Supporting social research use

CRFR developed the Evidence Request Bank project with partners because previous work had identified the need for better access to existing research. We have developed a method of reviewing research evidence with a focus on action, to close the evidence to action gap.

The Evidence Bank approach

WHAT IS THE ISSUE?
Support organisations to identify what they want to know and why.

WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY?
Produce an appraised, accessible and action-oriented summary of existing research.

HOW CAN THE RESEARCH BE USED?
Work with organisations to understand the evidence and how it could be applied in their setting.

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?
Collect information on what has changed as a result of using evidence.

SHARING AND LEARNING
Log these outputs into the evidence bank to allow others to learn and use it in the future.

West Lothian Council
Evidence review: What factors affect children’s transition to primary school?

- Staff at West Lothian Council created a driver diagram demonstrating successful transition from nursery to primary school based on the evidence review.
- The driver diagram was used with nursery and primary school staff to identify ways they could improve transitions.
- This has been shared through the council to reinforce the value of evidence-based practice and has also informed others via the Scottish Government Early Years Collaborative.

Success factors

Planning evidence use - discussing how to use evidence helped to integrate thinking within teams and direct resources effectively.

Training student researchers in KE - training students to write evidence reports helped them realise the complexity of evidence user’s environments.

Whole team discussion - fostered shared understanding, managed expectations over what the evidence does and doesn’t say, and helped ensure reports addressed the knowledge gaps.

Peer and user review - involving external reviewers increased their understanding of how to present information for third and public sectors.

Support is key - partners valued support to identify what they wanted to know and to develop the processes and tools needed to implement evidence change.

What next?
The Evidence Bank has been integrated with What Works Scotland, a new initiative to improve the way local areas in Scotland use evidence to make decisions about public service development and reform.

www.whatworksscotland.ac.uk
CRFR aims to make research accessible and act as a focal point for policymakers and practitioners interested in families and relationships research.

**Knowledge into action**

**the CRFR approach**

**Supported**
Recognising the importance of knowledge exchange through a skilled knowledge exchange team.

**Inclusive**
Including different voices in both research and dissemination.

**Open**
Freely accessible research communication and involving partners in spreading the word.

**Innovative**
Exploring different approaches to communication, engagement and action.

**Connected**
Encourage networking through advisory groups, integration programmes and social media.

**Interactive**
Building trust and creating shared agendas with partners to sustain a joined-up approach.

---

**A taste of CRFR activities...**

- Commissioned by Scottish Executive to map Sure Start services in Scotland.
- Research team advised Scottish Executive committee on drugs and alcohol.
- Growing Up in Scotland partnership includes dissemination officer based at CRFR.
- Review of poverty and disability and discussion seminar for Scottish Executive Child Poverty Unit.
- Research on care-home residents with dementia increased knowledge of supporting the night-time care of older people, receiving extensive media coverage.
- Fiona Morrison’s research on children’s perspectives on contact with non-resident fathers informed the National Domestic Abuse Delivery Plan for Children and Young People.
- Co-Director Sarah Cunningham-Burley gives evidence to the Local Government Committee on Poverty and Families.
- CRFR Artist in Residence Rosie Gibson collaborates with Health in Mind to include the voices of survivors of childhood abuse in a seminar for policy makers and practitioners.
- CRFR launches the Evidence Bank to help third and public sectors to use existing social research.
- Partners with IRISS to run a practitioner research programme.
- Leading on impact evaluation for Future Reserves Research Programme integration team, a major ESRC and MOD investment.
- Sarah Morton gives evidence to the Scottish Parliament Committee on Education and Culture.
- Start of long term collaboration with West Lothian Community Planning Partnership using contribution analysis to evaluate services.
- CRFR Artist in Residence Rosie Gibson collaborates with Health in Mind to include the voices of survivors of childhood abuse in a seminar for policy makers and practitioners.
Growing Up in Scotland

Launched in 2005, Growing Up in Scotland (GUS) is the longitudinal research study following the lives of over 10,000 children and their families from birth, through childhood and beyond.

It is funded by the Scottish Government to provide new evidence to support policy-making in relation to their objective ‘making Scotland the best place to grow up’.

The study is also intended as a resource for practitioners – for anyone working with and for children and their families.

As part of the study there is a dedicated knowledge broker, Lesley Kelly, whose role is to make sure the findings are useful to policy and practice.

Lesley and the academic team:
• Make findings accessible using the web, Twitter, newsletters, media, targeted briefings.
• Develop relationships with key organisations which work with children and families.
• Hold an annual programme of GUS events and attend key professional conferences and training.

Images of children ©iStock.com Perets/Aldo Murillo/Yalayama

Playing Scotland is the national organisation for play in Scotland. GUS worked with Play Scotland to produce a briefing ‘What do we know about play?’

The briefing was presented at their Annual Conference 2012 and has been widely circulated to practitioners in the play sector.

As part of the study East Ayrshire Council Education Services invited GUS to develop a workshop session, as part of a training day for early years practitioners working with vulnerable families with young children aged 0-3 years.

80 staff attended the workshop which covered the relationship between early experience and circumstances and child health and development outcomes.

Save the Children commissioned the GUS research team to carry out analysis of GUS data to explore the development of children from different socio-economic backgrounds as they start primary school. The report ‘Thrive at five’ found that children who grow up in poverty start school with development levels far behind those of their more affluent peers.

More recently, the GUS team has worked with Save the Children to support them with data analysis for their campaign to make sure that every child leaves primary school as a confident reader.

‘Very valuable research which will hopefully improve knowledge and enable more equality in future’

‘Makes you see the importance of early years and the early stages of children’s lives’

‘Rises awareness of the importance of again early relationships, learning and social/economic/poverty issues’

www.growingupinscotland.org.uk  @growingupinscot