



Hannah Durrant

From Evidence Broker to Knowledge Convenor: Knowledge Mobilisation Practice to Keep Evidence Relevant

For political systems across Europe and beyond, the 21st Century arrived on a tide of resurgent commitment to the rational and pragmatic ideals of evidence-based policy and practice (EBPP). That ‘what matters is what works’ has proved a persuasive and persistent rhetoric, underwriting significant investments in evidence centres and knowledge brokerage to solve entrenched challenges. But so too, the voices of concern about the lack of demonstrable impact of evidence on policy and practice have grown louder. Evidence has always been only one among many influences on policymakers and practitioners, contending with logistical and political barriers to uptake.

Fast-forward 25 years, and the ideal of EBPP faces even more daunting challenges. Even where demand for evidence exists, governments - particularly at local levels - face significant fiscal constraints, reducing capacity to engage with external expertise. Science budgets are under threat. At the same time, populist pushback against a perceived privileging of certain forms of expertise calls to diversify what counts as evidence, and the rise of disinformation is disconnecting research evidence from decision-making.

In this context, what are the prospects for EBPP? What approaches are needed to connect research to policy and practice and support evidence utilisation and implementation? In this keynote, I will outline the research-led approach to knowledge mobilisation (KM) developed at the Wales Centre for Public Policy (WCPP) – an evidence centre that works with research experts to enable Welsh Government and public services to apply evidence in decision-making. I will discuss the evolution of the Centre’s approach from evidence broker to knowledge convenor, and the craft of constructing ‘evidence mosaics’ that recognise differences in how knowledge is produced and the tensions and contradictions across knowledge forms in policy/service delivery contexts. I will provide examples of this KM approach and craft by drawing on a coproduced project to mobilise evidence on effective multisector collaboration to support community action.

About Hannah Durrant

Dr Hannah Durrant is a Senior Research Fellow and Programme Director at the Wales Centre for Public Policy (WCPP). She leads the Centre’s research and practice on knowledge mobilisation and evidence-informed policymaking and has published on academic-policy engagement, knowledge brokering organisations, and practices of knowledge mobilisation. She also leads WCPP’s work on community wellbeing, generating relevant and impactful evidence for Welsh Government, public services and community leaders on mobilising community action to meet community need and enhance social connection. Hannah is Vice Chair of the Universities Policy Engagement Network (UPEN).

In a recent publication, Hannah Durrant has synthesised studies investigating local models of knowledge mobilisation: <https://bristoluniversitypressdigital.com/view/journals/evp/20/3/article-p370.xml>
