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toolkit

Toolkit for Progressive Policymakers in Developing Countries

Sophie Sutcliffe and Julius Court

A Toolkit for Progressive Policymakers in Developing Countries

Sophie Sutcliffe and Julius Court

January 2006

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Research and Policy in Development Programme

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ISBN 0 85003 786 7

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Evidence-based Policy: Importance and Issues

1. Introduction

What is the purpose of the toolkit?

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

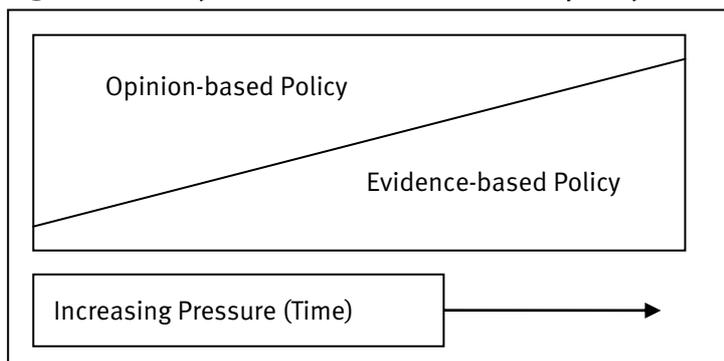
Where does EBP come from?

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

What is EBP?

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

Figure 1: The dynamics of evidence-based policy



2. Key issues surrounding EBP¹

What evidence is used in the policymaking process?

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

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

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

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

How evidence is incorporated into policymaking

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

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

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

Table 1: Components of policy process and different evidence issues

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

Source: Adapted from Pollard and Court (2005).

Evidence is not the only factor which influences policymaking

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

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

3. The implications of EBP for developing countries

Why does EBP matter for developing countries?

We are convinced that that EBP approaches have the potential to have even greater impact on socioeconomic outcomes in developing countries. This is because EBP tends to be less well established in developing countries than in developed ones. Indeed, better use of evidence in policy and practice could help dramatically reduce poverty and improve economic performance in developing countries. Two cases highlight the value of EBP in developing countries – one where evidence dramatically improved lives, the other where the lack of an evidence-based response has caused widespread devastation. In the first case, the government of Tanzania has implemented a process of health service reforms informed by the results of household disease surveys; this contributed to an over 40% reduction in infant mortality between 2000 and 2003 in the two pilot districts. On the other hand, the HIV/AIDS crisis has deepened in some countries because governments have ignored the evidence regarding what causes the disease and how to prevent it spreading.

Translation of EBP to developing country contexts

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

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

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

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

These factors affect evidence-based policy on both the supply and demand side, as well as the relationship between the two. In terms of the supply of evidence, stable and open political systems allow evidence to be freely gathered, assessed and communicated. In terms of demand, democracies imply a greater accountability of governments and therefore a greater incentive to improve policy and performance. Democratic contexts also imply the existence of more open entry-points into the policymaking process and there are fewer constraints on communication. In contrast, autocratic regimes often tend to limit the gathering and communication of evidence and have weak accountability

mechanisms. For example, a case study from Uruguay charted the negative effect the dictatorship had on the use of research in health policy (Salvatella, Muzio and Sánchez, 2000: 67-76).

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

4. Summary of main points

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

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

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

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

1. Approaches

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Box 1: Encouraging better use of evidence in policymaking

Increasing the pull for evidence

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

Facilitating better evidence use

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

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

2. Sources

Davies P. (2004) ‘Is Evidence-based Government Possible?’ Jerry Lee Lecture, presented at the 4th Annual Campbell Collaboration Colloquium, Washington DC.

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Summary of Specific Tools Used by the UK Government

Overview and Checklist

1. Impact Assessment and Appraisal: Guidance Checklist for Policymakers

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 Policymaking Toolkit (Sub-national)
7. International Comparisons in Policymaking 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

NB: This toolkit is the published version of an interactive web-based version which will be revised and updated periodically. This can be accessed at: www.odi.org.uk/Rapid/Projects/PPAo117.

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, in order to deliver a fairer, more inclusive and more competitive society. The Prime Minister's Strategy Unit has compiled a web-based checklist that helps policymakers identify these issues and highlights available tools to help policymakers provide effective advice to ministers.

When is it used?

This guidance checklist is for use when you are first thinking about a policy proposal, as part of your ongoing 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 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 is not comprehensive, but covers 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 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 5)
- **Public sector impacts:** What impact does your policy have on the public sector?
- **Quality of life:** In simple terms, this is 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 and further information

Policyhub website: Impact Assessment and Appraisal: www.policyhub.gov.uk/better_policy_making/impact_assessment_and_appraisal.asp

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 for successful strategy work.

How does it work?

The guide is structured around two sections:

(i) The Strategy Development section (www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/strategy/downloads/survivalguide/dev/index.htm) 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; and 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

(ii) The Strategy Skills section (www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/strategy/downloads/survivalguide/skills/index.htm) 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 SU 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: it 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.

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 www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/strategy/downloads/survivalguide/site/intro/about.htm#sc).

Source

www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/strategy/downloads/survivalguide/index.htm

3. Magenta Book: Guidance Notes on Policy Evaluation

(Government Chief Social Researcher's Office, 2003)

... effective policymaking 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 Policymaking in the 21st Century, Cabinet Office, 2000)

What is it?

The Magenta Book is a series of guidance notes on policy evaluation and analysis intended to help 'intelligent customers' and 'intelligent providers' determine what constitutes high quality work in the field. The notes complement HM Treasury's Guide to Economic Appraisal, more commonly known as The Green Book (Tool 4), and other sources of guidance from within government.

Where did it come from?

The Magenta Book was 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 commissioning to 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 in order to expand on methodological procedures and arguments, these are presented in an easily understandable and clear format. The subject 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 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 to be gained
- Where to go to find out more detailed information about policy evaluation and analysis

Box 2: Types of economic analysis used in economic evaluation

Cost-analysis compares the costs of different initiatives without considering outcomes to be achieved (or that have been achieved). Absence of information on 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.

For more information on evaluating policy

Policyhub: www.policyhub.gov.uk/evaluating_policy

Source

www.policyhub.gov.uk/evaluating_policy/magenta_book/index.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. 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 for all new policy actions which may have an impact on businesses, charities, the voluntary or 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)

(From Welch, 2004)

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 (Shaxson, 2005: 102). 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?

RIAs must be completed for all policy changes, whether European or domestic, which could affect the public or private sectors, charities, the voluntary sector or small businesses. It is for use throughout the policymaking process, although it is particularly important that it is used at the beginning as it will help you 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. Box 3 below shows the typical RIA steps.

Box 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
- Producing 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

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 – as a consequence, its use needs to be coordinated 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; it is therefore 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; it is therefore 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 by and useful to Ugandan policymakers and officials.

The RIA implemented in Uganda is considerably simpler than those carried out in the UK or other developed countries. It takes into account the lack of resources and 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. Also needing to be addressed are: 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.

For more information

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

Sources

Cabinet Office Regulatory Impact Assessment Guidance: www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/regulation/ria/ria_guidance/index.asp.

Court, J., E. Mendizabal and J. Young 'Structured Policymaking on M/SMEs in Egypt', ODI Background Paper for IDRC.

- Shaxson, L. (2005) 'Is your Evidence Robust Enough? Questions for Policymakers and Practitioners', *Evidence and Policy: A Journal of Research, Debate and Practice*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp101–11.
- Welch, D. (2004) *Introducing Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) in Developing Countries: The Case of Uganda*, London: Bannock Consulting.

Ensuring Key Perspectives are Included

6. Incorporating Regional Perspectives into Policymaking Toolkit (Sub-national)

(Cabinet Office, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 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; and 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 to 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; and when initiatives are developed quickly in the response to crisis events or public concerns.

For more information

The toolkit is accompanied by ‘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

Cabinet Office, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2002) Incorporating Regional Perspectives into Policymaking Toolkit: www.policyhub.gov.uk/docs/Region%20Persp%20Toolkit.pdf

7. International Comparisons in Policymaking Toolkit

(Government's Centre for Management and Policy Studies (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' (Modernising Government White Paper). This means learning lessons from other countries and integrating the EU 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 on 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?

The toolkit highlights the following steps:

- 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 affects 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.
- Finally, establish the possible lessons which can be learnt from the case study.

Useful examples

- Introduction of a Code of Social Conduct in the Armed Forces: www.policyhub.gov.uk/better_policy_making/icpm_toolkit/social_conduct_case_study.asp.
- This example 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.
- Future Governance programme: www.futuregovernance.ac.uk
- The Future Governance Programme is a research programme which was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. It consisted of 30 research projects in the social sciences concerned with lesson drawing in public policy and policy transfer. These 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. This 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 will bring together academics and practitioners to examine the potential contribution of cross-national experience to developing public policy initiatives.

Source

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

8. Gender Impact Assessment: Framework for Gender Mainstreaming

What is it?

The Gender Impact Assessment provides help for policymakers in incorporating a gender perspective into policies that take account of the different needs, characteristics and behaviours of the users at whom 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. These are as a result 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 policy formation and delivery and, in turn, to misjudge the different effects on each group, 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
 - Define 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

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 these positions were held by women, 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, they 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 was 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 this, a research programme was commissioned by the Women and Equality Unit (WEU) to evaluate the effectiveness of the seminars and to investigate factors that encourage women to apply for and hold public appointments.

Source

Cabinet Office, Women and Equality Unit: 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 supplementary guidance 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 harms to the public in line with the Government's Principles of Managing Risks to the Public (www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/C87/A1/risk_principles_180903.pdf): openness and transparency; involvement; proportionality and consistency; evidence and responsibility. The guidance 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?

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

How does it work?

The 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 (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).
- Develop an implementation plan, taking the best options in terms of monetary and non-monetary considerations, and developing an affordable and viable plan of action. Explain the basis of decisions and make this publicly available.
- Implement, monitor and evaluate the implementation plan.

Example

There is considerable public concern about the perceived health risks from electromagnetic 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: www.ukresilience.info/preparedness/risk/communicating_risk.pdf. This toolkit 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 (see 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): 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 and delivery and the identification of what works. This is an important recent innovation that allows 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 Strategy Unit (2003) identified the existence of a number of different types of pilots including 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 broadly or fully implemented. There are a number of key considerations about 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, information on the significance of advertising the scheme and the role of informal networks in spreading information, and lessons about the interrelationship with other policy areas.

For more information

'Trying it Out', Strategy Unit, 2003 (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, and supported by a panel of senior figures from inside and outside of 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*, London: Routledge. Rondinelli suggests that policymakers should look at a number of other projects, as well as pilots:

Table 3: Different types of project

Experimental projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Investigate possible courses of action. ● Are useful when uncertainty exists about the problems, feasible solutions, and the effects of different interventions.
Demonstration projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 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'. ● 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, S. et al. (2004) *Designing a Demonstration Project: an Employment, Retention and Advancement Demonstration for Great Britain*, Government Chief Social Researcher's Office, Occasional Paper No. 1 (2nd Edition) London: Cabinet Office.

Sources

Policyhub: www.policyhub.gov.uk/a-z

Davies, P. (2004) 'Is Evidence-based Government Possible?' Jerry Lee Lecture, presented at the 4th Annual Campbell Collaboration Colloquium, Washington DC.

Strategy Unit (2003) 'Trying it Out: the Role of 'Pilots' in Policymaking: Report of a Review of Government Pilots': www.policyhub.gov.uk/docs/rop.pdf

Public-oriented Tools

11. Concern Assessment Tool

What is it?

The 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 with 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 as 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 for more information

Managing risks to the public: appraisal guidance (HM Treasury; June 2005) p33-43: 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. There is considerable evidence that such involvement often leads to improved policy outcomes. 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 (www.ce.communitiesscotland.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/webpages/scrcs_006715.hcsp). A themed discussion event involving up to 1,000 people based on workshops that participants create and manage themselves.
- Opinion gathering: e.g. Citizens' juries (www.ce.communitiesscotland.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/webpages/scrcs_006718.hcsp). A small group that meet over a short period of time to deliberate on a specific issue or topic.
- Capacity building: e.g. Community animateurs (www.ce.communitiesscotland.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/webpages/scrcs_006720.hcsp). Local people employed to promote and facilitate participation.
- Participation and partnership: e.g. Community auditing/profiling (www.ce.communitiesscotland.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/webpages/scrcs_006721.hcsp). Method that enables a complete picture of an area to be built up, high level community involvement.
- Ensuring equal opportunities in community engagement: e.g. Equal opportunities in community engagement (www.ce.communitiesscotland.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/webpages/scrcs_006730.hcsp). A key principle of Community Engagement is the need to tailor measures to remove barriers to participation.

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. They have an increasingly 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:
www.ce.communitiesscotland.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/webpages/cs_006709.hcsp

Source

Scottish Centre for Regeneration: Community Engagement, How to Guide: www.ce.communities-scotland.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 in Torfaen's Future. Background and aims: Torfaen County Council (Wales) wanted to raise awareness of its work, give local people the opportunity to participate in planning the county's future, and form links between different interest groups within the community, as well as increasing goodwill between the council and local people. It held two major events to do this: Big T in 2000 and Big T2 in May 2002 in Torfaen. It combined fun activities, exhibitions, performances and instant opinion polls to get local people participating in planning the county's future.

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 District Audit to evaluate what makes partnerships work well. Torfaen's Community Strategy now includes objectives formed from the outcomes of the day.

What made it work: A well designed flyer and a ‘hand-written’ compliment slip sent by the Chief Executive to give a personal touch both brought in an excellent level of support. A meeting was held beforehand at Pontypool Youth Centre to talk to people 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 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). 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. See www.audit-commission.gov.uk/Products/NATIONAL-REPORT/EA01768C-AA8E-4a2f-99DB-83BB58790E34/archive_mpeffect.pdf.

Source

Connecting with Users and Citizens (Audit Commission, 2003): www.audit-commission.gov.uk/reports/NATIONAL-REPORT.asp?CategoryID=&ProdID=F1B75570-9AA7-469E-8BA6-3354AA457D61

Getting Better Advice and Evidence

14. Expert Advisory Bodies for Policymakers²

i) Permanent Advisory Bodies

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, whereas 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 by government. In some cases, members of these bodies are appointed solely by government, whereas 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, examining 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 policymaking 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 policymaking; 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: www.tsoshop.co.uk/bookstore.asp?Action=Book&ProductId=0215021460.

ii) Temporary Blue-Ribbon Commissions

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.

² This section draws on Stares and Weaver (2001: 12).

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 breadth 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 or not the final report is released, is at the will of the government. Another limitation 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 Commission 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 were 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 produced a number of radical recommendations yet managed to spur a consensus on many of the key issues. These included the introduction of a universal basic state pension with entitlement based on residency, rather than national insurance contributions, and raising the state pension age for men and women from 65 and 60 respectively to 68 for both.

Sources

Stares, B. Paul and R. Kent Weaver (2001), *Guidance for Governance: Comparing Sources of Public Policy Advice*, Tokyo: Japan Centre for international Exchange.
BBC News: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/4494306.stm>

15. Improving Standards of Qualitative Research

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

i) Assessing the Quality of Qualitative Research

Best practice in the use of evidence in policymaking recognises that not all published, or unpublished, research meets the standards of validity, reliability and relevance needed for policymaking. The Cabinet Office Strategy Unit in conjunction with the National Centre for Social Research has developed a framework for assessing 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, which 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
- **Rigorous** 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:
www.policyhub.gov.uk/evaluating_policy/qual_eval.asp

ii) Researching social policy: the uses of qualitative methods

This is an article by Sue Duncan, Director of Policy Studies, Strategy Unit, Cabinet Office and Alan Hedges, independent research consultant and 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 (www.policyhub.gov.uk/evaluating_policy/training_evaluation/researching-socialpolicy.asp).

iii) Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Research Methods Programme

This programme (www.ccsr.ac.uk/methods/) forms part of the ESRC's strategy to improve standards of research methods across the UK social science community. Funding seeks to:

- Support substantively focused research that poses interesting/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 the programme, or linked to existing centres of methodological excellence.
- Promote cross-national initiatives involving substantively focused and methodologically innovative research.

Source

Policyhub website: www.policyhub.gov.uk/evaluating_policy/qual_eval.asp

Other Web-based Resources

Policyhub: ‘the first port of call for improvements in Policy and Delivery’

What is it?

Policy Hub is a web resource launched in March 2002 that aims to improve the way public policy is shaped and delivered. 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

Crime Reduction Toolkit

What is it?

This is part of the Crime Reduction site providing practical help to policymakers and practitioners in accessing evaluated evidence and good practice on crime reduction. It covers most areas from vehicle crime, to racial crime and harassment, to arson. Each area is divided up into: what we already know; 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

www.crimereduction.gov.uk/toolkits

Source

www.policyhub.gov.uk (tools section)

Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)

What is it?

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

What is it?

The Evidence Network was established as a result of a decision taken by the ESRC in 1999 that a major initiative was needed to bring social science research 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 discussion on EBPP issues.
- Contribute to capacity building in the skills required for EBPP.
- Explore EBPP issues through research and consultancy activities.

For more information
www.evidencenetwork.org

Information for Development in the 21st Century (id21)

What is it?

id21 is an internet-based dissemination service, established in 1997, to communicate the latest UK-based international development research to policymakers and practitioners worldwide. 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 provides other information services, such as:

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

Who uses it?

About two thirds of id21's growing global audience can broadly be termed policymakers. Just over one-third is made up of 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 one-third of users. It is funded 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, www.nao.org.uk/publications/nao_reports/02-03/0203586-i.pdf.

The International Campbell Collaboration (C2)

What is it?

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. C2 builds summaries and electronic brochures of reviews and reports of trials for policymakers, practitioners, researchers and the public.

For more information
www.campbellcollaboration.org

Policy Brief

What is it?

Policy Brief is a cooperative 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.

A Toolkit for Progressive Policymakers in Developing Countries

- Subscribe to regular subject-based email bulletins.
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ISBN 0 85003 786 7

The Overseas Development Institute's Research and Policy in Development (RAPID) programme undertakes research, advisory and public affairs work on the interface between research and policy to promote more evidence-based development policy and practice. The programme is identifying, developing, distributing and delivering tools, resources and training support that can help researchers access policy processes, with the aim of using their research to contribute to more evidence-based and pro-poor policy. This handbook presents work in progress on lessons and approaches from evidence-based policy in the UK which may be valuable for developing countries.