Science and Analysis Review of the Department for Children, Schools & Families

(now Department for Education)
This report sets out the findings from a review of science and analysis in the former Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). The review was carried out in early 2010 before the formation of the Department for Education on 12 May 2010 and describes the organisation, processes and approaches present in the former DCSF at April 2010.

The report refers to DCSF when describing the review findings, reflecting the Department’s title at the time of the review. However, the report recommendations are equally relevant to the Department for Education (DfE) – and are addressed to DfE.
Foreword

By the Government Chief Scientific Advisor

As Government Chief Scientific Adviser I have a responsibility to ensure and maintain the quality of the science and engineering used in all government departments. This report includes the results of one of a series of reviews of main Whitehall departments that supports this role. These reviews provide a benchmark for how effectively departments use science (including social science) and engineering in their policy-making and strategies. The review reports highlight existing good practice as well as presenting recommendations to support departments in developing their capability.

This review of the Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) was carried out before the formation of the Department for Education (DfE) on 12 May 2010. However, the recommendations are equally relevant to the DfE and the Government Office for Science will work with DfE to address the review findings. The review looked at the full range of DCSF’s analytical activities, in particular economic, statistical, operational and social research & analysis. The breadth of this scope reflects the extent to which the Department uses the various analytical disciplines in its policy development and delivery.

The other government Heads of Analysis, the Heads of the Government Economic Service; the Government Operational Research Service; the Government Social Research Service and the Government Statistical Service, have supported this review. Advisers from the Government Economic Service and the Government Statistical Services worked alongside the Government Office for Science review team. The review’s terms of reference were agreed jointly by the Heads of Analysis and the Permanent Secretary for DCSF.

This report highlights the strong and effective focus within DCSF on the use of analytical evidence to inform policy-making and it describes many areas of good practice in the Department. The report also identifies areas where there is scope to extend or enhance existing practices to further strengthen the Department’s effective use of science and analysis.

Many of the findings, recommendations and good practice identified in this report will have relevance for other areas of government. As Government Chief Scientific Adviser, I urge other departments to consider the review findings within their own context.

Finally, I would like to thank the members of the independent expert panel and the analytic advisers who have worked with us to identify key issues for the review, to collect and analyse evidence and to develop its conclusions. I would also like to thank all of those who contributed evidence to the review, especially many staff within the former DCSF, as well as key stakeholders to the Department.

Professor Sir John Beddington
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Summary

This report sets out the findings of the Science and Analysis Review of the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), now the Department for Education (DfE). It provides a benchmark of how science (including social science) and analysis were used in DCSF at April 2010. The review looked at all the Department’s analytical activities, covering economics, statistics, operational research and social research, carried out and managed by DCSF.

The report makes conclusions based on evidence collected from within the Department and from external stakeholders. The recommendations are intended to further strengthen the already good quality of policy development and delivery in DCSF, as well as the Department’s strategic capabilities with regard to analytical activities. The report also highlights several areas of good practice within the Department which could profitably be drawn on more widely within the Department itself and across government more broadly to improve and enhance performance. Although the review was carried out before the formation of the Department for Education (DfE), the recommendations and good practice are equally relevant to DfE.

Overall, the review made a strong positive assessment of DCSF’s use of science and analysis. There is a clear focus on the use of analytical evidence to inform and guide the development and delivery of policy. This analytical approach is intended to help secure better outcomes for children, young people and families in the most cost-effective manner. The Department’s senior leadership play a key role in driving this analytical, evidence-based approach. The Department also has many strong links with the academic and wider research community and with delivery partners who are often involved in research and data collection.

DCSF underwent major organisational change over the last three years, since the Department was created in 2007, to bring together policy on schools and education with wider policy on children, families and young people. The Department (and its predecessors) has a strong history of commissioning and using evidence for policy development but the review observed that a number of processes and approaches have been introduced within the last two years which are intended to further strengthen the focus on analysis and evidence. In places, there is still scope for greater embedding to ensure that the evidence-based approach and processes are used consistently across the Department. Many of the report’s recommendations are intended to promote a consistent approach and to build on existing good practice.

DCSF is data and evidence rich and making the most value for money use of this analytical information is an ongoing challenge, and particularly important in the current fiscal climate. Many DCSF programmes only take full effect over a relatively long timescale of several years, so the Department must plan and manage some analytical activity (such as programme evaluation) over a corresponding period.
The recommendations and examples of good practice identified by the review are set out below. For the recommendations to have impact, it will be important to secure engagement across the whole Department and across the grades; and for analysts and policy-makers to continue to work together on an integrated and evidence-focused approach.

Summary of good practice examples
The review has identified a number of examples of good practice in DCSF’s analytical processes and management which help to enhance the quality and use of analysis and evidence in the Department. The review hopes to see these activities continue in the Department for Education in future. All the examples of good practice outlined below are described in more detail in Section 3.

Good practice examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Making Policy Happen programme</th>
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<tr>
<td>The Making Policy Happen Programme is intended to improve policy practice, strengthen longer term policy-making skills and encourage policy delivery professionalism. The programme is based around a four stage model on making and delivering policy and also includes policy leadership seminars; use of case studies and an intranet site. The Making Policy model is strongly focused on effective use of evidence and cost-benefit analysis and ultimately is expected to lead to better informed policy-making and best value for money. The programme, which is strongly supported by senior management, was launched in 2009 and its effectiveness is being monitored.</td>
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<th>Annual analysis and evidence strategy</th>
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<td>An annual analysis and evidence planning process is used to review progress against priorities and to plan the research and analysis for the year ahead (and beyond). Development of the strategy is coordinated with the Department’s annual business planning round and officials engage closely with key delivery and other government partners and with external stakeholders during the process. The resulting strategy is a clear document focused on the Department’s policy priorities and resulting evidence needs.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Using customer insight to develop and deliver policy</th>
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<td>The Department’s Customer Insight Unit was established in 2007 to use the voice of the customer (including children, young people, parents and carers) to inform policy-making development, communication and delivery. Customer insight work can help policy-makers to understand issues from a particular customer perspective. It can be used to test how solutions are likely to be perceived and received by customers (for example, whether policies are likely to reach priority groups), and to improve communication of policies. Work carried out by the Customer Insight Unit has helped to refine policy development and delivery.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Use of research centres</th>
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<tr>
<td>Building on the legacy of earlier research centres, the Department is currently commissioning three new research centres to look at:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Childhood Wellbeing</td>
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Youth Transitions and Development
Understanding Behaviour Change

The centres are each led by a consortium of academic and other research organisations, bringing a multi-disciplinary approach to each of them. The centres will have three main functions:

• to deliver an agreed programme of research
• to respond to ad hoc requests for advice
• to provide a challenge/scrutiny function

The new research centres are expected to complement the Department’s own research programmes and to provide an additional effective way for the Department to engage with the external research community.

Internal analytical scrutiny and challenge processes

The Department has a range of internal analytical scrutiny and challenge processes led by the Department’s most senior analysts. These include:

• Policy Evaluation Group
• Research Approvals Committee (to approve all externally funded research and analysis)
• Star Chamber Scrutiny Board (to control external data collections and minimise the burden on front line provider organisations and staff)
• Chief Economist’s review of impact assessments before they are submitted to Ministers

These scrutiny processes have led to improvements in the quality of research and analysis proposals and better assessments and have reduced the impact of data collections on front line services.

Development, maintenance and use of the National Pupil Database

The National Pupil Database (NPD) is a very large longitudinal database which combines national attainment and examination results for pupils with information on pupil and school characteristics. The NPD matches data from a several different datasets to form a single database which is a more valuable data source which offers the potential for a wider variety of analyses. It is a unique and internationally respected data source which is used by the Department and others to inform and improve education policy. The Department enables data from the NPD to be shared with other government departments and agencies, external researchers and other users outside government. The NPD has been used to help develop and assess the impact of many of the Department’s education policy initiatives.

Systematic publication of research and statistics

The Department publishes most of its research reports and well-regarded research briefs on its website on the last Thursday of each month. Some research publications are made at other points, for example, to coincide with a particular event or Ministerial announcement. For its national and official statistics publications, the Department also issues a planned schedule of publication twice a year. These well-ordered approaches to publication are simple but effective ways of ensuring that researchers, media and other organisations actively look out for new departmental research and data each month.

1 http://publications.education.gov.uk/
Research conference
The Department organises a research conference to engage a wide community of stakeholders in its research and analysis findings and plans. The conference attracts a wide range of stakeholders, including:
- representatives from delivery partners
- other government departments and agencies
- academic and other research organisations
- voluntary organisations
The Department uses the conference to present information about its research and analysis strategy and programmes and to discuss specific research projects. The conference is well-attended and well-regarded by the Department’s stakeholders who feel that it provides them with a good insight into use of research and analysis in the Department.

Summary of recommendations
The review has identified a number of areas where there is scope to further strengthen the Department’s use of science and analysis and the resulting recommendations are set out below. The benefits that are expected to be secured from taking forward each recommendation are described and the findings and observations that underpin each recommendation are also summarised below. More detailed background and findings for the recommendations are in Section 3 of the main report. The order in which the recommendations are listed below reflects the framework of seven criteria which underpins the review rather than an order of priority.

Recommendation 1
Securing maximum benefit from the Making Policy Happen programme.
The new Making Policy framework and the Department’s revised approach to policy-making should be given time and continued encouragement by senior management to become fully embedded in the Department. The Department for Education should also consider additional ways to ensure that the new Making Policy approach is fully adopted by all staff.

Significant – Immediate and ongoing

Background summary: The Department has recently introduced a Making Policy model and associated programme of activities which are intended to secure more consistent approaches to policy-making and delivery, including stronger use of evidence and better, more consistent use of cost-effectiveness analysis. The programme which was launched in 2009, is strongly supported by senior management but there is further work to be done to embed it fully and consistently across the Department to achieve the desired emphasis on evidence-based policy-making.

Expected benefits: Adopting the Making Policy Happen programme fully and consistently across the Department should embed the evidence-based approach more firmly. This in turn should help to ensure that decision-making is more robust and defensible and focused more strongly on securing better outcomes for children, young people and families and value for money.

2 The high level framework is set out in section 3 of this report and is based very closely on the framework used for the GO-Science programme of Science and Engineering Assurance Reviews: http://www.bis.gov.uk/go-science/science-in-government/science-engineering-assurance/review-framework
Recommendation 2

Consistent early involvement of analysts in policy-making

DfE should ensure that analysts are *consistently* involved in strategic policy decisions and in policy-making from the outset. Policy-makers and analytical units in policy directorates need to work closely together to identify upcoming analytical and evidence requirements (across all the analytical professions).

**Background summary:** Embedding analytical units in each of the policy directorates has helped to ensure that specialist analytical advice is available throughout all stages of a policy's development. However, during interviews for the review several departmental officials, including senior officials and both analysts and policy-makers, noted that consistently engaging analysts at an early enough stage in policy development remains a challenge for the Department.

**Significant – immediate and ongoing**

**Expected benefits:** Ensuring that analytical evidence is consistently fed into strategic decisions and policy-making from the earliest stages will help to ensure that policy decisions are properly informed. Ultimately it should ensure that the most cost-effective options for achieving intended policy goals are consistently identified and selected resulting in the most cost-effective policy outcomes, particularly important in the current fiscal climate. It should help to ensure that existing evidence is identified and applied at the outset, helping to save time and money by ruling out options which are not supported by the evidence. Early engagement between policy-makers and analysts also helps to inform the identification of research and analytical priorities and avoid unnecessary commissioning of new research.

Recommendation 3

Encouraging evidence-based policy delivery

DfE’s different front line delivery partners have different analytical information needs. The Department should continue to disseminate analytical information, for example in the form of guidance and best practice notes for delivery partners, to support policy delivery. Working with its delivery partners, the Department should also explore how it can support the capacity of front line professionals and practitioners for directly engaging with and interpreting research and analysis (subject to resource constraints).

**Significant – immediate and ongoing**

**Background summary:** The Department’s policy delivery is carried out by delivery partners, principally schools and local authorities, and therefore it is critical that these front line partners can apply relevant research findings and statistics to secure effective policy delivery. In some policy areas (e.g. children’s wellbeing and safeguarding), some stakeholders, including some of the review’s independent expert panel members, also felt that more guidance could be available on the use of evidence and statistics which would help front line staff to deliver policy more effectively.

**Expected benefits:** Awareness and understanding of relevant research and analysis should help delivery partners to develop or select the most effective delivery strategies and processes. In turn, strong engagement in research and analysis should also enable front line staff to identify gaps in evidence and data, and to advise on ways to fill them most effectively.
Recommendation 4
Extending involvement of external stakeholders in the development of the analysis and evidence strategy

DfE should ensure that all policy directorates work with external stakeholders in the development of the analysis and evidence strategy. As part of the planning process leading to development of the annual analysis and evidence strategy, policy directorates should discuss proposed future work programmes with external stakeholders and seek their views on specific data gathering, research and evaluation proposals. The Department should actively seek independent scrutiny or challenge of its research priorities and proposals, using existing stakeholder arrangements where practical.

Significant – timing linked to preparation of next Strategy for 2011-12

Background summary: The annual process of developing the Department's analysis and evidence strategy has clearly established mechanisms for engaging with key delivery partners and other government departments. However, the review found that the extent of discussion of the forward plan with external stakeholders are more variable, although different approaches may be appropriate for different policy directorates because of the breadth and make up of their stakeholder communities. For example, Schools Analysis and Research Division work very closely with a relatively tight knit stakeholder community. Such close relationships may not be practical with the wider and less coherent stakeholder communities with which the other policy directorates need to engage but closer engagement should still be beneficial.

Expected benefits: By ensuring that external stakeholders, including front line delivery partners, are able to participate in a timely manner in development of the future analysis and evidence strategy, external stakeholders can provide independent scrutiny or challenge and help ensure that DfE analysts are aware of evidence gaps and relevant research findings and activities. Overall, the result should be an even more robust, prioritised and practical analysis and evidence strategy that addresses DfE’s research and wider analytical needs in the most effective way, and a well-informed, supportive analytical community that can help to meet DfE’s research and data requirements.

Recommendation 5
Periodic review of the evidence-base

It is important to review the evidence-base periodically during policy development as well as at the outset, particularly at key decision points, such as the transition from a pilot to wider roll out, to identify any additional relevant evidence. Policy teams in DfE should ensure that such periodic review takes place consistently during all major policy development, especially when policy is developed over a number of years.

Significant – immediate and ongoing

Background summary: The review found that the Department was generally effective in identifying existing knowledge relevant to a new policy proposal, using both internal and external (including international) sources to identify research, statistical data and evaluations of existing interventions where available. A case study discussion suggested that further opportunities to review the evidence-base may be overlooked as policy teams focus on delivery of a new programme. Evidence may be very limited when a new policy is first discussed but policy development, particularly where pilot programmes are used before wider roll out, can take place over a number of years, during which time further relevant evidence may become available.

Expected benefits: By reviewing the evidence-base periodically as a policy is developed, policy teams help to ensure that relevant new evidence, which may affect the way a policy is implemented or even require a major change in policy direction, is
not overlooked, in turn helping to ensure that policy initiatives achieve their expected outcomes.

**Recommendation 6**  
**Identifying the transferability of international initiatives and evidence**

International programmes can provide valuable and innovative new evidence. Building on the Department’s experience of successful transfer of international models and practices, DfE should ensure that it consistently assesses critically the relevance of international evidence to the UK situation, for example, by considering the wider socio-economic and cultural context. DfE’s analysts should be involved in helping policymakers to identify and understand the relevant context and limitations of international evidence and programmes. Policy-makers should understand what it is about a particular programme or delivery model that makes it effective in its country of origin, using evaluation evidence where available. It may be possible to develop an appropriate model to examine the potential for transferability – based on a set of questions that could be applied routinely to evidence drawn from another country to help determine whether specific policy or practice options can be transferred wholly or in part to the UK.

**Significant – within six months**

**Background summary:** International programmes can provide valuable and innovative approaches and the Department has successfully drawn on international models and approaches when developing policy. However, stakeholders also commented on the need to ensure that the relevance and transferability of international evidence and policy initiatives are reviewed carefully. It is important for policy-makers to understand the wider social context surrounding the successful implementation of initiatives in other countries. Some of the review Panel expressed concern that, in certain cases, models of service delivery used in the United States had been transferred to the UK situation with apparently relatively little critical appraisal of their appropriateness.

**Expected benefits:** International evidence and programmes may offer valuable new or additional data that can be applied in the UK, for example the Department made considerable use of international Systematic Reviews of evidence in education and schools and participates in comparative international studies (such as PISA, PIIRLS, TIMSS). However, if evidence and programmes from other countries are applied in the UK uncritically, there is a risk that resulting initiatives will be unsuccessful because of significant differences in the wider socio-economic and cultural environment between the UK and the country from which the evidence is drawn. DfE can help to reduce these transfer risks by making an assessment of the relevance of evidence from other countries. Using a consistent, basic set of questions to help policy-makers to identify the relevance and limitations of overseas data and evidence would make the process of checking the transferability of policy and practice options easier and quicker.

**Recommendation 7**  
**Prioritisation and focus of evaluations**

Since resources are limited it is important that DfE prioritises and designs evaluations carefully in order to secure good value for money from all its evaluation spend. Available resources should target pilot and other policy evaluations which will yield useful information about impact and cost effectiveness. The use of rapid assessment methods could be considered in certain circumstances, for example, when evaluating pilots.
Pilots should also be designed in a way that will support robust evaluation

**Significant – immediate**

**Background summary:** The Department has a strong record of carrying out evaluations to help inform policy development. However, several staff commented on the high volume of evaluation work and the high level of resources that can be consumed in evaluation work. Issues were also raised specifically about the evaluation of pilots. The long-term nature of many of the Department’s policy interventions means that the longer term impacts of pilots will take time to become available.

**Expected benefits:** Clear prioritisation and planning of all evaluations should help to ensure that resources, including analytical staff time, are used most effectively and that evaluations support policy development and delivery in a cost-effective way. The design of pilots can also be optimised to support effective evaluation.

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**Recommendation 8**

**Using external expertise to help refine research proposals**

While working in accordance with formal competitive procurement requirements of fairness and openness, DfE should encourage the involvement of research practitioners and other stakeholders, such as front line delivery staff, in the development of research proposals. External input would be particularly valuable for research in new policy areas or where new methodologies are being explored. External advice on proposals could be secured through a variety of mechanisms, some of which are already in place in some areas of the Department, such as:

- seminars to discuss potential new areas of research
- feasibility studies
- consultancy
- seeking advice from the new research centres
- involving independent external members in project steering groups
- encouraging those who tender to offer suggestions for improvements to research proposals (for example, refinements to proposed methodology) as part of the tender documents

**Desirable – ongoing**

**Background summary:** A formal competitive route for commissioning work is preferred by some researchers in order to preserve independence between researchers and funders and to ensure a ‘level playing field’. Others have found framework arrangements to be effective in some cases. Some researchers noted that an overly formal approach can restrict the opportunity for researchers and other stakeholders (such as front line delivery staff) to suggest refinements that could improve a research proposal. The review was told of cases where the Department has used other mechanisms, such as feasibility studies or seminars, to help develop research proposals before a major formal tender exercise was launched. However, such mechanisms do not appear to be used consistently across the Department.

**Expected benefits:** By tapping into the additional knowledge that researchers and other stakeholders have of a research area, the Department can help to ensure that it secures best value from commissioned research and can help to minimise burdens on front line staff who may be involved in the research process.
Recommendation 9
Facilitating access to data
DfE should continue to work with other government departments and the Office for National Statistics to ensure it is using the most effective approach for providing access to DfE data and to explore the scope for greater sharing of data across government and with external organisations.

Desirable – longer lead time

Background summary: As well as mechanisms to disseminate research and analysis findings, departments can help to get the maximum use from their data by enabling other users, within government or externally, to access it. The Department’s Data Services Group provides access to the Department’s data, such as government, external researchers and users outside government, in line with data protection constraints, and responds to many requests for data each year. The review was pleased to find that the Department’s Data Services Group, led by the Head of Statistics, is working with other government departments to try to help the Department make data more useable. The Group is exploring the scope for sharing computing capacity across government departments to support faster, more efficient data analysis and access.

Expected benefits: Facilitating access to raw data enables other analysts and researchers, within government or externally, both to independently corroborate findings and to carry out additional relevant analysis. These may help to fill evidence gaps and inform the Department’s future policy development and delivery. There may be further scope, perhaps with the assistance of improved information technology and working within data protection constraints, for the Department to be able to facilitate easier and more cost-effective access to data thereby securing even greater value from the data.

Recommendation 10
Making the most of corporate knowledge
DfE should ensure that it is making the most of its substantial quantities of research, data and other knowledge that is important to the development, delivery and evaluation of policy. This should include robust knowledge management systems that are not reliant on the memory of key individuals. Records management systems and other knowledge management processes should capture the rationale and narrative behind policy-making that help to explain why and how a particular programme was developed, as well as the supporting analysis and evidence.

Significant – immediate. Linked to timing of development and introduction of new electronic records management system

Background summary: The review observed that in some cases there appeared to be considerable reliance on the memory of individual staff members, particularly for more narrative information about the process of decision-making. Knowledge management systems are not as robust as they should be if they are dependent on the memory and availability of a few key individuals. Regular staff moves are common in the Department which means that it is essential to have effective knowledge management systems that can help new post holders to quickly understand their new policy areas and how they have evolved over time, including lessons learned for future policy development.

Expected benefits: It is essential that the Department makes the best use of its existing knowledge. This will help it to secure the best policy outcomes, by ensuring that policy-makers are fully informed of relevant information, and will help to avoid the waste of resources through duplication of research or under-informed decision-making. Robust and user-friendly records management systems are a key part of being able to retain
and use corporate knowledge effectively.

**Recommendation 11**

**Analytical capacity**

There is a heavy demand for analytical capacity in the Department and, in the current fiscal environment, there is expected to be growing demand for economics expertise in particular. The review also found that economic capacity, such as the number of economist specialists, appears to be low relative to other government departments. DfE should regularly review its overall analytical capacity requirements and the distribution of analytical capacity (in terms of overall headcount, analytical mix and grade mix) across the Department in order to maintain its strong evidence-based focus and develop stronger capability to conduct cost-effectiveness appraisal. The Department may need to look at whether there should be a greater proportion of economists specifically to meet the growing cost-effectiveness focus and expected increased demand in the Department for formal cost-effective appraisal.

The review recognises that resource requirements may prevent significant (if any) increases in analytical headcount and recommends that DfE also considers other ways of enhancing analytical and economic capability in the Department, such as developing the economic expertise of other DfE staff. This could involve the central economics management team and the National School of Government, and utilise the Government Economic Service (GES) learning and development programme, potentially including the development of new introductory training on the economics of resource allocation. The new research centres may also provide an additional source of economic expertise.

**Significant – timing in line with development of departmental spending plans**

**Background summary:** During the review, most of the officials interviewed, both analysts and policy-makers, commented that analysts were often heavily loaded. This sometimes resulted in policy-makers managing research projects and designing and managing evaluations, a few stakeholders commented that difficulties sometimes arose when their main contact was not an analyst, or meant that analysts have very little time to carry out more strategic activity, such as feeding their knowledge into longer term planning.

Data from the Government Economic Service (GES) suggests that the Department has relatively low overall numbers of economists compared to other departments. Linked to this, one specific area where the capacity of the Department to meet its analytical needs was questioned was its ability to carry out cost-effectiveness appraisal across the Department. The review was told by officials that there was a variable level of appraisal capacity in the policy directorates. In some cases, the Central Analytical Strategy Team was filling capacity gaps in policy directorates which reduces its own capacity to carry out cross-cutting strategic work.

**Expected benefits:** The Department clearly recognises the benefits of an evidence-based approach to policy development and delivery which underpins cost-effective policy decisions and policy delivery. The Department going forwards needs adequate analytical capacity in order to work in an evidence-based way. The distribution of analytical capacity in the Department is important as well as overall headcount. It is important that individual policy directorates take ownership of the evidence-based approach to help embed the evidence-based approach consistently across the Department. Directorates will not be able to fully adopt the evidence-based approach without adequate analytical capacity and capability, including capacity to carry out robust appraisal of policy options which is fundamental to this approach.
Recommendation 12
Strengthening multi-disciplinary working

The senior management in DfE should continue to encourage multi-disciplinary working within the analytical community and between analysts and general policy-makers. Feedback from staff, both analysts and general policy-makers, should be used to help further develop effective ways of multi-disciplinary working.

Desirable – longer lead time

Background summary: The review identified a small number of more operationally-focused points, all linked to the issue of strengthening multi-disciplinary working, where there is scope for more detailed changes to ways of working.

Expected benefits: Closer working between analysts and generalist policy-makers should help to secure more consistent early involvement of analysts in policy-making. This, in turn, should help to ensure that the most effective policy options are taken forwards based on available evidence. By working alongside analysts, policy-makers should also become more aware of the particular skills, knowledge and analytical approach that analytical specialists bring to policy development and should be more likely to involve them from the outset in future policy development. Increasing the opportunities for analysts to broaden their experience in a wide range of analytical and potentially policy roles would help to broaden their capabilities and increase their overall impact and influence.
1. Introduction

0.1 Aim and scope of the review
The aim of this Science and Analysis Review was to assess the capability and capacity for the former Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) to access, manage, quality assure and use science (including social science) and wider analytical evidence in policy-making and strategy.

The Science and Engineering Assurance (SEA) programme of reviews managed by the Government Office for Science (GÔ-Science) generally address the use of science and engineering in a department. However, to reflect DCSF’s balance of statistical, economic, social and operational research activity over scientific technical work, the DCSF review looked at the Department’s analytical activities and was termed a ‘Science and Analysis Review’. In this context, analytical activity covers economic, statistical, social and operational research and analysis carried out and managed by DCSF.

Details of science and analysis in DCSF’s Agencies and Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs) are not considered in this report, except with reference to the relationship and interface between them and the core Department.

0.2 Review approach
The conclusions and recommendations of this review are based on assessment of information from DCSF documents, interviews with DCSF officials, and the perspectives of DCSF stakeholders who responded to a request for information about the Department for the review. Further details about the Review’s working methods can be found in Annex 1.

0.3 Review ownership and terms of reference
The review was jointly owned by the Government Heads of Analysis, led in this review by the Government Chief Scientific Adviser, and DCSF’s Permanent Secretary. The full terms of reference, agreed between the review owners at the start of the review, can be found in Annex 1. The terms of reference set out the review’s aims, scope, process and follow-up approach in more detail.

0.4 Independent expert panel and review advisers
An independent expert panel was appointed to assess the Department against an analytical framework (described further in Section 3). The panel members were appointed by Professor Sir John Beddington, the Government Chief Scientific Adviser. Alongside the independent expert panel members, the Director of Analysis from another government department and members of the Government Statistical Service and the Government Economic Service formally acted as advisers to the review. The independent experts and the

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3 The Government Heads of Analysis are: the Government Chief Scientific Adviser; the joint Government Chief Economists; the joint Government Chief Social Researchers; the National Statistician; and the Government Chief Operational Researcher.
review advisers, supported by the GO-Science SEA review team, helped to gather evidence through interviews, analyse evidence and develop the final review report.

**Independent expert panel members**

Sir Paul Ennals, CBE  Chief Executive, National Children's Bureau

Professor Dame Janet Finch, DBE, DL, AcSS  Professor of Sociology, University of Manchester

Professor Alan France  Professor of Social Policy Research, Loughborough University;

Paul Johnson  Senior Associate, Frontier Economics

Professor Pamela Sammons, PhD  Professor of Education, Department of Education, University of Oxford and Senior Research Fellow, Jesus College, Oxford

**Review Advisers**

Rebecca Endean  Director of Analysis, Ministry of Justice

Jason Bradbury  UK Statistics Authority (National Statistician’s Office), Government Statistical Service representative

Geoff Tily  HM Treasury, Government Economic Service representative

**0.5 Follow-up activity**

A follow-up process has been developed to help GO-Science and the DfE to address the review findings and recommendations, and to help assess the impact of the review. The follow-on process is described in more detail in the review's terms of reference (Annex 1).
2. Department of Children, Schools and Families

2.1 Aim, Public Service Agreements and Departmental Objectives

At the time of the review, DCSF’s overall aim, first set out in the Children’s Plan\(^4\) in 2007, was to make England the best place in the world for children and young people. The Children’s Plan set out a series of long-term (2020) goals and explained how the Department intended to achieve these and the overall aim.

In April 2010, DCSF had lead responsibility for delivery of five Public Service Agreements (PSAs):

- **PSA 10**: Raise the educational achievement of all children and young people.
- **PSA 11**: Narrow the gap in educational achievement between children from low income and disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers.
- **PSA 12**: Improve the health and wellbeing of children and young people.
- **PSA 13**: Improve children and young people’s safety.
- **PSA 14**: Increase the number of children and young people on the path to success.

A number of national indicators were also used to measure progress against each of the PSAs\(^5\). At the time of the review, the Department also contributed to a further twelve PSAs which were led by other government departments.

DCSF’s own Departmental Strategic Objectives 1 – 6 were clearly linked to and supported its PSAs:

- **DSO 1**: Secure the wellbeing and health of children and young people. (DSO 1 supports PSA 12.)
- **DSO 2**: Safeguard the young and vulnerable. (DSO 2 supports PSA 13.)
- **DSO 3**: Achieve world class standards in education. (DSO 3 supports PSA 10.)

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\(^5\) A summary of DCSF’s high-level goals at the time of the review; its PSAs, Departmental Strategic Objectives and supporting indicators is provided in the department’s ‘Every Child Matters Outcomes Framework’ [http://publications.everychildmatters.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/DCSF-00331-2008.pdf](http://publications.everychildmatters.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/DCSF-00331-2008.pdf)
• **DSO 4**: Close the gap in educational achievement for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. (DSO 4 supports PSA 11.)

• **DSO 5**: Ensure young people are participating and achieving their potential to 18 and beyond. (DSO 5 supports PSA 10.)

• **DSO 6**: Keep children and young people on the path to success. (DSO 6 supports PSA 14.)

DCSF had a seventh more internally focused DSO which supports all its activities:
  o **DSO 7**: Lead and manage the system.

### 2.2 Department structure

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) was created in June 2007. Its creation brought together policy on schools and education, children’s health and sport, youth justice and wider policy on children and families and young people. In April 2010, the Department had five directorates: three policy directorates (described further below), a Communications Directorate and a Corporate Services Directorate. The distribution of DCSF’s analysts within the different directorates is discussed in section 2.3.

The three policy directorates, each of which was primarily responsible for work on two of the Department’s DSOs, are:

- Children and Families Directorate (mainly supported DSO 1 and 2);
- Schools Directorate (mainly supported DSO 3 and 4);
- Young People Directorate (mainly supported DSO 5 and 6).

Policy initiatives to support children and families and young people are not new to government. However, the 2007 move to bring these other policy areas to sit alongside schools and education policy is relatively recent and the review team observed some differences between the different policy areas, for example, in terms of quantity of evidence and the way in which stakeholder relationships are established.

The bulk of the Department’s expenditure has been associated with the Schools Directorate and a large proportion of DCSF’s staff, around 50%, have been involved with schools policy. DCSF’s lower expenditure on children and families policy and young people policy, relative to expenditure on schools policy, is due partly to the fact that policy delivery in many of these areas involves other government departments (such as Ministry of Justice and Department of Health). DCSF works very closely with several other government departments; DCSF staff are involved in formal joint policy teams in a number of areas such as:

- the Cross-Government Obesity Unit, led by Department of Health
- Youth Justice Team, joint with the Ministry of Justice
2.3 DCSF’s analytical activities & community

2.3.1 Nature and scale of analytical activity in DCSF

DCSF carries out research, data collection, analysis and evaluation as an integral part of policy development and delivery. The Department’s Analysis and Evidence Strategy (2009-10) explains that analytical activity delivers:

- Analysis of current and potential future patterns and trends, including monitored progress towards targets;
- Insight into process and systems and their consequences so that we can understand the best means of achieving policy aims;
- Understanding of variations in attitudes, behaviour and need, so that we can target policies effectively and communicate clearly;
- Evaluation of initiatives and funding streams, including cost-benefit analysis to determine what works and how it can best be implemented.

The 2009-10 strategy also outlines the specific research, evaluations and analytical activity that the Department will be carrying out in the year ahead and beyond. Analytical activity on a particular policy programme often takes place over many years, reflecting the long-term nature of some of DCSF’s policy interventions, such as Early Years interventions which are aimed at pre-school children but are expected to have much longer term impact. Evaluations often take place over a number of years to enable longitudinal data on a cohort of children to be obtained.

DCSF publishes a large number of research reports and statistics each year – including about thirty national statistics and forty other official statistics products annually. As well as their planned activity, analytical units have to deal with a significant level of more reactive work that is outside the planned research and data collection and analysis programmes. For example, the Data Services Group is involved in preparing the responses to around 1000 to 1200 parliamentary questions each year which require information to be extracted from data sets or reports.

It was clear to the review that DCSF is a very research and data rich Department. The review heard about major data collections, research projects and evaluations and other analytical activity by DCSF officials that is used to support policy development and delivery. As part of the evidence gathering for the review, the review talked to three different policy teams about specific ‘case studies’ of policy development and delivery. As part of these case study discussions, the review saw a large number of very substantial reports that represent the output from externally commissioned research and evaluations which was used to inform the policy in question. (Further information about the case studies is given in Annex 2.)

Over the last few years, the Department has spent eleven to twelve million pounds each year on core external social and economic research. In addition, the policy directorates have directed significant expenditure over the same period, around fifteen to twenty million pounds each year to policy evaluations which is higher than the core research expenditure. DCSF’s spending on policy evaluation specifically has risen over the past few years although overall spending on research and evaluation typically represents only about 0.05% of total departmental spend. In particular, there have been increases in expenditure on research and analysis on:

- the wellbeing and health of children and young people (DSO 1)
- closing the gaps in educational achievement (DSO 4)
- keeping children and young people on the path to success (DSO 6)

This reflects policy areas where there have been particular evidence gaps that have needed to be addressed. In two of these policy areas which supported DSOs 1 and 6, the Department is setting up new research centres (described in section 3.2.3).

### 2.3.2 DCSF’s analytical community

DCSF’s analytical community includes economists; operational researchers; social researchers and statisticians, as well as staff involved with data collection and handling, procurement, publication and administrative support. The Department rarely undertakes science, other than social science, or engineering research activities and it does not specifically employ specialists from the natural sciences or engineering disciplines.

*Table 1: Distribution of DCSF’s analytical community,* shows that most of DCSF’s professional analysts are embedded in the three policy directorates, and form a key part of the policy development and delivery teams in their directorate. The Data Services Group (DSG), led by the Chief Statistician, includes statisticians and operational researchers (about sixty in total) who handle data collection and analysis, working alongside other data experts. A small number of centrally-based analysts, mainly economists, are involved in cross-cutting issues and international comparisons. Excluding the specialised DSG data collections team, around 86% of professional analysts are bedded out into the policy teams. Wherever they are located in the Department, analysts play an integral role in policy-making.

As well as being distributed across the organisation, DCSF’s analysts are geographically distributed, with analysts based in Sheffield and Darlington as well as in London.
Table 1 - Distribution of DCSF’s analytical community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children and Families Directorate</th>
<th>Schools Directorate</th>
<th>Young People Directorate</th>
<th>Data Services Group</th>
<th>Corporate Services Directorate (except Data Services Group)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of analysts(^7):</td>
<td>26.3(^8)</td>
<td>64.0</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>62.7</td>
<td>19.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of which:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economists:</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational researchers:</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social researchers:</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statisticians:</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>55.1</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DSO 1 &amp; 2:</th>
<th>DSO 3 &amp; 4:</th>
<th>DSO 5 &amp; 6:</th>
<th>DSO 7:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total 2009-10 planned departmental spending(^9) (capital and resource) to support relevant DSOs (in £m):</td>
<td>2,894</td>
<td>45,969</td>
<td>5,873</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.3.3 Management of analytical activity

The analytical community is led by the Director of Research and Analysis, Carole Willis, who was appointed in 2008. The Director of Research and Analysis also acts as the Department’s Chief Scientific Adviser, maintaining close links with the Government’s Chief Scientific Adviser and other CSAs across government.

The Director of Research and Analysis, together with the four Heads of Profession – Head of Economics, Head of Operational Research, Head of Social Research and Head of Statistics - and the Head of Schools Analysis and Research, work together as the senior management team for the Analytical Community. The Head of Operational Research, Head of Social Research and Head of Schools Analysis and Research are each based in one

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\(^7\) Figures show numbers of full-time equivalents. Data provided by DCSF for the review, figures correct at March 2010.

\(^8\) In addition, seven analysts (3 economists; 1 operational researcher; 1 social researcher and 2 statisticians) from the Children and Families Directorate work in the joint DWP/DCSF Child Poverty Unit.

of the policy directorates and lead the analytical teams that are ‘embedded’ in their directorate.

2.4 Policy delivery

DCSF policy delivery is carried out mainly by local authorities and schools. Ofsted and the Department’s executive non-departmental public bodies\(^\text{10}\) are also key delivery partners. A number of other public sector partners, operating at national, regional and local level, and non-governmental voluntary organisations also deliver services and training which support DCSF policy aims.

2.5 Capability review

In its most recent capability review of DCSF in 2008\(^\text{11}\), the Cabinet Office assessed the Department’s ability to base choice on evidence as ‘Well placed’ (the second highest assessment category). In its high-level summary, the capability review team commented that, since the capability review of DfES in 2006, DCSF has “strengthened its leadership, developed a clear high level strategy in the Children’s Plan, and addressed many weaknesses in systems and processes”.

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\(^{10}\) Details of DCSF’s current non-departmental public bodies are set out in Annex L of its Departmental Report [http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/aboutus/reports/](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/aboutus/reports/)

3. Conclusions, good practice & recommendations

The review looked at how DCSF acquires and uses science and analysis evidence using a high-level framework of seven criteria which are summarised below and have been adapted from the criteria described in the GO-Science report *Science and Engineering in Government*\(^\text{12}\). The term ‘science’ is used broadly in the context of this review and includes social science and educational research evidence and data (much of which does not conform to traditional scientific method but uses a range of research approaches and perspectives).

The high-level framework was used to guide the collection of evidence during the review and to structure its analysis. A similar framework is applied in the GO-Science Science and Engineering Assurance reviews of other departments.

| Criterion 1: | Strategy, policy-making and delivery should be effectively informed by science and analysis. |
| Criterion 2: | Government as a whole, and individual government departments, should take a strategic approach to the prioritisation, accessing, resourcing and delivery of science and analysis. |
| Criterion 3: | All science and analysis used by government should be robust, relevant and high quality. |
| Criterion 4: | Science and analysis evidence should be made publicly available unless there is clear justification for not doing so. |
| Criterion 5: | The implications of science and analysis for society should be fully considered, engaging the public whenever appropriate, using good practice. |
| Criterion 6: | Government should ensure effective knowledge transfer, innovation and pull through of its research and analysis to the economic development of new technologies and services. |
| Criterion 7: | Departments should ensure that they have the science and analysis capacity and capability to manage and deliver the first six criteria of the Framework effectively. |

Recommendations emerging from this review do not necessarily relate to only a single criterion of the framework.

Prioritisation of recommendations: The recommendations vary in their potential impact and/or the organisational risk implicit in not making the suggested change. Therefore, each of the recommendations has been classified (as summarised in Table 2: Prioritisation of recommendations) as either 'significant' or 'desirable'. The recommendations are also classified in terms of the recommended timescale for their implementation: In some cases, the review believes that action should be taken ‘immediately’ and in other cases, a ‘longer lead time’ is recommended or necessary to allow other inter-dependent recommendations to be implemented first.

Table 2: Prioritisation of recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact/expected benefits of adopting recommendation (significant or desirable):</th>
<th>Recommended timescale for adoption of recommendation (immediate or longer lead time):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Significant &amp; immediate</td>
<td>Significant &amp; longer lead time (time to be specified)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desirable &amp; immediate</td>
<td>Desirable &amp; longer lead time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.1 Criterion 1
Strategy, policy-making and delivery should be effectively informed by science and analysis.

DCSF is an evidence-rich department, very familiar with acquiring and using analytical evidence to inform and guide its policy decisions. There is strong and active leadership support for evidence-based policy-making from both the Department’s senior analysts and the DCSF Board. The 2008 Cabinet Office capability review report on DCSF commented that the “comprehensive range of hard data DCSF owns or has access to, demonstrates the Department’s ability to gather and use evidence on which to base policy decisions”\(^1\). Senior managers in the Department have also recognised that there is further work to be done, mainly in terms of embedding existing good practice, to ensure that analytical evidence is systematically used in a timely, effective and consistent way to inform all the Department’s strategy and policy development and policy delivery.

3.1.1 Senior leadership
DCSF’s focus on the need for an analytical and evidence-based approach has been a strong priority for over a decade. This focus has been further strengthened by the Department’s current Director of Research and Analysis (also DCSF’s Chief Scientific Adviser) and her direct engagement of the Permanent Secretary, Directors General and other Directors in the evidence-based, analytical approach.

One of DCSF’s Directors General has been appointed as the Department’s Head of Policy Profession and he is also playing a key role in strengthening the evidence-based approach in policy-making and delivery. He advocates the need to maintain an appropriate focus across evidence, political will and delivery practicalities for effective policy-making. He also chairs a recently-established (in 2009) Policy Delivery Board which expects to “strengthen internal capacity in using evidence and analysis in order to develop and implement policies”\(^1\). Some of the work underway currently in the Department to meet the Policy Delivery Board’s aims is described further in section 3.1.2 below. The Director of Research and Analysis also sits on the Policy Delivery Board and on other key DCSF management decision-making groups, including the Finance Strategy Board.

In two policy directorates, a senior analyst is also part of the senior management team of that directorate.

3.1.2 Evidence-based policy-making
The review team concluded from interviews that the Department’s analysts and senior management are strong advocates of evidence-based policy-making. While discussing the development of specific policy initiatives the

\(^1\) Civil Service Capability Reviews - Department for Children, Schools and Families: Progress and next steps, Cabinet Office, July 2009 [http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/capabilityreviews](http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/capabilityreviews)

review found policy-makers demonstrated a good knowledge of the evidence used to support the policy decisions and were also generally aware of some of its limitations. As noted in section 3.1.1, the Policy Delivery Board is overseeing a programme of work to enhance the Department’s policy delivery capacity and its evidence-based approach. This includes a set of activities, described as the Making Policy Happen programme, which are outlined below:

**Good Practice 1: The Making Policy Happen programme**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Making Policy Happen programme: Good Practice 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Making Policy Happen programme, which was launched in 2009, is intended to improve day-to-day policy practice; strengthen longer term skills; and encourage policy delivery professionalism. The programme includes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- a detailed, 4-stage Making Policy framework and guidance on making and delivering policy (based on HM Treasury’s <em>Green Book</em>[^15] and covering: establishing rationale; testing options; securing delivery and evaluating impact)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- a dedicated intranet site, with facilities to ‘find a friend’ or ‘find an expert’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- policy leadership seminars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- use of ‘close-to-home’ case studies where colleagues describe typical, recent policy development situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- modules on policy delivery in the Department’s Fast Stream training programme and corporate induction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- identification of an expert cadre of policy-makers who have demonstrated excellence in aspects of policy-making and delivery who will act as advisers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Making Policy framework is not mandatory but a number of checks and control mechanisms have also been developed to monitor the reach and impact of the programme. Usage of the website is monitored; feedback is obtained from those attending the leadership seminars; the quality of submissions will be monitored. The central Policy Impact Division, together with policy and corporate peers, will look at and rate, using a red/amber/green scoring system, a sample of ten major submissions bi-monthly and will provide advice on how they could be improved. In addition, senior civil servants will be required to comment, as part of the annual Statement of Internal Control, on whether core elements of the Making Policy framework have been applied in their teams.

The Making Policy Happen programme is intended to achieve a shift in behaviours, rather than a radical change to organisational values or culture, to secure more consistent approaches to policy-making and delivery, including stronger use of evidence and better, more consistent use of cost-benefit analysis. Ultimately, the programme is expected to lead to better-informed policy-making and best value for money, producing better outcomes for children and young people. The programme was only launched in 2009, although it brings together and builds on existing initiatives in some cases. It is too soon (at the time of this review) to judge whether it is achieving the expected benefits. It will be important for the Department to monitor its effectiveness using the measures outlined above.

The review encountered a strong focus on evidence-based policy-making among the staff interviewed for the review, including during ‘case study’ discussions of the development of three specific policy initiatives (which are described further in Annex 2). Awareness of the new Making Policy

framework and approach to policy-making also appears to be high among the Department’s staff (both policy-makers and analysts).

Leaders involved in implementing the framework indicated that there was further work to be done in embedding the new approach. Some of the generalist policy-makers interviewed also indicated that they had not fully engaged yet with the new approach, with the pressures of day-to-day work being given as a key reason for not adopting it more fully. The Making Policy programme is relatively new and the Department should build on the initial momentum and current high profile of the programme to embed it fully and achieve the desired behavioural shift and emphasis on evidence-based policy-making.

**Recommendation 1**

**Securing maximum benefit from the Making Policy Happen programme**

The new Making Policy framework and the Department’s revised approach to policy-making should be given time and continued encouragement by senior management to become fully embedded in the Department. The DfE should also consider additional ways to ensure that the new Making Policy approach is fully adopted by all staff.

**Significant – Immediate and ongoing**

**Expected benefits:** Embedding the Making Policy Happen programme fully and consistently across the Department should embed the evidence-based approach more firmly. This in turn should help to ensure that decision-making is more robust and defensible and focused more strongly on securing better outcomes for children, young people and families and value for money.

Specific additional actions to help embed the Making Policy approach might include:

- Adopting the behavioural change approach that the Department is championing elsewhere (see section 3.2.4) to help embed the new policy-making approach, i.e. working to understand any obstacles that are preventing adoption of the new approach and identifying factors that are helping to make it work well. So far, implementing the Making Policy Happen programme has focused on education and communication about the new approach. A more participative, consultancy-based approach could be effective now to help secure the desired shift in behaviour across the Department. Members of the Policy Impact Division (who have developed the Making Policy approach) and the new ‘Expert Cadre’ of policy champions could work with individual or small groups of team leaders to: identify the specific benefits expected from applying the new approach to their work; any factors that are preventing them from applying the new approach; and actions to be taken to implement the new programme. The consultancy sessions might usefully be targeted at deputy director (Grade 5) level initially to keep the numbers manageable and with the expectation that these leaders would then help to ensure that the approach is adopted by their teams.
• Reporting on uptake and effectiveness of the new programme in the Department’s future departmental reports and action plans (or equivalent documents).
• Linking the framework to individual performance assessment – e.g. include an assessment of how effectively policy-makers have applied the new approach within their annual performance assessment. Using the Expert Cadre policy champions, who should report in a functional management capacity to the Head of Policy Profession, to peer review the use of the Making Policy Happen approach in other policy directorates.

3.1.3 Early involvement of analysts in policy-making

Embedding analytical units in each of the policy directorates helps to ensure that specialist analytical advice is available, subject to staff capacity, throughout all stages of a policy’s development from analytical colleagues who are also aware of the directorate’s specific policy context. As well as providing specialist advice, analysts can help to bring an analytical approach and strategic thinking to policy-making. The Department’s Making Policy Happen programme (and previous evidence-based policy initiatives) is also highlighting the need for analytical input throughout the policy-making and delivery cycle.

However, during interviews for the review, several departmental officials, covering senior and junior staff, analysts and policy-makers, noted that consistently engaging analysts at an early enough stage in policy development remains a challenge for the Department. Feedback from the Star Chamber Scrutiny Board (which approves data collection proposals and is described further in section 3.3.1) also highlights that data collection proposals are often put forward for urgent formal approval without any prior, informal discussion of the collection requirements. Some staff mentioned that early engagement with analysts can be a particular challenge when Ministers had advocated a specific course of action and detailed policy solutions were agreed at an early stage with very little opportunity to consider available evidence or secure analytical advice. Senior managers in the Department recognise that there is a risk that officials move too quickly sometimes to commit to a specific policy solution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consistent early involvement of analysts in policy-making</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DfE should ensure that analysts are consistently involved in strategic policy decisions and in policy-making from the outset. Policy-makers and analytical units in policy directorates need to work closely together to identify upcoming analytical and evidence requirements (across all the analytical professions).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Significant – immediate and ongoing**

**Expected benefits:** Ensuring that analytical evidence is consistently fed into strategic decisions and policy-making from the earliest stages will help to ensure that policy decisions are properly informed. Ultimately it should ensure that the most cost-effective options for achieving intended policy goals are consistently identified and selected.
resulting in the most cost-effective policy outcomes, particularly important in the current fiscal climate. It should help to ensure that existing evidence is identified and applied at the outset, helping to save time and money by ruling out options which are not supported by the evidence. Early engagement between policy-makers and analysts also helps to inform the identification of research and analytical priorities and avoid unnecessary commissioning of new research (see 3.2).

Specific actions that might help to achieve this are:

- Ensuring analysts are well-informed about topics of current and potential policy interest and well-briefed on the Department’s current and future work programmes. In policy directorates, this might be done by involving the deputy director and team leaders of the embedded analytical units in regular (e.g. quarterly) business planning meetings and ‘keep in touch’ meetings or through dedicated discussions between the analytical team leaders and the senior policy management in a directorate.

- Formally involving the senior analysts in each of the three policy directorates within their directorate’s senior management team – reporting directly to the directorate’s Director General. This is currently the case in two of the directorates but not in Children and Families Directorate.

- Strengthening strategic analytical involvement in policy-making by inviting the Director of Research and Analysis to participate in the PSA Boards (or their equivalent).

- Adding the creation and use of a policy development plan as one of the steps in the first stage of the Department’s Making Policy model. The model already advocates the use of Implementation Plans and communication plans to help deliver interventions. A policy development plan would be used to help plan and manage the early stages of policy development activities (i.e. while establishing the rationale and testing options). It should include an explicit and detailed analysis and evidence component.

- Developing such a plan should not be an onerous task: a basic standard template could be used (as for the other plans) and the level of detail provided should reflect the expected scale and development time of the particular policy initiative. Crucially, the plan would need to identify where evidence and analytical input is likely to be required and when and what analyst resources will be needed. The policy development plan would be agreed between the policy lead and the directorate’s analytical unit and reviewed periodically and jointly as the policy is developed.

3.1.4 Behaviour change approach

DCSF is one of the lead advocates within government of the use of behaviour change to achieve desired policy outcomes. Research in the field of behaviour change has shown that people do not always behave in the way predicted by economic models. For example, a DCSF commissioned project is investigating the way that children in a classroom situation respond to their teacher’s perception of them, using an innovative experimental economics approach to test whether children always invest a rational amount of effort.
in their own learning. Behavioural economics is concerned with developing economic models based on the way that people really behave. A cross-government group has been established by DCSF’s Chief Economist to take forward this behavioural economics and change approach across Whitehall, and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is a leader in its use. DCSF’s Chief Economist is championing the behaviour change approach within the Department, adopting a more consultative approach, encouraged by the behaviour change model, to understand individual’s specific problems and running internal workshops to encourage policy-makers to engage with behaviour change thinking. One of DCSF’s three new Research Centres (see section 3.2.3) is a Centre for Understanding Behaviour Change. The review noted that this new Centre reflects the Department’s innovative commitment to developing behaviour change methodology as a possible effective alternative to legislation when implementing policy change.

3.1.5 Evidence-based policy delivery

As noted in Section 3.1.4, the Department is a major producer of data and a strong user of evidence to help develop policy (further examples of the Department’s use of evidence are described in the case study descriptions in Annex 2). However, the Department’s policy delivery is carried out by delivery partners, principally schools and local authorities. Therefore, it is important that the Department also develops guidance based on its research and other analytical evidence for delivery partners that helps to secure most effective delivery. It will also be important for some delivery partners to be able to access and use relevant research findings and analysis directly to help them to develop best practice in delivery themselves. For example, teachers are expected to be able to select the most appropriate literacy products for their pupils from a large range of possible products.

Guidance about education and schools research is substantial and widely disseminated. In other policy areas (e.g. children’s wellbeing and safeguarding) some stakeholders, including some of the review Panel members, felt that there should be more guidance available for front line staff on best practice in policy delivery and, in some cases, on the use of available research evidence and statistics. The Department’s approach to publication, dissemination and knowledge transfer are discussed under sections 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6.

**Recommendation 3**

**Encouraging evidence-based policy delivery**

DfE’s different front line delivery partners have different analytical information needs. The Department should continue to disseminate analytical information, for example in the form of guidance and best practice notes for delivery partners, to support policy delivery. Working with its delivery partners, the Department should also explore how it can support the capacity of front line professionals and practitioners for directly engaging with and interpreting research and analysis (subject to resource constraints).

**Significant – immediate and ongoing**

**Expected benefits:** Awareness and understanding of relevant research and analysis
should help delivery partners to develop or select the most effective delivery strategies and processes. In turn, strong engagement in research and analysis should also enable front line staff to identify gaps in evidence and data, and to advise on ways to fill them most effectively.
3.2 Criterion 2
Government departments should take a strategic approach to the prioritisation, accessing, resourcing and delivery of science and analysis.

The review found that DCSF’s approach to evidence and analysis is carefully planned and clearly linked to the Department’s objectives (section 3.2.1). The Research Approvals Committee (described in section 3.3.1) helps to ensure a strategic approach is taken to the use of research budgets and avoids duplication. The Department also uses a wide range of evidence sources and has been willing to try innovative approaches to secure evidence from different sources, for example, developing the customer insight approach described in Section 3.2.2.

3.2.1 Developing the analysis and evidence strategy
The Department produces an annual, forward-looking Analysis and Evidence Strategy that identifies the evidence priorities and planned analytical work for the year ahead and beyond. The strategy is structured around the Department’s seven Departmental Strategic Objectives (set out in section 2.1) and demonstrates a clear link between the Department’s business priorities and its analytical activities.

Good Practice 2: Developing the annual analysis and evidence strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Developing the annual analysis and evidence strategy: Good Practice 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An annual analysis and evidence planning process is used to review progress against priorities and to plan the research and analysis for the year ahead and beyond. Development of the analysis and evidence strategy is coordinated with the Department’s annual business planning round.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning for the strategy starts in the autumn when directorates develop plans for new research, data collections, analysis and evaluation for the year ahead. Directorates discuss the plans with key stakeholders, including analysts in key delivery partners (such as QCA, Ofsted); in other government departments and in the Research Centres. Individual policy directorates and teams may also engage with external researchers and analysts on their future plans. Schools Directorate, for example, holds an annual meeting with external stakeholders to discuss research priorities. The Department’s Data Services Group meets regularly with local authority and schools representatives to discuss forthcoming data collections.</td>
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<td>In December or January, key partners, mainly from within government, are also invited to a meeting of the Analytical Planning Board, chaired by the Director of Research and Analysis, to consider the state of the current evidence-base and the proposed forward programme of research to help inform the strategy. Depending on the timing of the event, the Department’s research conference can also be used to test proposals and seek ideas for new research from a wide range of external and government stakeholders. The Analytical Planning Board oversees development of the final strategy, helping to keep it focused on key evidence gaps. Ministers are consulted and asked to approve the proposed strategy in the spring.</td>
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The resulting strategy is a clear, comprehensive document which is focused on the

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3.2.2 Involving external stakeholders in the strategy

The annual process of developing the analysis and evidence strategy has clearly established mechanisms for engaging with key delivery partners and other government departments and organisations on the future research and data collection and analysis programme. However, the Panel found, through interviews and reflecting some Panel members’ own direct experience, that the routes for discussing the forward plan with external researchers are more variable – with different approaches adopted by the different policy directorates. Academic and other research organisations may be aware before policy officials of new research developments that are relevant to the Department’s strategy. Involving external researchers at an early stage in the development of research plans also means that they are aware of forthcoming research contracts - helping to ensure that the Department has a strong field of potential researchers in response to research procurement exercises.

Recommendation 4

Extending involvement of external stakeholders in the development of the analysis and evidence strategy

DfE should ensure that all policy directorates work with external stakeholders in the development of the analysis and evidence strategy. As part of the planning process leading to development of the annual analysis and evidence strategy, policy directorates should discuss proposed future work programmes with external stakeholders and seek their views on specific data gathering, research and evaluation proposals. The Department should actively seek independent scrutiny or challenge of its research priorities and proposals, using existing stakeholder arrangements where practical.

Significant – timing linked to preparation of next Strategy for 2011-12

Expected benefits: By ensuring that external stakeholders, including front line delivery partners, are able to participate in a timely manner in development of the future analysis and evidence strategy, external stakeholders can provide independent scrutiny or challenge and help ensure that DfE analysts are aware of evidence gaps and relevant research findings and activities. Overall, the result should be an even more robust, prioritised and practical analysis and evidence strategy that addresses DfE’s research and wider analytical needs in the most effective way; and a well-informed, supportive analytical community that can help to meet DfE’s research and data requirements.

Specific actions to help achieve this might include:

- Aligning the timing of key stakeholder events, such as the Research Conference, with the annual analytical planning cycle so that they provide an opportunity to secure input from external researchers and other stakeholders to inform development of the new strategy.
- Making greater use of standing groups or networks of independent experts. The Department is keen to ensure that the analysis and evidence strategy remains closely and clearly linked to the Department’s objectives. A group or network of external independent experts, who are familiar with the Department’s work but are not
primarily contractors to the Department, can fulfil a useful impartial
challenge function. Such a group, with a clear remit and challenge
function, could reinforce the relevance of future work programmes and
encourage clear prioritisation of research and analysis, in line with
departmental priorities. The approach that has been adopted by the
Department for International Development (DFID) in establishing an
informal Research Advisory Group may be a useful model for DfE to
consider.\textsuperscript{17}

- Separate policy specific groups or networks, may be more appropriate
for the Department given its wide ranging policy remit. Existing groups
may meet the requirements in some cases and should be used where
practical. For example, the Department has long-established links with
groups of stakeholders in some policy areas (such as schools policy).
The Department does not have an over-arching Science or Research
Advisory Council, although it does have two expert advisory groups,
led by the Department’s Chief Research Officer, which look at specific
policy areas\textsuperscript{18} - including one which advises on children’s social care
and safeguarding. Therefore, with respect to research requirements
and evidence relevant to children’s social care and safeguarding policy,
DfE could consider widening the remit of its existing Research Liaison
Group. With a widened remit, the Research Liaison Group could have
a formal role each year in considering the research plans relating to
children’s social care and safeguarding (in line with the timescales for
production of the annual analysis and evidence strategy).

- Involving the new research centres could ensure that they are fully
aware of the timing and deadlines of the analytical planning cycle and
are kept informed of the developing research plans so that they can
use their networks of external contacts to provide feedback on
proposals.

- Extending engagement with the official statistics’ user and producer
community through the Children, Education and Skills Statistical
Theme Working Group\textsuperscript{19}.

3.2.3 Customer Insight Unit
The use of customer insight is relatively new to government departments. The
Department’s Customer Insight Unit aims to bring the views of the
Department’s customers and an understanding of their needs to policy
development and delivery. The Unit, based in the Communications
Directorate, works closely with the central analytical teams and increasingly
with individual policy teams. There is further discussion, in section 3.7.5,

\textsuperscript{17} DFID is (in 2010) establishing an informal Research Advisory Group whose purpose will be to help to ensure the
quality and appropriateness of DFID research and its use, by providing strategic advice on DFID’s research activity;
its relationship with the wider UK and international research and science base; and the effectiveness with which
evidence is used to inform the development and delivery of DFID’s policy goals; and, in particular, the development
and delivery of the Department’s forward research portfolio.

\textsuperscript{18} DCSF’s two expert advisory groups (at April 2010) are the National Evaluation of Sure Start Scientific Advisory
Committee (a time-limited group overseeing the Sure Start Evaluation which will come to an end in 2011); and the
Research Liaison Group for Children’s Social Care Research, which advises on the scientific validity of the research
studies commissioned by the Department on children’s social care and safeguarding.

\textsuperscript{19} The Children, Education and Skills Statistical Theme Working Group is a cross-government community of
producers of official statistics, led, at the time of the review, by DCSF’s Chief Statistician. The group engages with the
statistical user community inside and outside government to identify future priorities and strategic/planning issues.
Further details of the group can be found at: http://www.statistics.gov.uk/hub
about ensuring that the Customer Insight Unit is working sufficiently closely with the Department’s analysts, but overall the review regards the Department’s customer insight work as an example of innovative and good practice.

**Good Practice 3: Using Customer Insight to develop and deliver policy**

Using Customer Insight to develop and deliver policy: Good Practice 3
The Department’s Customer Insight Unit (CIU) was established in 2007 to bring the voice of the customer into the Department during policy development (from the outset if possible), and to help policy communication and delivery. The CIU leads customer insight projects where greater customer understanding is key to a successful policy outcome.

An example of this activity is the Families Segmentation analytical framework, which the CIU has developed jointly with one of the Department’s central analytical teams. Segmentation is a way of breaking down a target audience into smaller groups or segments, each of which is defined by patterns or combinations of certain traits. The CIU work has identified different types of young people and parents based on their attitudes and behaviours towards issues that are important for the Department. The segmentation research can be used to improve policy design by considering the needs of different parents and young people and their likely reaction to policies. It can help to:
- prioritise particular segments
- to identify and understand the issues (for example, for those people in priority segments)
- to evaluate solutions (for example, to consider whether policies are likely to target priority segments)
- to improve communication of policies

The CIU also carries out regular customer voice research (generally involving small scale qualitative research, such as talking to four to six customer groups) to explore customer understanding on a particular issue. Customers have included children, young people, parents, and the public.

The review heard examples of how work carried out by the CIU has helped to refine policy development and delivery. One example was a customer insight project with parents to understand how they would respond to a proposed policy change (on schools admission procedures). As a result of the customer insight work, additional guidance has been provided for parents as part of the policy delivery process to help ensure that parents understand and respond effectively to the policy change and so, in turn, to help achieve the expected policy outcomes. The recently completed work on Families Segmentation is expected to improve policy design by helping policy-makers to tailor different solutions for each of the different segments of children and young people or parents and carers. The customer voice research has been used by policy teams to help them understand how best to communicate policy messages to particular audiences.

3.2.4 New research centres
The Department has commissioned three new research centres. This move builds on a tradition for the Department of establishing research centres in areas of high priority policy. The three new centres will replace five earlier research centres which the Department supported for a number of years.

32 Further information on Families Segmentation can be found at [http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk](http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk) (report reference number: RR059)
The decision to establish three new centres was taken following an internal review of the existing research centres which concluded that the centres had increased cumulative knowledge, filled knowledge gaps and were valued highly by stakeholders but that, in some cases, engagement between the research centres and departmental policy-makers needed to be much better. The new research centres have been established to reflect the Department’s current priorities and to support effective relationships between researchers and policy-makers. The Department also felt that education/schools research was now fairly well-served and so the three new research centres will address areas where the Department’s evidence is less well-developed (Childhood Wellbeing; Youth Transitions and Development; and Understanding Behaviour Change). Although, at the time of the review, the three new research centres are still being established, the review recognised that they should offer a new and potentially very effective way for the Department to engage with external research and advice and will be interested to see how these centres develop.

**Good Practice 4: Use of research centres**

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<th>Use of research centres: Good Practice 4</th>
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<tr>
<td>The Department is currently commissioning three new research centres, to look at:</td>
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<td>• Childhood Wellbeing (CWRC)</td>
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<td>• Youth Transitions and Development (CAYT)</td>
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<td>• Understanding Behaviour Change (CUBeC)</td>
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<td>The contract for each centre has been let through a competitive tender process, which generated substantial interest, to a consortium of academic and other research organisations, which brings a multi-disciplinary approach to each centre. The detailed ways of working are still being developed by the Department and the research centres but the Department is determined that there should be much closer relationships between its policy-makers and the new centres.</td>
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The Research Strategy team, in the central Strategic Analysis, Research and Policy Impact Group, is managing the contracts for the new centres and overseeing their work programmes but it is envisaged that departmental policy leads will be able to request advice and information directly from the centres and that the centres will also be able to approach policy-makers directly. The centres are expected to offer a challenge function as well as providing expert advice.

The new research centres are each expected to operate in three main ways, outlined below. The detailed ways of working between the Department and the research centres will be different for these three different functions.

- Delivering a research programme: the centres will each deliver a programme of research (to be agreed in advance by a DfE/Research Centre Steering Group). The research centres are not expected to carry out or commission major primary research projects themselves but will focus on secondary analysis of datasets and synthesis of existing evidence;

- Responsive mode: the centres are expected to devote some capacity to responding to ad hoc requests from the Department for advice or information. The central analytical team is monitoring this function to ensure that requests are appropriate and are coming from across the Department;

- Advisory mode: for example, the research centres will provide advice/challenge on the Department’s research programme during the central analytical planning round and representatives from the research centres may sit on the Department’s programme boards.
The new research centres are expected to address gaps in the Department's own capabilities, to enhance the Department's own research programmes and to provide an additional effective way for the Department to engage with the external research community.

3.2.5 Effective identification of existing knowledge

The review found that the Department was generally effective in identifying existing knowledge relevant to a new policy proposal, using both internal and external (including international) sources to identify research, statistical data and evaluations of existing interventions where available. A case study discussion (described further in Annex 2) suggested that further opportunities to review the evidence-base may be overlooked as policy teams focus on delivery of a new programme. This case study highlighted the fact that evidence may be very limited when a new policy is first discussed but policy development, particularly where pilot programmes are used before wider roll out, can take place over a number of years, during which time further relevant evidence may become available.

**Recommendation 5**

**Periodic review of the evidence-base**

It is important to review the evidence-base periodically during policy development as well as at the outset, particularly at key decision points, such as the transition from a pilot to wider roll out, to identify any additional relevant evidence. Policy teams in DfE should ensure that such periodic review takes place consistently during all major policy development, especially when policy is developed over a number of years.

**Significant – immediate and ongoing**

**Expected benefits:** By reviewing the evidence-base periodically as a policy is developed, policy teams help to ensure that relevant new evidence, which may affect the way a policy is implemented or even require a major change in policy direction, is not overlooked, in turn helping to ensure that policy initiatives achieve their expected outcomes.

3.2.6 Transferability of international evidence

International programmes can provide valuable and innovative approaches and the Department has successfully drawn on international models and approaches when developing policy. However, stakeholders also commented on the need to ensure that the relevance and transferability of international evidence and policy initiatives are reviewed carefully. It is very important for policy-makers to understand the wider social context surrounding the successful implementation of initiatives in other countries.

Two Panel members expressed concern that models of service delivery used in the United States had been transferred to England with apparently relatively little critical appraisal of their appropriateness. In one of these cases, a programme that was very successful in the US has been piloted extensively in England (by the Department) but initial evidence suggests that it is less cost-effective in England. When looking at US programmes, for example, there are some key differences for policy-makers to be aware of – such as the current lack of universal access to healthcare in the US; the much wider US use of
private businesses and the franchise approach in the delivery of programmes aimed at children, young people and families.

**Recommendation 6**

**Identifying the transferability of international initiatives and evidence**

International programmes can provide valuable and innovative new evidence. Building on the Department’s experience of successful transfer of international models and practices, DfE should ensure that it consistently assesses critically the relevance of international evidence to the UK situation, for example, by considering the wider socio-economic and cultural context. DfE’s analysts should be involved in helping policymakers to identify and understand the relevant context and limitations of international evidence and programmes. Policy-makers should understand what it is about a particular programme or delivery model that makes it effective in its country of origin, using evaluation evidence where available. It may be possible to develop an appropriate model to examine the potential for transferability – based on a set of questions that could be applied routinely to evidence drawn from another country to help determine whether specific policy or practice options can be transferred wholly or in part to the UK.

**Significant – within six months**

**Expected benefits:** International evidence and programmes may offer valuable new or additional data that can be applied in the UK. For example, the Department made considerable use of international Systematic Reviews of evidence in education and schools and participates in comparative international studies (such as PISA, PIRLS, TIMSS\(^21\)). However, if evidence and programmes from other countries are applied in the UK uncritically, there is a risk that resulting initiatives will be unsuccessful because of significant differences in the wider socio-economic and cultural environment between the UK and the country from which the evidence is drawn. DfE can help to reduce these transfer risks by making an assessment of the relevance of evidence from other countries. Using a consistent, basic set of questions to help policy-makers to identify the relevance and limitations of overseas data and evidence would make the process of checking the transferability of policy and practice options easier and quicker.

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\(21\) PISA: Programme for International Student Assessment, co-ordinated by OECD
http://www.pisa.oecd.org
PIRLS: Progress in International Reading Literacy Study, co-ordinated by the International Association for Evaluation of Educational Achievement http://www.iea.nl/pirls2011.html
TIMSS: Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study, also co-ordinated by the International Association for Evaluation of Educational Achievement http://www.iea.nl/timss2011.html
3.3 Criterion 3
All science and analysis used by government should be robust, relevant and high quality.

3.3.1 Internal scrutiny and challenge
The Department has established clear and rigorous internal processes to scrutinise research and data collection proposals to help ensure that new research is robust, high quality, cost-effective and addresses agreed evidence needs. The Chief Economist also plays a key role in scrutinising impact assessments for the Department, helping to ensure that policy proposals provide good value for money and support the Department’s aims. The Chief Statistician ensures that the Department’s national statistics are produced in line with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics\(^2\).

The Department has recently introduced an impact review process to look at how evidence from research projects has been used and to consider the impact that research projects have had on policy development and delivery. This impact review process is at an early stage of implementation and the Department is also considering how it can assess the overall impact of its research and analysis activity.

Good Practice 5: Analytical scrutiny and challenge processes

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<th>Analytical scrutiny and challenge processes: Good Practice 5</th>
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<td>The Research Approvals Committee (RAC) scrutinises proposals for externally funded research, including policy evaluations and consultancy, to ensure that the work offers value for money and supports departmental needs and that the methodologies, timing and scale of the proposed research are appropriate. The RAC meets monthly to consider proposals and it reports directly to the Secretary of State on whether the proposed research can go ahead. The Committee can (and does) reject proposals or may recommend that changes are made to a proposal before it is taken forward. The RAC is chaired by the Director of Research and Analysis; its main members are the senior management team for the analytical community and policy officials attend as appropriate. As part of the RAC process, the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) receives and comments on all relevant research proposals.</td>
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In addition to the RAC approval process, major evaluation proposals are also scrutinised by a Policy Evaluation Group (PEG). The PEG, established in 2007, advises on evaluation plans for major ‘flagship’ policies at an early stage, focusing particularly on ensuring that proposed expenditure is necessary and that best use is made of existing information and data systems. Like the RAC, the PEG is also chaired by the Director of Research and Analysis and its members are the senior management team for the analytical community and senior policy officials responsible for the relevant programme.

The Star Chamber Scrutiny Board (SCSB) reviews and controls data collection proposals. As well as considering data collection business cases put forward by policy areas, the SCSB also discusses relevant data developments and looks at how new collections are progressing. The SCSB approves and rejects proposals and, most frequently, approves proposals with conditions. The SCSB is chaired by the Department’s Chief Statistician and the Board Members come from local authorities, schools and Ofsted to help ensure that the data collections carried out for the

\(^2\) National Statistics are also subject to compliance assessment by the UK Statistics Authority.
Department do not compromise front line services.

The Department’s Chief Economist sees all regulatory impact assessments before they go to Ministers and can submit an independent assessment to Ministers if she is not content with the economic case set out in an assessment. The Chief Economist encourages policy leads to work with economists in their directorate for advice on developing the impact assessment and works with policy leads to improve assessments before submissions go to Ministers.

The RAC and the SCSB play a key role in maintaining the quality and value for money of the Department’s commissioned research and data collections. The RAC has seen the quality of proposals improve since it has been operating and has prevented unsuitable proposals from being taken forwards. The SCSB helps to ensure that the impact of data collections on front line services is minimised. In its 2009 annual report (an internal document), the Board noted that most of the conditions it imposed on proposals were to remove burdensome questions or to make adjustments to timing or sampling methods to the benefit of front line staff in schools and local authorities. The Chief Economist’s scrutiny is reported to have helped to improve the quality of impact assessments in the Department by working with policy leads on assessments. The threat of a negative report to Ministers from the Chief Economist has also helped to highlight to policy-makers the importance of addressing the economic, value for money issues as policy proposals are developed.

3.3.2 Evaluation

The Department has a strong track record of carrying out policy evaluation to help inform policy development. As an example, the review heard evidence regarding a major evaluation that has recently been commissioned to assess the impact of the extended services through schools programme (extended services). This major evaluation, which will be carried out by an external research organisation, will produce a cost-benefit analysis and a full assessment of the long-term impact of extended services on a range of outcomes (further details of this evaluation are provided in Annex 2).

Some staff (analysts, policy-makers and staff at both junior and senior grades) commented on the high volume of evaluation work and the level of resources that can be consumed in carrying out evaluations. Evaluation is important and necessary but it can be resource intensive, both in terms of funds for external research and internal staff time. Therefore it is important that evaluations, as with other areas of work, are carefully prioritised and linked to the Department’s key objectives and that the aims of the evaluation are clearly identified at the outset. Rapid assessment methods may be appropriate in certain circumstances: it is recognised that these will produce less robust and less comprehensive evaluations but have the potential to provide more rapid, research-based evidence of the impact of initiatives to aid policy development or roll out of pilots.

The extended services evaluation demonstrates one of the key challenges associated with meaningful evaluation of many of the Department’s policies: the long timescales involved before impact can be fully evaluated. In the extended services case, the policy should be fully implemented in 2010 and the full evaluation report will not be available until 2014.
Many of the Department’s policies are piloted initially before being rolled out on a wider basis. Using pilots can be a particularly effective way of introducing new policies: evaluation evidence from a pilot can help to demonstrate whether the policy is securing the desired outcome and whether the implementation approach was effective. The policy and its implementation can then be developed and refined in the light of the evaluation evidence. However, the timescales associated with evaluations can raise particular challenges when considering the evaluation of pilot initiatives.

The review welcomed the Department’s use of pilots but noted that the long-term nature of many of the Department’s policy interventions means that only limited impact information may be available from evaluation of pilots. Several stakeholders also commented that wider roll out of programmes appeared to take place before any substantive analysis of pilots had been completed. Evaluation of pilots may still provide very useful information to help improve the delivery of a policy programme but they may not provide detailed impact information before wider roll out takes place and do not replace evaluation of full programmes.

### Recommendation 7

**Prioritisation and focus of evaluations**

Since resources are limited it is important that DfE prioritises and designs evaluations carefully in order to secure good value for money from all its evaluation spend. Available resources should target pilot and other policy evaluations which will yield useful information about impact and cost effectiveness. The use of rapid assessment methods could be considered in certain circumstances, for example, when evaluating pilots. Pilots should also be designed in a way that will support robust evaluation.

**Significant – immediate**

**Expected benefits:** Clear prioritisation and planning of all evaluations should help to ensure that resources, including analytical staff time, are used most effectively and that evaluations support policy development and delivery in a cost-effective way. The design of pilots can also be optimised to support effective evaluation.

3.3.3 **Key database: the National Pupil Database**

Most of the officials interviewed for the review highlighted the use of the National Pupil Database (NPD) to support policy-making and several stakeholders who responded for the review also referred to it positively. Many external organisations, especially academic and other researchers and third sector organisations working on children’s and young people’s issues, use and refer to the NPD. The NPD, which is described in the following good practice section, is used as a key resource for the Department and others to inform education policy and to help evaluate the effectiveness of policy initiatives. For example, the review heard, while discussing the London Challenge with departmental officials, how the NPD is used to identify and target resources onto particular schools.

**Good practice 6: Development, maintenance and use of the National Pupil Database**
Development, maintenance and use of the National Pupil Database: Good Practice 6

The National Pupil Database (NPD) is a very large longitudinal database which combines national attainment and examination results for pupils with information on pupil and school characteristics. The NPD combines a number of different datasets, including key stage attainment data and school census data. Matching the data from different datasets to form a single database creates a more valuable data source with the potential for a wider variety of analyses to be carried out.

The key stage data contains attainment scores for children at key stages of their education, at ages ranging from seven up to eighteen. The schools census dataset contains approximately eight million records per year and includes information on each pupil’s gender, age, ethnicity, home postcode, free school meals eligibility, special educational needs and school history. It covers pupils in state-funded nursery, primary, secondary, and special schools and pupil referral units.

The NPD was developed in 2002 by the then Department for Education and Skills and DCSF continues to maintain and manage it. It is a unique and internationally respected data source which is used by the Department, and other organisations, to inform and improve education policy. Although access to the data is carefully regulated, the Department enables data from the NPD to be shared with other government departments and agencies for specific purposes (defined in legislation). It also discloses information from the NPD to independent researchers who have a legitimate need for it, subject to approval by the Department's Chief Statistician.

The NPD has been used to inform many of the Department’s education policy initiatives and is also used to help assess policy impact. It is used, for example, to calculate ‘contextualised value added’ (CVA) which is used as one method of measuring school effectiveness. In programmes, such as the London and other City Challenge initiatives, the NPD has been used to identify and direct resources at particular schools.

3.3.4 Procuring commissioned research

Different approaches to procurement have been adopted within government and the review heard a variety of views from departmental staff and stakeholders, including panel members, about the benefits and disadvantages of different procurement routes. The Department has consciously adopted a relatively formal approach to procurement and commissions almost all external research and analysis through competitive tender. The Customer Insight Unit sometimes has to respond to rapid requests for customer voice information and uses procurement frameworks that have been developed by the Central Office of Information (COI) and DWP to procure research without going through a formal competitive tender process.

The formal competitive route is preferred by some researchers in order to preserve independence between researchers and funders and to ensure a ‘level playing field’. Others have found framework arrangements to be effective in some cases. Some researchers among the review panel and the Department’s stakeholders noted that an overly formal approach can restrict the opportunity for researchers and other stakeholders, such as front line delivery staff, to suggest refinements that could improve a research proposal. The Department involves the Association of Directors of Children’s Services (ADCS) in the approval of research proposals and front line staff in data collection proposals that could affect them. The review was also told of cases where the Department has used other mechanisms, such as feasibility studies.
or seminars, to help develop research proposals before a major formal tender exercise was launched. However, such mechanisms do not appear to be used consistently across the Department.

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<td>Using external expertise to help refine research proposals</td>
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While working in accordance with formal competitive procurement requirements of fairness and openness, DfE should encourage the involvement of research practitioners and other stakeholders, such as front line delivery staff, in the development of research proposals. External input would be particularly valuable for research in new policy areas or where new methodologies are being explored. External advice on proposals could be secured through a variety of mechanisms, some of which are already in place in some areas of the Department, such as:

- seminars to discuss potential new areas of research
- feasibility studies
- consultancy
- seeking advice from the new research centres
- involving independent external members in project steering groups
- encouraging those who tender to offer suggestions for improvements to research proposals (for example, refinements to proposed methodology) as part of the tender documents

**Desirable – ongoing**

**Expected benefits:** By tapping into the additional knowledge that researchers and other stakeholders have of a research area, the Department can help to ensure that it secures best value from commissioned research and can help to minimise burdens on front line staff who may be involved in the research process.
3.4 Criterion 4
Analysis and science evidence should be made publicly available unless there is clear justification for not doing so.

3.4.1 Systematic publication
The Department aims to publish findings from all its research within 12 weeks of final project completion and publishes statistics to pre-announced dates in accordance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. The well ordered way in which it publishes statistics and commissioned research makes it an example of good practice.

The Department produces both short research briefs, designed to make results accessible to policy-makers and research practitioners, and longer reports, including detailed technical papers where appropriate. The Department also produces three types of national statistics publications:
- Statistical First Releases which provide early estimates of key statistical series
- Bulletins
- Volumes

The Department’s national statistics publications are produced in line with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. The Department publishes in the order of thirty national statistics every year and nearly forty additional official statistics products.

Good Practice 7: Systematic publication

Systematic publication: Good Practice 7
The Department publishes most of its research reports and well regarded research briefs on its website on the last Thursday of each month. Some research publications are made at other points, for example, to coincide with a particular event or Ministerial announcement. For its national and official statistics publications, the Department also issues a planned schedule of publication twice a year. The schedule sets out the details of national statistics and official statistics that the Department expects to publish each month over the next eighteen months.

These well ordered approaches to publication are simple but effective ways of ensuring that researchers, media and other organisations actively look out for new departmental research and data each month.

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24 http://publications.education.gov.uk/
3.5 Criterion 5
The implication of science and analysis for society should be fully considered, engaging the public whenever appropriate, using good practice.

3.5.1 Key stakeholder events
In addition to stakeholder communication events organised by individual policy teams that looks at research and other analytical issues, the Department’s analytical community organises two major regular stakeholder events to engage a wide community of stakeholders in its research and analysis plans and findings.

Good practice 8: Research conference

The Department’s research conference attracts a wide range of stakeholders, including:
- representatives from other government departments and NDPBs
- delivery partners
- academic and other research organisations
- third sector organisations

The conference is used by the Department’s analytical community to present information about its overall research strategy and analytical programmes and for more detailed workshops which often focus on specific research projects. The conference has also been used to seek views from stakeholders on the Department’s research programme and suggestions for new areas of research (see section 3.2.1).

The research conference is well attended and well regarded by the Department’s stakeholders. The 2010 conference, which focused on the use of evidence in policy development and delivery, attracted more than three hundred delegates and received strong positive feedback (for example, 90% of the 47% of attendees who responded felt that the conference had given them a good insight into the use of evidence in policy development and delivery in DCSF).

The Department’s central Analytical Management Team also organises an annual analytical planning stakeholder event. The audience for this event is a mixture of:
- departmental analysts and policy-makers
- analysts from other government departments
- a range of the Department’s delivery partners (including schools, local authorities and bodies such as Ofsted, CAFCASS and QCA)

This event is primarily used (as described in section 3.2.1) as a key part of the Department’s annual analytical planning round to help inform the Department’s analytical priorities for the year ahead and to seek external feedback on analysis and research proposals. However, the event also offers an opportunity for wider discussion with key stakeholders of issues relevant to the Department’s analytical community.
3.5.2 Communications strategy and communication plans

In 2008, the Department introduced communication plans for its research and evaluation projects for both in-house and externally commissioned work. These plans are completed at the start of projects, in discussion with contractors and project steering groups as necessary, and are expected to be living documents which are updated as required. The communication plans require project managers to identify at the outset of projects:

- key audience for the project
- proposed published outputs
- expected impact of findings for key audiences
- proposed dissemination plans

The Department also uses the Customer Insight Unit’s findings to help inform the communications approach for specific policy initiatives (as discussed in section 3.2.2). The use of project steering and advisory groups which includes policy-makers and practitioners is intended to support research relevance to these audiences and to advise on research use and dissemination.

3.5.3 Ethical considerations

The Department does not have a dedicated ethics board but is well aware of ethical considerations and goes through the relevant external ethical committees, such as the British Medical Association’s Medical Ethics Committee, when conducting research with specific ethical dimensions. The Department’s Chief Research Officer has recently commissioned research to identify appropriate ethical governance mechanisms for the different areas of the Department’s research. The review will be interested to learn how the Department takes forward the results of this research.

25 More details about the British Medical Association’s Medical Ethics Committee can be found at the Association’s website: http://www.bma.org.uk/representation/pro_committees/medical_ethics_committee/
3.6 Criterion 6
Government should ensure effective knowledge transfer, innovation and pull through of its research to the economic development of new technologies and services

3.6.1 Knowledge transfer with external stakeholders
As well as publishing information, departments need to have adequate arrangements in place to support knowledge transfer and dissemination of research and other analytical evidence. Section 3.1.5 discussed the importance of using evidence to support policy delivery as well as policy development.

DCSF, often working with other public and charitable sector partners, helps to support several research databases which help to provide easy (e.g. searchable) access to a wide range of research and evidence. Some of these databases are education specific (e.g. TRIPS\textsuperscript{26}), others, such as CERUKplus\textsuperscript{27} and the Education Evidence Portal\textsuperscript{28}, have had their coverage widened to include aspects of children’s services research as well as education research. This is to reflect the Department’s wider policy remit. The Department requires all contractors to register their DCSF-funded projects with the CERUKplus database. DCSF research is also deposited in the UK Data Archive\textsuperscript{29}.

The Department also has some mechanisms in place to actively promote dissemination and knowledge transfer with key delivery partners and other stakeholders. For example, the Department’s Star Chamber Scrutiny Board, whose membership is mainly drawn from local authorities and schools, provides a route for discussion of knowledge transfer about statistical information. The Department is also working increasingly with the Research in Practice\textsuperscript{30} organisation to help ensure that the results of research are disseminated to, and used by, local authorities in developing effective local services for children and young people.

The Department also works with the Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People’s Services (C4EO)\textsuperscript{31} to make research available and accessible to front line practitioners. The C4EO publishes evidence reviews on its websites and actively engages with front line managers and professionals in the regions through local events. The C4EO involves stakeholders, policy-makers and practitioners, in shaping research questions used to guide evaluations and to support its strategy for knowledge production.

\textsuperscript{26} TRIPS website: http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/research/
\textsuperscript{27} CERUKplus website: http://www.ceruk.ac.uk
\textsuperscript{28} Education Evidence Portal: http://www.eep.ac.uk/DNN2/
\textsuperscript{29} The UK Data Archive is curator of the largest collection of digital data in the social sciences and humanities in the UK. It acquires high quality data from the academic, public and commercial sectors, providing continuous access to these data. The UK Data Archive is largely funded by the Economics and Social Research Council, the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) and the University of Essex. Further information about the Data Archive UK can be found at: http://www.data-archive.ac.uk/home
\textsuperscript{30} Research in Practice is a charitable organisation which promotes the development of evidence-informed practice and policy in child welfare. Further information about research in Practice can be found at: http://www.rip.org.uk/
\textsuperscript{31} Further information about C4EO can be found at: http://www.c4eo.org.uk/
and use. The Department’s Schools Directorate produces a monthly newsletter which is sent to policy and field staff, practitioners, teachers and others with an interest in education to help keep them up-to-date with recently published research and forthcoming opportunities to get involved in research. In responses for this review, several of the Department’s stakeholders, both within government and from external organisations, commented positively on the ways that DCSF disseminates research and statistical data.

3.6.2 Access to the Department’s data

As well as mechanisms to disseminate research and analysis findings, Departments can help to get the maximum use from their data by enabling other users either within government or externally to access it. Data needs to be presented in an appropriate manner, such as in line with data protection requirements, and to ensure it is useable by others. The Department’s Data Services Group already responds positively to many requests for data each year. For example, the National Pupil Database (described in section 3.3.3) are made available by the Department, on request, for use by other analysts (including external researchers). The review was pleased to hear that the Department’s Data Services Group, led by the Head of Statistics, is also working with other government departments and the Office for National Statistics to try to help the Department make data more useable within the Department. The Group is exploring the scope for sharing computing capacity across government departments to support faster, more efficient data analysis and access.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation 9</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facilitating access to data</td>
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<tr>
<td>DfE should continue to work with other government departments and the Office for National Statistics to ensure it is using the most effective approach for providing access to DfE data and to explore the scope for greater sharing of data across government and with external organisations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desirable – longer lead time</td>
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</table>

Expected benefits: Facilitating access to raw data enables other analysts and researchers, within government or externally, both to independently corroborate findings and to carry out additional relevant analysis which may help to fill evidence gaps and inform the Department’s future policy development and delivery. There may be further scope, perhaps with the assistance of improved information technology and working within data protection constraints, for the Department to be able to facilitate easier and more cost-effective access to data thereby securing even greater value from the data.

3.6.3 Internal knowledge management

It is important that departments record and use knowledge acquired during the development, delivery and evaluation of policies. Such corporate knowledge will include information about the evidence, analysis and other information used to inform decisions and narrative about why decisions were made, as well as the decisions themselves. Without this knowledge, important evidence may be overlooked or resources wasted in commissioning new research or data collections which gather duplicate evidence. Without ready access to existing knowledge, opportunities may also be lost to structure new
research or data collection in a way that makes it more readily comparable with existing information.

Effective and robust corporate knowledge management is particularly important for the Department because of the large quantities of relevant data and evidence and because in many cases, the cycle of policy development, delivery and evaluation will extend over many years. For example, the period of time over which the Department needs to capture evaluation information may extend over more than ten to fifteen years if evaluations seek to capture the long-term impact of a policy initiative that targets young children as these children move into secondary education or develop into young adults.

Policy staff and analysts in the Department often change post regularly throughout their career to support their personal learning and development, for example changes of post every two to five years are common and often more frequent at ‘training’ grades. This approach is common to all government departments and regular moves can help individual’s development and help to maintain capability and capacity across the Department. However, regular changes of staff also mean that it is even more essential to have effective knowledge management systems to help new post holders to quickly and efficiently understand the key issues and background for their new policy area, including how they have evolved over time and lessons learned for future policy development.

The review saw that in the case of the extended services policy development it was possible for the Department to trace the development of policy over several years using good files. However, in one of the other case study areas (London Challenge), there appeared to be more reliance on the memory of individual staff members, particularly for more narrative information about the process of decision-making. Knowledge management systems are not as robust as they should be if they are dependent on the memory and availability of a few key individuals.

In feedback for the review, a voluntary sector stakeholder also suggested that there was scope for the Department to make more effective and more extensive use of existing data to fill evidence gaps, for example more synthesis and analyses of existing data. This stakeholder suggested that greater reference to existing data when planning new research and data collection might also result in more comparable evidence.

**Recommendation 10**

**Making the most of corporate knowledge**

DfE should ensure that it is making the most of its substantial quantities of research, data and other knowledge that is important to the development, delivery and evaluation of policy. This should include robust knowledge management systems that are not reliant on the memory of key individuals. Records management systems and other knowledge management processes should capture the rationale and narrative behind policy-making that help to explain why and how a particular programme was developed, as well as the supporting analysis and evidence.

**Significant – immediate.** Linked to timing of development and introduction of new
**Expected benefits:** It is essential that the Department makes the best use of its existing knowledge. This will help it to secure the best policy outcomes, by ensuring that policy-makers are fully informed of relevant information, and will help to avoid the waste of resources through duplication of research or under-informed decision-making. Robust and user-friendly records management systems are a key part of being able to retain and use corporate knowledge effectively.

Specific activities that may help to support effective knowledge management are:

- The current introduction of a new electronic records management system in the Department may provide an opportunity to ensure that a robust approach to knowledge management is consistently adopted across the Department. The Making Policy framework (described in section 3.1.2) could also be used as a checklist to confirm that relevant information about policy initiatives throughout the policy-making and delivery cycle has been captured in electronic records.

- A suggestion that came from analytical staff interviewed for the review, and which is supported by the Panel, is for there to be greater use of existing datasets. In particular, several staff suggested that there was scope for greater linking of existing datasets. A single data ‘warehouse’ that could be easily searched by policy-makers was also suggested.

- Given the regular movement of staff, effective handover processes are important to support knowledge management and the effectiveness of the Department. Written and oral briefing can be used to inform incoming staff and, wherever possible, outgoing staff should be involved in briefing new staff.
3.7 Criterion 7
Departments should ensure that they have the scientific and analytical capability to manage and deliver the above sustainably and effectively.

3.7.1 Analytical professions and community in the Department
Analysts, from all four of the analytical specialisms that are present in the Department, have a strong sense of being part of their analytical profession. Each of the Heads of Profession are active supporters of their professional group in the Department. They help to maintain links with the relevant government analytical professional bodies and to encourage analysts to maintain their continuing professional development. Activities, such as seminars, tailored induction programmes, mentoring and managed moves, help to generate a strong sense of being part of a particular profession in the Department.

The review gained a clear impression, from the interviews with analysts and from a recent internal survey of the analytical community, that the Department’s analysts also regard themselves as part of a wider analytical community in the Department although this identity is less strong than the links to individual professions. The review welcomes the fact that the Director of Research and Analysis and the small central Analytical Community Coordination Unit are also working to strengthen the overarching analytical community feel through:

- group events
- a community newsletter (which was welcomed by analysts who spoke to the review team)
- using feedback from the community itself on how it could be strengthened

3.7.2 Analytical capacity
During the review, most of the officials interviewed (both analysts and policy-makers) commented that analysts have particularly heavy workloads. This sometimes resulted in policy-makers managing research projects and designing and managing evaluations and a few stakeholders commented that difficulties sometimes arose when their main contact was not a specialist. Interviewees also suggested that it meant that analysts have very little time to carry out more strategic activity or contribute to broader policy thinking.

The distribution of analysts in the Department is described in section 2.3. Table 1: Distribution of DCSF’s analytical community, shows that although the majority of specialist analysts are embedded in policy directorates, there are still relatively few analysts in each policy directorate. If too few analysts are available in the policy directorates or if there is a poor grade mix (i.e. if only relatively junior analysts are embedded) it is likely to be difficult for them to carry out their challenge function effectively.

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32 The four government professional bodies relevant here are the: Government Economic Service (GES); Government Operational Research Service (GORS); Government Social Research (GSR); and Government Statistical Service (GSS).
Although it is difficult to make direct comparisons, data from the Government Economic Service (GES) suggests that the Department has a relatively low overall number of economists (as a proportion of total civil servants in the Department\(^{33}\)) compared to other departments\(^{34}\). There are particularly low numbers of economists (and a more junior grade mix) in Schools Directorate – a possible risk given that this Directorate is responsible for more than forty billion pounds of the Department’s annual spending and employs about 50% of the Department’s policy staff.

The capacity of the Department to carry out cost-effectiveness appraisal across all the Department’s activities was questioned by several analysts during interviews. While the Department has a long track record of carrying out evaluations, the Department has increased its focus on cost-effectiveness appraisal over the last two to three years. The greater emphasis on cost-effectiveness appraisal has been pushed by the Department’s Chief Economist and reflects the need to respond to the tightening fiscal environment. There is also an increased focus from the Treasury on value for money, including specific assessment of Department’s value for money performance and a recent push for departments to prepare business cases for capital, as well as resource, expenditure.

The review was told by DCSF officials that there was a variable level of appraisal capacity in the policy directorates. In some cases, the central analytical strategy team was filling capacity gaps in policy directorates, i.e. using economists from the central team to complete appraisals for the policy directorate. This reliance on central team capacity reduces the centre’s own capacity to deliver a strategic function and reduces the directorates’ understanding and ownership of a key analytical approach.

**Recommendation 11**

**Analytical capacity**

There is a heavy demand for analytical capacity in the Department and, in the current fiscal environment, there is expected to be growing demand for economics expertise in particular. The review also found that economic capacity, such as the number of economist specialists, appears to be low relative to other government departments. DfE should regularly review its overall analytical capacity requirements and the distribution of analytical capacity (in terms of overall headcount, analytical mix and grade mix) across the Department in order to maintain its strong evidence-based focus and develop stronger capability to conduct cost-effectiveness appraisal. The Department may need to look at whether there should be a greater proportion of economists specifically to meet the growing cost-effectiveness focus and expected increased demand in the Department for formal cost-effective appraisal.

The review recognises that resource requirements may prevent significant (if any) increases in analytical headcount and recommends that DfE also considers other ways of enhancing analytical and economic capability in the Department, such as developing the economic expertise of other DfE staff. This could involve the central economics management team and the National School of Government, and utilise the Government Economic Service (GES) learning and development programme, potentially including

\(^{33}\) The ratio of economists to the total number of civil servants in a department can be distorted for departments with particularly large operational functions (such as HM Revenue and Customs).

\(^{34}\) Similar information about relative levels of other analytical specialists across different departments was not available at the time of the review.
the development of new introductory training on the economics of resource allocation. The new research centres may also provide an additional source of economic expertise.

**Significant – timing in line with development of departmental spending plans**

**Expected benefits:** The Department clearly recognises the benefits of an evidence-based approach to policy development and delivery which underpins cost-effective policy decisions and policy delivery. The Department going forwards needs adequate analytical capacity in order to work in an evidence-based way. The distribution of analytical capacity in the Department is important as well as overall headcount. It is important that individual policy directorates take ownership of the evidence-based approach to help embed the evidence-based approach consistently across the Department. Directorates will not be able to fully adopt the evidence-based approach without adequate analytical capacity and capability, including capacity to carry out robust appraisal of policy options which is fundamental to the evidence-based approach.

### 3.7.3 Effective multi-disciplinary working

The review identified a couple of more operationally-focused points, all linked to the issue of multi-disciplinary working, where there is some scope for more detailed changes to ways of working. The two specific points are discussed further in the two following sections but they have been grouped under a single recommendation

**Recommendation 12**

**Strengthening multi-disciplinary working**

The senior management in DfE should continue to encourage multi-disciplinary working within the analytical community and between analysts and general policy-makers. Feedback from staff, both analysts and general policy-makers, should be used to help further develop effective ways of multi-disciplinary working.

**Desirable – longer lead time**

**Expected benefits:** Closer working between analysts and generalist policy-makers should help to secure more consistent early involvement of analysts in policy-making. This, in turn, should help to ensure that the most effective policy options are taken forwards based on available evidence. By working alongside analysts, policy-makers should also become more aware of the particular skills, knowledge and analytical approach that analytical specialists bring to policy development and should be more likely to involve them from the outset in future policy development. Increasing the opportunities for analysts to broaden their experience in a wide range of analytical and potentially policy roles would help to broaden their capabilities and increase their overall impact and influence.

### 3.7.4 Embedding analysts in policy teams

As described in section 2.3, multi-disciplinary teams of analysts are based in each of the three policy directorates. The analytical units in the policy directorates are managed by analysts and are generally located together as a dedicated specialist resource for the directorate rather than being assigned to individual policy units. Many of the staff interviewed for the review agreed that the current system of embedded analytical units was more effective than the pre-2004 structure where all analysts worked in central units.
When the review spoke to a small group of more junior analysts, they suggested that the current system of ‘embedding’, which has established analytical units within each of the three policy directorates, does not bring analysts close enough to policy-makers, and believed that this was a widely shared view among junior analysts. A minority but significant proportion of respondents to the internal DCSF analytical community survey, carried out in summer 2009, also noted concerns about the current relationship with policy-makers, suggesting there was insufficient integration with the policy community or that links with policy-makers could be closer.

Whenever analysts are ‘embedded’ in policy units there is a balance to be struck between close relationships with policy colleagues and the ability to provide an effective challenge function and support from professional colleagues. Section 3.1.3 talked about the importance and benefits of early involvement of analysts in policy-making. A greater degree of embedding, such as placing analysts with specific policy teams rather than in a distinct analytical group, may help to secure more consistent early involvement of analysts in policy-making. However, there is a risk that if analysts are more closely embedded with policy teams they would find it much more difficult to provide effective challenge to policy proposals – particularly if analysts were managed directly by policy managers. There is also a risk that analysts embedded in policy teams become involved in a wider range of more general, day-to-day team activities thereby reducing their capacity to work on tasks where their specialist expertise is required.

The Department’s approach to embedding analysts generally appears to be working well. Closer working between analysts and policy teams helps to ensure that the most effective policy options are taken forwards based on the available evidence.

However, the review considers that there may be situations, for example, in the early stages of a new high priority policy initiative or when a major project is approaching the transition between pilot to wider roll out, when very regular input from analysts is required and it would be more effective for an analyst to be co-located with a particular policy team for a period of time.

A specific action that might be considered here is:
- The Director of Research and Analysis and the heads of the three ‘embedded’ analytical units, working closely with other directors in the policy directorates, may be able to identify specific projects where closer working, including co-location if practical, between analysts and policy teams for an agreed period of time would be effective. It is important though that line management for embedded analysts remains within the analytical community in order to provide professional support for analysts and help them to continue to provide an internal challenge function.

3.7.5 Analytical capacity in Customer Insight Unit
The valuable work of the Customer Insight Unit (CIU) is described in section 3.2.2. The CIU is based in the Communications Directorate and its staff
includes communications and market research experts but no analysts. The CIU is not a research unit but it does procure qualitative social research to help inform policy development and policy delivery.

- A specific action that might be considered here is:
  The review believes that the CIU would benefit from some dedicated analytical capacity to help advise on procuring and analysing research and other data, sometimes on rapid timescales. This dedicated capacity might be achieved through seconding an analyst to the CIU from one of the central teams, perhaps on a part-time basis, to retain the analyst’s professional line management while enhancing the CIU’s capabilities. It might be sufficient for the CIU to have nominated analyst contacts (for example, one from each of the four analytical specialisms) who it could contact for advice when necessary.
Annex 1: Review Methodology & Terms of Reference

Methodology

Review timing
The evidence gathering for the review was conducted largely between January 2010 and March 2010, although some desk research was carried out in November and December 2009 and stakeholder engagement was initiated in December 2009. The main evidence gathering interviews with DCSF staff took place in March 2010.

Approach to evidence gathering
Desk research on DCSF was conducted by GO-Science officials to gain an overview of DCSF activities and the way the Department works in the context of the review criteria. Information was taken mainly from the DCSF website, including annual reports and strategy documents, copies of research papers and briefings and statistical output. The most recent external Capability Review Report\(^{35}\) and several internal guidance documents were also considered.

GO-Science also invited comments from 79 DCSF stakeholders, including:
- other government departments
- DCSF’s agencies and its delivery partners and practitioners
- Research Councils
- many voluntary organisations involved in education and children’s services

Stakeholders were asked to comment on the way the Department uses science and analysis, with reference to the review criteria. Nineteen stakeholders (23% of those contacted) provided comments. The points raised by stakeholders were discussed with the Department to help the review to fully understand and weight the issues and the stakeholder evidence was used to guide avenues of questioning in subsequent evidence gathering interviews with DCSF staff and to help inform the final report.

A total of sixteen interviews were conducted involving thirty-four members of DCSF staff (as detailed in Table 3: Grade of staff interviewed). Members of the independent expert panel, as well as GO-Science review team members led the interviews and the review’s analytical advisers also participated in many of the discussions. These interviews included the three case study evidence-gathering sessions which are described further in Annex 2.

Table 3: Grade of staff interviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade of staff interviewed</th>
<th>Number interviewed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Director General</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Director</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Research Officer</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Officer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Economist</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>34</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Independent expert panel and review advisers**
An independent expert panel (the Panel) was appointed to assess the Department against an analytical framework (described further in Section 3). The panel members were appointed by Professor Sir John Beddington, the Government Chief Scientific Adviser. Alongside the external panel members, the Director of Analysis from another government department and members of the Government Statistical Service and the Government Economic Service formally acted as advisers to the review. The Panel and the review advisers, supported by the Science and Engineering Assurance Team within GO-Science, helped to gather evidence through interviews, analyse evidence and develop the final review report.

**Independent expert panel members**

Sir Paul Ennals, CBE  
Chief Executive, National Children’s Bureau

Professor Dame Janet Finch, DBE, DL, AcSS  
Professor of Sociology, University of Manchester

Professor Alan France  
Professor of Social Policy Research, Loughborough University;

Paul Johnson  
Senior Associate, Frontier Economics

Professor Pamela Sammons, PhD  
Professor of Education, Department of Education, University of Oxford and Senior Research Fellow, Jesus College, Oxford

**Review advisers**

Rebecca Endean  
Director of Analysis, Ministry of Justice

Jason Bradbury  
UK Statistics Authority (National Statistician’s Office), Government Statistical Service representative

Geoff Tily  
HM Treasury, Government Economic Service representative
DCSF Science & Analysis Review: Terms of Reference

Aims
1. To review DCSF’s capability and capacity to access, manage, quality assure and use science (including social science) and wider analytical evidence in policy-making and strategy. This will provide assurance to the Permanent Secretary and help to enhance delivery of departmental objectives.

2. To put forward effective, strategic and workable recommendations to support DCSF in improving capacity and/or capability in the above areas.

Ownership
3. The review will be jointly owned by the Government Heads of Analysis and the DCSF Permanent Secretary.

Project Scope
4. Scope will be guided by the GO-Science analytical framework and tailored to DCSF’s needs at the finer level.

5. The focus of the review will be on all analytical evidence, to reflect the make up of the analytical resources in the Department. The GO-Science review team will work closely with all the analytical professions at DCSF – economics, operational and social research and statistics – to ensure that all perspectives are considered as appropriate.

6. Final scoping will be determined by the expert panel and GO-Science, in consultation with DCSF. Broadly the scope will cover:

7. Content:
   A strategic overview of the existing end-to-end processes, guidelines, mechanisms and skills contributing to DCSF’s capability and capacity to use scientific and analytical evidence effectively. Illustrative examples include:
   - Influence of the Director of Analysis on strategy and priority setting
   - How the science and analytical strategy links to departmental objectives
   - The procurement and management of evidence
   - The interface between policy-making and evidence

8. Exploration of how the above translates in practice, by a fit-for-purpose review of 3 significant policy areas/areas of DCSF business that will be agreed jointly by DCSF and ourselves with advice from the expert panel. The three specific policy areas selected for the fit-for-purpose review are:
   - Extended Services through Schools Programme (an example of Children and Families Policy);
   - London Challenge (an example of Schools Policy);
Alcohol Misuse – an aspect of Youth Risky Behaviour (an example of Young People Policy).

9. Information sources:
   o Documentation – published and unpublished, classified and non-classified
   o Current research programmes
   o Interviews with DCSF officials (to include CSA and other analytical Heads of Profession)
   o Interviews with selected external DCSF stakeholders

10. Exclusions:
   o The review will not cover the DCSF agencies. However, it may explore how interactions with and/or the organisation of agencies impacts on DCSF’s capabilities.
   o As part of the fit-for-purpose reviews (outlined in paragraph 8), interactions with other government departments (and other organisations) may be examined. However, the review will not assess DCSF on issues that fall outside its departmental responsibilities, and will not make recommendations that fall outside DCSF’s control.

Process
11. The GO-Science Science and Engineering Assurance team will manage the DCSF review, working with a nominated DCSF contact, liaising with representatives of the other Analytical Professions.

12. An external expert panel of 3-5 members will be agreed with DCSF and appointed by the SEA team. The panel will contribute significantly to the fine project scoping, evidence gathering, analysis and recommendation formulation. This will be supplemented by representatives provided by the other analytical professions.

13. The project will begin at the start of January 2010 and will complete in 3 months.

14. Planned timescales and work schedule:
   • Initiation phase (approx. 2 weeks)
     o Includes: agreeing fine scope and interview schedule, DCSF contact arranging interviews, 3 mile-stone meetings – SEA Team/HoA/CSA; GCSA/CSA/DCSF Permanent Secretary; GCSA/expert panel/DCSF/SEA team briefing meeting.
   • Evidence and analysis phase (approx. 8 weeks)
     o Includes: interviews, analysis of data collected, review for gaps in data, filling gaps in evidence, recommendation development.
   • Report phase (approx. 4 weeks)
     o Includes: report written by SEA team/expert panel, sign off meeting with GCSA, expert panel, DCSF and SEA team; agreement of timing for report publication.
15. We will keep DCSF officials up to date with emerging findings as the review is undertaken. DCSF will also have the opportunity to comment on the draft report before it is finalised.

**Outputs**

16. A report which comments on the findings of the review and sets out the review recommendations and the evidence that has led to them.

**Follow up**

17. Within 3 months of the review publication, DCSF will issue a formal response to the report (using the SEA Programme template provided by GO-Science): this will include views on the report recommendations and initial plans for addressing them and brief feedback on the review process and experience.

18. After receiving DCSF’s formal response, and within 6 months of the review publication, the GCSA will discuss progress with the DCSF Permanent Secretary.

19. Within 9 months of the review publication, the GO-Science Project Leader and the DCSF contact will meet to discuss progress on implementing the recommendations and any review-related issues or concerns which may have arisen.

20. Within 15 months of the review publication, DCSF will provide GO-Science with a progress summary (using a SEA Programme template) which outlines the Department’s progress on each recommendation.
Case studies were conducted as part of the review process to help build a picture of how the Department uses science and analysis in practical policy-making. The case studies described below were chosen by the review panel in consultation with DCSF using the following criteria:

- Policy area coverage – the case studies reflect the wide range of DCSF’s policy responsibilities (with one case study drawn from each of the Department’s three policy directorates);
- Importance of policy area to DCSF and resources committed to evidence-base/analytical activity – case studies that reflect DCSF’s current policy priorities were selected and the level of resources that has been committed to the evidence-base was used to indicate the importance of the policy area and to help identify substantive case study areas for the review;
- Practicality & value to DCSF – the chosen case study subjects could be effectively reviewed within the boundaries of the review timescales and available staff resources (from DCSF and the review team, including the experts);
- Shared policy ownership – DCSF shares many of its PSAs and its policy delivery with other government departments. Therefore one case study – on Alcohol Misuse, a specific aspect of Youth Risky Behaviour – was selected because of the high level of joint policy ownership involved in it.

Policy teams provided evidence for the case studies in the form of reference material (for example, copies of key pieces of evidence) and oral presentations followed by discussion between panel members and the policy teams. The three case study areas are summarised on the following pages (largely based on the discussions with the policy teams) along with issues that the review team identified in the course of these discussions.

**Case Study 1: Extended Services through Schools Programme (Children and Families Directorate)**

**Current policy**

The aim of the current extended services through schools programme (extended services) is to use the school institution as a vehicle to directly and indirectly provide families with access to a range of services and activities, often beyond the school day, to help meet the needs of children, their families and the wider community. Among other things, the policy is intended to help raise families and children out of poverty by improving achievement at school and beyond. This is in line with the objectives of the Children’s Plan and the Every Child Matters programme and the DCSF Vision for 21st Century Schools. A school offering access to extended services works with their local
authority, other schools and private and voluntary providers to provide access to a core offer of extended services. Those services include a varied range of activities. There are currently over 20,000 schools providing access to extended services in partnership with other local schools and providers.

Underpinning this policy is a well established body of evidence showing a causal relationship between social deprivation and underachievement at school and later life and that interventions that address this deprivation will help improve achievement at school and beyond.

**Summary of policy development**
The policy has evolved to its current form over nearly 10 years and reflects the evolving responsibilities of the Department over this period.

The initial evidence supporting the benefits of extended services as ‘one stop, collaborative institutions’ came from studies conducted in the USA in the 1990’s; Scottish New Community Schools initiative in the 1970’s and 1990’s; Schools Plus pilots conducted by Department For Education and Employment (DfEE) in 1999; and the Cambridgeshire Village College experiments of the 1920s. The current policy has its origins in a 2001 Department for Education and Skills (DFES) White Paper “Schools achieving success” that made a commitment to conduct small-scale pilots to test the feasibility and potential attainment benefits for schools providing a range of additional services to the local community. These small-scale pilots, in three Local Education Authority areas, ran from 2001 to 2002 and were followed in 2002 by a larger Pathfinder pilot involving 25 Local Authorities (LAs).

Evaluations of these pilots showed evidence of potential to improve attainment (some small gains in attainment in target groups over the short period of the pilots) and (importantly) an absence of any detrimental impact on educational attainment. This helped to counter concerns that the extended services agenda could divert focus or funds away from core educational activities in schools. However, both these early pilots (due to their timescales) were principally concerned with providing evidence on how best to scale up and define the elements of the extended services model rather than determining the impact of the policy.

The Lord Laming report of 2003 prompted several policy changes in the government’s approach to child protection including transfer of responsibilities for child protection policies from the Department of Health to DfEE. The *Every Child Matters Green paper* published in 2003, reflected DfEE’s new

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38 [http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/00001682.htm](http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/00001682.htm)
responsibilities and included a commitment to provide Full Service Extended Schools (FSES). Under the FSES initiative, one or more schools in every LA would provide extended services, including:

- access to health and other specialist services;
- access to community facilities;
- parent support services and (in primary schools),
- childcare (e.g. breakfast clubs and after-school clubs)

In 2005 the Department published “Extended Schools - a Prospectus” that set out the core offer of extended services that should be available from all schools by 2010, marking the transition from pilot phase to full roll out. This was accompanied by a funding commitment for Extended Services of £680 million for 2006-8 and a further commitment of £1 billion for 2009-11.

Policy evaluations
Several evaluations of the evolving policy were carried out between 2003 and 2009 providing varying levels of evidence to justify continuing support for the policy. A two year evaluation by Dyson and Cummings, published in 2004, indicated that child and parent support elements of the policy had beneficial effects on child behaviour, school attendance, motivation and learning. An evaluation published in 2005 indicated that the policy had helped improve multi-agency working. Evaluation reports in 2006 and 2007 (particularly the 2006 report) provide evidence for beneficial outcomes on attainment but concluded that the policy had not achieved desired impact on harder to reach target groups. There was also evidence to indicate that the policy could have wider beneficial impact in addressing other negative outcomes associated with social deprivation (e.g. teenage pregnancy).

A major five year evaluation of the full extended services programme was started in 2009. Both the design and duration of this current extensive evaluation should provide a much more accurate indicator of the effectiveness of the policy. The evaluation will involve collection and analysis of several different types of longitudinal data from schools, parents and children and include case study–based thematic reviews around important current issues with the objective of identifying causal relationships. Research questions will surround the issues of how successful the policy has been in realising its objectives and will include cost-benefit analysis. The evaluation will look at measures of educational attainment, exclusion and attendance as well as impact on wider social issues, such as youth offending and teenage pregnancies. The evaluation will also look at effectiveness from a dose/response perspective (level and/or duration of service versus level of

44 http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/RR530.pdf
outcome). A final evaluation report is expected in 2013 and three million pounds has been allocated for the full evaluation programme.

**Issues highlighted by the case study 1**
The Panel identified the following key points from this case study discussion:

- The policy has evolved over time and has used two phases of pilots before wider roll out. It is now expected to help address a wide set of social goals rather than just the narrower educational attainment aims which were the initial focus.
- The policy was initially driven by evidence primarily from USA and Scottish studies. Evidence from the pilots was then used to guide and shape the policy rather than looking for input from new external evidence.
- The evaluations of the pilots were short-term assessments which were used primarily to provide evidence on how to implement the programme rather than evidence of causal links or other impact data.
- The full evaluation programme appears to be very thorough. It will include a long term cost/benefit analysis and cost-effectiveness assessments. Central DCSF funding for the policy is not ring-fenced at the LA level and it can be difficult to determine the true level of funding devoted to implementing the policy, making accurate cost/benefit analysis difficult.
- It was also recognised that challenges exist around obtaining valid control and baseline data, for example, in some of the earlier evaluations, some schools in the control groups were offering similar services and the extent of implementation at different points in time can be difficult to assess. It can also be very difficult to establish direct causal links of a single initiative because of the impact of related interventions, for example, schools in disadvantaged areas are receiving additional funding for a range of initiatives.
- Local evaluation is vital to monitoring the effectiveness of the programme; Ofsted and the TDA have also been closely involved (e.g. Ofsted has issued guidance to schools on self-evaluation of the services).
- The extended services team were able to give a comprehensive description of the evolution of this policy over several years – even though the team leader was relatively new in post. A good example of effective knowledge management where a new team member had been able to use records to extract key information and the background ‘narrative’ about a policy development.

**Case Study 2: London Challenge (Schools Directorate)**

**Current policy**
A decade ago attainment in London secondary schools was behind the national average in both the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSEs at A*-C including English and maths; and those gaining five or more GCSEs in all subjects. The then Secretary of State for Education and Skills, Estelle Morris, publicly recognised that there was a clear need to address
educational issues within London. The London Challenge was formally
launched in 2003 as a five year programme aimed at improving educational
standards across London secondary schools and in doing so achieve better
outcomes for young Londoners. The main thrust of the policy is to put in place
a major change programme at three levels that initially focused on
underperforming schools but subsequently rolled out good practice across all
schools:

- **Keys to Success (KTS) schools**
  Identifying and addressing the keys to success in a small number of
  schools (about sixty originally) with the greatest capacity for improvement.
- **Key Boroughs**
  Addressing issues in five key London boroughs such as those facing the
  greatest challenges and which could potentially benefit most from the
  additional input, mainly those with the majority of KTS schools.
- **Pan London**
  Addressing strategic issues that affect London as a whole, for example,
  issues affecting the workforce, the teaching of English as an Additional
  Language

The overall aim of the policy was to develop a strategic response tailored to
address the issues facing the London educational system

The policy involved:
- identifying the problems, root causes and interactions that cause
  under-performance within London;
- identifying (using educational attainment data) under-performing
  schools and boroughs facing the greatest challenges that could potentially
  benefit most from additional support;
- developing and rolling out a package of support that is tailored to the
  needs of individual schools or boroughs and more strategic, pan-London
  measures

At a school and borough level this included:
- implementing strategies for improving school leadership
- identifying and sharing of good practice through facilitating
  collaborative working between schools (for example, identifying
  ‘families of schools’)
- improving teaching capacity and capability and improving school
  infrastructure

The policy has also put in place measures to better co-ordinate the activities
of the separate Local Authorities (LAs). Although some methodology was
new, the policy is often concerned with catalysing existing activities (e.g.
sharing of best practice, co-operation between LEAs). A key element of the
policy involves the use of London Challenge Advisers. These are people with
recognised educational expertise and achievement and local knowledge (e.g.
selected head teachers, Directors of Children’s Services) who act as the
Department’s front line consultants and change managers at the school and
borough level to help design and implement change programmes using a toolkit of options provided by the Department.

The policy is a model and precursor for the City Challenge programme which aims to raise standards in primary and secondary schools in the Black Country, Greater Manchester and London by 2011. The primary school element of this programme is a continuation of a London Primary Challenge programme that started in 2006.

Policy development
The policy initiative was based on evidence drawn from early National Pupil Database (NPD) results which suggested that London secondary schools lagged behind other areas of the country in terms of pupil attainment (although London schools were performing reasonably well on a 'value added' basis when taking the wider social context of its pupils into account). Additional evidence from Ofsted reports, NPD and consultation with key people indicated that attainment problems where causally linked with poor school leadership and teaching standards and these in turn were linked with high staff turnover rates, barriers to workforce mobility and progression and lack of affordable housing. Comparison of this evidence, with that from other UK conurbations, indicated that the problems contributing to poor secondary school pupil attainment were particularly accentuated in London. In addition, collaboration between London schools and education authorities was patchy. This suggested the need for a concerted change programme at more than one level.

Potential policy interventions were identified by consulting with numerous education experts, including heads of successful schools as well as schools with problems. The Department also examined international data (from USA and other European countries) and carried out detailed analysis of existing pupil level data to identify fresh ideas. The Department also liaised with other government departments; for example, with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister on using key worker housing initiatives to encourage teachers to work in the most challenging London schools.

The Department then identified five key boroughs and approximately sixty Keys to Success schools and developed packages of measures aimed at these individual schools and boroughs. It was recognised that the success of the policy depended upon effective delivery. Therefore expert advice was used to help identify London Challenge Advisers who were tasked with helping to develop and implement the intervention packages at school and borough level.

Policy evaluations
Early evaluation of this policy evolved using evidence from feedback from key community focus groups. This initial evaluation was mainly concerned with identifying key measures for success. Later more thorough evaluation demonstrated improvements in attainment in general and modest improvements when benchmarked against other similar schools outside the programme. However it was difficult to obtain valid comparisons because
many of these schools were inevitably involved in other policy interventions. This and the earlier policy development research and analysis was conducted in-house, partly because the key data sets that became the NPD were still being developed by the Department. A major Ofsted evaluation\textsuperscript{47} in 2006 using quantitative and qualitative data indicated that KTS schools improve at a greater rate than the London average.

The Department continues to monitor effectiveness of the policy by analysing data from all KTS schools in the programme. Evidence indicates that about 80% of KTS schools that leave the programme (those deemed to have the capacity and capability to sustain improvements) continue to do well and some have gone on to become academies.

The 2006 Ofsted evaluation recommended extending the London Challenge approach to other areas. Desk research short listed six potential urban areas and further consultation and analysis identified Greater Manchester and the Black Country as areas that would benefit most. In these areas, there has been an emphasis on promoting effective collaboration between authorities to help achieve sustainable changes. Early benchmarking evidence from the Greater Manchester and Black Country Challenges is positive.

The London Challenge programme was also extended, as part of 2008-2011 funding, to key primary schools to help sustain improvements at secondary level. Evidence suggested that children starting secondary schools with low attainment do not perform well at secondary level.

As the final years of London and City Challenge programme approach the Directorate recognises that it will have developed a large body of knowledge on how to obtain educational improvements in urban areas. There are plans to perform a final evaluation of the London and City Challenge programme.

\textbf{Issues highlighted by the case study 2}

The panel identified the following key points from this case study discussion:

- London Challenge is a good example of evidence-based policy development and implementation where working closely with policy delivery partners has brought rewards. Discussion with front line staff was vital to help policy-makers understand the range and interaction of issues.
- The Challenge programme is a good example of DCSF’s approach to successful policy-making that combines use of relevance evidence, practical interventions and political will.
- Success of this long term policy and its successful expansion across the country was greatly influenced by strong and consistent policy leadership.
- The National Pupil Database which has been developed and maintained by the Department is a significant and unique research asset. Development of the NPD has helped to promote a more quantitative approach to education research.

\textsuperscript{47} http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/News/Press-and-media/2006/December/London-schools-have-improved-dramatically/(language)/eng-GB
Evaluations can be an important vehicle for disseminating information about policy initiatives and the final evaluation of the City Challenges is expected to be used to disseminate information (qualitative and quantitative) about the programme and the lessons learnt from it about education in large urban areas.

Case Study 3: Aspects of youth risky behaviours - alcohol misuse (Young People Directorate)

Current policy
The aim of the current youth alcohol policy as set out in the 2008 *Youth Alcohol Action Plan* is to reduce excessive drinking by children and young people under 18 in line with the objectives of the *Children’s Plan*. The objectives of the policy are to reduce the direct and indirect negative effects of alcohol abuse on health welfare, in childhood and later adult life, and antisocial behaviours including crime. The policy has five priorities:

1. Stepping up enforcement activity to address young people drinking in public places.
2. Taking action with industry on young people and alcohol.
3. Developing a national consensus on young people and drinking.
4. Establishing a new partnership with parents on teenage drinking.
5. Supporting young people to make sensible decisions about alcohol.

The Action Plan is an extension of previous policies on addressing alcohol abuse in children and young people but is focused on addressing recent changing patterns of alcohol consumption, in particular how much alcohol is consumed, where it is consumed and where it is obtained. Although this policy is now led by DCSF – who approach it from the young person’s perspective - many of the related policy areas (and policy levers) are led by other government departments, such as the Home Office, Department of Health, Department for Business, Innovation & Skills and Department for Culture, Media & Sport. Therefore, alcohol misuse interventions have been developed and/or implemented in partnership with other government departments and delivery partners. DCSF sits on policy delivery boards in other departments and chairs a cross-government delivery group for implementing the Action Plan, as well as participating in various working groups and research groups across government.

DCSF is leading on priorities 3, 4 and 5 from the Action Plan, including:
- family-based interventions (for priority 4);
- improved school education programmes (priority v)
- a comprehensive communications campaign (priority v) about the risks of alcohol, aimed particularly at 11 – 15 year olds

Policy development & evaluation
The policy is very much a continuation of long established government policy on managing alcohol abuse in adults and children and the policy is driven by an extensive body of evidence. The 2008 Action Plan reported that although

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48 [http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/Cm%207387.pdf](http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/Cm%207387.pdf)
there has been an overall fall in the proportion of young people who drink alcohol, there has been a sharp increase in the alcohol consumption of young people who do drink. Amongst those young people that do drink a “drink to get drunk” attitude is also common. Also there has been a shift to excess drinking in public places with consequential antisocial behaviour.

This is a cause for concern because there is well established evidence that excessive alcohol consumption in children and young people has significant short term and long term harmful effects on physical health and welfare. There are also complex causal links between alcohol misuse and other youth risky behaviour (e.g. drug and substance abuse, early unprotected sexual activity, teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, truancy and underachievement at school). Research is ongoing in this area to try to identify the direction of the causal links.

Evidence indicates that these behaviours are probably causally linked with exposure of young people to alcohol advertising and access to alcohol in the home with and without parental consent. Parental attitudes to alcohol consumption and parent alcohol consumption patterns are particularly influential. Much of this evidence was gathered from studies, including research conducted in the UK and internationally from the 1980s onwards (including large-scale, long-term European studies). A key piece of evidence was a recent ‘Review of Reviews’ of the large body of relevant research on the impact of alcohol consumption on young people.

In the course of identifying appropriate intervention measures, evidence was also gathered on the effectiveness of existing interventions, including:

- Challenge Age schemes in shops
- school–based education programmes;
- measures to discourage drinking in public places
- responsible alcohol advertising codes of practice

Evidence was also gathered on the effectiveness of interventions used outside of England. This included evidence from USA and evaluations of alcohol pricing policy in Scotland. The Department also commissioned, jointly with the Department of Health, a 2009 report from the Chief Medical Officer (CMO), which sets out, for the first time, guidance on the consumption of alcohol by children and young people.

DCSF’s Customer Insight Unit provided advice which was used to help develop the new communications campaign about the risks of alcohol. Existing evidence indicated that the campaign should focus on young people under 15 years old because of the greater potential to learn in this younger age group. Research also highlighted the importance of working with parents and families before alcohol misuse habits are engrained in young people. Customer Insight Unit work was then used to identify the parent groups that it would be most effective to target and to use messages that have most resonance for the target groups.

49 http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/consultations/downloadableDocs/Review%20of%20existing%20reviews%20(Full).pdf
The new Action Plan is only at the early stages of implementation and, therefore, no evaluation have been completed yet. However, evaluation has been designed into the programme – for example, plans are in place to evaluate the impact of the communications campaign and the family-based interventions.

**Issues highlighted by the case study 3**

The Panel identified the following key points from this case study discussion:

- Moving the lead for youth alcohol misuse policy to DCSF enabled the policy to be approached from the young person’s perspective and appears to have contributed to a more holistic approach to tackling the problem.
- The Department’s capability to implement the policy is limited by the fact that it does not ‘own’ many of the policy levers. This has required the Department to work very closely with other government departments and other delivery bodies where it has sought to build on areas of consensus. Working with a range of partners has highlighted the fact that different types of evidence on the same issue can sometimes be contradictory (for example, health evidence might point to a particular solution which is not supported by the economic evidence).
- Alcohol misuse is an area where analysts have clearly worked very closely with policy generalists throughout the development of the new policy programme.
- DCSF has used its Customer Insight Unit to tailor the alcohol misuse policy interventions to different types of family behaviour.
### Annex 3: Acronyms

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<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>ADCS</td>
<td>Association of Directors of Children’s Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>C4EO</td>
<td>Centre for Excellence &amp; Outcomes in Children &amp; Young People’s Services</td>
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<td>CAFCASS</td>
<td>Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service.</td>
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<td>CAYT</td>
<td>Centre for the Analysis of Youth Transitions</td>
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<td>CIU</td>
<td>Customer Insight Unit</td>
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<tr>
<td>CMO</td>
<td>Chief Medical Officer</td>
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<td>COI</td>
<td>Central Office of Information</td>
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<td>CUBeC</td>
<td>Centre for Understanding Behaviour Change</td>
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<td>CWRC</td>
<td>Childhood Wellbeing Research Centre</td>
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<td>DCSF</td>
<td>Department for Children, Schools and Families</td>
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<td>DFID</td>
<td>Department for International Development</td>
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<td>DSG</td>
<td>Data Services Group</td>
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<td>DWP</td>
<td>Department for Work and Pensions</td>
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<td>FSES</td>
<td>Full Service Extended Schools</td>
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<td>GES</td>
<td>Government Economic Service</td>
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<td>GORS</td>
<td>Government Operational Research Service</td>
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<td>GO-Science</td>
<td>Government Office for Science</td>
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<td>GSR</td>
<td>Government Social Research</td>
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<td>GSS</td>
<td>Government Statistical Service</td>
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<td>KTS</td>
<td>Keys to Success</td>
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<td>LEAs</td>
<td>Local Education Authorities</td>
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<td>NDPBs</td>
<td>Non-Departmental Public Bodies</td>
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<td>NPD</td>
<td>National Pupil Database</td>
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<td>Ofsted</td>
<td>Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills</td>
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<td>PEG</td>
<td>Policy Evaluation Group</td>
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<td>PIRLS</td>
<td>Progress in International Reading Literacy Study</td>
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<td>Programme for International Student Assessment</td>
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<td>Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency</td>
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<td>Research Approvals Committee</td>
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<td>Science and Engineering Assurance</td>
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<td>TDA</td>
<td>Training and Development Agency for Schools</td>
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<td>Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study</td>
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