

Mapping the Standards of Evidence used in UK social policy.

Description

Puttick, R. (2018). [Mapping the Standards of Evidence used in UK social policy. Alliance for Useful Evidence.](#) [Tweet](#)

“Our analysis focuses on 18 frameworks used by 16 UK organisations for judging evidence used in UK domestic social policy which are relevant to government, charities, and public service providers.

In summary:

• There has been a rapid proliferation of standards of evidence and other evidence frameworks since 2000. This is a very positive development and reflects the increasing sophistication of how evidence is generated and used in social policy.

• There are common principles underpinning them, particularly the shared goal of improving decision-making, but they often ask different questions, are engaging different audiences, generate different content, and have varying uses. This variance reflects the host organisation’s goals, which can be to inform its funding decisions, to make recommendations to the wider field, or to provide a resource for providers to help them evaluate.

• It may be expected that all evidence frameworks assess whether an intervention is working, but this is not always the case, with some frameworks assessing the quality of evidence, not the success of the intervention itself.

• The differences between the standards of evidence are often for practical reasons and reflect the host organisation’s goals. However, there is a need to consider more philosophical and theoretical tensions about what constitutes good evidence. We identified examples of different organisations reaching different conclusions about the same intervention; one thought it worked well, and the other was less confident. This is a problem: Who is right? Does the intervention work, or not? As the field develops, it is crucial that confusion and disagreement is minimised.

• One suggested response to minimise confusion is to develop a single set of standards of evidence. Although this sounds inherently sensible, our research has identified several major challenges which would need to be overcome to achieve this.

• We propose that the creation of a single set of standards of evidence is considered in greater depth through engagement with both those using standards of evidence, and those being assessed against them. This engagement would also help share learning and insights to ensure that standards of evidence are effectively achieving their goals.

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Current landscape of standards of evidence in social policy

We have analysed the 18 standards of evidence currently used in UK social policy.³ We have only looked at impact standards and those relevant to the social sector, we have also only included those currently used in the UK.

Our analysis focuses on 18 frameworks used by 16 UK organisations for judging evidence used in UK domestic social policy which are relevant to government, charities, and public service providers. These are:

Organisation	Framework
Big Lottery Fund's Realising Ambition programme	The Confidence Review
Bond	Evidence Principles
Centre for Analysis of Youth Transitions (CAYT)	Standards of Evidence
Dartington Service Design Lab (formerly known as Dartington Social Research Unit)	Standards of Evidence
Early Intervention Foundation	Evidence Standards
Education Endowment Foundation	Teaching and Learning Toolkit
Education Endowment Foundation	Evaluation Padlock Rating
HACT	Standards of Evidence
National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)	GRADE (Grading of Recommendations Assessment, Development and Evaluation)
National Institute of Health Research's Health Services and Delivery Research (NIHR HS&DR) Programme	Realist and Meta-Narrative Evidence Syntheses: Evolving Standards (RAMESES)
National Academy for Parenting Practitioners	Parenting Programme Evaluation Tool (PPET)
Nesta	Standards of Evidence
Office for Fair Access (OFFA)	Standards of Evidence*
Project Oracle	Standards of Evidence
What Work Centre for Local Economic Growth	The Maryland Scientific Methods Scale (SMS)
What Works Centre for Crime Reduction	EMMIE Framework
What Works Centre for Wellbeing	GRADE (Grading of Recommendations Assessment, Development and Evaluation)
What Works Centre for Wellbeing	CERQual (Confidence in the Evidence from Reviews of Qualitative research)

Category

- 1. Uncategorized

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