

Linking up research, policy and practice: lessons from a collaborative crime prevention project

Inez Dussuyer
Victoria University

Diana Smart
Australian Institute of Family Studies

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (Uncompressed) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

Research, Policy and Practice

- "The relationships between research, knowledge, policy and practice are always likely to remain loose, shifting and contingent" (Nutley et al 2003)
- "...The gaps between research and policy, and between policy and practice, have continued to prove challenging to those attempting to bridge them" (Wadsworth, 2004)

The Australian Temperament Project 1983-2006+

A longitudinal study of a large representative sample of children and families from Victoria

13 waves of data over the first 20 years of life

See *Prior, Sanson, Smart & Oberklaid (2000), Pathways from infancy to adolescence: Australian Temperament Project 1983-2000*,
Website - www.aifs.gov.au/atp

Findings and implications from the AIFS-CPV project

- Multiple pathways to antisocial behaviour → it's never too early, never too late to intervene
- Onset coincided with major life transitions → importance of a successful transition
- Most common pathway began in childhood → importance of the middle childhood years
- Multi-faceted nature of risk → need for multi-faceted interventions

Findings and implications from the AIFS-CPV project

- Antisocial behaviour often occurred alongside other problem behaviours → need for broad, multi-faceted efforts
- Entrenched antisocial behaviour often persisted into adulthood → crucial to prevent its development
- Capacity for change, for the better and the worse → dangers of labeling, need for mix of individualised and community-based approaches

Collaborative model - project operational structure

Small project team

- AIFS - research, analysis and reporting
- CPV - guidance and leadership

Evaluative comments

- Effective relationships, team stability, supervision and appropriate mix of skills
- Flexibility and openness within parameters

Contributions of the Project Advisory Group

Project Advisory Group

- Source of ideas, interpretation of results
- Access to criminal justice information
- Dissemination to practitioners
- Briefing to senior management, Ministers

Evaluative comments

- Infrequent meetings (quarterly)
- Irregular attendance, change of representatives
- Links to practitioners uneven

Lessons learnt

- Policy experts must be involved from the start
- Need to cover range of policy areas/portfolios
- 'Clout' to reach upwards and downwards
- Actively seek out mutual interests and concerns
- Jointly agree on project goals and outcomes
- Use network expertise and contacts
- Early take-up of findings and messages

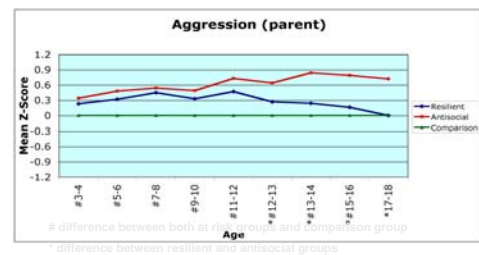
Outputs - Content, type and presentation

- Differing perspectives brought together
- Very productive - 3 large reports, many issues examined (10+)
- Impact of size of the project, breadth and complexity of results
- Setting up of Task Force for impact on practitioners

Evaluative comments

- *What could have been better?*
 - More active Project Advisory Group role
 - More targeted and practical recommendations
- *What else?*
 - Series of working groups to discuss results and implications?
 - Series of small reports to target audiences?

Example of visual presentation



Evaluative comments regarding outputs

- Value / power of description and trends
- Tailor the product
- Keep it short and transparent

Lessons learnt

To make the policy and practice links -

- Discuss and allocate responsibility for leading this
- Build in dialogue between researchers and policy makers
- Engage practitioners across range of sectors
- Create Task Force with practitioners and policy makers
- Workshop the findings before finalising product

Dissemination - How much, by whom, who to?

Dissemination activities

- Many presentations, extra papers produced
- Multiple audiences
- Involvement of project team

Evaluative comments

- Planning challenges
- Was there an impact (type, when, where, on whom)?

Lessons learnt for dissemination

- Develop a dissemination plan early on
- Use Project Advisory Group to reach multiple audiences
- Researchers need to participate in dissemination and take-up of findings
- Build these activities into timelines, resourcing and costing
- Unrealistic expectations about impact

Timelines, resourcing and costs

Timelines

- Agreed timelines and funding arrangements covered analysis and write-up phase only
- Dissemination activities and clearances not factored in

Evaluative comments

- Difficult to calculate timelines
- Time needed for the take-up of findings, messages
- Contractual constraints

More lessons learnt

For maximum impact -

- Allow time for research, review, clearance, approval
- Allow for dissemination activities and filtering effect
- Realistic about the actual time, resources, costs
- Flexible agreements, if possible

Overall evaluative conclusions

- Very rewarding
- Pitfalls and challenges
- Chance to make a difference

For more information on the ATP, and the AIFS-CPV project, see www.aifs.gov.au/atp