

# School for Public Health Research (SPHR)

<b>Project Title</b>	<b><i>Evidence Beyond the Health Sector</i></b>
<b>Project ID</b>	SPHR-LSH-PH1-LAR / LAS
<b>Lead Researchers</b>	Karen Lock, Mark Petticrew – SPHR@L, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM)
<b>SPHR Collaborators</b>	Matt Egan, Judith Green, Theo Lorenc, Fred Martineau, Sarah Milton, Lesley Mountford, Elizabeth McGill, Gemma Phillips, Rebecca Steinbach – LSHTM; Margaret Whitehead - LiLac
<b>External Collaborators</b>	Steven Duffy, Centre for Reviews and Dissemination, University of York
<b>Start Date</b>	1 June 2012
<b>End Date</b>	30 November 2013
<b>Outline</b>	<p>Decisions made in many different policy sectors may have important impacts on population health outcomes. This is particularly true of sectors relating to the built environment, such as transport, housing and urban planning. While considerable research has been done on evidence use in healthcare and public health, cultures of evidence in these other sectors are much less well understood, and may be very different to those in health-related fields. There is a need to understand how decision-makers understand evidence in their own terms, as well as what factors influence their use of research evidence. To this end, we have conducted a number of linked studies that aim to improve our understanding of how evidence is understood, accessed, used and valued by decision-makers working beyond health areas, in sectors that potentially impact upon people's health and well-being. These studies include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A systematic review of qualitative evidence exploring cultures of evidence across policy sectors [<a href="#">link to ReSCuE project publication</a>]</li> <li>• An <a href="#">ethnographic study</a> of local practitioners working within and beyond the health sector.</li> <li>• A <a href="#">focus group study</a> of UK and international local practitioners working in urban planning and the built environment.</li> <li>• A <a href="#">qualitative case study</a> exploring why local authorities sometimes undertake controlled evaluations of the health impacts of interventions in housing.</li> <li>• An <a href="#">exploration of policy decisions</a> in the transport sector.</li> </ul> <p>Findings for all four of these work strands will be published separately and synthesised in an overview report.</p>
<b>Findings</b>	<p>Although cultures of evidence in non-health sectors are similar to those in health in some ways, there are some key differences, particularly as regards the political context of decision-making. Intersectoral public health research could benefit from taking into account non-health decision makers' needs and preferences, particularly around relevance and political feasibility. Specifically, researchers could take into account the following issues relating to how local practitioners think about and use evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local practitioners apply the word 'evidence' to a variety of knowledge sources including case studies</li> <li>• Practitioners seek evidence of <i>viability</i>, a conflation of terms relating to the feasibility of intervention delivery and sustainability.</li> <li>• Emphasis is placed on immediate outputs and intermediate outcomes; evidence of long-term outcomes is often seen as unattainable.</li> <li>• Local knowledge is vital to local practice. Academic evidence is frequently considered to be irrelevant to practitioners' local contexts.</li> </ul>



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	Academics can meaningfully impact on local decision-making by co-producing research with local practitioners, in developing geographical data at local authority level, and by improving local evaluation and research capacity through training.
<b>Publications</b>	<p>Lorenc T, Tyner EF, Petticrew M, Duffy S, Martineau FP, Phillips G, et al. Cultures of evidence across policy sectors: systematic review of qualitative evidence. <b>The European Journal of Public Health</b>. 2014:doi: 10.1093/eurpub/cku038.</p> <p>Steinbach R. Policy Decisions in the Transport Sector. London: SPHR@L, 2013. (SPHRL working paper - for practitioners available on website).</p> <p>Gorsky M, Lock K, Hogarth S. Public health and English local government: historical perspectives on the impact of 'returning home'. <b>Journal of Public Health</b>. 2014:doi: 10.1093/pubmed/fdt131.</p> <p>Petticrew M, McKee M, Lock K, Green J, Phillips G. In Search of Social Equipoise. <b>BMJ</b>. 2013;347:f4016</p> <p>Anderson W, Egan M, Pinto A, Mountford L. Planning for Public Health – building the local. <b>The Journal of the Town and Country Planning Association</b>. 2014; 341-47</p> <p>G Phillips, T Lorenc, M Petticrew and J Green. <i>Working for the public health: politics, localism and epistemologies of practice</i>; <b>Sociology of Health and Illness</b> (accepted/ in press 2014)</p> <p>S Milton, M Petticrew, J Green. <i>Why controlled evaluations of housing interventions do sometimes get implemented</i>. Submitted to <b>Public Health</b> (accepted/ in press 2014)</p> <p>Elizabeth McGill, Matt Egan, Mark Petticrew, Lesley Mountford, Sarah Milton, Margaret Whitehead, Karen Lock. Trading off relevance versus quality: non-health decision makers use of evidence on the social determinants of health. (Submitted <b>BMJ Open</b>)</p>
<b>Impact</b>	Our engagement with several local authorities has encouraged them to strengthen their links with the academic community and engage in co-production of evidence to inform local decision-making. The Public Health Directorate for Suffolk has requested assistance from SPHR@L to help identify and assess alcohol initiatives taking place in their county, and evaluate their 'Reducing the Strength' intervention. Similarly, the London Borough of Islington (Community Safety and Public Health Directorates) have requested that SPHR@L help evaluate the impacts of their Borough-wide alcohol policy of introducing alcohol Cumulative Impact Zones (and related interventions). In addition, we have also conducted the first of a planned series of evaluation workshops in April 2014 (this was developed in 2013/14). This first workshop was attended by practitioners working in public health and a range of other local authority sectors. This workshop was tailored to meet the needs of this audience and will be repeated in London and in other areas following very positive feedback from attendees.
<b>Funding</b>	£326,719
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