

## Professional Development Policy Workshop: Science and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Leadership

### Key Lessons

#### For Early-Career Researchers

- **Policy making is a 3-ring circus: Politics, Do-ability and Evidence** all have to be taken into consideration. Evidence is necessary but not sufficient.
- **Independence:** Advice to government must be independent, never ideologically driven. Civil-servants are good at spotting bias.
- **Timing:** Understand what policy customers want, and when they want it by; Advice should be timely and policy relevant, or it won't get noticed, no matter how excellent the research.
- **Policy is interesting:** Some of the problems policy makers have to tackle are very interesting, and can lead to exciting research opportunities.
- **Communication:** Be clear and concise. If you can't distil your findings to half a page, policy makers can't read it!
- **Contact:** There is a lot of uncertainty about how to get research in front of the right policy maker. If you have no network to utilise, then write to the relevant minister. Every piece of mail is read, and will work its way down to the right person.

#### For Both

- **Reach out:** There is often a nervousness and apprehension around approaching one another, but there is clearly a great appetite for engagement, so go for it.
- **Investing in Evidence:** With departmental budgets falling, the burden of research is increasingly going to fall upon the wider research community. So it is vital that both sides improve their engagement with the other.
- **Trust, openness and empathy:** It is of course vital to be honest with the other, especially when communicating uncertainty. And bear in mind cultural differences: policy makers work to a practical solution, while academics work to find an exact answer.
- **Networks:** The easiest and most efficient way to find out what relevant research is out there, or to get a piece of research in front of a policy maker, is through informal networks.

#### For Policy Makers

- **Limits of Evidence:** Expertise and evidence provide the outer constraints of what you can do, they do not tell you what you should do.
- **Implementation & Evaluation:** Considerations of implementation should be built into policy formulation at the outset. As should mechanisms for evaluation.
- **Looking to the future:** Government departments have established networks of experts that they use. But the networks are often geared towards historical needs, beware of this.
- **Communication:** If you want academics to provide relevant research, it is imperative that you communicate your research needs effectively.
- **Contact:** It can be hard to discover what academic research is going on in a given area. If you're at a loss, the HECCE database of 2014 REF Impact Case Studies (<http://impact.ref.ac.uk/CaseStudies/search1.aspx>), and RCUK's Gateway to Research (<http://gtr.rcuk.ac.uk/>) are good places to start.