



Alliance for Useful Evidence November Newsletter: Science and social science in policy, standards of evidence, and Sure Start....

## Upcoming events

The next Alliance run event **Broadening the evidence base: science and social science in social policy** will be held in the New Year **on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> January**, and is part of a wider series of seminars on **'Future directions for scientific advice in Whitehall'**. This seminar has proved very popular and is now fully subscribed, however to be added to the waiting list please visit the event page on the [CSAP website](#)

This is a shared initiative from five partners – The Institute for Government (IfG); The Alliance for Useful Evidence; The University of Cambridge Centre for Science and Policy (CSaP); SPRU and the ESRC STEPS Centre at Sussex University; and Sciencewise-ERC. There are two more events in the series: for details on these events please visit the links below:

- 15 January 2013, [Experts, publics and open policy](#)
- 6 & 7 February 2013 [Credibility across cultures: the international politics of scientific advice](#),

## Recent events

### What is good evidence? Standards, kitemarks and forms of evidence

Friday 9 November 2012, London. This breakfast seminar focused on standards of evidence for social policy, programmes and practice. Chaired by Geoff Mulgan, attendees heard from Dr Gillian Leng, Professor Leroy White and Dr Louise Morpeth. A video of the speakers' presentations and the lively Q&A session that followed is available to watch on the [Alliance website](#)

### Culture clash - bridging the divide between science and policy

Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> November, IFG. This was the first seminar in the 'Future directions for scientific advice in Whitehall' series and was titled 'Culture clash - bridging the divide between science and policy' Details of the seminar, including a video of the session can be found on the [IFG website](#)

## Alliance publications and guest blogs

### Blog: Flying Kites for Evidence

This guest blog from Huw Davies, University of St Andrews, was written in support of our event earlier this month on standards of evidence. It tackles the ticklish question of what

counts as good (enough) evidence to determine 'what works'. Read the blog on the [Alliance blogpages](#)

### **Blog: Using evidence effectively: a top ten list of barriers**

Rosie Chadwick, Director of Public Affairs at Catch 22 discusses what she thinks gets in the way of organisations using evidence effectively. This is based on her experience of 15 years involvement in neighbourhood crime reduction, youth crime prevention and youth development programmes. Read her thoughts on the [Alliance blogpages](#)

### **Blog: Was sure start an evidence based policy?**

Naomi Eisenstadt, previously Director of the Sure Start Unit discusses the design and evaluation of Sure Start, and discusses the other factors alongside evidence that influence the design of new policy. Read the Sure Start blog on the [Alliance blogpages](#)

## **News from our funders**

### **Big Lottery Fund**

#### **Evaluation of Village SOS**

Village SOS launched on 1 June 2009 and was a new funding scheme from the Big Lottery Fund (BIG) in partnership with BBC One. The programme aimed to support rural communities that were struggling with issues such as the closure of local amenities and services and a lack of local training and employment opportunities. Read the summary report which provides findings and learning from an independent evaluation of Village SOS. The report is available on the [Big Lottery website](#)

### **Nesta**

#### **Decoding Learning report**

In the last five years UK schools have spent more than £1 billion on digital technology. But so far there has been little evidence of substantial success in improving educational outcomes. Nesta commissioned the London Knowledge Lab (LKL) and Learning Science Institute, University of Nottingham to analyse how technology has been used in the UK education systems, and lessons from around the world to begin to bridge the evidence gap. The full report is available to download on the [Nesta website](#)

#### **Making it work**

This paper makes the case for innovation in the jobs market. Few issues have as acute a need for innovation. Unemployment levels remain high, particularly for young people and in some local areas. Under-employment means many are working fewer hours than they would like. The paper identifies three possible alternatives for tackling worklessness, and argues for more experimentation around such pilot ideas as well as much more intensive measurement and assessment of what works, so that successful models can be scaled up. You can read the full paper, or a shorter executive summary on the [Nesta website](#)

### **ESRC**

**Evidence briefing: 'Supporting health and activity in schools'**

Research by the Centre for Diet and Activity Research, together with evidence reviews indicates that food eaten at school lunchtimes makes a significant contribution to children's diets, and that sixty-nine per cent of Year 5 children were meeting current physical activity guidelines, but this declined between school years 5 and 6. This has policy implications such as that late primary school may be an important period to intervene to support maintenance of activity levels in children. Read the full evidence briefing on the [ESRC website](#)

**Evidence briefing: 'Cutting children's exposure to unhealthy food advertisements'**

In 2007 Ofcom introduced regulations banning the advertising of foods which are high in fat, salt and sugar during children's TV programming. Researchers from the Fuse Centre for Translational Research in Public Health found that, whilst broadcasters adhered to the restrictions, the overall amount of unhealthy food advertisements seen by children was the same as before the ban. The policy implications of this suggest that to be effective, the restrictions would need to be applied to a much wider audience. Read the full evidence briefing on the [ESRC website](#)

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