in the graphical summaries in Part II.
16. We define innovation as *the successful exploitation of new ideas that contribute to achieving Defra’s overarching sustainable development goal and the component policy objectives and Strategic Outcomes*. Horizon scanning, foresight and policy analysis; stakeholder engagement and communication; social science and economics; science, engineering and technology (including transfer to users); piloting and demonstration activities, all contribute to innovation. Defra is launching a new Innovation Centre, with IBM in April 2006, which will be a major boost for developing Defra’s innovation capability. Although we see innovation as integral to the policy-making process, it is often useful to consider needs and opportunities for major advances separately, which is why we presented innovation separately from evidence in Figure 1.

17. Our initial analysis of these graphical summaries of evidence and innovation needs shows that, if we are to deliver our Strategic Outcomes, we will increasingly require:
- social and opinion research to help us understand people’s attitudes and preferences on policy issues, and their likely response to different solution strategies
 - multidisciplinary analysis and assessment to address difficult policy questions (e.g. risk assessment)
 - greatly improved levels of evaluation (including social, economic and environmental as well as technical aspects) of issues and solutions
 - expert specialist support to be broadened from ‘delivering outputs of a research project’ to include ‘and advising Defra on the potential application and use of the knowledge so gained’.

We can also see:

- a growing emphasis on working jointly with key stakeholders – their shared views on Defra’s evidence base are vital to securing its acceptance
 - a need to determine our requirements for primary research against the policy cycle to help us maintain our focus on delivering policy outcomes. In some areas, this may require work with other funding organisations to ensure essential capabilities are maintained
 - a clear requirement to assess the depth and breadth of the skills base necessary to deliver evidence against Defra’s complex goals and other priorities (especially on sustainable development and sustainable consumption and production) in the medium to long term.
18. As set out in our *Evidence and Innovation* report,¹ Defra cannot expect to fund more than a small proportion of its science/knowledge base. Our proposed approach is to use our resources to secure access to the information we need in order to deliver our policy outcomes, while maintaining targeted support for the essential strategic capabilities we need now and in the future.
19. These changes have significant implications for how Defra procures and uses evidence and innovation in the future. They pose challenges for the internal capacity of Defra staff, partly in ensuring we have sufficient skilled analysts with the time to manage the procurement of our evidence and innovation needs, and also in interpreting and using evidence in policy making. We anticipate more collaborative work with delivery bodies and agencies; better cross-departmental co-ordination; increasing strategic planning of evidence and innovation needs with major providers such as the Research Council institutes; and increased emphasis on international co-ordination and influencing.
20. The purpose of this section of the consultation document is to explore general issues about how Defra will develop its approach to procuring evidence and innovation. These are dealt with under headings (a) to (g) below. If you would like to comment on the evidence and innovation

¹ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2004), *Evidence and Innovation: Defra’s Needs for the Sciences over the Next 10 Years* (Defra Publications: London). Available at http://www.defra.gov.uk/science/forwardlook_2004.htm

needs for specific Strategic Outcomes, please see Part II. Your comments will help us understand where Defra's investment is most important and most cost-effective.

21. **General issues for consultation: developing Defra's approach to evidence and innovation**

The issues on which we invite comments are shown in italics below. Please use the relevant section of the response form for your contribution, responding on as many or as few issues as you wish.

a) Defra's approach to evidence and innovation

Paragraphs 9-17 and the associated figures set out our current approach to the role of knowledge in delivering Defra's policy goals and the different uses of knowledge: from understanding the evidence needs for policy, through to monitoring and evaluating the outcomes and impacts of policies. (Reading examples of the graphical summaries will also be beneficial in helping you to understand how we have applied our approach).

- Q.i) *Please comment on our approach to identifying Defra's evidence and innovation needs in relation to our Strategic Outcomes, as set out in paragraphs 9-17 and the associated figures.*
- Q. ii) *Please comment on the implications of the generic changes in our needs and approach suggested in paragraph 17.*

b) Facilitating better joint working

Scoping work for this project identified the need for better access to information about what evidence and innovation activities are current or planned, so that links can be identified and developed with all our partners. To aid this, we have developed (with help from the other funders) an External Funders Mapping database of research activities relevant to Defra's policy priorities (available at <http://www.externalfunders.defra.gov.uk>). A more extensive database on environmental research and monitoring is being developed by the Environment Research Funders Forum (ERFF) (see <http://www.erff.org.uk/>). The EU Commission is also funding the ERAWATCH² project, to develop an intelligence service to support co-ordinated research policy making in Europe.

- Q. i) *Is the material provided under each of Defra's Strategic Outcomes (in particular, the graphical summaries) sufficient and appropriate to enable other funders to engage effectively with us in joint planning and strategy work on evidence and innovation?*
- Q. ii) *Please comment on the usefulness of Defra's External Funders Mapping database (see above): how could it be developed to support better joint working and to help manage knowledge about evidence and innovation activities?*
- Q. iii) *What co-ordination and consultation mechanisms and approaches are likely to be/proving most effective? (Please give examples of best practice.)*

Given the need for better engagement with other bodies in delivering our evidence and innovation needs, we need to explore how this can best be achieved. Sections (c) to (f) explore aspects of this in relation to different types of organisation.

² Further information available at <http://www.erawatch.jrc.es/public/welcome.htm>

c) Links with Defra's delivery bodies and statutory agencies

Defra's Delivery Strategy³ sets out how the core Department, responsible for defining the Strategic Outcomes required to deliver government policy, will work with delivery bodies that have a shared understanding with the Department of their role in both delivering Defra's Strategic Outcomes and supporting the development of policy. General information-sharing and the potential for co-ordinating research have been identified in discussion as potential areas for more collaborative ways of working under the Delivery Strategy.

Discussion has started between the science communities of Defra and the Environment Agency (EA) on the potential for greater collaboration. Both Defra and the EA have published science strategies in the last two years, improving mutual understanding of each other's programmes. We have established mechanisms to exchange information and to identify mutual interests and opportunities for closer co-operation, notably the ERFF, which also engages other funders. We believe that this consultation exercise now provides an important opportunity for considering how collaboration between Defra and delivery bodies should develop in the future.

We take it as axiomatic that both the core Department and delivery bodies must access the evidence underpinning the setting and delivery of government policies across the policy cycle (although emphasis and specific needs may differ). Efficiency pressures and the need to avoid duplication of scarce human and financial resources also argue for increased collaboration/co-ordination. Lastly, we believe that co-operative development of evidence and innovation programmes should lead to better shared understanding of how best to deliver Defra's Strategic Outcomes, taking account of all potential policy levers open to Government, as well as the practicalities of implementation.

In giving effect to these principles, we need to recognise the status of individual delivery bodies. For example, the new Natural England non-departmental public body (NDPB) that will be established next year, subject to Parliamentary approval, will have a remit, alongside its executive delivery functions, to provide expert advice and challenge, independently of Government.

Work is in hand to develop an overall approach to collaboration across the Defra family. Conclusions from this consultation exercise will inform the future collaboration agenda.

- Q. i) *What do you see as the key issues, barriers and opportunities for improved joint working between core Defra and delivery bodies on research and other evidence and innovation activities? This could include, for example, independence of formal advice to Government, commissioning arrangements, management of research and development (R&D) budgets etc.*
- Q. ii) *Do you agree that we should aim to produce in the future a combined evidence and innovation strategy for the Defra family? How do you see this being developed? What might be the advantages and disadvantages?*

³ Published in December 2004 in Chapter 10 of HM Government (2004), *Delivering the Essentials of Life: Defra's Five-Year Strategy* (HMSO: Norwich). Available at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/5year-strategy/index.htm>

d) Relations with the Research Councils, academia, business and the voluntary sector

In line with the Government's *Science and Innovation Investment Framework 2004–2014*,⁴ closer partnership with Research Councils' programmes is expected to provide a more responsive science base to meet the needs of public services and the economy.

Developing our funding approach to primary research needed for policy delivery is one of the most difficult science policy challenges that Defra faces. Given its high and increasing costs, we will (as the *Evidence and Innovation* report⁵ identified) become less able to maintain significant independent research programmes. We will have to look to joint strategies and approaches, and to accessing research by other research funders, in order to deliver the timely and policy-relevant evidence and innovation outputs we need. We will also need clear criteria to define the boundaries of Defra's investment and to help us prioritise. In relation to areas of knowledge underpinning private sector innovation to deliver public goals, we will have to develop appropriate three-way relationships between the science base, Government and business.

Defra is already participating in the ERFF. We are considering the implications of the Research Council Institute and Public Sector Research Establishment (PSRE) Sustainability Study (RIPSS),⁶ in particular on how necessary strategic capabilities are identified and supported.

- Q. i) *Should Defra seek to develop some criteria with the Research Councils (and wider academia) and with business to define the boundaries of Defra's research funding so that we can efficiently address evidence and innovation needs throughout the policy cycle? What might such criteria include?*
- Q. ii) *What strategic areas of science and other forms of knowledge does Defra need to maintain itself within the UK, via partnership with the UK science and engineering base or otherwise?*

e) Engaging with Other Government Departments and the Devolved Administrations

In line with the Government's *Science and Innovation Investment Framework 2004–2014*,⁷ Defra hopes to benefit from better cross-Government co-ordination of its evidence and innovation activities. Generic as well as specific mechanisms are already in operation⁸ and all departments acknowledge the need for better co-ordination.

- Q. i) *What is the scope for better cross-departmental evidence and innovation activities? How does our analysis help engage other departments and the devolved administrations?*

⁴ HM Treasury (2004), *Science and Innovation Investment Framework 2004–2014* (HMSO: Norwich). Available at http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/spending_review/spend_sr04/associated_documents/spending_sr04_science.cfm

⁵ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2004), *Evidence and Innovation: Defra's Needs for the Sciences over the Next 10 Years* (Defra Publications: London). Available at http://www.defra.gov.uk/science/forwardlook_2004.htm

⁶ Department of Trade and Industry (2004), *A Policy for Sustainable Trading and Joint Strategic Investment in Public Sector Research Establishment (PSRE) Infrastructure* (DTI: London). Available at http://www.ost.gov.uk/research/psre_sustainability.htm

⁷ HM Treasury (2004), *Science and Innovation Investment Framework 2004–2014* (HMSO: Norwich). Available at [http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/spending_review/spend_sr04/associated_documents/sp\[ending_sr04_xcience.cfm](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/spending_review/spend_sr04/associated_documents/sp[ending_sr04_xcience.cfm)

⁸ For example, the Coordination of Research and Analysis Group (CRAG) [http://www.gsr.gov.uk/gsr_network/crag.asp], created in December 2004 to ensure that analytical priorities and resources in Government are effectively co-ordinated and targeted.

f) International co-ordination and influencing

Defra expects a move towards EU/international research effort, with less emphasis on national boundaries and funding directed only within the UK. Already Defra's international engagement on evidence and innovation both promotes our policy interests directly (e.g. on climate change) and influences European and other international decisions. Defra facilitates engagement in EU Framework Programmes and is active (via our own experts and otherwise) in a multiplicity of international science activities and other fora. Defra is a member of the new Global Science and Innovation Forum⁹ which is seeking to focus co-ordinated international activity on science and innovation. The *Evidence and Innovation* report¹⁰ states that we will increasingly have to align national research programmes with EU and other international programmes.

- Q. i) *In the different Strategic Outcome areas, where should Defra put the overall balance of effort in its Evidence and Innovation Strategy between engaging at the international level and the domestic level?*
- Q. ii) *What issues, opportunities and barriers do you see as especially relevant to Defra in developing evidence and innovation internationally in support of its sustainable development and environmental leadership goals?*

g) Our consultation processes

Our strategies for science, innovation and other forms of knowledge set out our goals and what we think we need to do to deliver them. In developing such strategies, we have sought to engage with our stakeholders through consultation (for example, on our first Science and Innovation Strategy, *Delivering the Evidence*,¹¹ our *Evidence and Innovation* report¹² and many policy-specific processes such as the work of the Research Priorities Group¹³).

- Q. i) *How do you consider we could improve our consultation processes on our strategies for science, innovation and other forms of knowledge?*

⁹ Further information available at http://www.ost.gov.uk/ostinternational/world/2_2.htm

¹⁰ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2004), *Evidence and Innovation: Defra's Needs for the Sciences over the Next 10 Years* (Defra Publications: London). Available at http://www.defra.gov.uk/science/forwardlook_2004.htm

¹¹ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2003), *Delivering the Evidence: Defra's Science and Innovation Strategy (2003–06)* (Defra Publications: London). Available at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/science/how/ScienceInnovationStrategy.htm>

¹² Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2004), *Evidence and Innovation: Defra's Needs for the Sciences over the Next 10 Years* (Defra Publications: London). Available at http://www.defra.gov.uk/science/forwardlook_2004.htm

¹³ Further information available at http://www.defra.gov.uk/science/rpg/research_priorities.htm

5. Strategic Outcome: Reduction in UK's greenhouse gas emissions

Reduction in the UK's contribution to global climate change by cutting our greenhouse gas emissions.

Why it is important that we invest in evidence and innovation (E&I) in this Strategic Outcome area

Rationale

- 5.1 The UK ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1993 and was one of the first countries to publish a programme setting out how it planned to meet, and move beyond, its target under the Kyoto Protocol to the UNFCCC. The UK Government is on course to meet its Kyoto Protocol target of reducing emissions of greenhouse gases by 12.5%, from base year levels, by 2008-2012. The UK has also set itself an ambitious goal of reducing emissions of carbon dioxide by 20%, below 1990 levels, by 2010. The UK Climate Change Programme Review (CCPR), which is due to report by the end of 2005, is considering a range of possible measures to help the Government meet its goal of reducing carbon dioxide emissions.
- 5.2 The commitment of **business** to tackling climate change is growing in the UK. Many firms recognise that action to reduce emissions can bring wide-ranging benefits, including lower costs, improved competitiveness and new market opportunities. However, energy use in the commercial sector is growing fast – principally from space heating and lighting, ventilation and air-conditioning.
- 5.3 In **households**, the UK is aiming to deliver savings of around 4.2 million tonnes of carbon per year by 2010 (3.5 million tonnes of carbon per year for England) through a combination of policies.
- 5.4 The **public sector** has an important role in providing leadership to and driving change in other sectors. It can do this by setting an example through its own procurement and operations, as well as through its powers, policies and programmes.
- 5.5 The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Mid-Term Review reforms agreed in June 2003 made fundamental changes to the subsidy system for **agriculture** and are likely to lead to detectable changes in agricultural practice from the end of 2005. There is considerable uncertainty about how farmers might react and what the impact on greenhouse gas emissions might be.
- 5.6 The development of the **energy supply** sector in the coming decades will also be critical to the UK's ability to meet our short-, medium- and long-term carbon dioxide emission-reduction goals. In particular for Defra, the role of Combined Heat and Power (CHP), both at the community heating and house/micro CHP levels, and of other micro-generation technologies in households, will become increasingly important. Defra must therefore support the Department for Trade and Industry (DTI) in steps to reduce energy sector emissions more broadly.

5.7 Carbon dioxide emission levels from road **transport** rose by some 10% between 1990 and 2000, and they are expected to rise further, by another 9% or so between 2000 and 2010. Because transport emissions are projected to rise, there will be even more pressure to achieve savings from the household, business, public and other sectors. However, it is important that Defra supports the Department for Transport (DfT) in steps to reduce the growth in transport sector emissions.

Future policy developments

5.8 The Government is currently reviewing the Climate Change Programme (CCP) and will report by the end of the year. Existing policies have been evaluated and potential new policies appraised for their impact on carbon emission savings for 2010 and 2020. A considerable amount of new evidence has been gathered in the process, as well as new requirements being identified for the future. Once the CCPR is complete, specific new requirements will be clear.

5.9 For **businesses**, climate change agreements began in 2001. The EU Emissions Trading Scheme began in January 2005. Energy use in non-energy-intensive businesses is being addressed through the Climate Change Levy; Building Regulations; programmes from the Carbon Trust; and (from 2006) the implementation of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive.

5.10 The Energy Efficiency Commitment is one of the two principal policy mechanisms for improving the energy efficiency of **households** (the other is the Building Regulations). The objective is to help all consumers in the household sector (not just electricity and gas customers) to use energy more efficiently and in turn reduce their fuel costs or enjoy greater comfort.

5.11 Key **public sector** areas to be targeted for reductions in emissions are schools (Building Schools for the Future), the NHS estate (Capital Investment Programme), and local authorities and regional bodies (influence in building sustainable communities). It is important that central government sets a good example to other sectors on reducing emissions.

5.12 In **agriculture**, cross-compliance in England (which will set a new baseline standard for environmental performance that farmers will need to meet to receive their Single Farm Payment) is expected to make a modest contribution to emission reduction. The England Rural Development Programme (the mechanism for delivering the current EU Rural Development Regulation) tackles climate change issues directly, for example, through the Energy Crops Scheme, and less directly through measures under existing agri-environment schemes. The new EU Rural Development Regulation for the period 2007-13 is currently being negotiated.

5.13 **Energy**-related emissions from power stations are expected to decline further, mainly because of the impact of the EU Emissions Trading Scheme and the Large Combustion Plants Directive on the energy mix, and also as the proportion of electricity supplied by renewable sources of energy grows.

5.14 In July 2004, the Government set out its **transport** strategy in its White Paper, *The Future of Transport: A network for 2030*. This made clear that, while good transport is central to a prosperous economy, facilitating better access and greater mobility, we must balance the increasing demand for travel against our goal of protecting the environment effectively and improving the quality of life for everyone.

Key policy outcomes

5.15 There are six key policy outcomes for reduction in UK's greenhouse gas emissions:

- a. Emissions and removals from agriculture, forests and land use optimised, taking account of biodiversity needs, sustainable development and approaches for renewable bio-fuels and material substitutes
- b. Emissions reduced from business and industry and the business use of energy improved (investment in energy efficiency stimulated)
- c. Proportion of electricity supplied from renewable energy sources increased (10% of energy supply from renewable sources by 2010) and carbon emissions from the energy supply sector reduced
- d. Domestic energy consumption reduced and better energy efficiency in the domestic/household sector stimulated
- e. Sustainable and cost-effective reductions in emissions from road, aviation, rail and marine transport, and use of sustainable transport encouraged
- f. In managing their estates and operations, reduced absolute carbon emissions in the public sector, achieving better value for money by improving energy efficiency and supporting the production of renewable energy and CHP technology

The role of Defra and other organisations

5.16 Defra is the lead UK central government department responsible for reducing UK greenhouse gas emissions. However, this requires effective joint-working with other departments such as the DTI, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), HM Treasury, and DfT. Reducing emissions in the public sector involves not just central government, but regional and local bodies as well. The private sector also has a key role to play in the form of construction companies, private generators of energy and all those involved in product supply-chain activities.

5.17 There are also numerous delivery agencies, Research Councils and organisations, academic and research advisory groups, and co-ordinating committees that have a key role to play in reducing UK emissions in each of the agricultural, business, energy, household, transport and public sectors. The Carbon Trust has major responsibilities for innovation, research and development for business. The Energy Saving Trust works with households, business and the public sector in the areas of energy efficiency, road transport and renewable energy. In addition, there are a large number of international programmes which contribute to the UK understanding of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

5.18 Private sector organisations and the public have a major role to play by changing behaviour and reducing emissions.

What we have done previously to establish our E&I needs

5.19 The Energy Efficiency Innovation Review (EEIR), jointly sponsored by Defra and the Treasury, is examining how technological, policy, financial and organisational innovation can best contribute to a step change in national energy efficiency performance. The Review will feed into the CCPR, which is not specifically examining evidence and innovation needs but has reflected them in the appraisal of some new policy measures that may be included in the revised CCP. We have also conducted a series of workshops within Defra and have identified the need for evidence and innovation in each of the policy outcome areas listed above.

Summary of why the identified E&I needs are required to deliver the Strategic Outcome

5.20 There are many reasons why E&I needs must be met and numerous examples of what they might be.

5.21 For **business**, there needs to be energy efficiency and corresponding energy service demand indicators for both the services and industry sectors, the use of good long-term information from which temporal trends and spatial information can be determined, data on the impact of changes such as increased home-working and more open-plan working, understanding of the impact of energy efficiency measures on energy savings, better understanding of the impacts of policies and regulation etc.

5.22 For **households**, it is important:

- to understand much better how householders use energy to deliver different energy 'services' (e.g. thermal comfort, hot water), how such patterns change with income, improved energy efficiency, awareness etc.
- to develop energy efficiency indicators
- to conduct market research on consumer responses to economic incentives
- to monitor the impact of installation of energy efficiency measures on household energy savings
- to review the cost and effectiveness of different policies etc.

5.23 In the **public sector**, there is a need for information on benchmarking the consumption of energy in buildings occupied by public sector organisations, better understanding of barriers to reducing emissions, information on energy efficiency of buildings acquired for use within the public sector etc.

5.24 In the **agriculture** sector, E&I is required to assess emissions from different types of farming activity and land-use patterns, to gain information about how agricultural processes contribute to emissions, to assess the impacts of mitigation policies, to evaluate the impact of other policies on agriculture etc.

- 5.25 For the **energy supply** sector, E&I is required to support an increase in the proportion of energy obtained from renewable sources, to increase lower-carbon power generation, to reduce overall emissions while maintaining competitiveness etc. Robust and transparent emission projections are required with good evaluation of the impact of policies on actual emission levels.
- 5.26 In the **transport** sector, emissions information is needed for each of the different modes of transport, studies are required to evaluate the effectiveness of specific initiatives such as fuel tax changes and user charging, policies must be developed to ensure sustainable and cost-effective reductions in emissions from each transport type etc. The use of sustainable transport needs to be encouraged.
- 5.27 It is increasingly being recognised that economic analysis is important to support better evidence and innovation. The Government is committed to expanding and updating information on the costs of emissions at the national level. Estimates need to be based on a wide range of sensitivities and scenarios. Sensitivity modelling can include changing the availability of low-carbon technologies and their costs, the cost and availability of energy efficiency in the domestic and business sectors, and the level of innovation in low-carbon technologies.
- 5.28 Information on the costs of specific policies and measures will be extended under the CCPR. The costs and benefits of all the existing policies in the CCP and all the possible new policies can be calculated. It is envisaged that the analytical work underpinning the review should produce abatement cost curves showing the cost-effectiveness and carbon saving potential of possible new policies and measures for reaching emissions targets. The work will also provide the opportunity to compare the carbon mitigation costs of policies with the research evidence on the damage costs of carbon emissions.

Graphical summary of evidence and innovation needs

Please refer to Figure 5 overleaf before responding to the consultation questions below.

How should Defra take forward its E&I needs?

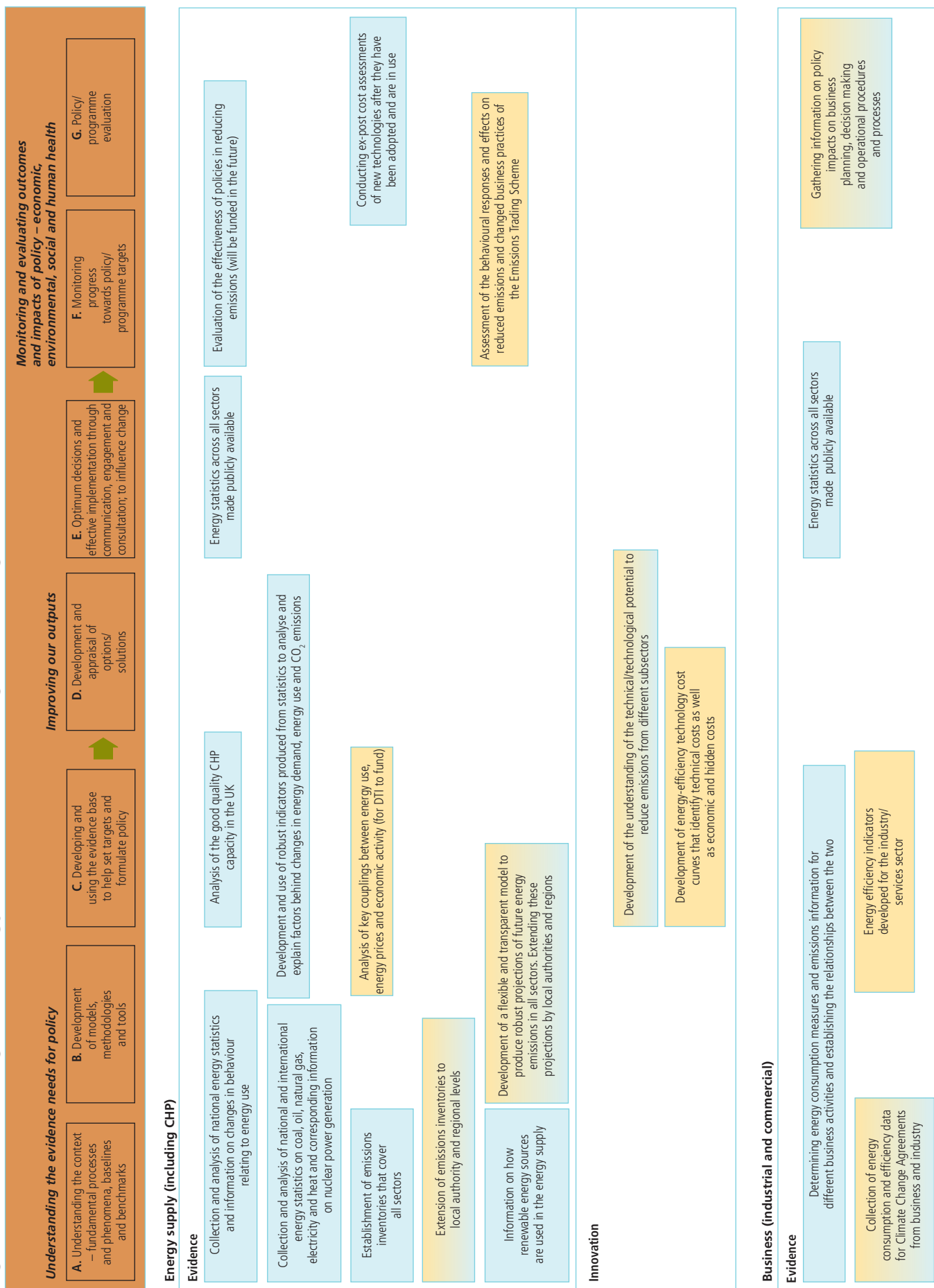
- Q.5.i In the summary charts of evidence and innovation need, are there major missing items (e.g. key areas of uncertainty, opportunities for innovation) or any erroneous ones?
- Q.5.ii Where should the emphasis of E&I investment by Defra be put (including sun-setting¹)?
- Q.5.iii How should major gaps in evidence and innovation be filled?
- Q.5.iv Could the logic and clarity of the evidence and innovation need, as set out in the summary charts, be improved upon and, if so, how?

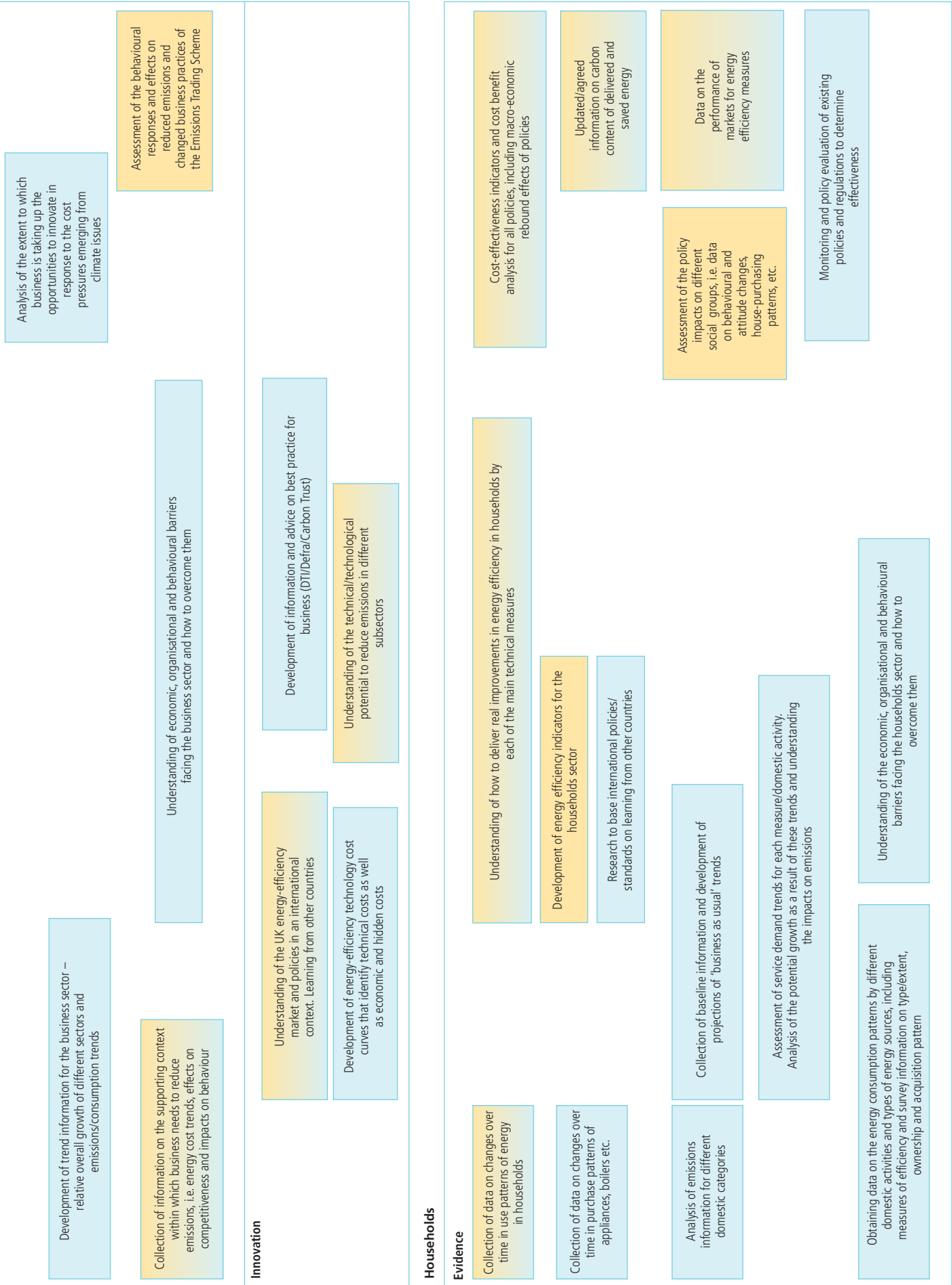
¹Sun-setting is the planned closure of a programme of activity when it has outlived its value/usefulness.

Strategic Priority – Climate change and energy

- Q.5.v What are the most important requirements in evidence and innovation needed to achieve the overall objectives of a reduction in UK global greenhouse gas emissions? Please list up to a maximum of 10.
- Q.5.vi How could Defra work more effectively with your organisation and other key climate change partners to strengthen evidence-gathering and innovation?
- Q.5.vii How can Defra improve its influence with key climate change partners in the UK?
- Q.5.viii What further work can be done to raise public awareness of climate change in the UK and what contributions can your organisation make towards this?
- Q.5.ix Do you have any other comments on how Defra could improve its Evidence and Innovation Strategy?

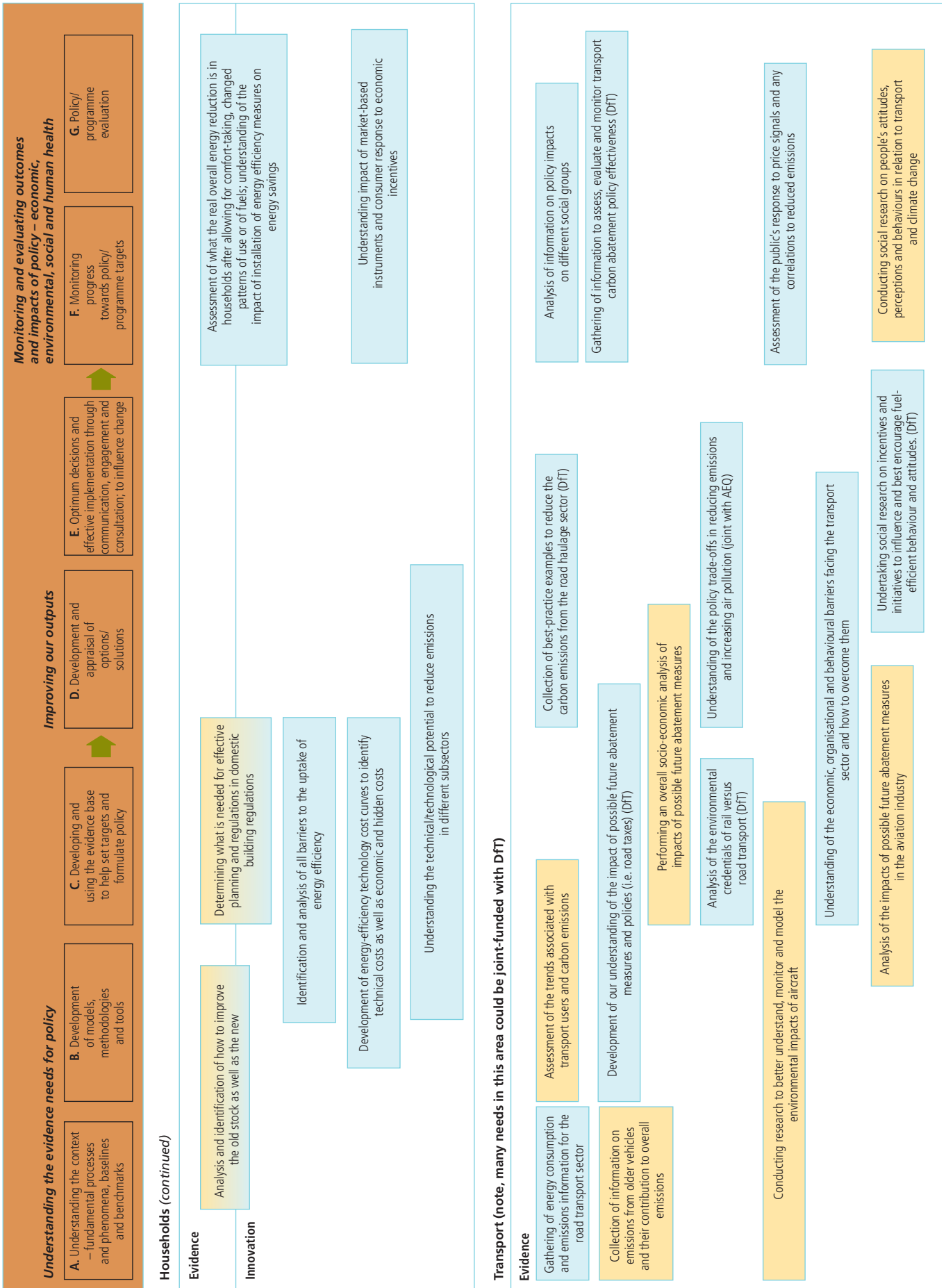
Figure 5: Climate change and energy – Reduction in UK’s greenhouse gas emissions

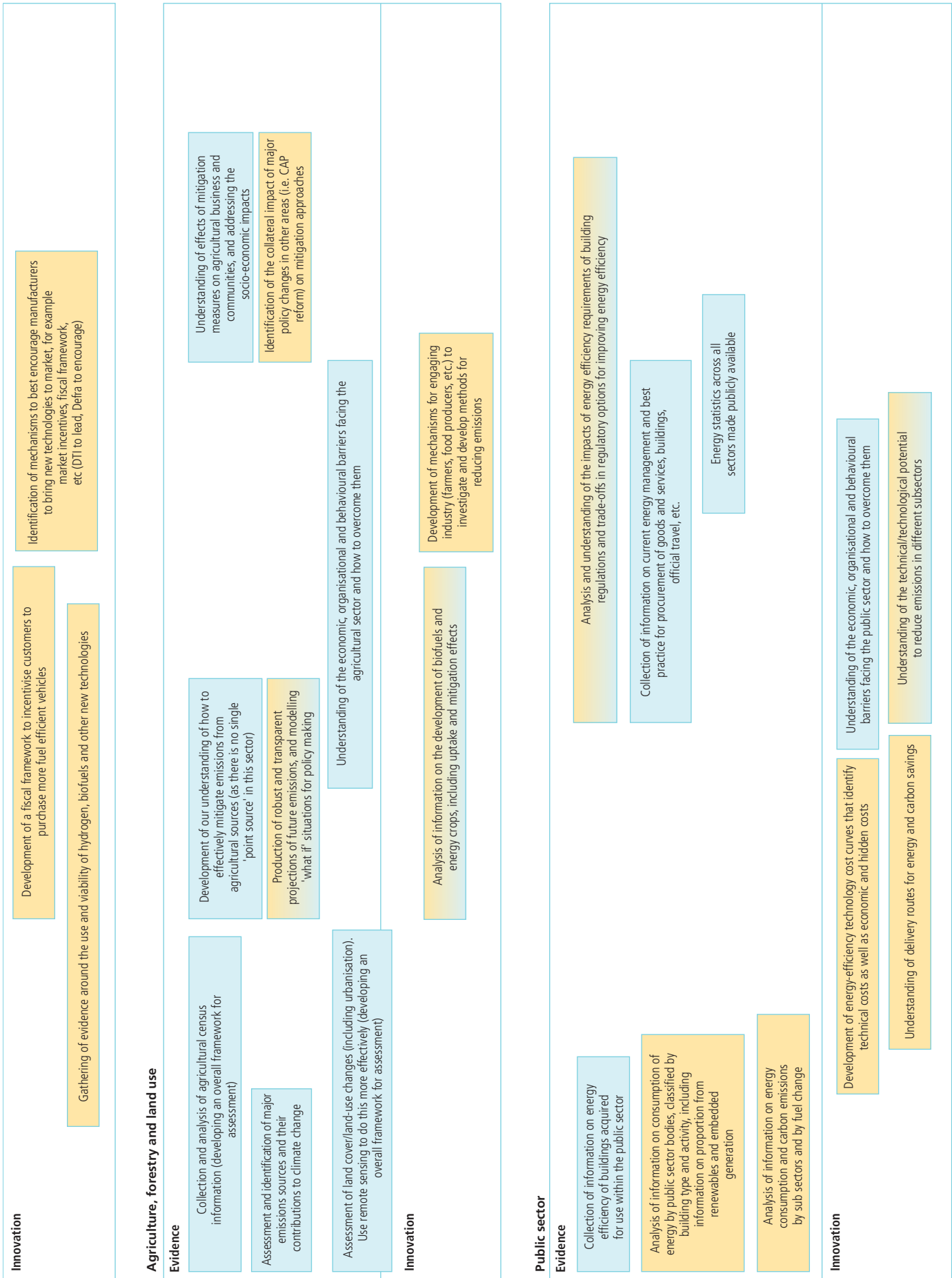




* Key: Please see paragraph 15, page 10

Figure 5: Climate change and energy – Reduction in UK’s greenhouse gas emissions (continued)





* Key: Please see paragraph 15, page 10

Understanding Risk in Everyday Policy-Making

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Contents

Foreword	v
Executive Summary	vi
List of Acronyms	vii
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Widening Approaches to Risk and Environmental Governance	1
1.2 Secondment – Between Research and Practice	2
1.3 Structure	3
2.0 Risk, Governance and the Public – Social Scientific Perspectives	4
2.1 Placing Risk in a Social Context	4
2.2 Perspectives on Knowledge	6
2.3 Risk and the Public	7
2.4 Summary – The Challenge of Risk	9
3.0 A Culture of Risk in Practice?	10
3.1 Risk Perceptions in CEER	11
3.2 Giving Meaning to Practice	12
3.2.1 Applying Expertise	14
3.2.2 Engaging Stakeholders and the Public	16
3.2.3 Risk and Democracy – Offering ‘Risky’ Advice	20
3.3 Summary	21
4.0 Moving Risk Forward in Governance and the Social Sciences	23
4.1 Making Risk the Property of Policy makers	24
4.2 Making Social Science Relevant to Policy makers	25
5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations	27
Appendix A – Methodology	29
Notes	31

Dr. Kevin E. Jones is Lecturer at The University of Liverpool Management School, and a Senior Research Associate with the Leverhulme Trust's Programme on Understanding Risk. Dr. Jones' work investigates ideas of risk in reference to debates over science, technology and the environment, with a specific interest in how these controversies are managed within government. In addition, Dr. Jones conducts research into the public understanding of risk, investigating how local publics can become more involved in taking control of those risks in their communities.

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Programme on Understanding Risk

The Programme on Understanding Risk is a major research programme (2001-2005) funded by the Leverhulme Trust. It is hosted at the University of East Anglia with further work being conducted by research teams at Cardiff University, The Institute of Food Research and the University of Liverpool. The Programme conducts research on the social dynamics of contemporary risk issues, involving topics such as public risk perception, risk communication, stakeholder involvement and governance. The Programme makes it an explicit aim to provide social research which is relevant to Government, NGOs and Business. For more information about the Programme on Understanding Risk please visit the Programme's website at <http://www.risks.org.uk>, or contact the team at the following address:

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Foreword

Early in 2004, a conversation started between Defra and members of the Leverhulme Trust's 'Programme on Understanding of Risk'. It centred on the changing role of risk in society and the resulting implications for government. Clearly not a new topic, but we had recently been involved in the GM public debate, which most definitely gave it a renewed sense of urgency.

On our part, whilst Defra unarguably holds considerable expertise in both the science and politics of risk, we needed to find new ways to challenge all policy makers to improve their knowledge of the processes and structures designed to ensure a more integrated approach to framing risk.

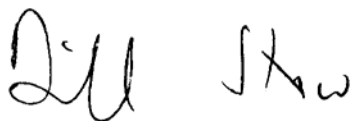
At the same time, our practical experiences of dealing with risk were not always well reflected in the increasing body of risk literature that argued for government to adopt more socially robust practices. Improved engagement with the academic community seemed attractive, enabling more informed understanding of the day-to-day challenges that we face in seeking to be effective risk managers.

In September 2004, Dr. Kevin Jones joined Defra on secondment from the Programme with the task of facilitating a joint learning process between government and academia on issues of risk as they relate to chemicals, GM, radioactive waste and nanotechnology. This report sets out his findings, and I hope that it will provide the backcloth for both further improvements in risk management practices in Defra, and continued critical but mutually supportive collaboration between us and the academic community.

In order to maintain momentum, a number of initiatives are now underway that build upon the secondment:

- the appointment of an expert in social understandings of risk, to develop nanotechnology policy, as well as to provide advice to and challenge other policy makers on best practice risk management and communication;
- the recruitment of a doctoral student to evaluate in greater detail our treatment of risk in particular policy areas; and
- a wider evaluation of the expertise that will be needed over the coming years in Defra to deliver effective policy.

With time I am confident that we will be able to add to these items and in doing so it is my hope that a fully integrated and critical understanding of the concept of risk will incrementally become an almost unspoken part of what it means to make and deliver effective environmental policy.



Bill Stow
Director General Environment
Defra

Abstract

This report is the outcome of a secondment between the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), and the Leverhulme Trust's 'Programme on Understanding Risk' (PUR). Beginning a dialogue between social scientists and policy makers, it addresses issues of environmental risk, and the processes involved in their governance. More specifically, this report enquires into how the governance of risk is evolving in the day-to-day policy making activities of the Department. This process is assessed against a backdrop of social scientific advice about risk. Policy makers are encouraged to adopt more socially attuned perspectives of hazard, while social scientists are challenged to find ways of engaging with practice and making advice relevant to policy contexts. Key recommendations call for:

- I. the development of risk approaches that lead and structure policy processes, as opposed to conforming to pre-existing practice;*
- II. the building of capacity in accessing, mediating between, and applying a wider range of expertise and knowledge in the policy process;*
- III. the continued development of engagement practices in ways that encourage publics and stakeholders to inform policy, thereby potentially conferring legitimacy on processes of governance;*
- IV. the translation of best-practice in risk governance into advice to Ministers;*
- V. policy makers to take greater control in developing ideas of risk and risk-based practices within the Department.*

Acronyms

ACRE – Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment
AEBC – Agriculture, Environment and Biotechnology Commission
BSE – Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy – ‘mad-cow’ disease
CEER – Climate, Energy and Environmental Risk Directorate
CGMP – Chemicals and GM Policy Division
CoRWM – Committee on Radioactive Waste Management
CSF – UK Chemicals Stakeholder Forum
Defra – Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
FMD – Foot and Mouth Disease
PFOS – Perfluorooctane Sulphonate
PUR – The Leverhulme Trust’s Programme on Understanding Risk
RAS – Radioactive Substances Division
WTO – World Trade Organization

1.0 Introduction

1 Risk has recently become a key concept in the everyday language of government, and of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)ⁱ. It is a multi-faceted term that may refer to specific hazards, but also to new approaches to environmental protection, food safety, as well as the other core business within the Department. This report will discuss how ideas of risk are being developed at Defra, and specifically within the Department's Climate, Energy and Environmental Risk (CEER) Directorateⁱⁱ. The aim is to develop an understanding of how better risk practices are being developed at the policy level and in the everyday practices of the Directorate.

1.1 Widening Approaches to Risk and Environmental Governance

2 CEER is involved in the difficult business of building and maintaining a governmental basis for environmental protection and public safety across a multitude of complex and contentious topics. Key areas of work in the Directorate include: the regulation of novel technologies, such as GM crops and nanotechnology; dealing with longstanding concerns about the impact of hazardous chemicals on the environment; and the mounting problem of how to contend with Britain's stockpiles of radioactive waste. Each of these issues presents difficult scenarios for civil servants who are being asked to uncover the probability and impacts of potential hazards on the natural environment, while concurrently considering a host of other social factors, ethical issues and legal commitments. The Department's mandate is not simply to do away with environmental hazards, but to integrate environmental protection with social progress and well-being. It is, as the Prime Minister and the Environment Secretary recently put it, a task that involves nothing less than "improving the current and a future quality of life."ⁱⁱⁱ

3 It is this difficult undertaking of coping with technical complexity within socially complex and often tendentious contexts where Defra and its predecessors have in recent years received heavy criticism. Following controversial issues such as mad-cow disease (BSE), Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) and the regulation of GM crops, these criticisms have raised difficult questions about the government's ability to deal adequately with potential hazards, as well as to generate public confidence in its actions. In response to these criticisms, the rise of the language of risk demarcates an attempt by government to improve the way in which Departments address their mandates. Partly, these processes involve attempts to enhance the quality and use of scientific and technical expertise available to policy makers involved with risk assessment and regulation^{iv}. Furthermore, policy makers are being asked to move away from approaches to environmental governance rooted in the perception that hazards are solely technical matters, and to develop socially robust risk practices. To some extent, this involves the recognition that Defra needs to rebuild social legitimacy in its actions. What is more, the Department is being encouraged to become more adept at

recognizing, and contending with risk issues within their social and political contexts.

4 In summary, the difficult task of policy makers is to deliver advice that is able to take account of a variety of aspects of risk, and make that advice applicable to a range of social and political contexts. That is, to take decisions which make use of various forms of expert knowledge; are able to engage with a range of contentious social perspectives of hazards; and hold the confidence of the public. All of which must be accomplished while still working within the bounds of the political and legislative structures, constitutional arrangements and ministerial relationships with which policy makers are often most comfortable and familiar and which constrain their freedom of manoeuvre.

1.2 Secondment – Between Research and Practice

5 This report is the outcome of a four month secondment arranged between CEER and the Leverhulme Trust's Programme on Understanding Risk (PUR). The secondment was established with the intention of bringing together social scientists interested in issues of risk and environmental governance with policy makers in the Directorate. This may at first appear to be a rather modest aim. However, such relationships have seldom been explored fully by either party. Social scientists may well be criticized for too often preferring to address risk and environmental policy from outside government, rather than engaging directly with the people and processes involved. Likewise, Defra has not always been good at opening itself up to proactive critical relationships with the social sciences, and is only now becoming aware of the significant shortfall of expertise it holds in this regard.

6 The secondment has, therefore, been guided by the need to build a relationship of mutual benefit between both parties and to encourage a process of joint-learning with the aim of advancing approaches to environmental governance. In practice this has meant, on the one hand, applying social scientific expertise on a day-to-day basis, assisting policy makers in developing good risk management and communications practices. On the other hand, the secondment has enabled PUR to inform its research work through the unique access it has been granted to the policy-making process.

7 Mindful of the purpose of the secondment, this report is not intended as an exercise in critical social analysis of the use of risk in the Directorate. Nor is it intended to be added to the growing pile of toolkits and advice documents offering practical advice on creating better risk management practices in Defra. Instead, the report lies in-between, outlining the beginning of a conversation between policy makers and academics in the social sciences. It seeks to encourage more socially aware approaches to risk, pointing to areas of this dialogue where both parties can learn from each other, and where the development of further expertise and engagement should be developed^v.

1.3 Structure

8 In terms of structure, the report is divided into three primary sections.

9 Part One addresses some of the perspectives offered by the social sciences to issues involving the governance of risk. Although not intended as a comprehensive review of the literature in the field, the purpose of this section is to help elucidate and contextualize issues of risk, as well as to draw out areas of critical interest to government. Additionally, a short explanation of how these perspectives have directed the focus and method of the secondment is provided.

10 Part Two outlines how issues of risk and governance are being handled in the day-to-day work of policy makers in CEER. It addresses the development of what is often referred to by strategic planners as a 'culture of risk' in the Directorate. Furthermore, it argues that if the Directorate is to be successful in contending with environmental hazards the concept of risk must be given greater weight in shaping the policy process. Specifically, it encourages policy makers to give greater meaning to practices centred on the use of advice and expertise, stakeholder and public engagement, and the drafting of advice to decision-makers

11 Part Three of the report addresses some of the barriers to achieving best-practice in risk governance at Defra, how they impact policy work within the Directorate, as well as how they might be overcome. In particular, an argument is made that calls for policy-makers to take greater control of ideas of risk within the Department. Furthermore, social scientists are challenged to find ways of assisting these processes and make a positive contribution to risk governance at the policy level.

12 Finally, as a note to the reader, throughout the report a series of text boxes are included where it is beneficial to extrapolate upon a key argument or concept. These boxes either refer to specific case studies comprising key areas of work within CEER, or to discussion topics raised by policy-makers about what a piece of advice might mean in practice.

Notes

