INCREASING DIVERGENCE
MORE OR LESS REASON FOR EXCHANGE?
The Context for Social Policy Evidence Exchange in the UK

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September 2015
This paper has been written as a background and context to the Evidence Exchange project of the Alliance for Useful Evidence. Evidence Exchange was instigated to promote increased sharing of social policy evidence across the four UK jurisdictions. During 2015, it’s promoting this idea through developing cross-UK learning under themes like wellbeing and reduction of harm from the misuse of alcohol. At the same time, the project has been finding out more about whether and why there isn’t more cross UK evidence exchange and bodies or systems to support that.

If you have any comments on this paper and the ideas in it, please contact the author, Pippa Coutts, Evidence Exchange Project Lead: pippa.coutts@nesta.org.uk

Thank you very much to everyone who took part in the paper: those who were consulted, as listed in Appendix Two, and colleagues in Evidence Exchange who provided useful comments and corrections.

The Alliance for Useful Evidence champions the use of evidence in social policy and practice. We are an open-access network of 2,000 individuals from across government, universities, charities, business and local authorities in the UK and internationally. The Alliance provides a focal point for advancing the evidence agenda, developing a collective voice, whilst aiding collaboration and knowledge sharing, through debate and discussion. We are funded by the Big Lottery Fund, the Economic and Social Research Council and Nesta. Membership is free. To sign up please visit: www.alliance4useful evidence.org

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FOREWORD

It is far more commonplace now for grantmakers to require third sector organisations to evidence the impact of their projects and wider work. Over the coming years, public bodies will also be faced with challenging choices about spending priorities and where best to invest. Collecting, analysing and applying robust evidence will become ever more vital.

Sharing this increasing volume of evidence about what works should be more widespread, not least across the four UK jurisdictions. After 16 years of devolution, interesting and marked differences in social policy and practice are emerging between the four UK jurisdictions and indeed within them.

The Carnegie UK Trust works to improve the lives of people throughout the UK and Ireland by influencing policy and developing innovative practice. To support this work we build and champion the effective use of evidence. We were pleased to be co-founders with the Big Lottery, Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Nesta of the Alliance for Useful Evidence Exchange partnership in 2014/15.

As Evidence Exchange has been testing out the demand for evidence sharing across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, stakeholders have repeatedly asked why more exchange is not happening already.

This paper starts to examine the reasons standing in the way of cross-UK social policy learning, whilst highlighting what is to be gained from assimilating all of our hard won experience and knowledge.

We hope this paper encourages people to be open to evidence generated across the UK, and stimulates the demand for sharing social policy learning.

Martyn Evans, Chief Executive of Carnegie UK Trust
INCREASING DIVERGENCE: MORE OR LESS REASON FOR EXCHANGE?

Since devolution in 1999, there are examples of innovative social policies being developed in one part of the UK, and then being taken up elsewhere: such as the ban on smoking in public places, or the Children’s Commissioner first established in Wales. However, overall policy and practice learning between the four UK jurisdictions appears to be limited. This paper considers some of the reasons for that.

In the early years of devolution, policies adopted by the newly formed Scottish and Welsh Governments tended to be ‘tartanised’ or ‘welshified’ versions of UK policy. Overtime, this has changed. Devolved governments have developed policies that reflect local needs, and priorities, and ones that show that devolution really makes a difference. The effect has been significant enough to be described as a policy ‘race for the top’: an ideal environment for an increased appetite to learn about what worked. Yet this learning and sharing seems to have been underdeveloped, with important chances to learn from differing policies, such as Scottish Government’s introduction of free personal care for the elderly and renouncing prescription charges in Wales, being missed.

Reasons for this may include the underlying policy divergence, which leaves stakeholders feeling a neighbouring jurisdiction’s experience is less relevant for them. Yet diversity, providing exposure to different ideas, can counter groupthink and promote innovation. Perhaps a more straightforward reason is that during devolution the processes and enabling structures for evidence exchange between the four jurisdictions have been overlooked. Few, if any networks for sharing social policy learning and practice across the UK exist currently, although people recognise they would be useful.

EVIDENCE EXCHANGE

“Evidence alone does not ensure wisdom or deliver something called ‘objectivity’ or ‘the truth’. ….Evidence is always contingent on context, sources, perceptions and timing.”

The Alliance for Useful Evidence is committed to promoting the uptake and use of evidence by social policymakers and practitioners. In 2014 it began a trial project, Evidence Exchange, to promote good-practice, research and evaluation sharing between the four UK jurisdictions. This project is supported by Big Lottery, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Carnegie UK Trust and Nesta.

The driver for the project was research with UK policymakers and practitioners on their interest in and use of evidence from other jurisdictions, which found an appetite to draw on learning from other parts of the UK. In a survey of key researchers across the UK, 41 per cent of respondents said they had a ‘great deal of interest’ in learning from other parts of the UK. Whereas, only 22 per cent said evidence from another jurisdiction had ‘a great deal of influence on their work’. The Evidence Exchange project, through a series of practical
actions, is learning more about this gap between the interest in, and practice of, cross–UK learning. It is trying out various methods of exchanging evidence, from podcasts and webinars, to roundtables and ‘piggybacking’ on existing projects and reviewing existing exchange networks.

During this process, participants have repeatedly expressed the view that the effectiveness of evidence exchange in changing policy and action, is determined by the context. So what is the context for Evidence Exchange?

SIZE AND STRUCTURAL DIFFERENCES MEAN AN UNEVEN PLAYING FIELD FOR EVIDENCE EXCHANGE

An asymmetrical UK

Listening to a conversation comparing the policies of the four UK jurisdictions, an outsider might be forgiven for thinking they are similarly governed, administered and populated. Yet they have some fundamentally different characteristics. One of these is size: England is more than five times as large as Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland combined, both in terms of GDP and population.6

A history of political and administrative variation makes for a far more complex context than is first apparent.7, 8 The jurisdictions had differences prior to the devolution of the 1990s. Northern Ireland first had a devolved parliament in 1921, which sat until 1972. It has a separate party system, meaning that local political representatives can’t contribute to the Westminster government. From 1965, uniquely in the UK, Health and Social Services have been a joint department or ministry. Scotland historically has separate legal and education systems, and a distinctive relationship with local government, which has developed since the Local Government Concordat of 2007. It also has a relatively more devolved third sector, which receives a substantial amount of funding from local authorities.9 The concordat promotes a more distant relationship between the Scottish Government and local authorities (no ring–fenced budgets, for example) and the Scottish Government sets overarching outcomes whilst local government has greater control over delivery.

There is asymmetry, too, in terms of the devolved powers and responsibilities for Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. It has been argued that the UK Government has devolved responsibilities to Wales and Scotland in order to keep the state together. This is less relevant to Northern Ireland (because it has the right to secede to join the Republic of Ireland), which might influence the UK Government to be less concerned about Northern Ireland moving in different policy directions.

England is the only jurisdiction without its own government, and it is this obvious difference that the Evidence Exchange project has felt most keenly. For example, in terms of finding the right person to represent or talk about social policy, such as promoting societal wellbeing.
Different and stretched, government research capacity

UK, Scottish and Welsh Government civil servants are all part of the Home Civil Service. However, Welsh and Scottish Government staff must work to the Scottish and Welsh Ministers (as specified in the Civil Service Code), who in turn account to their parliaments. Northern Ireland has its own civil service, from the devolution settlement of 1921 - the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) - which works directly for the devolved government. Northern Ireland has comparatively more civil servants than the other jurisdictions (per capita comparison), because of its control of welfare, which is not devolved to Scotland and Wales. In Scotland and Wales, the staff of UK departments such as the DWP and DFID, outnumber civil servants working for the devolved governments. Scottish and Welsh Governments have less capacity than Northern Ireland: the NICS has around 23,000 staff, although not all in central government, compared to 5,100 and 5,700 attached to the Welsh and Scottish Governments, respectively. The Scottish Government and Welsh Government are relatively small departments of the civil service when compared to other UK civil service departments, with Scotland the ninth largest department, coming after the DWP, HMRC and others.

The disparity in size and structure between the devolved and UK administrations, can impact negatively on opportunities for informal exchange between Whitehall and the jurisdictions. Whitehall is seen as unwieldy and, as one Chief Social Researcher said:

“It may be difficult to work out who’s your opposite number; so who to talk to”.

A potential mitigation to this is the transfer of British home civil servants between jurisdictions, which can foster an exchange of ideas and stronger personal relationships between people working in Whitehall, and the Scottish and Welsh governments. However, in the last five to ten years this transfer has slowed:

“While all governments benefit from the existence of a unified Home Civil Service, interchange of staff and other activities that strengthen relationships appear to have declined”.

Governing In An Ever-looser Union.

In May to November 2007, only one civil servant was transferred to the then Scottish Executive and five people moved the other way, whereas in the first five years after devolution, 318 staff had moved from Whitehall to the Executive.

All four governments have researchers, economists and statisticians, in analytical services, providing support to policymakers. The UK and Northern Irish Governments adopt similar structures to their analytical services, with researchers largely being embedded in policy departments. Scotland and Wales have moved away from this model. In the Welsh Government, analytical services are centralised managerially and professionally. In Scotland, analytical services also are professionally unified, which means they can work across a large number of departments, but the researchers are embedded and managed in policy departments, and in reality researchers tend to stick to one area, building their knowledge there.

The Scottish Government has a greater research capacity than Wales with around twice the number of government researchers (85 versus 40); and the NICS employs 150 statistics and research staff.
Unequal and declining resources can negatively affect cross-UK evidence exchange. Having fewer internal analysts, Wales has felt disadvantaged in terms of research capacity. This situation is compounded by Wales having a less developed Higher and Further Education sector, with fewer and less well-resourced universities than Scotland or England. The resource barrier seems to have grown with civil service cuts and reported declines in the number of civil servants in analytical services over the last ten years. As fewer people are asked to do more, with the strengthening of devolution, they have less time for what might be seen as a lesser priority - exchange of evidence between the jurisdictions.

The advantages and disadvantages to being smaller

The smaller governments of the devolved jurisdictions make it easier for analysts and policymakers to know one another and establish strong working relationships. Government analysts in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland all have said this eases the transfer of research evidence from internal experts into policy within their jurisdictions.

Knowing each other, or having many ‘well-kent faces’, stretches beyond the government in the devolved administrations, into the third sector, civil society and academia, providing opportunities for meaningful consultation and partnership development. Eve Hepburn argues these “short lines of communication and transfer” promote evidence exchange within regions, such as Scotland, Northern Ireland or Wales, and makes them important sites for “innovation and policy initiation”.

An example of the scale of the devolved administrations facilitating a collaborative approach is the Scottish Institute of Policing Research. This brought together 12 Scottish universities to form a knowledge transfer partnership with direct contact to the Police Service of Scotland and Chief Police Officers. Similarly, in Wales the University Police Science Institute (UPSI), a collaboration between two universities and South Wales Police, integrates research and practice for policing. In England, because this collaboration and direct contact is less feasible, there’s a need to broker research and practice knowledge exchange. This is a key function of the What Works Centre for Crime Reduction.

Being smaller supports the devolved jurisdictions to develop collaborative services too. For example, Scotland has a unified police force: something described by a member of the College of Policing as ‘unthinkable’ for England.

Although a small policy community and short-lines of communication to academia and other sources of evidence can be positive, it can also mean evidence is being pulled from a small pool where there are relatively few research institutions. Also, ‘in practice relationships can become too cosy’ and ‘cosy’ policy communities can hamper cross-UK exchange as tight-knit policy communities have a tendency to be less receptive to ideas from outside.
GOVERNMENTS’ DRAW ON LOCAL ACADEMIC RESEARCH

 Governments’ draw on local academic research, as well as experts from think tanks, universities and the third sector. Policy and government research advisers often refer to academics (or other experts) who they already know and trust on a particular topic or development, and it's been said in Scotland that academics and researchers are “active participants in policy making” (Hepburn 2007). If this the case, it is facilitated by the short lines of communication and trusting relationships.

In Northern Ireland this has been formalised in the Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series (KESS) involving the three local universities and the Northern Ireland Assembly. KESS formally partners the legislative arm of government – the Assembly - with academia and promotes evidence-led policy and law-making. The forum aims to make research findings more accessible to both decision-makers, such as Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) and the wider public sector.

Uniquely, in Wales the Public Policy Institute for Wales (PPIW) was established to increase the flow of research evidence from a range of UK and international experts to Welsh Government Ministers. So it approaches experts from across the UK or beyond, depending on where the expertise lies. It provides a conduit for fresh thinking and new ideas and mediates between the jurisdiction and the What Works Centres.

There are macro-level challenges around policymakers and practitioners acquiring and using academic evidence, which apply to all the jurisdictions. For example, the Research Excellence Framework (REF) universities are measured against can act against evidence exchange, incentivising publication in peer-review journals, which are virtually unreachable outside of universities, over more accessible formats. This framework is common to all of the UK.

Another common barrier to evidence exchange is a variable appetite for the use of evidence. It’s difficult to determine whether or not any parts of the UK are more prone or averse to using research evidence than others. Rather, experts often say the use of evidence by any of the UK jurisdictions depends on the individual - the minister or the civil servant policymaker. If they are generally interested in evidence-informed policy then evidence exchange will be frequent in their area of responsibility.
NON-ACADEMIC EVIDENCE: INTEREST GROUPS AND THINK TANKS

One of the responses to a limited legacy of policymaking at the start of devolution was for the devolved jurisdictions to engage third sector and interest groups in policymaking. This continues in a diverse range of sectors, from personalisation/self-directed support to reduction of harm from alcohol. In the latter case, in 2013 an independent group of experts including many charities and independent groups, such as Cancer Research UK, Alcohol Focus Scotland and Drink Wise North West, produced a evidence-based alcohol strategy for the UK, Health First.

Although the policy engagement with the third sector may have been continued, it’s not obvious that devolution has led to the creation of new Scottish, Welsh or Northern Irish interest groups.

UK think tanks are predominantly located in England, particularly around Westminster: even the think tank named after the Scottish philosopher Adam Smith is based in London.

Following devolution a few independent think tanks have been established. For example, in Wales, the Bevan Foundation was established in 2001 and, more recently, Gorwel. In Scotland there is the Centre for Public Policy; the Common Weal; and IPPR (Institute for Public Policy Research) is establishing an office in Scotland, to focus on skills and labour market issues. Overall, these think tanks are small and poorly resourced - IPPR is starting in Scotland by recruiting a Director for a year - and a relative absence of think tanks in Northern Ireland has been noted by a number of commentators.

However, it is not easy to discern any causal relationship between a paucity of think tanks and policy communities: does a less vibrant policy community mean fewer think tanks, or the other way around? Or it could be that the devolved nations refer to different sorts of experts in their policymaking. For example, Public Service Wales 2025 is promoting transformational public sector reform, through creating ‘a big debate’ across Wales. The Scottish Government has a history of calling upon third sector experts known to it, and rhetoric is emerging of a Scottish policy approach, which emphasises co-producing policy with people, service users and providers.
COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Population-level research studies of UK and the devolved administrations described as ‘UK wide’ often focus on England (in part because of its larger population size), which makes them of little use to the devolved administrations. The sample may be such that it’s not possible to compare England, Northern Ireland Scotland and Wales within the study, and a more reasonable comparison often is between the devolved administrations and regions of England.

Since devolution the jurisdictions have been collecting their own data sets, such as Scottish Household Survey, Scottish Health Survey, the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey, the National Survey for Wales (StatsWales) and the Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey.

Differing data sets make comparison more difficult, but statisticians from the four jurisdictions do meet through themed groups set up by the UK Statistical Authority. However, these meetings are more about data harmonisation than sharing findings or comparing what works.

DEVOLUTION MEANS DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY

The growth of national statistical studies at jurisdictional, rather than UK level, reflects an increasing difference in the outcomes and performance measures of jurisdictions, as their policies diverge. Having Wales/Scotland/Northern Ireland data is essential to the devolved governments and populations’ understanding the impact of their policies and strategies.

The spread of policy knowledge was, traditionally, from the centre (Whitehall) to what Keating and colleagues called ‘the periphery’ - Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast. Keating has argued this is related to the attitude from London towards the devolved regions as being, “little interested in what they do, and spurns the idea that it might learn from them”. It was likely also linked to the overspill of UK policy to the emergent, devolved jurisdictions and influenced by what the governments have in common, such as a desire to reach consensus with the public and constraints around government systems and budgets. However, as devolution matures the policies and policymaking styles are changing across the UK and it’s less easy to argue that policy evidence exchange is unidirectional.

The Scottish and Welsh Governments have become increasingly vocal about the desire to implement policies and programmes that work for their people in their context. Both have resisted the increasing market orientation and New Public Management of English public services, and have more statist and welfarist outlooks. The divergence in stances could intensify following the UK 2015 election with different parties holding power in Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales and the UK.

On one hand, increasing policy and political differences can act as a disincentive to cross UK evidence exchange, when stakeholders think that the underpinning differences between the jurisdictions makes policy learning from each other less relevant. On the other hand, it has the potential to provide a more balanced policy evidence ecosystem in the UK, with more two-way sharing and influencing between the devolved administrations and Westminster or Whitehall.
An example of where the learning has moved from the ‘periphery’ to the centre is the ban on smoking.

**Evidence Exchange and Policy Transfer from Ireland and Scotland to the UK: Banning Smoking in Public Places**

Smoking bans are a policy to protect the public from the harmful effects of secondhand smoke (SHS), and to influence the habits of smokers and those at risk of taking up smoking.

Initially, although smoking was known to cause lung cancer, the effect of passive smoking proved harder to quantify. However, a 2002 report by the International Agency for Research on Cancer suggested that regular exposure to SHS increases the risk of lung cancer by 20 - 30 per cent. In 2003, New York City banned smoking in all public bars and restaurants, with only a few exceptions.

In March 2004, Ireland became the first country in the world to institute an outright ban on smoking in the workplace. Fears the ban would be flouted were unrealised and few problems were identified in enforcing the legislation.

Members of the UK All Party Parliamentary Group on Smoking and Health visited Ireland to see how the smoke-free legislation was working and to consider what lessons could be learned from the Irish experience. The visit convinced them of the need for similar legislation in other parts of the UK, and David Taylor MP, the Chairman of the All Party Group, stated:

> “Ireland has shown that going smoke free is achievable and popular. But more importantly it is the only way of ensuring that employees are protected from the proven hazards of secondhand smoke.”

ASH Press Release 20 October, 2014

A year and half later, Scotland was the first UK jurisdiction to introduce a similar ban on smoking in public places, but it seemed likely that Wales and Northern Ireland would also instigate a ban, which they did. This public health initiative was more heavily debated for England, but in the end a free vote in Westminster lead to a complete ban on smoking in public places and the introduction of the policy has been partially accredited to rest of the UK and Ireland’s influence.

Subsequent reviews of the impact of smoke-free legislation, have found a reduction in exposure to passive smoking and benefits for health, changes in attitudes and behaviour and no clear adverse impact on the hospitality industry.28, 29, 30
WHAT WORKS IS MORE THAN MINDLESS REPLICATION

There is a recognition that what is successful in one place, under one set of conditions, may not work elsewhere. This was summed up by Geoff Mulgan as:

“The crucial question is not ‘what works’, but rather ‘what works for who, when, where and with who’. You could call them the ‘Six Ws’. What works at one time and place may not in other times and places; it may work for one demographic group but not for another; and it may depend on one implementation capacity and not others.”

Nesta Blog, 19th March 2015

It is these underlying circumstances and implementation capacity that often concern planners or policymakers assessing learning from elsewhere: they are keen to understand the extent to which the evidence came from a place or situation like theirs and to know about the delivery mechanisms as well as the outcomes.

Understanding the nuances in the different contexts, for example the historical distinctiveness in education, health and local government across the UK, can be important in fostering evidence exchange - both inside the UK and further afield.

A SURPRISING LACK OF NETWORKS FOR CROSS-UK EVIDENCE EXCHANGE

Much of the existing cross UK exchange of evidence takes place through personal or professional relationships. Evidence exchange across the UK can be characterised as informal, quiet and between individuals. Evidence users and brokers, such as PPIW and analysts in the civil service, tend to go to experts in the subject of concern, who generally are academics.

Analysts and policymakers who took part in the preparation of this paper said there are few networks for exchanging evidence across the UK, excepting professional networks, despite there being an interest in having such linkages.

To develop networks of evidence exchange, it’s worth noting the devolved jurisdictions’ interest in ‘periphery to periphery’ evidence exchange. As policy diverges across the UK, the ‘Celtic fringe’ is interested in its neighbours’ developments, not least because they are more similar in size and scale to each other, than to England.

Also of interest are existing networks, such as professional networks that play a strong role in evidence sharing, for example, in Health where the Royal Colleges share research on effective practice, and have an influence on health service design.
Intergovernmental groups can promote collaboration and sharing across the UK, such as the Joint Ministerial Committee (JMC) - a forum where the UK Government and the devolved administrations meet and discuss matters relating to devolution. Recently, the Institute for Government called for those to be better utilised, not least to increase learning. One formal cross-jurisdictional exchange network for government ministers and officials that has shared good practice in policy and delivery is the British Irish Council.

**British Irish Council (BIC)**

The British Irish Council brings together governments from the UK and Ireland, including the devolved governments in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, as well as the Isle of Man, Guernsey and Jersey.

It was set up in 1999, after the signing of the British-Irish Agreement to enable the exchange of information and discussion between ministers and officials, to promote good relations across the UK. There are biannual summit meetings, attended by the heads of the UK administrations and ministers, to review issues of the day and progress work on a variety of social and environmental topics.

The Council is supported by a secretariat and officials from all the administrations meet regularly, for example as members of the topic working groups. This has led to exchange of good practice on topics such as credit unions, early years and the misuse of drugs and alcohol.

At the Ministerial Summit of the Council held in June 2015, the topic focus was the reduction of harm from the misuse of alcohol. This is a topic where Evidence Exchange is promoting cross-UK sharing of information, so it plans to support the BIC secretariat and UK health officials in their development of an evidence-based report on this topic at a special meeting in October.31

**WHAT WORKS CENTRES**

The What Works Centres have been set up to make evidence more readily available, more useable and more sought after by policymakers and practitioners. They are brokers of evidence; providing practical toolkits for busy policymakers, commissioners and planners who want to know about effectiveness and value for money.

Whilst the Centres have achieved much simplification, transmission of complex evidence, and fresh research, they have received some criticism for concentrating on increasing the availability of accessible evidence without supporting potential evidence users. They are focussed on England, with the majority only covering England, as in the case of the devolved subjects of local economic growth and health. See Appendix Two for more details.

What Works Centres in Wales and Scotland have now been set up with differing remits and receive funding from the Welsh and Scottish Governments. What Works Wales acts to influence directly Welsh Ministers, working on three cross-cutting themes, promoting non-siloed thinking and tackling thorny issues such as poverty reduction. The themes are relevant to some of the other What Works Centres and What Works Wales has a remit to
liaise with them. What Works Scotland is different again. The universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow are working collaboratively with pilot Local Authority Community Planning Partnerships to understand better what works in public sector reform, and why certain interventions are more effective in one situation than another. It is influenced by the Government’s emphasis on co-production and prevention, as well as the need for public sector reform. What Works Scotland appears to be operating less on the research transfer model, and more actively engaging with a wide audience of service users, providers and the private sector.

For Scotland and Northern Ireland an approach to sharing learning between the English What Works Centres, the devolved governments and What Works Scotland has yet to be clarified or publicised.

CONCLUSION: NOT YET NATURAL LABORATORIES OF DEMOCRACY

“The reality of the policymaking process is that it is extremely complex and involves a range of different people with different agendas. Evidence is one component in that process.”

Sally Shortall, 2015

To set Evidence Exchange in context, this paper has considered some of the structures and roles that are involved in the cross-UK evidence and policy transfer.

Earlier this decade, devolution was heralded as a possible ‘laboratory of democracy’, with divergence and difference supplying the potential for learning between the jurisdictions to begin. However, although devolution may produce an opportunity for innovation and divergence, it doesn’t seem to have created the structures to share learning from those opportunities across the UK.

The history of the devolved jurisdictions’ administration and governments, as well as asymmetry of England not having a government may account for some of the barriers to cross-UK exchange. This is accentuated in cases where the UK Government and civil servants have a relatively low awareness of devolution or devolved policies.

The difference in scale between the devolved jurisdictions and the UK government can make it more difficult for the informal networks and relationships, so important to knowledge transfer, to operate across the UK on an equal basis. The smaller civil services of the devolved nations have found sharing particularly difficult in a time of declining resource, when, concurrent with increasing devolution, they have more responsibilities at home.

However, the small size of the devolved nations does allow them many opportunities for internal evidence sharing. This is a situation to be capitalised on, through forming more linking networks or the devolved jurisdictions engaging with regions of England as opposed to just Westminster and Whitehall.
As devolution progresses the policies of the jurisdictions are diverging. This situation could be a strong disincentive to cross-jurisdictional sharing, with different government priorities and ways of working making it less likely that the policies of our neighbours are comparable. Yet, overarching UK policy concerns around common social issues (like a low levels of wellbeing, a high prevalence of depression and anxiety, or an unhealthy relationship with alcohol), and the pressing need to respond to their challenges in a time of austerity make a strong case for learning across the UK.

This paper has found little in terms of UK networks for sharing social policy evidence. However, it is still the case that as policymakers and practitioners we can benefit from others’ insights, experience and research, which is a strong driver for developing structures and process to facilitate UK evidence exchange.
APPENDICES

Appendix One: The What Works network

Below is a list of the existing networks and their social policy areas, which outlines the jurisdictions they are due to include. This is not always clear cut as research summaries and online tools are available to all, but in some cases the tailored activity is more focussed on one jurisdiction alone – most commonly England.

- National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) - Health and social care. NICE Guidance is officially English only, and guidance topics are referred by the Department of Health, but there are agreements to provide certain services to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

- Sutton Trust/Educational Endowment Foundation - Educational achievement. It is funded through a Department for Education endowment, and is a centre for English schools, with funding available to, and projects in, that jurisdiction.

- College of Policing What Works Centre for Crime Reduction - Crime reduction. The crime reduction toolkit and research map available for all, and the map includes Scottish (not Northern Irish) research. A main target for the Centre is Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs), elected officials in England and Wales; and the centre is run by the College of Policing, which covers English and Welsh forces.

- Early Intervention Foundation - Early intervention - The Early Intervention Guidebook has information on programmes run across the UK. The Centre is funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government, the Department for Education, the Department of Health and the Department for Work and Pensions: three out four with remits for England, and its Pioneering Places are in England.

- What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth – To support and increase local economic growth. The events and activities predominantly are English, although it has a mission to improve UK wide evidence. Economic Growth is a devolved matter for Scotland.

- Centre for Ageing Better – It is “aiming to leave a legacy of having made a profound difference to the quality of later life in England” (CfAB Business Plan, Extended Summary).

- What Works Centre for Wellbeing – A centre which plans to be UK wide.

- What Works Scotland.

- What Works Wales.
Appendix Two: **List of people directly consulted**

**Graeme Beale**, Office of the Chief Researcher, Scottish Government

**Tim Allen**, Local Government Navigator

**Bryan Collis**, Senior Research Officer, Wales Council for Voluntary Action

**Professor Bronwen Cohen**, Honorary Professor in Social Policy, School of Social and Political Science, The University of Edinburgh

**Rachel Tuffin**, Director of Knowledge, Research and Education; College of Policing

**Dave Rogers**, Head of Statistics and Research in OFMDFM. A member of NISRA (Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency)

**Professor Sally Shortall**, Queen's University Belfast

**Dr Emma Gordon**, Head of GESR Team, HM Treasury

**Dr Steve Marshall**, Chief Social Research Officer, S.R. & Information Division Welsh Government

**Professor Steve Martin**, Public Policy Institute for Wales
ENDNOTES

1. Policies that were close to the UK Government’s strategy, which were given a Scottish or Welsh slant when/if adopted by the devolved administrations.


5. Ibid.


8. Participants in the paper’s preparation noted this.


10. NISRA Statistical Bulletin: Employment in the NICS, October 2014. This includes civil servants in the 12 ministerial departments, the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland, the Office of the Attorney General for Northern Ireland, staff of The Assembly Ombudsman for Northern Ireland/The Northern Ireland Commissioner for Complaints and the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry Team.


17. Defined separately in the UK Civil Service as those three professions.

18. A Scottish term for someone who is well-known.


21. What Works in Wales, Drawing on Public Policy Evidence from Across the UK, Alliance for Useful Evidence blog by Professor Steve Martin.


24. See, for example, ‘Where have all the NI think tanks gone?’ http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-24150973, accessed 02 June 2015.


