# Evidence-Based Policymaking:

# What is it? How does it work? What relevance for developing countries?

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## Contents

# Executive Summary

## Evidence-based Policy: Importance and Issues

### *What is the purpose of this paper?*

Over the last decade the UK government has been promoting the concept of Evidence-based policy (EBP). Our partners in the South constantly ask about what is happening in the UK regarding EBP and what can they learn from the UK experience. The aim of this work is to identify lessons and approaches from EBP in the UK which may be valuable to developing countries. The issues, approaches and tools presented are based on the assumption that the reader is a progressive policymaker in a developing country, who is interested in utilising EBP. The focus is on policymakers within the public sector, rather than those working within the private sector or civil society.

### *Where does Evidence-based policymaking 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 EBP gained political currency under the Blair administrations since 1997. It was intended to signify the entry of a government with a modernising mandate, 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 a discourse or set of methods which informs the policy process, rather than aiming to directly 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 which is based on systematic evidence is seen to produce better outcomes. The approach has also come to incorporate evidence-based practices.

### *Why does it matter for developing countries?*

EBP can have an even more significant impact in developing countries; EBP tends to be less well established in developing countries than in developed ones, and therefore the potential for change is greater. Better utilization of evidence in policy and practice can help save lives, reduce poverty and improve development performance in developing countries. For example, the Government of Tanzania has implemented a process of health service reforms informed by the results of household disease surveys – this contributed to over 40% reductions in infant mortality between 2000 and 2003 in two pilot districts. On the other hand, the HIV/AIDS crisis has deepened in some countries because governments have ignored the evidence of what causes the disease and how to prevent it spreading.

### *What are the issues surrounding the use of EBP?*

This paper highlights three main issues surrounding the use of EBP:

(i) *What evidence is used in the policymaking process?* What is clear from the literature is that policy should be informed by a wide breadth of evidence, not just hard research. Key issues include the quality, credibility, relevance and the cost of the policy.

(ii) *How evidence is incorporated into policymaking.* Policy processes ideally involve different stages, from agenda-setting to formulation to implementation. Evidence therefore has the potential to influence the policymaking process at each stage. However different evidence and different mechanisms may be required at each of the policy stages.

(iii) *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 – for example, a policymaker's own experience, expertise and judgement – and at an institutional level, for example in terms of institutional capacity. There are also a number of constraints, which will limit the extent to which evidence can affect policy – for example, the pressure to process information quickly. Policymaking is neither objective nor neutral; it is an inherently political process.

Despite these challenges to creating an EBP approach, there is a general consensus in the literature that a more evidence-based approach to policy and practice would be a positive development.

## Increasing Evidence Use: Approaches and Tools for Progressive Policymakers

### *Approaches to increase the use of EBP*

The paper puts forward a number of approaches which will help to promote 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 evidence is available, know how to gain access to it and be able to critically appraise it (Davies, 2004: 18). Fundamentally, there needs to be increased communication and interaction between the research and policy worlds, such as through discussion forums and joint training. Building institutional bridges will strengthen the integration of policy and evidence, and ensure that this is sustainable. A number of ways by which policymakers can achieve this are put forward here, for example, the need to create better incentives to encourage the use of evidence and the need to encourage policymakers to 'own' evidence.

### *Specific tools used by the UK government*

The UK government uses a wide range of tools. In this paper we focus on a number of these, detailing what they are, how and when they should be used and give an example of them in use.

*Overview and Checklist*

1. Impact Assessment and Appraisal: guidance checklist for policy makers.

*Strategy and Policy Evaluation*

2. Strategy Survival Guide
3. Magenta Book: Guidance notes on Policy Evaluation
4. Green Book: appraisal and evaluation in Central Government
5. Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA)

*Ensuring Key Perspectives are Included*

6. Incorporating regional perspectives into policy making toolkit (Subnational)
7. International Comparisons in Policy Making Toolkit
8. Gender Impact Assessment: a framework for gender mainstreaming
9. Managing risks to the public: Appraisal Guidance

*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 Policymakers
15. Improving Standards of Qualitative Research

*Other Web-based Resources*

### *What are the issues surrounding the transferability of EBP?*

Undoubtedly the development arena is distinct and therefore there are a number of reasons that the tools are not directly transferable. Increasing the use of EBP in developing countries introduces new challenges. Economic, social and political environments are diverse and often more complicated; capacity is more limited; resources are scarcer. In addition, international actors have a substantial impact on research and policy processes. As a result of these challenges, EBP approaches will need to be adapted. Despite the challenges that confront the use of EBP in developing countries, the tools and approaches are still relevant and can be adapted for different contexts.

# Section I: Evidence-based Policy: Importance and Issues

## Introduction

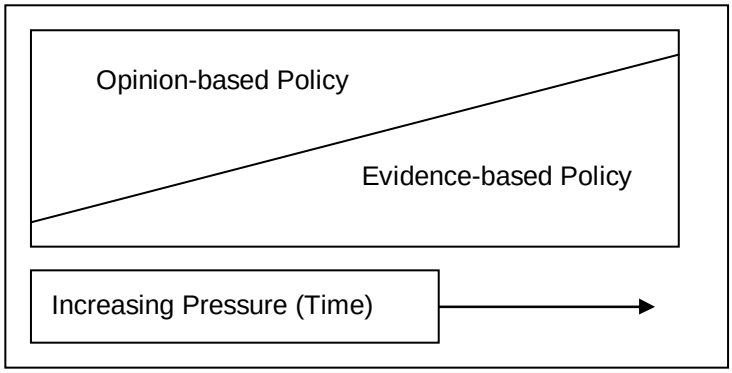
The idea of using evidence to inform policy is not new. As far back as ancient Greece, Aristotle put forward the notion that different kinds of knowledge should inform rulemaking. This would ideally involve a combination of scientific knowledge, pragmatic knowledge and value-led knowledge (Flyvbjerg, 2001; Ehrenberg, 1999). What is new and interesting however, is the increasing emphasis that has been placed on the concept over the last decade in the UK.

The current debates originated from the medical sector in the UK in the early 1990s, which was promoting the use of evidence-based medicine. Evidence-based policymaking (EBP) has gained political currency since 1997 under the Blair administrations. This signified the entry of a government with a reforming and modernising mandate, which was committed to putting an end to ideologically-driven politics and replacing it instead with rational decision making. They made a bold commitment towards the use of evidence in policy decision making with their White Paper in 1999, *Modernising Government.*[1] This 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*'.

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). The EBP discourse has become popular among a range of policy communities, those within government departments, research organisations and think-tanks. EBP is a discourse or set of methods which informs the processes by which policies are formulated, rather than aiming to affect the eventual goals of the policy. It advocates a more rational, rigorous and systematic approach, and moves beyond traditional notions of research to adopt a broader understanding. In most discussions, the approach has also come to incorporate evidence-based practices.

Phil Davies of the Cabinet Office 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*'[2] (see figure 1). As Davies (2004: 3) notes '*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**




*Source*: Adapted from Gray (1997)

[1] Cabinet Office (1999)
[2] Davies cited in Shaxson, 2005: p102

### *Why does EBP matter?*

The pursuit of EBP is based on the premise that policy decisions should be better informed by available evidence and should include rational analysis. David Blunkett, former UK Education Secretary, said in a speech to the ESRC '*Social science research evidence is central to development and evaluation of policy…We need to be able to rely on social sciences and social scientists to tell us what works and why and what types of policy initiatives are likely to be most effective*' (Young et al, 2002). This is because policy which is based on evidence is seen to produce better outcomes.

Shaxson (2005: 102-3) argues that 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 and 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 are aiming for and what we are 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 and depth) of our evidence base to meet the open government agenda.

### *Why does EBP matter to developing countries?*

There is the view that EBP approaches have the potential to have even greater impact on outcomes in developing countries, where better use of evidence in policy and practice could dramatically help reduce poverty and improve economic performance. This is because EBP tends to be less well established in developing countries than in developed ones, and policies are often not based on evidence. Two cases highlight the value of EBP in developing countries – one where evidence transformed lives; the other where the lack of an evidence-based response has caused widespread misery and death. First, the Government of Tanzania has implemented a process of health service reforms informed by the results of household disease surveys – this contributed to over 40% reductions in infant mortality between 2000 and 2003 in two pilot districts. On the other hand, the HIV/AIDS crisis has deepened in some countries because governments have ignored the evidence of what causes the disease and how to prevent it spreading. Increasing the use of evidence-based policy in developing countries does, however, introduce new challenges. Economic, social and political environments are more difficult, capacity is more limited to generate rigorous evidence and to formulate policy. Also, resources are scarcer.

Although the UK Government is constantly seeking to improve its use of EBP, this paper attempts to outline the ideas, issues and tools already being used in the EBP approach in the UK and to assess their relevance for developing countries. In order to do this we first outline the central debates surrounding the concept of EBP. Overall, the literature reveals a general consensus as to the benefits of using evidence in policymaking. However, given the inherently political nature of policymaking, this remains a formidable challenge. This paper confronts this challenge by exploring the tools which are currently used by the UK government, and the conditions that facilitate EBP. It also looks at the issues which are likely to arise when transferring these tools to LDCs. The issues, approaches and tools presented here are primarily intended for policymakers in developing countries, who are interested in utilising EBP. The focus is on policymakers within the public sector, rather than those working within the private sector or civil society.

This paper has been informed by a literature review[3], a workshop at ODI[4] and a series of discussions, both face-to-face and by e-mail. The contributors represent a cross-section through government, other organisations concerned with the use of evidence based policy, and academia.

## Key Issues Surrounding EBP

Discussion of EBP tends to cluster around three key issues. Firstly, we focus on the kinds of evidence which are used and its credibility. Second are issues surrounding the way in which evidence is incorporated into the policymaking process. Finally, we highlight the issue that many factors other than evidence affect the way policy is made; policymaking is inherently a political process.

### *Evidence for policy processes*

Central to making evidence more accessible to policymakers is the need to go to the very basis of what is meant by the term 'evidence' and explore how this can, should and does affect policymaking. Evidence tends to be portrayed as an a-political, neutral and objective policy tool. This image is encouraged by the Labour government's claim that policy will now be shaped by evidence; thereby implying that the era of ideologically driven politics is over (Nutley, 2003: 3). It is however neither neutral nor uncontested; instead evidence is a fundamentally ambiguous term.[5]

**(i) Different types of evidence**

What counts as evidence varies as much from the researchers working practice to the end use of the evidence. The UK Cabinet Office attempted to define its understanding of evidence in its 1999 White Paper *Modernising Government*, according to which evidence is '*expert knowledge; published research; existing research; stakeholder consultations; previous policy evaluations; the Internet; outcomes from consultations; costings of policy options; output from economic and statistical modelling*' (Cabinet Office, 1999: 33). The breadth of what is considered evidence is therefore wide and dynamic (Shaxson, 2005). Marston and Watts (2003) supported this interpretation, listing a rich and varied variety. Possible sources include photographs, literary texts, official files, autobiographical material such as diaries and letters, newspaper files and ethnographic and particular observer accounts. We take the view that evidence-based policy should be based on systematic evidence (both the hard and soft evidence types highlighted above). Therefore we believe that evidence-based policy should be based on research based evidence. The key however 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 as long as they have been collected through a systematic process. This may include any systematic process of 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.

**(ii) Hierarchy of evidence**

Despite this broad eclectic definition of evidence, 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 over validity and power. For example, UK public sector policy relies on a limited range of 'top-end' evidence, centring on empirical research, policy evaluation and expert knowledge, and thereby creates an implicit hierarchy. Government departments are not alone in their preferences towards empirical research, viewing it as the most reliable form of evidence.

[3] See website: http://www.odi.org.uk/RAPID/Bibliographies/EBP/bibliography.html
[4] See website: http://www.odi.org.uk/Rapid/Meetings/Impact_Insight/Index.html
[5] Oxford Dictionary definition quoted in Upshur et al, 2001: 9.

Marston and Watts (2003: 151) categorised evidence through a social sciences perspective as either 'hard' or 'soft', implying objective versus subjective forms. Hard evidence is said to consist of: primary quantitative data collected by researchers from experiments; secondary quantitative social and epidemiological data collected by government agencies; clinical trials; and interview or questionnaire-based social surveys. This is in contrast to 'soft' evidence which is viewed as consisting of qualitative data such as ethnographic accounts and autobiographical materials. Upsur et al (2001: 91) argue that qualitative methodologies receive little attention in the social sciences. Such categorisation as prescribed in Marston and Watts (2003) lead to risks and failures with the EBP approach. This because a hierarchy which is weighted in favour of hard evidence, creates a risk and a limitation that EBP will in fact be used to ignore evidence that comes low in the hierarchy. This would include tacit forms of knowledge, practice-based wisdom and, perhaps most importantly, the voices of ordinary citizens – the 'voices of the poor'. The implication is therefore that an EBP approach should take into consideration a wide breadth of sources of research, not just hard evidence. This understanding continues to embrace a wide range of factors, such as voice and consultations, if the evidence is collected through a systematic process. Although it is this idea which we promote, for ease of use the following discussion shortens the term 'research based evidence' to 'evidence'.

**(iii) Attempts to establish what evidence is useful to policymakers**

As not all forms of evidence share an equal validity or weighting, when the government attempts to create a broad understanding of what evidence is useful, there are inevitable questions. Therefore, in order to come to some agreement over what constitutes useful evidence, we highlight the work of Louise Shaxson who identifies some of the key characteristics of evidence that influence whether it is used (Shaxson, 2005: 102). We also draw on the work of the RAPID programme at ODI that has been focusing on these issues in developing countries.[6] The key issues are outlined below:

*1. Quality / accuracy / objectivity*

This refers to the accuracy of the evidence. Is the evidence correctly describing what it purports to do? There are arithmetical (are the numbers added up correctly?), statistical (were the cause and effect parameter correctly specified?) and representative (do the quotes from people really represent what the body of people felt?) issues that can be considered to address the relevance of evidence. There are also issues surrounding the objectivity of the evidence and its sources. It is important to question the bias in the evidence base to deepen our understanding of how it conditions our interpretation of the evidence for policy (Shaxson, 2005: 107).

*2. Credibility*

Credible evidence relies on a strong and clear line of argument; tried and tested analytical methods; analytical rigour throughout the processes of data collection and analysis; and on clear presentation of the conclusions (Shaxson, 2005: 106). This relates to the reliability of the evidence and therefore whether or not we can depend on the evidence for monitoring, evaluation or impact assessments – planning for the lessons learned approach. In reality, it is very difficult for policymakers to check evidence, therefore they often rely on the reputation of the source as a proxy. For example, research and research findings from academic institutions and reputable think-tanks tend to be viewed as more credible than, for instance, civil society groups or community leaders opinions. Reputation, however, is subjective and depends on the decision maker. Advice on employment morale will be more easily accepted from a highly reputable human resources consulting firm than from a small NGO.

*3. Relevance*

The key issue here is that evidence is timely, topical and has policy implications. The type of evidence one refers to matters greatly according to the audience it is being presented to and the likely impact it can create. For example, policymakers in the public sector would be more interested in evidence of action (what has already happened) rather than opinion. This is supported by the findings of Moseley and Tierney (2004: 114) when investigating the problems relating to the

[6] see Court and Young (2003); Court, Hovland and Young (2005); www.odi.org.uk/rapid

implementation of EBP. Implicit to the idea of relevance is the need for the evidence to be generalisable. This refers to whether there is extensive information or just selective case studies and therefore how easily applicable the argument is. It also relates to the way in which we make inferences. 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 (Shaxson, 2005: 106).

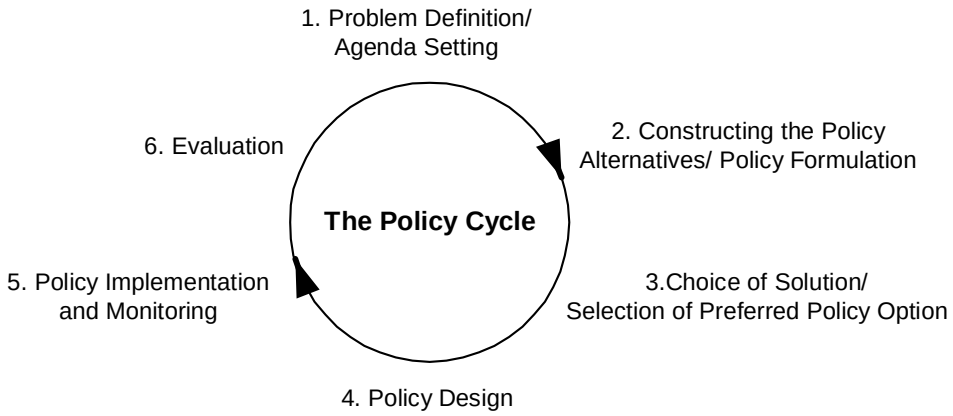
*4. Practicalities*

This relates to the extent to which the evidence is accessible to policymakers; whether policymakers have access to it in a useful form and therefore the ease with which it can be translated into policy. It also refers to the cost of the policy implications of the research, and therefore whether it is feasible and affordable.

### *Policy stages and the use of evidence*

Following Lasswell (1977), the most common approach to the study of public policy disaggregates the process into a number of functional components. A conceptual model of the policy cycle is shown visually in the diagram below (figure 2). It is important to emphasise that policy processes are never as linear, or cyclical, as implied in the model. But, looking at the policy process in terms of these stages or functional elements can help us to understand how this process does (or should) work.

**Figure 2: The policy cycle**




*Source*: Young and Quinn (2002)

This conceptualisation is important since it demonstrates that research has the potential to influence the process at any stage – both informing and correcting planning and implementation, for instance. Thus this view of policy processes also helps break down the policy cycle to try to identify the different types of research or evidence that might be needed. It may well be that success in influencing an agenda, for example, often requires a different kind of approach than that needed for influencing the implementation of policy. The value of this view of the policy process is that it is not tied to a particular set of institutions, thus enabling the analysis of a range of actors (not just government) and the way they interact across policy issue, component of the process and time.

For the purposes of this paper, the functions of the policy processes are simplified into four categories:

- *Agenda Setting*: awareness of and priority given to an issue or problem;
- *Policy Formulation*: the ways (analytical and political) options and strategies are constructed;
- *Policy Implementation*: the forms and nature of policy administration and activities on the ground;

- *Monitoring and Policy Evaluation*: the nature of monitoring and evaluation of policy need, design, implementation and impact.

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.

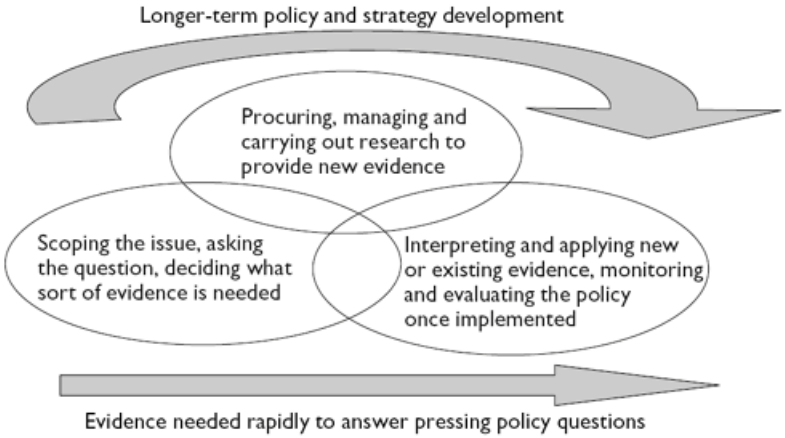
**Table 1: Components of policy process and different evidence issues**

| 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 or 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)

Figure 3 below provides a generic characterisation of the flow of evidence in the policy process. It is a simplistic diagram, but it also provides important insights. First, it provides a similar distinction between agenda setting, formulation and monitoring and the different evidence-collection processes needed. Secondly, it clearly makes the distinction regarding the different time constraints between evidence needs for pressing policy questions and those for longer term strategic policy objectives. The implication is that different types of evidence are often needed for different parts of the policy process and that time considerations are likely to influence the mechanisms available to mobilise evidence.

**Figure 3: The flow of evidence in the policy process**




*Source*: Shaxson (2005: 104)

### *Politics*

'*The good news is that evidence can matter. The bad news is that it often does not.*' [7]

So far we have looked at issues of evidence and policy in a technical sense. However, policymaking is inherently a political process. Many factors jostle with evidence to take centre stage in policy formation both at an individual level and at an organisational level. Davies (2004: 4-7) describes seven major factors other than evidence, which inform and influence policymaking (see figure 4 below).

**Figure 4: Factors influencing policymaking in Government**


*Source*: Davies (2004)

[7] Julius Court speaking on 'The political context in developing countries', at Does Evidence Matter? ODI meeting series, see ODI (2004: 14).

1. *Experience, Expertise and Judgement* – Human and intellectual capital, tacit knowledge;
2. *Resources* – Policymaking and implementation occurs in the context of finite (usually declining) resources, indicating some kind of cost-benefit exercise;
3. *Values* – These include ideological and political beliefs. Values are strong driving forces behind policymaking and often influence the end result;
4. *Habit and Tradition* – Important features which often defy rational explanation in the twenty-first century;
5. *Lobbyists, Pressure Groups and Consultants* – This category also includes think tanks, opinion leaders and the media, all of whom are major influencing powers;
6. *Pragmatics and Contingencies* – of political life, such as timetables, parliamentary terms, capacities of institutions and unanticipated contingencies. Although these factors do not necessarily stand against EBP in principle, they do not compliment the strategic EBP approach.

Weiss (1977) offers an alternative way of categorising the factors which policy and practice depend on. She puts forward the four I's; information, interests, ideologies and institutions:

- *Information*: 'the range of knowledge and ideas that help people make sense of the current state of affairs, why things happen as they do, and which new initiatives will help or hinder'
- *Interests* – i.e. 'self-interests'
- *Ideologies* – 'philosophies, principles, values and political orientation'
- *Institutions* – 'first the institutional environment shapes the way in which participants interpret their own interests, ideologies, and information. […] Second, organisational arrangements affect the decision process itself, such as who is empowered to make decisions.'

Over time, the four I's interact with each other in a dynamic manner. While information – and research is included here – does matter, it is also clear that there are other major issues that impact on policy. Shaxson (2005: 102) supports this conclusion, arguing that evidence is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for any decision-making process.

Moseley and Tierney (2004: 115) highlight that EBP is not meant to be taken on its own. It is only one resource available to practitioners which should be used with others.

In the realities of the political world, the value assigned to research is less than prevailing thought or opinion. There are those in the political world who will perpetually view research '*as the opposite of action rather than the opposite of ignorance*.'[8] 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, have different priorities, different agendas, different time scales and different reward systems. Consequentially a communication gap exists.

Evidence therefore has a tough role to play if it is to gain wider credibility amongst decision makers. Challenging assumptions and value systems is a long term, and often difficult, process. Despite the move towards a more rational method of decision-making practices, value judgments are often made based upon assumptions. Politics is implicit in the sphere of policymaking and therefore political agendas play a key role. Politicians often argue that, to an extraordinary degree, the political world merely pays lip service to evidence and research.[9]

Time constraints and the resultant pressure should feature as a stand-alone factor. Pressure refers to the short-term need to respond to external demands from senior managers or politicians, regulators and advocacy groups. Policymakers often need to advise ministers on pressing issues; this pressure can result in a delay in the use of EBP approaches, while assumptions, personal or

[8] Julius Court speaking on 'The political context in developing countries', at Does Evidence Matter? ODI meeting series, see ODI (2004: 16).
[9] Vincent Cable speaking on 'Evidence and UK Politics', at Does Evidence Matter? ODI meeting series, see ODI (2004: 11).

institutional values form the forefront of knowledge. Consequentially current knowledge needs to be very quickly synthesised to inform a decision. However, there is the danger that due to time pressures, evidence which lacks credibility and accuracy is produced. As a result one could argue that it would be better to wait until the end of the peer review process to consider the evidence. The difficulty with this is that policy may have leapt forward too far and therefore the evidence would no longer be relevant. Perhaps, therefore, it would be better to have timely and policy relevant findings, albeit with a number of caveats and uncertainties.

**Box 1: The five 's's that limit EBP**

Based upon his experience as an MP, Vincent Cable has come up with five factors which limit evidence-based decision making. These five 's's are speed, superficiality, spin, secrecy, and scientific ignorance.

*Speed:* Policymakers are under chronic time pressure, as well as political pressure, to be seen to be acting and therefore they are forced to process information quickly. This requires improvisation and also means that sometimes compromises have to be made. Occasionally, this leads to bad decisions.

*Superficiality:* Each policymaker has to cover vast thematic fields, and cannot possibly have an in-depth knowledge about every issue in those areas. They are therefore heavily dependent on the knowledge and integrity of the people who inform them. This raises difficult questions about who policymakers should turn to for advice, and how they can judge the advice given to them – for example, the increasing amount of advice coming from the NGO sector.

*Spin:* In the political world, perception is very important. For example, even though evidence has shown that beat policing is not the most cost effective way of using police resources, this form of policing is still prioritised because there is a strong public perception that it will improve security. Perception guides political decisions.

*Secrecy:* Cable also raises the question of how to relate to evidence that is secret. For example, Tony Blair's controversial memorandum on the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

*Scientific ignorance:* There is a growing suspicion towards science and scientists among the public, which will have an effect on policies. One example of this is the public demand for zero rail accidents while road accidents are tolerated. This means that political decisions are made to invest far more in rail safety than in road safety.

*Source*: Vincent Cable speaking on 'Evidence and UK Politics', at Does Evidence Matter? ODI meeting series, see ODI (2004: 11-13).

## Examples of EBP

'*The UK has many specific cases where evidence has improved policy with positive outcomes – literacy, labour market participation and pre-schooling*.'[10]

There are many examples of where evidence has been used to inform policy and thereby improved outcomes. Davies (2004) highlights some notable examples as being:

- The Sure Start programme
- The Educational Maintenance Allowance
- The Connexions programme (Dfes)
- Many of the New Deal employment and welfare-to-work programmes (DWP)
- The New Deal for Communities and much of the Neighbourhood Renewal programme
- The Home Buying and Selling policy (ODPM)
- Many policy pilots (Cabinet Office)

[10] David Halpern speaking on 'Evidence Based Policy: 'Build on' or 'Spray on'?', at Does Evidence Matter? ODI meeting series, see ODI (2004: 1).

- Work being undertaken by government departments to better understand the nature, size and distribution of problems that policy seeks to solve
- Work on strategic audit and on benchmarking UK social life, social change and social institutions against those of other countries

Below, we provide further information on two of these examples.

**Box 2: Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA) Demonstration project (Cabinet Office, 2003, Government Chief Social Researcher's Office)**

*Goal*
The aim of the project was to identify the most effective way of retaining and advancing low paid workers, who had recently left welfare, in the workforce. A number of policy options were suggested and the team was asked to design an evaluation of the final policy using a randomised controlled trial methodology.

*Useful approaches*
- The project team was based in the Cabinet Office in order to provide an 'off-line' opportunity, and to work in a cross-cutting and cross-departmental way.
- The design team consisted of policy officials, policy implementation staff, researchers and specialist consultants from research organisations in the UK and the USA. This mix of personnel ensured a high degree of integration of policymaking, policy implementation and policy research and evaluation.
- The research stage was given sufficient time and resources to gather the best available evidence. This extensive review was made possible by the considerable amount of work which had already been undertaken on employment and retention policy by research organisations.
- Qualitative evidence (in-depth interviews) and survey evidence was also commissioned on Job Centre's clients' views of the transition from welfare to work and on the Job Centre's view of retention and advancement issues.
- A detailed and sensitive cost-benefit study was an essential part of the trial.

*How useful is it as an example?*
The ERA Demonstration Project was unusual because of the length of time involved (one year for the design phase and five years for full evaluation) and the resources committed to it. It does however provide a useful example of how evidence-based government can be undertaken, and a model of how to integrate policy development, policy implementation and policy evaluation from the outset and over the life course of a policy.

For more information see:
http://www.policyhub.gov.uk/evaluating_policy/era_papers/eradp.asp

*Source*: from Davies (2004)

**Box 3: The literacy strategy in Britain**

In 1996 Michael Barber [then responsible for drafting the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, now head of the PM's Delivery Unit] and a group of people came together to try to work out why there were such low-levels of literacy and numeracy, particularly at the primary level, and to look at what could be done about it. They looked at a wide range of evidence to try to work out what would work to improve literacy and numeracy. A big part of the success of the literacy strategy was not just that the evidence was put together, but that it was put together by building a coalition and consensus amongst many of the stakeholders.

The literacy strategy was very successful and had a very high profile. Although the ultimate targets have not quite been reached on time, nonetheless it was a spectacular turnaround in terms of Key Stage One and Key Stage Two in British schools. From an evidence-based policy viewpoint, it can and has been criticised on specific points, for example, that there was an insufficient emphasis on phonetics. There is also the question of how far it is possible to argue that the improvements in literacy and numeracy actually resulted from the strategy and therefore from the evidence. This is because it was, for the most part, universally applied and therefore it is actually quite difficult to track whether the original strategy was the cause.

*Source*: David Halpern speaking on 'Evidence Based Policy: 'Build on' or 'Spray on'?', at Does Evidence Matter? ODI meeting series, see ODI (2004: 3)

## Translation of EBP to Developing Country Contexts

Undoubtedly the translation of EBP to developing country contexts represents a considerable challenge. It is important to note that there is a considerable diversity of cultural, economic, and political contexts which make it especially difficult to draw valid generalisations. We try to highlight here a few of the issues that may matter in some countries.[11]

First, some developing countries often have a more troubled political context. There are many places with limited political freedoms or no democratic spaces. There may be less public representation, weak structures for aggregating and arbitrating interests in society and weak systems of accountability. Although the number of 'democratic' regimes[12] has more than doubled, from under 40 to over 80 between 1976 and 1999, many developing countries remain undemocratic and many countries have deficits in these areas, even if they are seen as democratic in form (Hyden, Court and Mease, 2004).

Second, at an extreme level, some developing countries are characterised by conflict – whether civil war or low intensity conflicts – which make the idea of evidence-based policy limited in application. While conflicts today are fewer in number than 10 years ago, they remain relatively common (particularly in Africa).

Third, developing countries tend to be more politically volatile. Political volatility tends to have a negative impact on the use of evidence in policy processes.

In addition to general democracy contexts, some other specific issues are relevant here. Academic freedom is an critical context issue for evidence-based policy. Similarly, media freedom is also a key factor for communicating ideas into policy and practice. Also, civil society plays a part in most political systems – it is where people become familiar and interested in public issues and how rules tend to affect the articulation of interests from society. Key issues here include the conditions under which citizens can express their opinions, organise themselves for collective action and compete for influence. There is also much evidence to suggest civil society is an important link between research and policy (Court and Maxwell, 2005).

It has often been commented that policy processes tend to be centralised and often less open in developing countries, especially in terms of policy formulation (Grindle and Thomas, 1991). However, the implementation component of policy processes can also have major barriers to evidence use. Many commentators note the problems with accountability, participation, corruption and the lack of incentives and capacity to draw in evidence in policy implementation.

Hornby and Perera (2002) argue, as a result of his research on Sri Lanka, that there are a number of factors which 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 that monitor the equality of service provision, the quality of service or the efficacy of service delivery; the lack of institutional mechanisms; and the fact that political research isn't routinely carried out in developing countries, just on demand, and therefore there is a lack of ongoing evaluation.

These factors affect evidence-based policy on both the supply and demand side, as well as the relationship between them. 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

[11] This section is based on Court (2005).

[12] Gurr et al, (2001) 'Democracy is defined as a political system with institutionalized procedures for open and competitive political participation, where chief executives are chosen in competitive elections and where substantial limits are imposed on powers of the chief executive'.

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 et al, 2000: 67-76).

It is clear that in some contexts, the real challenge is not around evidence based policymaking but about the general challenges of political context. In an increasing number of countries, however, the context is improving. In many, there are thresholds that have been reached that merit a greater focus on evidence-based policy. Chile, for example, in many ways provides an 'ideal' case example where research and local technical expertise often contribute to improving policy frameworks within the context of a democratic polity. So too in Tanzania, which has often used the evidence base to improve policy and practice despite its very low income – we highlighted one such good news case above. In such contexts, many of the tools and approaches we propose are worth considering. They would, of course, need to be adapted to make them relevant to local context.

## Summary and Preliminary Conclusions

Although the idea that policy should be informed by evidence is not new, the current emphasis on EBP is. We have highlighted some of the issues and challenges regarding how evidence is and should be incorporated into policymaking. It is important to acknowledge that evidence is but one of many factors that influence policy processes. Policymaking is inherently political (Nutley, 2003: 3). This is true of the developed as well as the developing world. The realities of policy decisions are less about projected consequences and more about process and legitimation; '*The policy process is characterised by competition over agenda setting, over jurisdictions, and over interpretations*' (Young et al, 2002). Against this backdrop, the EBP approach seeks to create a sustainable and transferable impact.

There are lots of different stages to the policymaking process and at each juncture different evidence is needed. Therefore evidence does not merely enter the policymaking process at one point. The challenge is to analyse the conditions that facilitate evidence-informed policymaking (Nutley, 2003) and translate these conditions into practical tools for the governments of developing countries. Despite the challenges to creating an EBP approach, there is a general consensus that a more evidence-based approach to policy would be a positive development.

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

- policy should be informed by a wide breadth of evidence, not just hard research. Key issues include the quality, credibility, relevance and the cost of the policy;
- evidence is needed, and in different ways, at a number of different points of the policy cycle;
- time constraints will affect the mechanisms available to mobilize evidence – urgent issues require different approaches than processes to develop strategic policy directions.

This paper continues by suggesting a number of tools which can be used to make policy more evidence based. The tools are presented on the assumption that the reader is a progressive policymaker in a developing country, who is interested in developing policy which is more evidence based. Undoubtedly the development arena is distinct and therefore there are a number of reasons why the tools are not directly transferable. This is a work in progress and thus this is only a preliminary version of a paper, which is likely to change and develop based on comment and further testing.

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

## Approaches

Having highlighted the central debates surrounding the issue of EBP, this section is focused around the practical means which exist in the UK to integrate evidence into policy. The first section puts forward some general approaches which are promoted in the UK. The second section reveals some more specific tools that are used in the UK. Neither of the two sections is exhaustive; these are only some of the possible approaches and tools which are available. This is very much a work in progress and therefore feedback would be appreciated. These tools are targeted at progressive policymakers, so although there are a number of other issues which surround policymaking, this section is based on the premise that the reader is interested in implementing EBP.

Although the emphasis has been on evidence-based policymaking since 1999, this is only one factor which should be taken into consideration. In September 1999 the Cabinet Office published '*Professional Policy Making for the Twenty First Century*' which sets out three themes (vision, effectiveness, and continuous improvement) and nine key characteristics which policymaking should aspire to:[13]

- Forward looking: takes a long term view of the likely impact of policy
- Outward looking: takes account of influencing factors and learns from elsewhere
- Innovative and creative: questions the status quo and is open to new ideas
- Evidence based: uses the best available evidence from a wide range of sources
- Inclusive: is fair and takes account of the interests of all
- Joined up: works across institutional boundaries and considers implementation
- Reviews: keeps policy under review
- Evaluates: builds evaluation into the policy process
- Learns lessons: learns from experience of what works and what does not

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, know 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 policymakers and researchers, and within the research community, as to what constitutes evidence (Davies, 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*' (Davies, 2004: 19). Importantly this involves making a commitment to use findings whether or not they support the project, and therefore not to continue with the policy or programme, if the evidence reveals that it is ineffective. This is most likely to occur in organisational structures which are non-hierarchical, open and democratic (Davies, 2004: 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 to the biennial Spending Reviews by HM Treasury, provide some incentive to establish evidence of effectiveness and efficiency. Davies (2004: 21)

[13] Professional Policy Making for the Twenty First Century (Strategic Policy Making Team, Cabinet Office) http://www.policyhub.gov.uk/docs/profpolicymaking.pdf

also highlights the use of tools such as delivery and service agreements, national and local targets, triennial spending reviews in the UK. At local level, the devolution of budgets to front line 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 (Davies, 2004: 18).

Clearly the onus also lies not only with policymakers, but also with researchers, to improve the availability and dissemination of sound research. The development of research synthesis by groups such as the Cochrane and Campbell Collaborations, the EPPI Centre, and the 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, and therefore what is perhaps needed are systematic reviews of what we already know and the increased use of routine assessments and audits (Davies, ibid). Hornby and Perera (2002: 171) reinforce this argument, drawing on their experiences in Sri Lanka, arguing that there is a need for ongoing evaluation of the 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 will be achieved by setting up mechanisms which 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 4.[14]

Institutional bridges need to be built 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 to better 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 – for example, in the UK, a new set of institutions now exist to organise and create knowledge in health. These include the National Institute for Clinical Excellence; the NHS Centre for Reviews and Dissemination; the Cochrane collaboration; in education the Centre for Evidence-informed Education Policy and Practice; in social policy, centres such as the Centre for the Analysis of Social Exclusion at the LSE, the Social Care Institute for Excellence, the Campbell collaboration and the ESRC Centre for Evidence based policy and practice (Mulgan, 2003: 3). Another possible response is the co-location of policymakers and internal analysts, however Nutley (2003) questions if 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, increased forums for discussion and joint training, and professional development opportunities for policymakers and researchers (Davies, 2004: 18).

Where there are a lack of formal exchange arrangements, an alternative might be for policymakers to approach their relationship with researchers in a different way; as partners rather than contractors. Nutley (2003) does raise the important point that although 'sustained interactivity'[15] is needed, it does raise legitimate concerns about the independence and impartiality of research. There is a danger that research priorities may become too closely allied to political priorities. Having said that, research that has no relevance for policy will not be used and is redundant.

[14] cited in Nutley, S (2003: 10)
[15] Huberman cited in Nutley, S (2003: 13)

**Box 4: 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, Bullock et al (2001)

## Summary of Specific Tools Used by the UK Government

*Overview and Checklist*

1. Impact Assessment and Appraisal: guidance checklist for policy makers.

*Strategy and Policy Evaluation*

2. Strategy Survival Guide
3. Magenta Book: Guidance notes on Policy Evaluation
4. Green Book: Appraisal and evaluation in Central Government
5. Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA)

*Ensuring Key Perspectives are Included*

6. Incorporating regional perspectives into policy making toolkit (Subnational)
7. International Comparisons in Policy Making Toolkit
8. Gender Impact Assessment: a framework for gender mainstreaming
9. Managing risks to the public: Appraisal Guidance

*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 Policymakers
15. Improving Standards of Qualitative Research

*Other Web-based Resources*

## Specific Tools Used by the UK Government

## Overview and Checklist

### 1. Impact assessment and appraisal: guidance checklist for policymakers

(London, Cabinet Office, Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, 2002)

*What is it?*

Policy decisions need to be informed by taking account of key issues and the needs of different groups to deliver a fairer, more inclusive and more competitive society. The Strategy Unit has compiled a checklist which is designed to help policymakers identify those issues and provides guidance on best practice so that they can provide effective advice to Ministers. This quick reference guide replaces the Policy Makers' Checklist which was previously on the Cabinet Office Regulatory Impact Unit website.

*When is it used?*

This guidance checklist is for use when you are first thinking about a policy proposal, as part of your on-going work and at the end of the policy process.

*How does it work?*

The checklist helps you to 'screen' for the potential impacts of your proposal by providing access to the most up-to-date guidance. If you decide that the issue or impact assessment is appropriate to your work then you can just click on the underlined word for more detailed guidance. In most cases this will start with a summary page and a contact point in the relevant department or unit before leading into the main guidance. The list of impacts covered is not comprehensive and you may need to consider other issues, but the categories of impact cover most of the ground.

The following list summarises some of the methods and tools used by the UK Government for policy evaluation:

- Costs and Broad Appraisal Issues:
  What are the broad objectives – these tend to be defined in economic and equity terms. The Treasury's Green Book provides useful guidelines on setting objectives (see tool number 4)
- Impact Assessment:
  - Value for Money: Will it affect the cost to the public and the quality of goods and services?
  - Access: Will it affect the public's ability to get hold of the goods or services they need or want?
  - Choice: Will it affect consumers' choice of goods and services?
  - Information: Will it affect the availability of accurate and useful information on the goods or services?
  - Fairness: Will it have a differential impact on some individuals or groups of consumers?
- Regulatory impact assessment: What impact does the policy have on businesses or the voluntary sector? (see tool number 5)
- Public Sector impacts: What impact does your policy have on the public sector?
- Quality of Life: In simple terms this means a better quality of life (sustainable development) including:
  - Social progress which recognises the needs of all
  - Effective protection of the environment
  - Prudent use of natural resources
  - Maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment
- Scientific evidence: What does the balance of evidence suggest?
- Risk, Public Health and Safety: What are the implications for the public (including vulnerable groups and the environment)?
- Legal Issues: Is the policy legal?

- Treaty Obligations: Is the suggested policy compatible with existing treaty obligations?
- Devolved Administration: How does policy relate to the constitutional position and remits of devolved administrations?
- Environmental Appraisal: Will there be an adverse impact?
- Area Implications: Would the policy affect either directly or indirectly different groups of people living in different parts of the country (e.g. rural areas)?
- Policy appraisal for equal treatment: Would the policy affect either directly or indirectly different groups of people, for example, women, disabled people, older people, those from different ethnic groups?

*Source*

- Policyhub website: Impact Assessment and Appraisal http://www.policyhub.gov.uk/bpmaking/impact_assessment_and_appraisal.asp
- Structured Policymaking on M/SMEs in Egypt: A Background Paper for IDRC, Julius Court, Enrique Mendizabal and John Young, Overseas Development Institute, London

## Strategy and Policy Evaluation

### 2. Strategy Survival Guide

(London, Cabinet Office, Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, 2004)

*What is it?*

The Strategy Survival Guide aims to support strategy development and promote strategic thinking in government. It encourages a project-based approach to developing strategy and describes four typical project phases. It also discusses a range of skills and useful tools and approaches that can help to foster strategic thinking. It is offered as a resource and reference guide, and is not intended as a prescription or off-the-shelf solution to successful strategy work.

*How does it work?*

The guide is structured around two sections:

The Strategy Development section discusses the process of conducting a strategy project. This highlights the different stages to the strategy development process: Justification and Set Up; Research and Analysis; Strategy Formulation; Policy and Delivery Design. Each summary page provides links to the following detail:

- typical tasks
- example outputs
- management issues that should be considered
- typical questions that should be asked
- relevant skills

The Strategy Skills section addresses the skills that are required for successful strategy work. These are:

- Managing people and the project
- Managing stakeholders and communications
- Structuring the thinking
- Building an evidence base
- Appraising options
- Planning delivery

The summary page for each strategy skill contains links to a number of helpful tools and approaches. Together these make up a 'toolkit' for the strategy practitioner – using the right tool for the job will help to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of strategy work. 'In practice' examples are provided to illustrate how each tool or approach has been applied in recent strategy work, and references are provided for those wishing to find further information. Where appropriate, blank templates are also provided.

*Example*

One of the tools suggested to help with planning the delivery of a successful strategy is designing an implementation plan. The Strategy Unit Childcare Project is an example of one in practice.

The Strategy Unit Childcare project team specified the need for an implementation plan at an early stage; stakeholders were clear that an implementation plan would be one of the final deliverables from the project and felt that they could own the process.

The team involved key players in thinking through implementation: they set up working groups on specific project strands and specified the key deliverables. They delegated as much of the detailed work as possible to the lead players to establish ownership and buy-in to the specific tasks, as well as the overall conclusions.

The team presented the plan in a tabular form: the plan specified key conclusions, outputs, activities, lead responsibility, key stakeholders, and timetable. For the Ministerial version the team inserted an additional column for further comments.

The plan was published as an annex to the report so that key stakeholders could be held to account for delivering against it.

See the Implementation Plan in Annex 2 of the Delivering for Children and Families Strategy Unit Report 2002 (http://www.strategy.gov.uk/output/Page3685.asp).

*For more information*

- The Strategic Capability Team at the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit exists to support government departments in understanding and applying the content of the guide. (see http://www.strategy.gov.uk/downloads/survivalguide/site/intro/about.htm#sc)

*Source*

- http://www.strategy.gov.uk/downloads/survivalguide/index.htm

## 3. Magenta Book: Guidance notes on Policy Evaluation

(Government Chief Social Researcher's Office, 2003)

'*...effective policy making must be a learning process which involves finding out from experience what works and what does not and making sure that others can learn from it too. This means that new policies must have evaluation of their effectiveness built into them from the start* ...' (Professional Policy Making in the 21st Century, Cabinet Office, 2000)

*What is it?*

The Magenta Book is a series of guidance notes on policy evaluation and analysis which are intended to help 'intelligent customers' and 'intelligent providers' determine what constitutes high quality work in the field of policy evaluation and analysis. The guidance notes complement HM Treasury's Guide to Economic Appraisal , which is more commonly known as *The Green Book* (see tool 4), and other sources of guidance from within government.
(see www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/economic_data_and_tools/greenbook/data_greenbook_index.cfm)

*Where did it come from?*

The Magenta Book developed in the context of the post-1997 demand for evidence-based policymaking and the changing needs of analysis in and for government. This generated a demand for guidance on how to undertake high quality evaluation, appraisal and analysis for policymaking.

*When is it used?*

It is for use throughout the policymaking process; from the commissioning of a particular policy to its eventual evaluation.

*How does it work?*

The Magenta Book provides a user-friendly guide for specialists and generalists alike on the methods used by social researchers when they commission, undertake and manage policy research and evaluation. Where technical detail is necessary to expand on methodological procedures and arguments, they are presented in an easily understandable format. It is approached from the perspective of analysts, rather than that of social researchers and therefore avoids the methodological disputes between academic disciplines or different schools of thought.

The Magenta Book provides guidance on:

- How to refine a policy question to get a useful answer
- The main evaluation methods that are used to answer policy questions
- The strengths and weaknesses of different methods of evaluation
- The difficulties that arise in using different methods of evaluation
- The costs involved in using different methods of evaluation, and the benefits that are to be gained
- Where to go to find out more detailed information about policy evaluation and analysis

*For more information on evaluating policy*

- Policy Hub: http://www.policyhub.gov.uk/evalpolicy/index.asp

*Source*

- http://www.policyhub.gov.uk/evalpolicy/magenta/guidance-notes.asp

**Box 5: Types of economic analysis used in economic evaluation**

*Cost-analysis* simply compares the costs of different initiatives without considering the outcomes to be achieved (or that have been achieved). The absence of information about outcomes is a major limitation of cost appraisal and evaluation. It cannot tell us much, or anything, about the *relative effectiveness or benefits* of different interventions.

*Cost-effectiveness* analysis compares the differential costs involved in achieving a given objective or outcome. It provides a measure of the *relative* effectiveness of different interventions.

*Cost-benefit analysis* considers the differential benefits that can be gained by a given expenditure of resources. Cost-benefit analysis involves a consideration of alternative uses of a given resource, or the opportunity cost of doing something, compared with doing something else.

*Cost-utility analysis* evaluates the utility of different outcomes for different users or consumers of a policy or service. Cost-utility analysis typically involves subjective evaluations of outcomes by those affected by a policy, programme or project, using qualitative and quantitative data.

*Source:* Policyhub website section on Magenta Chapter 1:
www.policyhub.gov.uk/evalpolicy/magenta/chapter1.asp

## 4. Green Book: appraisal and evaluation in Central Government

(HM Treasury, 2003)

*What is it?*

The Green Book provides guidance on the economic appraisal of cost and benefits of policy options to HM Treasury. It sets out the general approach to carrying out options' appraisal (combined with cost benefit analysis) of all government intervention. This is a requirement for all expenditure and of all new policy actions which may have an impact on businesses, charities, the voluntary or the rest of the public sector. The Green Book discusses risk and uncertainty in general terms.

*Where did it come from?*

The Treasury has, for many years, provided guidance to other public sector bodies on how proposals should be appraised, before significant funds are committed – and how past and present activities should be evaluated. This new edition of the Green Book incorporates revised guidance to encourage a more thorough, long-term and analytically robust approach to appraisal and evaluation.

*How does it work?*

The Green Book presents the techniques and issues that should be considered when carrying out assessments. It is meant to ensure that no policy, programme or project is adopted without first having to answer these questions:

- Are there better ways to achieve this objective?
- Are there better uses for these resources?

*When is it used?*

All new policies, programmes and projects, whether revenue, capital or regulatory, should be subject to comprehensive but proportionate assessment, wherever it is practicable, so as best to promote the public interest. The Green Book is primarily for use at the agenda setting stage of the policy process, before the policy is adopted.

**Table 2: Activities covered by the Green Book**

| | |
|---|---|
| Policy and programme development | Decisions on the level and type of services or other actions to be provided, or on the extent of regulation. |
| New or replacement capital projects | Decisions to undertake a project, its scale and location, timing, and the degree of private sector involvement. |
| Use or disposal of existing assets | Decisions to sell land, or other assets, replace or relocate facilities or operations, whether to contract out or market test services. |
| Specification of regulations | Decisions, for example, on standards for health and safety, environment quality, sustainability, or to balance the costs and benefits of regulatory standards and how they can be implemented. |
| Major procurement decisions | Decisions to purchase the delivery of services, works or goods, usually from private sector suppliers. |

*For more information*

- Supplementary guidance to The Green Book is available in 'Managing risks to the public: Appraisal Guidance'.

*Source*

- http://greenbook.treasury.gov.uk/

## 5. Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA)

*What is it?*
Regulatory Impact Assessment is a tool developed by the Cabinet Office, which aims to improve the chain of causality between evidence and advice (Shaxon, 2005: 102). '*In August 1998, the Prime Minister announced that no proposal for regulation which has an impact on business, charities or the voluntary sector should be considered by Ministers without a regulatory impact assessment being carried out*.'[16] It is a methodology for designing precise, targeted regulations that achieve legitimate policy aims with the minimum burden on those affected.

*When is it used?*
It is for use throughout the policymaking process, although it is particularly important that it is used at the beginning as it will help to develop better policy.

*How does it work?*
It provides users with a guide designed to address the main stages of the development of a good quality policy. These stages include a thorough analysis of the full range of options available to government for addressing a policy problem, and a calculation of the costs and benefits to ensure that new measures are fully justified. The table below shows the typical RIA steps.

**Table 3: Typical steps in an RIA**

| |
|---|
| 1. Title of Proposal |
| 2. Purpose and Intended Effect of the Proposal |
| 3. The Policy Problem |
| 4. Options |
| 5. Impacts |
| 6. Distribution of Impacts |
| 7. Results of Consultation |

*What are the benefits of using the RIA?*
Among the benefits of using a methodology such as RIA the following can be highlighted:

- Improving the quality and efficiency of government interventions
- Enhancing competitiveness
- Increasing transparency and accountability
- Reducing opportunities for corruption
- A tool for policy monitoring and evaluation

*What are the challenges attached to using the RIA?*
Some of the challenges that might be encountered when implementing an RIA are:

- Lack of awareness and acceptance of RIA within government and civil society
- Institutional capacity within developing country governments (lack of staff with the requisite training, overall lack of resources)
- Problems of data availability
- More generally, a lack of a coherent, evidence based and participatory policy process within developing countries – policies are often made by the minister, after consultation with one or two advisors.

[16] http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/regulation/docs/ria/pdf/ria_quick_guide.pdf

*The RIA and changes in the policy environment*

Although a RIA is a tool, its correct implementation requires and will lead to important changes in the institutional and policy environment – in addition to resource and capacity/skills issues. The introduction of a formal RIA system in any country usually involves a shift in the balances of power along three dimensions, i.e. between:

- Institutions at the centre of government – consequentially its use needs to be co-ordinated across the central Ministries of Government.
- The centre of Government and line Ministries – the RIA can act as a break on the regulatory activities of line Ministries, which could result in resentment, therefore it is important that it is managed carefully.
- Ministers and officials – the RIA can act as a break on the governing activities of Ministers and force them to use a more creative approach than they are used to; therefore it is important that it is managed carefully.

*Example*

Using the RIA methodology in Uganda, a DFID funded project has had to deal with the challenges mentioned above. The project team is working closely with various actors in the Ugandan government to ensure that RIAs are accepted and useful to Ugandan policymakers and officials.

The RIA which was implemented in Uganda is considerably simpler than the ones carried out in the UK or other developed counties. It takes into account the lack of resources, data and the existence of institutional and private barriers to change. However, RIAs, like other evidence based policymaking tools, cannot address the entire policy process. Setting the agenda and initiating the policy process, identifying key policy problems and prioritising expenditure, as well as policy approval by political actors and the monitoring and evaluation of implemented policies need to be addressed as well.

*For more information*

- Cabinet Office's Regulatory Impact Assessment Guidance which was updated in 2005. It provides background information on the meaning and purpose of RIAs and step-by-step guidance on the procedure for preparing and presenting them.
  (see: http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/regulation/ria/ria_guidance/index.asp)

*Source*

- Welch, Darren (2004) *Introducing Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) in Developing Countries: The Case of Uganda*
- 'Structured Policymaking on M/SMEs in Egypt: A Background Paper for IDRC', Julius Court, Enrique Mendizabal and John Young, Overseas Development Institute, London

## Ensuring Key Perspectives are Included

### 6. Incorporating regional perspectives into policymaking toolkit

(Cabinet Office, ODPM, 2002)

*What is it for?*

This toolkit aims to ensure that policymaking is informed by a proper understanding of regional issues and priorities. It is intended to be a practical resource to support new thinking and a set of ideas and techniques that can be used to design better policymaking processes. The toolkit contains exercises to promote learning, encourage successful working and promote integrated policy development.

*What does it say?*

The project and report highlighted seven building blocks of sound policy development which lead to long-term, joined up success. These are: culture; mapping need; strategic fit; networks and communications; project planning and accountability; organisational capacity; evaluation and feedback.

*How is it used?*

The toolkit explores each of these building blocks in more depth and provides prompts, exercises and ideas to engage regions in policymaking.

Section 1 provides a diagnostic checklist to rate regional or departmental performance against these seven building blocks and help you focus on areas where development is most needed.

Section 2 develops action-orientated exercises for each of the building blocks:

- potential barriers to an outward looking approach are highlighted
- the regional and central exercises are separately identified so that within each exercise, there are two possible sections with questions and prompts addressed at:
    - establishing good foundations
    - developing a specific new policy

Section 3 provides an overall checklist for the architecture of policy success. It highlights potential barriers and then makes recommendations for overcoming these, with the goal of establishing good foundations and developing a new policy.

*When should it be used?*

The toolkit is for use at three different stages of the policymaking process; at the development of new policy initiatives; when established policy is reviewed and updated; when initiatives are developed quickly in the response to crisis events or public concerns.

*For more information*

- The toolkit is accompanied by the 'Incorporating Regional Perspectives into Policymaking', which is available from the Cabinet Office Strategy Unit. The report and toolkit are intended to complement each other.

*Source*

- http://www.policyhub.gov.uk/docs/Region%20Persp%20Toolkit.pdf

## 7. International Comparisons in Policy Making Toolkit

(CMPS, 2002)

*What is it?*

This toolkit is a response to the *Modernising Government* White Paper, which stated that government needed to become '*more forward and outward looking*' (Cabinet Office, 1999), meaning learning lessons from other countries and integrating the European Union and international dimension into policymaking; 'expand your horizons'. The toolkit pack is intended to provide practical help and guidance to policymakers in the use of international comparisons in policymaking.

*Why is it important?*

The use of international comparisons can provide invaluable evidence of what does and does not work in practice and reveal new mechanisms for implementing policy and improving the delivery of public services. Policymakers can also learn from the way in which other governments undertake the process of policymaking itself.

*What does it say?*

It highlights that when searching for international comparisons we should not look solely at what national governments do. Administrations at sub-national, state, regional or local government level, and businesses and not-for-profit organisations working with governments, may be equally valuable sources of ideas and knowledge. Policymakers should identify existing sources of information, expertise and institutional memory, including social science and operational researchers, economists, statisticians, scientists and librarians in their organisation. It also involves cultivating networks of contacts in other administrations and international organisations, and in the academic research community.

*When should it be used?*

The aim of the toolkit is to make yourself aware of current practice and relevant developments in other countries, so that you are in a position to incorporate comparative information into your analysis and advice as a matter of routine.

*How does it work?*

First policymakers should *scan* the horizons for interesting approaches and innovative development. Next they should select one or more promising comparators for closer systematic examination. Then it is important to make an effort to understand whether, and if so how, your comparator works in practice. This involves not only understanding the model but also the way in which the complex context in which it operates effects its expediency. The CMPS International Comparisons Workbook provides practical help in exploring what factors in the social, economic, cultural and institutional environment are critical to policy success. Next, it is important to analyse the relevance of the comparator and finally establish the possible lessons which can be leant from the case study.

*Useful Examples*

***Future Governance Programme***

The Future Governance Programme is a research programme funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. It consists of 30 research projects in the social sciences concerned with lesson drawing in public policy and policy transfer. They address key questions about the circumstances under which cross-national lessons are sought; the conditions under which policies can be transferred; how the process of transfer works; and the political, social, economic and cultural variables that affect how lessons drawn from experiences in one jurisdiction can be applied in another. It provides specific lessons for policy development in fields across the range of government services and generates broader insights into how innovations developed in one country may be adapted to work successfully in other jurisdictions. The programme also supports conferences and commissioned work which bring together academics and practitioners to examine the potential contribution of cross-national experience to developing public policy initiatives.

(see: http://www.futuregovernance.ac.uk/)

***Introduction of a Code of Social Conduct in the Armed Forces***
This describes the introduction by the Ministry of Defence of a Code of Social Conduct which underpinned a change of policy on service by homosexual men and women in the Armed Forces. The example of the Australian Defence Force, which had successfully adopted a similar non-discriminatory approach, was closely examined before the Code was formulated.
(see: www.policyhub.gov.uk/better_policy_making/icpm_toolkit/social_conduct_case_study.asp)

*Source*

- Policyhub: http://www.policyhub.gov.uk/better_policy_making/icpm_toolkit/index.asp

## 8. Gender Impact Assessment: a framework for gender mainstreaming

*What is it?*
The Gender Impact Assessment provides help for policymakers in incorporating a gender perspective into policies that takes account of the different needs, characteristics and behaviours of the users at which they are aimed.

*When and where is it used?*
Equality Impact Assessments can be applied to legislation, policy plans and programmes, budgets, reports, and existing policies and services. Ideally, they should be done at an early stage in the decision making process so that policies can be changed – or even abandoned – if necessary.

*Why is it important?*
Although there are some policies where it is clear that gender plays a central role, there are other policies where the relevance of gender is less obvious. As a result they are sometimes labelled gender-neutral, for example, health and safety, and regional or town planning. In these examples it may be tempting to see such policies, goals and outcomes affecting people as a homogeneous group. If policies are mistakenly perceived as gender-neutral, opportunities will be missed to include the views of different groups of women and men in the formation and delivery of those policies and in turn to misjudge the different effects on them, and the systems and organisations that support them.

*How is it used?*
It provides a methodology for policymakers to assess whether their policies will deliver equality of opportunity across the board, and helps to challenge policymakers to question the assumption that policies and services affect everyone in the same way. It puts forward key questions for policymakers to ask at each stage of process:

- Define issues and goals
    - What the policy trying to achieve
    - Understand different problems and concerns
    - Enable equal contribution
- Collect data
    - Gather gender, race and disability disaggregated statistics
    - Consult experts, women and men, black and minority ethnic and disability groups
    - Interpret from different perspectives
- Develop options
    - Determine impact/ implications for different groups
    - Offer real choice and opportunities
    - Remove stereotyped perceptions
- Communicate
    - Integrate with equality commitments
    - Design different strategies
    - Use inclusive language
- Monitor
    - Use the community
    - Develop indicators
    - Examine differential impact
- Evaluate
    - Achieve equality of opportunity and equal outcomes
    - Learn lessons
    - Spread best practice

(Equality Impact Assessment Tool)

*Example*

**Diversity in Public Appointments**

The Government is taking action to increase women's representation on the boards of public bodies with the aim that women should hold 45-50% of the national public appointments made by the majority of central Government Departments by the end of 2005. In 2002 34% of women hold these positions with 1.8% held by women from an ethnic minority background. Research commissioned by the former Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions shows that many women underestimate their potential contribution and the relevance of their experience. Far fewer women than men apply for national posts, however when they do, women appear to be just as successful at getting on public boards as men. Encouraging women to apply for appointments in the first place is the challenge. In an attempt to redress the balance, a series of regional seminars were organised during 2002, aimed at encouraging women from a diverse range of backgrounds to make the move from local to national level appointment. In parallel with the seminars, a research programme was commissioned by WEU to evaluate the effectiveness of the seminars and to investigate factors which encourage women to apply for and hold public appointments.

*Source*

- Cabinet Office, Women and Equality Unit
  http://www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk/equality/gender_impact_assessment.pdf

## 9. Managing risks to the public: Appraisal Guidance

(HM Treasury, 2005)

*What is it?*

This is a supplementary guide to the Green Book, Appraisal and Evaluation in Central Government. It provides guidance for developing and assessing proposals that affect the risk of fatalities, injury and other harm to the public in line with the Government's Principles of Managing Risks to the Public – openness and transparency, involvement, proportionality and consistency, evidence and responsibility (www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/C87/A1/risk_principles_180903.pdf). The guide also contains a tool to help structure and make explicit the evaluation of concerns that may exist about risks of fatality and harm.

*Why is it important?*

Government has a role to protect and reassure the public, which includes taking cost effective action to reduce risk, and to provide accurate and timely information about risk. This guidance is designed to help policymakers address certain risks that the public faces, and also the public's perception of risk.

*When should it be used?*

This guidance is primarily for use at the agenda setting stage of the policy process, before the policy is adopted.

*How does it work?*

The appraisal guidance highlights a number of generic steps that will need to be taken in the appraisal process. These are set out below and discussed in detail in the guidance.

- Consider if there are good *prima facie* reasons for government intervention (e.g. market failures or equity issues that should be addressed);
- Carry out an expert risk assessment;
- Carry out an assessment of public concern (using the Concern Assessment tool – see tool 11);
- Consider the extent of public involvement that may be required during the appraisal and decision-making processes;
- Develop the decision-making process (including how to involve the public) and make this publicly available;
- Consider the options available for addressing the hazards and risks, and the concerns identified. Develop options, which address the reasons for intervention, the specific risks and hazards, and the concerns identified in steps 1 to 3;
- Assess the monetary costs and benefits of each option, expressing these within ranges of uncertainty;
- Assess the non-monetary advantages and disadvantages of each option (and consider other non-monetary issues as well);
- Develop an implementation plan, taking the best options in terms of monetary and non-monetary considerations, and developing an affordable, viable plan of action. Explain the basis of decisions and make this publicly available;
- Implement, monitor and evaluate the implementation plan.

*Example*

***The use of open meetings***

There is considerable public concern about the perceived health risks from electro-magnetic fields (EMFs), such as exist around overhead electricity power lines. The National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB) is responsible for recommending guidelines for limiting exposure to EMFs. There is a lack of scientific evidence about health effects and a diversity of practices for control of the possible risk in different countries. NRPB organised a public open meeting in Birmingham in 2002 to consider public concerns with a view to providing input to the development

of proposals for limiting exposure. The meeting was conducted under an independent chairman (Lord Winston) and attended by stakeholders from a variety of backgrounds. The open discussions were supplemented by a questionnaire survey of participants, to establish what they valued about the meeting and its outcomes, administered by NRPB's Radiation, Risk and Society Advisory Group. Feedback on the lessons drawn by NRPB was provided to all participants and these have been used in the recommendations on limiting exposures and in reviewing NRPB's procedures.

*For more information*

- Communicating Risk, GICS guidance http://www.ukresilience.info/risk/
  This tool-kit helps policymakers and others to plan communication strategies, develop an understanding of risk and improve their knowledge of its likely effects.
- Communicating about risks to public health. Pointers to good practice.
  http://www.dh.gov.uk/PublicationsAndStatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidanceArticle/fs/en?CONTENT_ID=4006604&chk=f3sSqN

*Source*

- Managing Risks to the public: Appraisal Guidance (HM Treasury, June 2005)
  http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/8AB/54/Managing_risks_to_the_public.pdf

## Testing Policy Ideas

### 10. Policy Pilots

*What is the tool?*
Policy piloting is an important tool in policy development, delivery and the identification of what works. Policy pilots are an important innovation in recent years which allow for the phased introduction of major government policies or programmes. This means that policies can be tested, evaluated and adjusted where necessary, before being rolled out nationally. A recent review of pilots by the UK Cabinet Office (2003) identified impact pilots, process pilots and phased implementation projects.

*When should you use it?*
The Cabinet Office report recommended that '*the full-scale introduction of new policies and delivery mechanisms should, wherever possible, be preceded by closely monitored pilots*' (Cabinet Office, 2003). Where pilots are used to test policies it is important that they are completed and that lessons are learned before more widespread implementation. The Cabinet Office Review of Pilots recommended that '*Once embarked upon, a pilot must be allowed to run its course. Notwithstanding the familiar pressures of government timetables, the full benefits of a policy pilot will not be realised if the policy is rolled out before the results of the pilot have been absorbed and acted upon. Early results may give a misleading picture*.' (Cabinet Office, 2003; Recommendation 6)

*How it works?*
Pilots are used to test policies before they are implemented. The Review of Government Pilots makes 27 recommendations about the how pilots should be used in policymaking. Some of these are highlighted below:

- The role of pilots
    - Pilots are an important first stage;
    - Pilots should be used to try innovations that might otherwise be too costly or risky to embark on;
    - The scale and complexity of any experimental treatment should be proportionate to its likely utility;
- Pre-conditions
    - Once embarked on, a pilot must be allowed to run its course;
    - Pilots should be preceded by the systematic gathering of evidence;
    - The purpose of the pilot should be made explicit in advance so that its methods and timetable are framed accordingly;
- Key properties
    - Independence – there should not be pressure to produce 'good news';
    - Budgets and timetables should allow for the adequate training of staff to avoid systematic errors;
    - Provision for interim findings should be made (accompanied by warnings) as it is not always possible to carry out lengthy pilots before policies are introduced;
- Methods and practices in pilots
    - There is no single best method of piloting a policy. Multiple methods of measurement and assessment – including experimental, quasi-experimental and qualitative techniques – should all be considered to get a complete picture;
    - For policies designed to achieve change in individual behaviour or outcomes, randomised control trials offer the most conclusive test of their likely impact;
    - For policies designed to achieve change at an area, unit or service level, randomised area or service-based trials offer the most conclusive test of impact;
- The use of results
    - Pilots which reveal policy flaws should be viewed as a success, not a failure;
    - Appropriate mechanisms should be in place to adapt or abandon a policy or its delivery

mechanisms in light of a pilot's findings;
- Pilot reports should be made easily accessible to facilitate easy reference of past successes and failures.

*Example*

***Earnings Top-Up (ETU)*** (Department for Work and Pensions)
The ETU pilots assessed the effectiveness of in-work benefits for low-income workers without dependent children, and of improving the lowest-paid workers' chances of getting employment and keeping it. Lessons drawn from the project contributed to a better design of the ETU, including improving take-up and eligibility criteria, the significance of advertising the scheme and the role of informal networks in spreading information, and lessons about the inter-relationship with other policy areas.

*For more information*

- 'Trying it out: the role of 'pilots' in policymaking: report of a review of government pilots' (Strategy Unit, 2003)
  (see: http://www.policyhub.gov.uk/docs/rop.pdf)

The Government Chief Social Researcher's Office carried out a review of government pilots. The review was chaired by Professor Roger Jowell, City University, supported by a panel of senior figures from inside and outside government. The report is intended to stimulate debate on the use of pilots in policy development, and to provide guidance on the effective use of pilots across government.

- Rondinelli, D (1993) 'Development projects as policy experiments: An adaptive approach to development administration'

Rondinelli suggests that policymakers should look at a number of other projects, as well as pilots:

**Table 4: Different types of project**

| | |
|---|---|
| Experimental projects | • Investigate possible courses of action.<br>• Useful when uncertainty exists about the problems, feasible solutions, and the effects of different interventions. |
| Demonstration projects | • Can be useful 'to exhibit the effectiveness, and to increase the acceptability, of new methods, techniques and forms of social interaction on a broader scale.' |
| Replication, diffusion or production projects | • Involve widespread replication after sufficient knowledge is obtained in order to 'test full-scale production technology and to organise an effective delivery system for dissemination results or distributing outputs.'<br>• Some experimental and pilot projects should not lead to full-scale replication if they are found to be useful only in specific conditions or ineffective. |

The UK Department of Work and Pensions is undertaking a randomised controlled trial (the ERA Project) of three policy initiatives aimed at retaining and advancing in the labour market those people on the lower margins of the workforce.

- For more information see Morris et al. (2004).

*Source:*
- http://www.policyhub.gov.uk/a_z_index/index.asp
- http://www.policyhub.gov.uk/home/jerryleelecture1202041.pdf (Davies, 2003)
- Trying it out: the role of 'pilots' in policymaking: report of a review of government pilots. (Strategy Unit, 2003) (http://www.policyhub.gov.uk/docs/rop.pdf)

## Public-orientated Tools

### 11. Concern Assessment tool

*What is it?*
The Concern Assessment tool puts forward a framework for understanding people's concerns in order that they can be considered in policy development, and in the development of related consultation arrangements and communication strategies. The assessment framework is based around six risk characteristics that research suggests are indicators of public concern. Two of the characteristics relate to the nature of the hazard (Familiarity and Experience; and Understanding), two relate to the risk's consequences (Fear or Dread; and Equity and Benefits) and two relate to risk management (Control and Trust).

*How does it work?*
Each characteristic should be scored on a five-point scale by reviewing relevant evidence obtained from interviews, focus groups, review of media material, etc. For example, two elements to score the first indicator (Familiarity and Experience) are:

- How familiar are people with the hazard?
- What is the extent of their experience?

For each piece of evidence a number of bulleted questions act as prompts to explore related issues. For example, the first element under 'Familiarity and Experience' ('how familiar are people of the hazard?') has three further prompt questions:

- How familiar is the public with the hazard?
- Are all sections of society familiar, or is familiarity confined to specific groups?
- Are those exposed to risk familiar with it?

These prompts are intended to give an indication of the range of issues that should be explored to collect enough relevant evidence to come to a decision on the extent of concern, and not as literal questions to be asked (e.g. as a questionnaire). They are indicative and not prescriptive or exhaustive lists. Having reviewed these prompt questions, a summary of the evidence should be entered in the scoring table.

Once all the evidence has been collected, it should be considered as a whole to score the indicator on a five-point scale, where Level 1 is associated with the lowest level of concern and Level 5 with the highest. The specific score should be taken as indicative, rather than a determinant of a particular action and may be useful in identifying those risks requiring further consideration for action. It may also provide useful information for further evaluation.

The framework does not attempt to integrate or aggregate scores from the six indicators into an estimate of 'total concern' because the categories are not wholly independent of each other.

*Source and more information*

- Managing risks to the public: appraisal guidance (HM Treasury; June 2005) p33-43
  http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/8AB/54/Managing_risks_to_the_public.pdf

## 12. Community Engagement: How to Guide

*What is it?*
Community planning aims to improve the quality and delivery of public services. At its heart is the importance of ensuring that all groups and communities are equally involved in the planning and managing of local services. The aim of this guide is to provide community planning partners, including community representatives, with help in this process.

*How does it do this?*
The site provides an introduction to practical techniques that can be used to support the process of community engagement in partnerships. Below are examples of some of these techniques:

- Sharing information – e.g. Open space event: A themed discussion event involving up to 1,000 people based on workshops that participants create and manage themselves. (http://www.ce.communitiesscotland.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/webpages/scrcs_006715.hcsp)
- Opinion gathering – e.g. Citizens' juries: A small group that meet over a short period of time to deliberate on a specific issue or topic. (http://www.ce.communitiesscotland.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/webpages/scrcs_006718.hcsp)
- Capacity building – e.g. Community animateurs: Local people employed to promote and facilitate participation.

  (http://www.ce.communitiesscotland.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/webpages/scrcs_006720.hcsp)
- Participation and partnership – e.g. Community auditing/profiling: Method that enables a complete picture of an area to be built up, with high level community involvement.

  (http://www.ce.communitiesscotland.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/webpages/scrcs_006721.hcsp)
- Ensuring equal opportunities in community engagement – e.g. Equal opportunities in community engagement: A key principle of Community Engagement is the need to tailor measures to remove barriers to participation.

  (http://www.ce.communitiesscotland.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/webpages/scrcs_006730.hcsp)

*When should it be used?*
Community engagement is necessary both as a response to specific events, and in order to ensure ongoing community involvement.

*Example*
Community based housing associations (CBHAs) are a useful example of giving local communities ownership and control over key services. They have provided an important organisational model for involving communities in the regeneration of their communities and neighbourhoods. Originating in Glasgow in the early 1970s, they can now be found across much of the UK. Increasingly they are having an important role in providing a vehicle for local authorities to transfer ownership and management of their housing stock.

*For more information*

- Scottish Centre for Regeneration: A directory of community engagement publications http://www.ce.communitiesscotland.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/webpages/cs_006709.hcsp

*Source*

- Scottish Centre for Regeneration: Community Engagement, How to Guide

http://www.ce.communitiesscotland.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/webpages/scrcs_006693.hcsp

## 13. Connecting with Users and Citizens

*What is it and who is it for?*
This report aims to inform and encourage public sector service providers to develop new and effective ways of involving local people in improving the services they use. The guide is centred on examples of good practice from a range of sources, setting out how specific issues, involved in consulting, communicating with and involving service users, have been tackled. It encourages the cross-fertilisation of ideas from local government, health and criminal justice.

*Why is this being pursued?*
Improving the level of involvement of local people is a major part of the government's agenda to modernise the public services. This is based on the knowledge that people benefit most from public services that are based on a real understanding of their needs.

*How does it work?*
The report sets out evidence that shows that success can be achieved in a range of settings and circumstances. It looks at nine case studies concentrating on a few key areas: the background and aim of the project; how it was done; what was learned; what made it work; and improvements for next time. It then draws out the following principles of good consultation. Much depends on the level of commitment that organisations and partnerships show towards community involvement. They need cross-organisational structures to support their work in this area, and to help with funding, planning and training. They also need to include both short-term, one-off consultations and longer-term techniques for involving service users and communities in service and policy development. Within each consultation process, efforts should be made to ensure that those taking part are representative and inclusive in relation to the service users or community concerned. Some of the most effective projects have handed over the lead and control to the participants, letting them develop the approach according to their own priorities. Finally, organisations need to evaluate projects and learn from the outcomes of consultation, and ensure that the results have a real influence on decisions, policy and service development. These outcomes should also be communicated back to the service users and communities involved.

*Example*

***Getting People Interested***
The Big T2 event, held in May 2002 in Torfaen, Wales, followed the original Big T in 2000. It combined fun activities, exhibitions, performances and instant opinion polls to get local people participating in planning the county's future. The organisers also hoped to raise awareness of the Council's work in partnership with others and to form links between different interest groups within the community, as well as increasing goodwill between the Council and local people.

What was learned: The event was evaluated via evaluation forms and over 60 in-depth interviews held one month later and the feedback was predominantly positive. The electronic voting results have been fed into all Torfaen's key partnerships and sent to every delegate. The electronic information on partnerships is being used to shape Torfaen's Partnership Framework, and it is helping the District Audit to evaluate what makes partnerships work well. Torfaen's Community Strategy now includes objectives formed from the outcomes of the day.

Factors which made it work included a well-designed flyer and a 'hand-written' compliment slip sent by the Chief Executive to give a personal touch which both brought in an excellent level of support. Also, a meeting was held beforehand at Pontypool Youth Centre to talk to them about getting involved. A subsidised bus service helped young people to attend and over 60 came along. Literature about Big T2 was provided in Welsh and English, and Welsh-speaking council staff took part on the day. The event was friendly and relaxed – and while it was carefully planned, the programme was not rigid, so facilitators were able to give extra time to the most popular activities, while the event host led from the front to keep up the right pace. Energy levels were kept up by a constant supply of tea, coffee, water and soft drinks, served to participants at their tables by council staff who acted as hosts, giving everyone who attended a friendly point of contact.

*For more information*

- ‘Listen up! Effective Community Consultation’ (1999, Audit Commission) (http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/Products/NATIONAL-REPORT/EA01768C-AA8E-4a2f-99DB-83BB58790E34/archive_mpeffect.pdf)

This report sets out the growing importance of public consultation in the public sector, and gives practical guidance on how to involve communities in decision making and service provision. It looks at why consultation is necessary; how to decide what to consult on and when; how to overcome barriers to consultation; highlights principles of good practice; and how to evaluate the effectiveness of consultation.

*Source*

- Connecting with Users and Citizens (Audit Commission, 2003) http://www.bestvalueinspections.gov.uk/Products/NATIONAL-REPORT/F1B75570-9AA7-469E-8BA6-3354AA457D61/Making%20Connections_FINAL.pdf

## Getting Better Advice and Evidence

### 14. Expert Advisory Bodies for Policymakers

#### *Permanent Advisory Bodies*[17]

*What are they?*
Permanent Advisory bodies are appointed by the government for independent advice on policy issues.

*What is their role?*
They vary in mandate, agenda and appointment. Germany's Council of Economic Experts is charged with a broad mandate, while many advisory bodies are limited to single issues, such as the arts or science policy. Sometimes advisory bodies are afforded substantial leeway over their own agenda; sometimes studies are undertaken only on request of government. In some cases, members of these bodies are appointed solely by the government, while in others interest groups have input as well.

*Example:* Select Committee on Science and Technology
In the UK each House of Parliament - Lords and Commons - has its own select committees. Many of these are investigative committees looking at particular policy areas and producing reports on particular topics. In January 2005 the Select Committee on Science and Technology produced a report called The use of science in UK international development policy: Government response to the Committee's thirteenth report of session 2003-04 second special report of session 2004-05. This document sets out the Government's reply to the Committee's report which examined the following issues: the role played by science and technology research in informing the spending of the UK's aid budget, how research is being used to underpin policy making in international development, and how the UK is supporting science and technology in developing countries. Topics discussed include: the funding approach of the Department for International Development (DFID), multilateral funding routes, DFID scientific and technological in-house expertise and policy division, the lack of a scientific culture, evidence-based policy making, the draft Research strategy, capacity building and technology transfer, UK training schemes and scholarships, and the role of the UK Research Councils.

*Source*
TSO Online Bookshop
http://www.tsoshop.co.uk/bookstore.asp?Action=Book&ProductId=0215021460

#### *Temporary Blue-Ribbon Commissions*[18]

*What are they for?*
Temporary blue-ribbon commissions are sometimes created as an alternative to creating a permanent advisory body, to investigate a particular problem.

*What is it?*
Membership of temporary blue-ribbon commissions tends to include prominent citizens with some claim to expertise and representatives of groups affected by the policy area. The breath of the mandate can vary, as can how governments use them. They do however tend to have a clear mission and a limited time frame.

*Problems with temporary commissions*
The effectiveness of temporary commissions is compromised by the fact that their existence, and often whether of not the final report is released, is at the will of the government. Another limitation

[17] Stares, B. Paul and R. Kent Weaver, Guidance for Governance: Comparing Sources of Public Policy Advice (Tokyo: Japan Centre for international Exchange, 2001); p12
[18] ibid

of temporary commissions is the lack of follow through because there is no institutional capacity, or obligation, to keep the commission's findings and recommendations before the public.

*Example:* Turner Review on Pensions
(BBC News http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/4494306.stm)

In the UK a Pensions Commission was set up to report on the future of the British pensions system, amid fears that many Britons are heading for poverty in old age. The Commission was chaired by Lord Turner and spent three years reviewing the highly contested and complex debates surrounding pension provision. The result of the commission was a 450-page report which managed to draw out a consensus on a number of these issues and produced a number of recommendations. These included the introduction of a universal basic state pension with entitlement based on residency, rather than national insurance contributions, which would provide a platform for workers to build other savings and advised raising the state pension age from 65 to 68 by 2050.

*Source*
Stares, B. Paul and R. Kent Weaver, Guidance for Governance: Comparing Sources of Public Policy Advice (Tokyo: Japan Centre for international Exchange, 2001)

## 15. Improving Standards of Qualitative Research

Here are three tools for policymakers to help ensure that the qualitative research they commission meets an acceptable standard.

### *a) Assessing the Quality of Qualitative Research*

Best practice in the use of evidence in policy making recognises that not all published, or unpublished, research meets the standards of validity, reliability and relevance that is needed for policy-making. The Cabinet Office Strategy Unit in conjunction with the National Centre for Social Research have developed a framework for assessing the quality of research evidence. The framework provides a useful and useable guide for assessing the credibility, rigour and relevance of individual research studies.

There are four central principles that underpin the content of the framework. They advise that research should be:

• *contributory* in advancing wider knowledge or understanding about policy, practice, theory or a particular substantive field;

• *defensible in design* by providing a research strategy that can address the evaluative questions posed;

• *rigourous in conduct* through the systematic and transparent collection, analysis and interpretation of qualitative data;

• *credible in claim* through offering well-founded and plausible arguments about the significance of the evidence generated.

The guiding principles have been used to identify 18 appraisal questions to aid an assessment. Between them, they cover all of the key features and processes involved in qualitative enquiry. They begin with assessment of the findings, move through different stages of the research process (design, sampling, data collection, analysis and reporting) and end with some general features of research conduct (reflexivity and neutrality, ethics and auditability).

*Source and for more information*

Quality in Qualitative Evaluation: A framework for assessing research evidence (http://www.policyhub.gov.uk/docs/a_quality_framework.pdf)

### *b) Researching social policy: the uses of qualitative methods*

This is an article by Sue Duncan, Director - Policy Studies, Strategy Unit, Cabinet Office and Alan Hedges, independent research consultant and a spokesperson for the Association for Qualitative Research. It examines the social policy role of qualitative research, based mainly on group discussion techniques, which is becoming a valuable tool to help local authorities and public bodies undertake public consultation and develop their policies.

Follow this link to access the article.

### *c) ESRC Research Methods Programme*

The Research Methods Programme forms part of the Economic and Social Research Council's strategy to improve the standards of research methods across the UK social science community. Programme funding seeks to:

- Support substantively focused research that poses interesting or novel methodological issues
- Foster work that directly enhances methodological knowledge or improves and advances quantitative and qualitative methods;
- Encourage and support the dissemination of good practice, including the enhancement of training programmes and training materials for the research community
- Establish Fellowships linked to research funded through this Programme, or linked to existing centres of methodological excellence
- Promote cross-national initiatives involving substantively focused and methodologically innovative research

*Source*

Policy hub website
http://www.policyhub.gov.uk/evaluating_policy/qual_eval.asp

## Other web-based resources

### Crime Reduction Toolkits

The Crime Reduction Toolkit is part of the Crime Reduction website and provides practical help to policymakers and practitioners in accessing evaluated evidence and good practice on crime reduction topics. It covers most areas of crime, from vehicle crime, to racial crime and harassment, to arson. Each area of crime is divided up into what we already know about it, how to develop local solutions, how to tackle the problem and how to put these plans into practice. The toolkit also highlights useful resources, innovations and practical tools.

*For more information*

- http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk/toolkits/

*Source*

- www.policyhub.gov.uk (tools section)

### Economic and Social Research Council

The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) is the UK's leading research funding and training agency addressing economic and social concerns. It aims to provide high quality research on issues of importance to business, the public sector and government.

*For more information*

- www.esrc.ac.uk

### The ESRC Evidence Network

The Evidence Network was established as result of a decision taken by the ESRC in 1999 that a major initiative was needed to bring social science research much nearer to the decision-making process. It aims to:

- provide a focal point for those who are interested in evidence based policy and practice to access useful information and resources;
- provide a forum for debate and debate on EBPP issues;
- to contribute to capacity-building in the skills required for EBPP;
- to explore EBPP issues through research and consultancy activities.

*For more information*

- www.evidencenetwork.org

### HDA Evidence Base

The HDA Evidence Base is an information resource developed by the Health Development Agency that aims to '*to build and disseminate the evidence base for public health, focusing on reducing inequalities*'.

*For more information*

- http://www.hda-online.org.uk/html/research/evidencebase.html

*Source*

- www.policyhub.gov.uk (tools section)

**Information for Development in the 21st Century (id21)**

id21 is an internet-based dissemination service, established in 1997, to communicate the latest UK-based international development research to policymakers and practitioners worldwide. The aim is to inform the policy debate by presenting information in a user friendly and accessible manner. Research featured on id21 focuses on policy solutions relating to health, education, urban poverty and infrastructure, and social and economic policy in developing countries. A team of in-house and freelance development researchers and professional journalists summarise research reports into short Research Highlights, focusing on the policy relevant aspects of the research. In addition, id21 also provides other information services, such as:

- *Insights*, a quarterly newsletter that provides a round up of new research and appears both in print and online
- *id21News*, an email newsletter service that provides regular updates of recent research to users who have limited Internet access

About two thirds of id21's growing global audience can broadly be termed policymakers. Just over a third are researchers, academics, and students (the last not being a target group, but a natural audience). Southern users are an important target and make up over a third of users. It is enabled by DFID and hosted by the Institute of Developing Studies at Sussex University.

*For more information*

- www.id21.org

*Source*

- National Audit Office (2003) Getting the evidence: using research in policymaking http://www.nao.org.uk/publications/nao_reports/02-03/0203586-i.pdf

**The Campbell Collaboration (C2)**

The international Campbell Collaboration (C2) is a US based non-profit organisation that aims to help people make well-informed decisions about the effects of interventions in the social, behavioural and educational arenas. C2's objectives are to prepare, maintain and disseminate systematic reviews of studies of interventions. It acquires and promotes access to information about trials of interventions, and also builds summaries and electronic brochures of reviews and reports of trials for policymakers, practitioners, researchers and the public.

*For more information*

- http://www.campbellcollaboration.org

**Policybrief**

Policybrief is a co-operative web project to provide a 'one-stop-shop' for all public policy initiatives in the UK. Visitors to the Policybrief website can:

- view comprehensive subject-based listings of the UK's leading policy thinkers' work
- subscribe to regular subject-based email bulletins
- find links to other websites relating to Policybrief material
- download selected documents in full
- purchase copy-protected digital versions of documents

*For more information*

- www.Policybrief.org

**Policyhub**

Policy Hub is a web resource launched in March 2002 that aims to improve the way public policy is shaped and delivered, and is '*the first port of call for improvements in Policy and Delivery*'. It provides many examples of initiatives, projects, tools and case studies that support better policymaking and delivery, and provides extensive guidance on the role of research and evidence in the evaluation of policy.

*For more information*

- www.policyhub.gov.uk

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