

Institution: Cardiff University		
Unit of Assessment: Business and Management Studies (17)		
Title of case study: Improving the effectiveness of policy making through an innovative model of knowledge mobilisation in Wales		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2010 – 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Steve Martin	Professor and WCPP Director	01/09/2000 – present
James Downe	Professor and WCPP Director of Research	01/09/2003 – present
Dan Bristow	WCPP Director of Policy and Practice	04/11/2013 – present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2013 – 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words) <p>Policy makers tackling pressing societal challenges are often unable to access relevant academic research when they need it. Cardiff Business School designed a unique, demand-led model of knowledge mobilisation where researchers work closely with Welsh Government Ministers to identify their evidence needs and provide them with independent analysis. This model improved the effectiveness of policy making in Wales by providing rigorous evidence at the right time to inform key decisions across policy areas including the economy, Brexit, public services, and employability. Evidence-based policy decisions underpinned by this work included the awarding of a £4.8M innovation fund to develop housing and support to prevent youth homelessness, and changes to childcare funding plans which resulted in annual savings of £80M to Welsh Government.</p>		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words) <p>Government, research councils and other research funders have emphasised the need for academic research to engage with ‘real world’ challenges. Policy makers are often unaware of relevant research and expertise within universities or do not know how to access it. Equally, many researchers do not realise contributions they could make to informing policy, or may not know how to engage effectively with government [3.1].</p> <p>Cardiff Business School researchers outlined how the policy process is far more complex than is implied by simplistic linear models of evidence use, and ‘pathways to impact’ are often difficult to navigate [3.1]. Their research on knowledge brokers (intermediaries who can translate academic research so that it addresses policy makers’ needs), evidence use, and evidence-informed policy making underpinned new approaches to mobilising social science knowledge to improve policy making and public service delivery.</p> <p>2.1 New approach to knowledge mobilisation</p> <p>In 2010, Martin drew on research conducted with local and central governments to explore the strengths and weaknesses of five contrasting approaches to the co-production of social research [3.2]. He concluded that, of the different approaches, the ‘policy maker as commissioner’ model improves the chances that a study will have an impact. Under this model, policy makers have greater control over conception and initiation of studies, with researchers taking responsibility for gathering and analysing evidence. It ensures that research is focused on the policy issues of the day and enables policy makers to suggest deadlines and formats which are tailored to their needs [3.2].</p> <p>Martin further developed this research as co-investigator of the ESRC-funded Knowledge Navigator programme (2013-2015) [G3.1], which mapped out the steps needed to create a productive relationship between councils and researchers [3.3]. The researchers interviewed</p>		

senior politicians to identify their evidence needs; selected academics with relevant expertise; then commissioned a series of 'need to know' reviews that summarised the evidence on topics highlighted as priorities by policy makers and practitioners.

Key recommendations from this work, aligned to strengthening knowledge and exchange between academic and government, included [3.3]:

- promoting opportunities for research-policy collaborations to avoid reliance upon existing links between individual researchers and local policy makers;
- changing the culture in both academic and policy communities, and developing more systematic approaches to achieving connectivity between them;
- continuing the 'need to know' approach where there are clearly defined evidence needs that can be addressed by rapid and affordable reviews to distil the existing research base.

2.2 Informing evidence-led policy making in Wales

Alongside this work, in 2013 the Cardiff team established the Public Policy Institute for Wales (PPIW) to bridge the gap between academia and Welsh Government. The Institute, funded by Welsh Government (£2.6M [G3.2]), ran until 2017 and was replaced by a larger successor organisation, the Wales Centre for Public Policy (WCPP) in 2017 (£8M [G3.3]). The WCPP operates a demand-led model of knowledge mobilisation based on use of strategies identified in the team's research (as outlined in Section 2.1). It also benefits from Martin's practical experience from the Knowledge Navigator project, as well as the team's findings on the value and limitations of knowledge brokering [3.4].

The Centre's way of working contrasts with the traditional linear generate-transmit-adopt approach where research is undertaken by academics with little, if any, engagement with potential users. Instead, staff work closely with Welsh Government ministers to understand priority topics and identify relevant academic experts (from Cardiff and externally) to undertake evidence reviews [3.5]. Work is tailored to each minister's needs, research findings are communicated in non-specialist language so that they can be assimilated easily by busy politicians, and synthesising existing knowledge allows a quicker response than carrying out primary research [3.1].

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

[3.1] Martin, S. J. (2016) 'Practical approaches to increasing the utilization of research', *Public Administration Review*, 76 (1), 18-19. <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.12509>

[3.2] Martin, S. J. (2010) 'Co-production of social research: strategies for engaged scholarship', *Public Money & Management*, 30 (4), 211-218. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540962.2010.492180>

[3.3] Allen, T., Grace, C., and Martin, S. J. (2015) 'Making the Most of Research: Final report of the ESRC Local Government Knowledge Navigator' <https://www.solace.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/SOLACE-Reports-and-Guides-Solace-Making-the-Most-of-Research.pdf>

[3.4] MacKillop, E. Quarmby, S., and Downe, J. (2020) 'Does knowledge brokering facilitate evidence-based policy? A review of existing knowledge and an agenda for future research' *Policy & Politics*, 48 (2), 335-353. <https://doi.org/10.1332/030557319X15740848311069>

[3.5] Bristow, D., Carter, L., and Martin, S. J. (2015) 'Using evidence to improve policy and practice: the UK What Works Centres', *Contemporary Social Science*, 10 (2), 126-137. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21582041.2015.1061688>

Selected grants:

[G3.1] Grace, C., Allen, T., and Martin, S. Local Government Knowledge Navigator (2013-2015), Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), £150,000, (Grant no. PS120034)

[G3.2] Martin, S. Public Policy Institute for Wales (2013-2017), Welsh Government, £2.6M

[G3.3] Martin S., and Bristow, D. Wales Centre for Public Policy (2017-2022), Welsh Government, ESRC and Cardiff University £8M (Grant no. ES/R00384X/1)

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Cardiff Business School's demand-led knowledge mobilisation model, delivered by the Public Policy Institute for Wales (PPIW) and its successor the Wales Centre for Public Policy (WCPP), influenced the development and practice of other 'knowledge brokerage' centres across the UK via the What Works Network. Cardiff also delivered tangible benefits for Welsh Government across a range of policy areas, as outlined below.

4.1 Impact on the development of the UK's What Works Network

Cardiff plays a leading role in the UK's What Works Network. The Network, which currently comprises thirteen What Works Centres (one of which is the WCPP), brokers knowledge between research and various policy areas accounting for more than £250B of public spending. Martin, a member of the Network's governing body since 2015, was also on the commissioning panel for two other Centres: What Works Scotland (in 2013, also acting as a member of their Advisory Group from 2015-2018) and the What Works Centre for Evidence Implementation in Adult Social Care (in 2020). Martin also advised the Northern Ireland Executive on establishing its own Public Policy Institute and the WCPP convened a joint event with Queen's University Belfast and the Campbell Collaboration (a social science research network) which led them to discuss options for a Centre. Other WCPP staff are members of the Advisory Groups of two further What Works Centres.

The WCPP additionally led an ESRC Strategic Fund project to increase the Network's impact across the UK through a series of summits designed to help What Works Centres to engage with policy makers in devolved administrations **[5.1]**. Five summits attracting a total of 300 attendees were held in 2018-19 in Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland, followed by a final roundtable in England involving What Works Centres, the ESRC, the Cabinet Office, and representatives from devolved administrations. 82% of What Works Centres, policy makers and practitioners who attended the summits rated them 'extremely useful' or 'very useful.' 86% of participants said that they planned to use what they had learnt at the summit to inform their practice, with one attendee stating *"I know a lot more about a range of other research that is available and where to easily access it. Will definitely be making use of this in the future"* **[5.1]**. WCPP used the project's findings to develop a series of published recommendations to maximise the impact of Centres in supporting policy makers across the UK **[5.1]**.

4.2 Impact on Welsh Government policy

"We are using this advice to inform our decisions, to focus our interventions, to target our policies ... The Public Policy Institute for Wales has already established itself as an important part of the policy 'landscape' here in Wales" – the former First Minister of Wales in 2015 **[5.2]**.

The PPIW, and later the WCPP, pioneered new ways of working which have improved the Welsh Government's use of research evidence. Cardiff's model has been key to achieving demonstrable impact through the responsive and timely way in which knowledge is provided to meet the evidence needs of ministers and senior civil servants. In 2019, Wales' current First Minister reported that *"The work of the Wales Centre for Public Policy greatly strengthens our policy-making in Wales. It gives us high-quality independent evidence to challenge current assumptions and improve our decisions"* **[5.3a]**.

Andrew Slade, Welsh Government's Director General (Economy, Skills and Natural Resources) confirmed the benefits of Cardiff's model **[5.4]**:

- By *"acting as a trusted intermediary, the Centre has introduced ministers to a much wider range of academic expertise than the Welsh Government has previously accessed"*;
- He described the approach as: *"a novel development, both in Wales and in the UK, and has achieved impacts which previous attempts to enhance interaction between research and policy making had not"*;

- And he highlighted the *“speed at which it is able to synthesise evidence which means that it is available when it is most useful to ministers”*.

This unique, demand-led approach has enabled research to achieve significant, cost-effective impacts on government policies. On average, each PPIW/WCPP study costs around £10,000, which compares favourably to budgets set aside by governments for the large-scale, multi-year policy evaluations that they have traditionally commissioned.

The PPIW advised the Cabinet Office on how to develop ‘cross-cutting’ strategies to deliver the Welsh Government’s 2015-2020 Programme for Government. It provided a synthesis of the evidence on formulating strategies and held an internal seminar for Cabinet Office staff. It then wrote a report on joined-up government and held a seminar for the Permanent Secretary and her senior team. Jo Salway, then Head of the Cabinet Office, stated that the resulting strategy *“was a first for Government and drew on the work of the Centre”* [5.5a]. The Centre’s work *“achieved its purpose of challenging senior civil servants to think about the issues, including considering the extent to which we had already achieved the goal of cross government working”* [5.5a].

Through membership of the UK’s What Works network, Cardiff researchers also enabled Welsh policy makers to access work undertaken by What Works Centres in England and Scotland and facilitated experts from these Centres to work in Wales. A Welsh Government Director General explained: *“Without PPIW, departments here might have been less aware of the work of What Works Centres, the Centres would have been less aware of Welsh policies and priorities, and there might have been obstacles to our engaging with this UK government-funded network”* [5.4].

a. During the Covid-19 pandemic

The speed and flexibility of Cardiff’s model allowed the WCPP to play *“an integral role”* in the development of the Welsh Government’s response to the Covid-19 pandemic by *“providing relevant and timely evidence to identify challenges and priorities as it focuses on recovery from Covid-19”* [5.5b - Catrin Sully, Head of the Cabinet Office]. In April-May 2020, the Counsel General and Minister for European Transition asked the WCPP to write briefing papers for participants in expert roundtables (including Gordon Brown and a range of international experts) that he established to advise the Welsh Government on recovery from the pandemic. WCPP staff attended roundtables, wrote reports on each session and published an overarching report. In July-August 2020, the Minister asked the WCPP to synthesise the research evidence on Covid-19 to guide the work of an External Advisory Group which met six times to identify strategies for recovery. The WCPP attended the meetings and produced a report on the experts’ recommendations. It was also commissioned to analyse responses to the Welsh Government’s public consultation on recovery. Its reports were discussed by the Cabinet in September and cited in the Welsh Government’s policy on ‘COVID-19 reconstruction: challenges and priorities’, published in October 2020 [5.6]. Sully confirmed that the WCPP’s work *“informed the Welsh Government’s approach to recovery and will shape its priorities for the remainder of the Senedd term”* [5.5b]. She noted how the *“understanding, flexibility and responsiveness”* of the WCPP’s operating model *“was important to help produce rapid outputs that were accessible, context aware and able to support future thinking and reconstruction after Covid-19”* [5.5b].

4.3 Changing Welsh Government policy decisions

Cardiff’s work directly influenced a range of other Welsh Government policy decisions, delivering impacts which would not have occurred without the unique model of knowledge brokering developed from Martin and colleagues’ research. As of December 2020, the PPIW and WCPP have published 145 reports and supplied more than 100 verbal and written ministerial briefings. All reports are written in accessible language and concise formats that policy makers can relate to and act on. Its outputs are published on the Centre’s website and many have been cited in policy documents, Government White Papers, ministerial statements and select committee enquiries. Delivering rigorous evidence in this way enabled ministers

and senior officials to apply research evidence and expertise to policy decisions, resulting in “significant and demonstrable impacts on policy decisions” [5.4]. These include:

- The PPIW’s analysis showed that ministerial plans to fund universal childcare would have little impact on household poverty or maternal employment rates. This led directly to a decision to target provision on working parents only, which resulted in annual savings for the Welsh Government of £80M [5.3b].
- Two reports on the causes and prevention of youth homelessness had a direct impact on Welsh Government policy. The Minister for Housing and Regeneration said: “*The WCPP report tells me that there is a clear need to promote and encourage new and innovative options to both house and support young people. I am therefore pleased to announce £4.8m of funding to establish a brand-new innovation fund to develop suitable housing and support options for young people*” [5.7].
- A report showing that there would be a fall of 1%-1.5% in GDP in Wales over 10 years as a result of the UK immigration White Paper informed the Welsh Government’s negotiations with the UK government. The research was cited in and published as an annex to a White Paper ‘Securing Wales’ Future: Transition from the EU to a new relationship with Europe’ [5.8, p.49]. Piers Bisson, Welsh Government Director (European Transition, Constitution and Justice) confirmed the “*huge impact that the WCPP has made on the creation of what has been an almost entirely new – and strategically vital – policy agenda for the Welsh Government*” [5.9].
- The design and implementation of a waste recycling trial in South East Wales was directly informed by WCPP recommendations on ways to increase recycling rates including distributing an information pack to people who have moved home [5.8]. The First Minister said: “*In 2018 the Centre made a valuable contribution to helping the Welsh Government and its partners understand how to increase recycling rates among residents*”. The work helped the Welsh Government “*to retain our place as the best in the UK and 3rd best in the world for recycling household waste*” [5.3].

Cardiff’s knowledge mobilisation model, involving close working with policy makers to identify evidence needs and broker existing knowledge, has informed a wide range of other Welsh Government policy areas and it was highlighted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) as an example of good practice in evidence-based policy making [5.10]. For its body of work, WCPP was recognised by the ESRC Celebrating Impact Prize 2019 as the runner-up for Outstanding Public Policy Impact.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

[5.1] Increasing the impact of the What Works Network across the UK (2020)

[5.2] Using Evidence to Improve Policy: The Public Policy Institute for Wales one year on (2015). Testimonial from Carwyn Jones, then First Minister of Wales, on p.1

[5.3] a. Testimonials from Professor Mark Drakeford, First Minister for Wales, Welsh Government, and video interview recorded by the First Minister for the ESRC, b. ESRC Press release

[5.4] Testimonial from Andrew Slade, Director General, Economy, Skills and Natural Resources, Welsh Government

[5.5] a. Cabinet Office testimonials from Jo Salway (former Head, Cabinet Office), b. Welsh Government and Catrin Sully (Head, Cabinet Office)

[5.6] COVID-19 reconstruction: challenges and priorities’, Welsh Government (October 2020)

[5.7] Ministerial statement: Rebecca Evans AM (Minister for Housing and Regeneration), speaking 20 November.

[5.8] White Paper: Securing Wales’ Future Transition from the European Union to a new relationship with Europe (2017)

[5.9] Testimonial from Piers Bisson, Welsh Government Director (European Transition, Constitution and Justice)

[5.10] OECD (2017) ‘Governing better through evidence-based policy making’