

# 'Evidence-Based' or 'Intelligent' Government? International Trends and Examples

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# Outline of presentation

- Perspectives on 'evidence-based' government
- 'Intelligent government': an agenda
- Examples from Europe (Australia and Canada)

# Evidence-based government as the 'rational' approach

*"If government decisions are to be robust, they need to be based on all relevant evidence ... more needs to be done to ensure that policy makers have access to the best scientific evidence and advice and are therefore in a position to make the best decisions about the challenges, both national and international, facing the country."*

(Science and Engineering in Government: An Overview of the Government's Approach, Government Office for Science, Oct. 2009)

# Challenges to the 'rationalist' perspective

- Research evidence is 'fallible' - less certain and less value free than assumed in the rationalist perspective
- The domain of 'relevant evidence' is not restricted to scientific knowledge but must be extended to include 'political know-how' and experience from professional practice. (Head, 2008)
- Complex modern arrangements of networks, partnerships and collaborative governance introduce a diversity of perspectives on 'evidence' which may be incompatible:
  - *"...the most important question regarding the utilisation of evidence in policy is one of how the incoherence and potential conflict between different types of knowledge can be made sense of and managed, rather than one of how to create the conditions for greater utilisation of research and evidence"*
    - (Tensenbel, 2004, p.190)
- Policy debate and decision making are inherently political and value-based:
  - *"Policy decisions are not deduced primarily from facts... but from politics, judgement and debate" (Head, 2008, p.9).*

# Policy making as a political/ 'deliberative' process

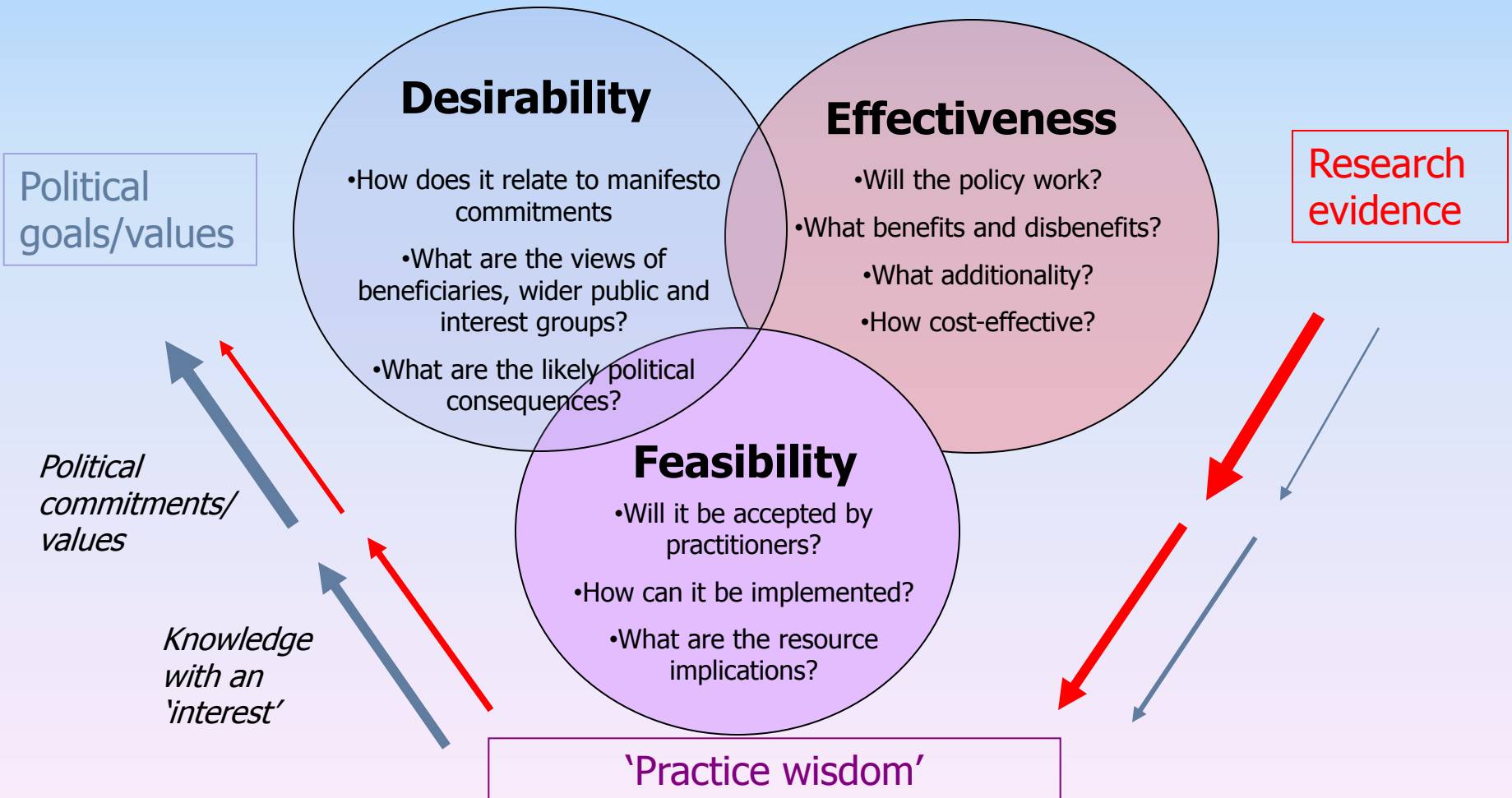
- *"Policy making in government is inherently political; the role of ministers is crucial. Good policies successfully combine the political (mobilising support and managing opposition, presenting a vision, setting strategic objectives) and the technocratic (evidence of what works, robust policy design, realistic implementation plans)."*

- *Institute for Government (2011, p.25)*

- Need deliberative processes to reach 'sound and acceptable decisions

- (CHSRF, 2005)

# Policy making - seeking 'sound and acceptable' solutions?



# Prospects for 'evidence' in policy making / government?

*"If we enlarge the meaning of evidence, there is indeed scope for bringing more intellectual edge to the analysis of what we can learn from the past. But, equally important, if we remember that evidence speaks with many voices - and that our values drive facts and shape the conclusions we draw from them - we will also conclude that any such exercise will be no more, and should be no more, than one contribution to the process of policy making."*

(Klein, 2003, p.431)

⇒ 'evidence-informed' policy making / government?

OR: 'intelligent government'?

# Australia: Principles of 'good governance'

- Transparent
- Accountable
- Responsive
- Participatory
- Equitable and inclusive
- Effective and efficient
- Follows rule of law



# An agenda for 'intelligent government'

- Need 'whole government' approach, - not just policy-making process ⇒ key processes to 'drive' evidence use
- 'Government for Results'
  - Outcome / results focus
  - Performance budgeting
- Policy making process:
  - Reinforcing the role of evidence
  - Controlling other influences
  - Building policy analytical capacity
  - Improving access to relevant evidence
- Civil service capability
  - Principles / processes / ethics
  - Skills and competencies
- Openness/ transparency/ accountability
  - 'Open government' / access to information
  - Parliamentary scrutiny
  - Supported by free, investigative media

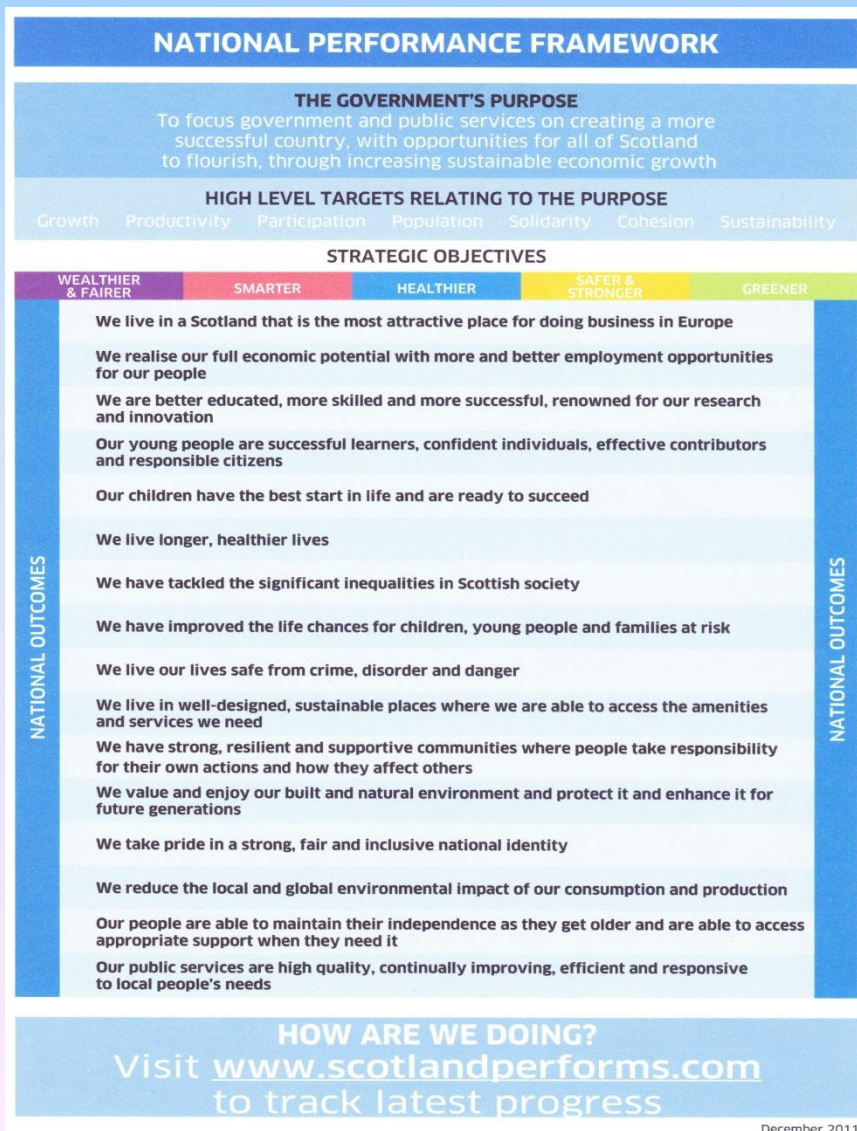
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# Scottish Government: National Performance Framework



# Scottish Government: National Performance Framework





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Scotland Performs measures and reports on progress of government in Scotland in creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all to flourish through increasing sustainable economic growth.

Progress towards the Purpose is tracked by 7 Purpose Targets and it is supported by 16 National Outcomes - describing the kind of Scotland we want to be - and 50 National Indicators, covering key areas of health, justice, environment, economy, and education measure progress.

Scotland Performs offers accountability based on national priorities set out in the National Performance Framework. [NHSScotland](#) is the first partner organisation to report performance through Scotland Performs.

You can judge for yourself how Scotland is progressing through 'direction of travel' arrows on the 'Performance at a Glance' page which indicate whether performance is improving, worsening or maintaining.

Assessments of progress are regularly updated from the latest evidence and each has explanatory notes attached.

The National Performance Framework was updated in December 2011. Information and data for the Purpose Targets and National Indicators included in the 2007 version of the NPF are still available.

[Purpose Targets \(2007 version\)](#)

[National Indicators \(2007 version\)](#)

[Performance at Glance \(2007 version\)](#)

Two of the Indicators from the 2007 set, which were removed at the refresh, had specific targets with endpoints after 14 December 2011.

The final data for these two indicators was reported in early 2012 and the final performance assessment is available in the [legacy targets](#) section.

Your comments

What do you think of the Scotland Performs site? Do you have suggestions for improvement?

Latest update



National Indicator on terrestrial breeding birds

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National Indicator on:  
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Also worth seeing

- Government Economic Strategy
- Spending Review 2011
- Programme for Government 2013-14
- Scottish Draft Budget 2014-15
- Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics
- Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation

# Developing 'government by results' in Scotland

- Scotland Performs - not just measuring change
  - <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/Performance/scotPerforms>
- Strategic policy frameworks to achieve national outcomes: early years, health, drugs, offending etc.
- Requires better use of evidence to inform policy/resource allocation:
  - to *measure* what's important
  - to *understand contribution* to outcomes
  - to *challenge* existing commitments
  - to inform new *policy development* and *delivery improvement*
  - to inform *resource allocation* (Spending Reviews)

# Performance budgeting

- Increasing use of performance budgeting in OECD; but limited use of evidence to drive resource allocation
- Norway: Performance budgeting
  - advanced in the use of performance reporting (annual reports, budget documents, operational plans, and strategic plans) and management-by-objective-and-results (MBOR).
  - government-wide performance budgeting system - performance targets integrated into the budget process and used when developing the executive's budget.
- Netherlands: Fundamental Expenditure Reviews
  - Rejuvenated in 2009 following financial crisis; reviews of all major spending progs on four-year cycle in year before general elections
  - Part of wider evaluation system (CBA: policy reviews) contributing to budgetary process
  - Working groups of civil servants plus external experts; independent chair
  - Develop options for budget savings plus economic and social impacts
  - Results used by incoming administrations to develop programmes

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# Policy making process

- Reinforcing the role of evidence
  - Policy appraisal and risk assessment
  - Experimentation/Piloting
  - Evaluation
- Controlling other influences
  - 'special advisers' / lobbying
- Building policy analytical capacity
  - capacity within government to provide 'policy-relevant' evidence
- Improving access to relevant evidence
  - Strengthening the role of expert advice
  - Partnership with academia
  - Intermediary bodies - 'conduit' for evidence into government
  - Governance and funding of universities

# Reforming the policy process: UK Institute of Government

- Head of Policy Profession as **Policy Director/ Policy Effectiveness**
- Accounting Officer responsible for **quality** of policy process
- Clear statement of government's high-level **policy goals**
- Clear rules for policy **appraisals**; results made public
- Clarity of **roles of ministers and civil servants**; ensure constructive relationships
- Policy making **open and transparent** with shared analytical base
- **Training** for civil servants on policy analysis and relations with ministers
- Better use of **external expertise**
- More rigorous **knowledge management** processes
- Ensure rigorous **evaluation** and build **lessons learned** into future policy making
- More 'trial-and-error' **experimental approaches** to encourage innovation

# Policy appraisal and risk assessment

- Devolved government of Northern Ireland has developed programme to improve policy making
- *PolicyLink* website provides access to range of resources to support policy making
  - <http://www.ofmdfmni.gov.uk/index/making-government-work/policylink.htm>
- *Policy Making Toolkit* provides practical guidance in five 'workbooks'
- Workbook 3 covers appraisal of costs, benefits and risks:
  - Identify and quantify **costs and benefits** (monetary and non-monetary)
  - Identify **risks and uncertainty**; assess probability against impact; implications of uncertainty; options for mitigation
  - Assess **policy options** using full evidence base and analysis of costs, benefits, risks and uncertainty
  - Engage key **stakeholders** in process, especially those involved in delivery
  - Use **technical methods** where appropriate (eg. CBA, Weighted Scoring) but be flexible and practical, adapting approach to circumstances

# Experimentation / piloting (1)

- UK Review of role of pilots (Jowell, 2003) recommended:
  - Piloting of new policies where possible to encourage **innovation**
  - Pilots based on **systematic evidence**, free from pressure to deliver good news, and allowed to run course
  - **Evaluation** methodology based on expert advice, employ multiple methods including RCTs where appropriate
  - Pilots part of broader **continuous process** of building evidence base
  - Results and methods **published and freely available** within and outside government
- Conclusion:
  - (Pilots) "...play a highly constructive role in promoting innovation (via explicit, small-scale experiments and trials), and in helping to fine-tune policies and their delivery mechanisms in advance of their national roll-out. In short, policy pilots have become an indispensable tool of modern government." (p.34)

# Experimentation / piloting (2)

- Examples from Scotland:
  - Innovative international approaches to 24/7 healthcare
    - <http://www.publicfinance.co.uk/news/2013/10/4m-to-pilot-round-the-clock-nhs-care-in-scotland>
  - Walk-in health services in community pharmacy setting
    - <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/06/7788>
  - Improving transition between primary and secondary schools
    - <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/163851/0044590.pdf>
  - Improving educational attainment of looked-after children
    - <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/238207/0065397.pdf>
  - Co-production with disabled people to meet housing needs
    - <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/365083/0124090.pdf>
- Examples from Netherlands:
  - 'Blue Birds' migrant labour project:
    - <http://www.government.nl/government/documents-and-publications/reports/2013/01/23/evaluation-of-the-blue-birds-circular-migration-pilot-in-the-netherlands.html>
  - Sentencing of violent offences under influence of alcohol or drugs
    - <http://www.government.nl/government/documents-and-publications/press-releases/2011/03/25/violence-committed-under-the-influence-of-alcohol-or-drugs-will-be-punished-more-severely.html>

# Policy on Evaluation: Canada

- Objective: to create a comprehensive and reliable base of evaluation evidence that is used to support policy and program improvement, expenditure management, Cabinet decision making, and public reporting.
- Department Deputy Heads have responsibility to:
  - Establish robust, neutral **evaluation function** and ensure adherence
  - Establish Departmental **Evaluation Committee** of senior officials to advise
  - Develop rolling **five-year departmental evaluation plan** to ensure all direct program spending evaluated every five years;
  - Ensure **performance information** available to support evaluation of programs
  - Ensure evaluation findings **inform program, policy and resource allocation** decisions
  - Ensure **neutral assessment** of departmental evaluation function at least once every five years.
- Secretary of the Treasury Board monitors compliance including coverage and quality of evaluations
- Evaluation Standard:
  - ***evaluation processes and activities***: to ensure evaluations produce credible, neutral and timely results that inform decision making, support program improvements, and demonstrate accountability.
  - ***evaluation planning and design***: to ensure that the basic elements of a good evaluation are in place at the outset of an evaluation.
  - ***evaluation project management***: to ensure that evaluations are conducted in a professional and ethical manner.
  - ***evaluation reporting and use***: to ensure that reports present the findings, conclusions and recommendations in a clear and neutral manner.

# Building policy analytical capacity

- Ability to collect and process **data** and undertake or commission **research**
- Ability to apply **analytical techniques** such as environmental scanning and forecasting, policy appraisal and evaluation
- Ability to **communicate** policy-related messages to policy makers and stakeholders
- Sufficient employees with **skills** needed to undertake and communicate research and analysis, with opportunities for skills development
- Access to **external expertise**
- A healthy policy **research community** outside government
- '**Boundary spanning**' capabilities to coordinate with relevant non-governmental organisations to ensure research is relevant and timely
  - Source: Howlett (2009, p.162-4)



# Analytical Services: Scotland

- Director of Analytical Services ⇒ corporate group
- Analytical Service Divisions (ASDs)
  - Based in policy directorates close to 'policy customer'
  - Comprise economists, social researchers and statisticians to provide integrated service: quality/challenge
  - Undertake evidence synthesis, research and evaluation, surveys, data collection and preparation of statistics
  - Justice ASD:
    - *"We aim to foster an open supportive environment where different analytical contributions are encouraged, challenged and enhanced. We are committed to close and constructive team working across professions, with policy colleagues, with analytical colleagues in other Scottish Government directorates, with other Government Departments and with external experts. Where appropriate, we aim to work effectively in project teams across traditional boundaries so we can best contribute to progress against the (Government's) Purpose and national outcomes."* (Scottish Government, 2012, p.4).
- Heads of Profession have responsibility for recruitment, deployment and professional development of staff
- 2008 c. 260 analysts within Scottish Government



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  - Analytical Services in Scotland
- Improving access to relevant evidence
  - Strengthening the role of expert advice
  - Developing partnership with academia
  - Intermediary bodies
  - HE governance and funding

# Strengthening the role of expert advice: Knowledge Chambers in the Netherlands

- Part of a broader programme to strengthen evidence-based policy making by including researchers and experts in policy making.
- *Kenniskamer* promote interaction between the top echelons of ministries and knowledge institutions
- Organised by the National Strategic Council - day-long (or half day) meetings comprising senior officials from the relevant ministry and invited experts
- All ministries now have some form of Knowledge Chamber
- Expectation is that KCs will be innovative and creative in approach - that they will "...challenge existing policy paradigms."
- Flexible approach to mobilising scientific expertise rather than relying on fixed advisory councils with fixed membership

# Developing partnership with academia: Australian National Institute for Public Policy

- Objectives of Commonwealth-ANU strategic relationship:
  - to improve the connection between the public sector and the best in public policy research from across Australia and the world.
  - to foster innovative relationships between the public sector and relevant academic institutions in an open and facilitative way.
  - to building an enhanced evidence base on which policy practitioners can draw to develop future public policy.
  - to develop the capabilities of Australian public servants so they can identify and adopt best practice and strive for the highest standards of professional achievement.
- Institute encompasses several schools at ANU
- HC Coombs Policy Forum: 'think tank' to integrate, translate and communicate policy relevant knowledge, administered by Dept of Industry;
  - provides a key national interface between the research community and the Australian Public Service (APS)
  - enhances the evidence base for public policy through targeted projects in line with government needs
  - commissions and publishes analysis of longer-term challenges and opportunities for Australia
  - provides a forum for broader public debate of key policy challenges facing the nation.

# Intermediary bodies (1): MindLab in Denmark

- Created in 2002 for the Ministry of Economic Affairs as internal incubator for invention and innovation
- 2007 became cross-ministerial institution with professional researchers, "...involving citizens and companies to develop new public sector solutions."
- Works with experts, think tanks, researchers and other knowledge environments to generate change in government.
- Strategic objectives:
  - **Innovation** - developing of new public solutions to give better experience of public services and produce desired outcomes.
  - **Efficiency** - improve use of public resources through targeting new solutions.
  - **Culture** - transforming ministries' culture and practices to involve citizens and businesses more extensively and increase cooperation across public sector.
  - **Knowledge** - developing and sharing experience and new knowledge to encourage innovation in public and the private sectors.
  - **Visibility** - communicating MindLab's work and how parent ministries experiment with new methodologies and forms of cooperation.
- Current research:
  - exploring how innovation in public sector is shifting notions of evidence and useful knowledge.
  - developing a design approach to policy making based on learning from practice (cf. 'what works')

# Intermediary Bodies (2): What Works Centres in the UK

- Civil Service Reform Plan: 'NICE for social policy'
- New network of What Works centres funded jointly by the Government, Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and Big Lottery Fund.
  - two existing centres: NICE and the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF)
  - four new centres: crime reduction, local economic growth, ageing and early intervention.
- Centres independent of government but are remitted to have a clear policy focus and have National Adviser within govnt
- Core functions of the centres:
  - *Generate evidence synthesis*: undertaking systematic reviews of relevant evidence and producing clear, reliable and actionable syntheses of evidence on effectiveness, cost-effectiveness and applicability of interventions.
  - *Translate the evidence*: producing a common currency for comparing the effectiveness of interventions, putting the needs of users at the centre.
  - *Evidence absorption*: publishing and disseminating findings in a format that can be understood, interpreted and acted upon.
  - *Promoting good evidence*: identifying research and capability gaps and advising those responsible for implementing interventions on approaches to effective evaluation.
- What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth and the Centre for Crime Reduction (hosted by the College of Policing) currently being established

# Governance and funding of universities: UK Research Excellence Framework

- The Research Excellence Framework (REF) is the successor to the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), a method of assessing the research of UK higher education institutions (HEIs).
- Currently taking place in 2014 to assess research 2008-2013.
- The assessment outcomes will be used to:
  - inform the selective allocation of their research funding to HEIs, with effect from 2015-16
  - provide accountability for public investment in research and produce evidence of the benefits of this investment
  - provide benchmarking information and establish reputational yardsticks.
- Peer Review process to assess three dimensions of quality:
  - *Outputs (65%)*: quality of research outputs in terms of their 'originality, significance and rigour', with reference to international research quality standards
  - *Impact (20%)*: 'reach and significance' of impacts on the economy, society and/or culture that were underpinned by excellent research as well as approach to enabling impact from research
  - *Environment (15%)*: research environment in terms of 'vitality and sustainability', including its contribution to wider discipline or research base
- Assessment of impact based on expert review of case studies

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# Civil Service Reform in Poland

- A professionally managed civil service is being developed as part of a broader 'Effective State Strategy'
- *Principles of Civil Service* are based on legalism, integrity, human and citizens rights, transparency, professionalism, accountability, rationality, life-long learning, employment stability, open and competitive recruitment, sustainability, disinterestedness as well as the principle of Prime Ministerial superiority
- A new *Code of Ethics* will be focused on certain rules of proper behaviour, honesty/ integrity, political neutrality/ impartiality and loyalty to the state and its public service.
- Forum of directors general of public offices will oversee implementation of guidelines and compliance with Principles of the Civil Service and the Code of Ethics



# UK Civil Service Competency Framework



# Civil Service skills and competencies

- Making Effective Decisions:
  - "Effectiveness in this area is about being objective; using sound judgement, evidence and knowledge to provide accurate, expert and professional advice."
  - Key competencies (level 4):
    - Weigh up data from various sources, recognising when to bring in experts/researchers to add to available information
    - Analyse and evaluate pros and cons and identify risks in order to make decisions that take account of the wider context, including diversity and sustainability
    - Draw together and present reasonable conclusions from a wide range of incomplete and complex evidence and data - able to act or decide even when details are not clear
    - Make difficult decisions by pragmatically weighing the complexities involved against the need to act
- Policy Profession Skills and Knowledge Framework
  - Four areas of competence:
    - Bring together evidence, politics and delivery to support ministers
    - **Evidence:** Investigate, assess and advise on the political and practical implications of government policy using evidence and ideas from a wide range of sources to meet required outcomes
    - **Politics:** Monitor developments in the political context and give timely, honest, objective and impartial advice and recommendations to respond to the changing context in which ministers operate
    - **Delivery:** Develop sound policy, fast, in a public and political arena, and convert this policy into robust deliverable plans at whatever stage the policy is at, using creativity and confidence



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# Australia: Declaration of Open Government

- *The Australian Government now declares that, in order to promote greater participation in Australia's democracy, it is committed to open government based on a culture of engagement, built on better access to and use of government held information, and sustained by the innovative use of technology.*
  - (Minister for Finance and Deregulation, July, 2010)
- The Australian Government's support for openness and transparency in Government has three key principles:
  - **Informing:** strengthening citizen's rights of access to information, establishing a pro-disclosure culture across Australian Government agencies including through online innovation, and making government information more accessible and usable;
  - **Engaging:** collaborating with citizens on policy and service delivery to enhance the processes of government and improve the outcomes sought;
  - **Participating:** making government more consultative and participative.

# Access to information: StatRes statistical system in Norway

- Aims:
  - Increased transparency of utilisation of resources.
  - Motivating increased performance due to better transparency.
  - Input for analyses, control and decisions.
- StatRes:
  - has an input-output approach at the agency level based on the aims of the agency.
  - publicises data on resources, activities, services and results, hence facilitating inter- and intra agency comparisons, as well as more advanced efficiency analyses.
  - provides valuable input for policymakers and as an instrument in the management of public agencies and service production.
- "An important aspect about StatRes is that data is fully accessible for the public, and hence provides a basis for critical scrutiny of the activities of government agencies by media, independent researchers etc".

Source: OECD (2010)

# Conclusion

- Policy making is not a rational, technical exercise but rather an inherently complex, deliberative, political process that involves balancing a wide range of information, opinions, and value-positions to reach 'acceptable and appropriate' decisions
- Scientific evidence is an important input to this process and improving the availability and use of such evidence is a key element in achieving 'better policy making'
- The task of strengthening the role of evidence in policy making needs to be supported by wider measures in a 'whole-government' approach, addressing core processes that 'drive' the use of evidence (eg budgetary process), a commitment to openness and transparency, and the development of capability and skills.

## A final word

- *"There will be no single institutional means to accomplish this subtle balancing act of technical expertise, citizen participation, and executive, since circumstances differ by topic, urgency, public understanding, time horizon involved, and much else. Yet the general commitment to the combination of scientific rigour, public consensus and democratic accountability should be a guidepost for action and institutional design."*

- Prof, Jeffrey Sachs, *Special Adviser to UN Secretary General*, (2009)

**Thank you**