

Policy Briefings

Writing, publishing and promoting policy-focused research notes

Dr Tom Arnold
Heseltine Institute



Heseltine Institute for Public
Policy, Practice and Place



About this session



The Levelling Up The UK White Paper: what's the problem?

Professor Michael Parkinson CBE
University of Liverpool

1. What is a policy briefing and why write one?
2. Identifying your audience
3. Policy writing vs academic writing
4. Writing your briefing
5. How to use your briefing

By the end of this workshop you will...

- Recognise different approaches to influencing policy
- Know what a policy briefing is and how it differs from other types of publication
- Understand what policymakers value in a policy briefing
- Develop your understanding of how to identify key messages
- Have some potential strategies to use your policy briefing to achieve research impact

The Heseltine Institute



The University of Liverpool's in-house 'think tank' and policy research team.

4 main areas of work:

- Research and thought leadership covering a broad range of urban and regional issues
- Knowledge exchange: promoting partnerships between the university and local partners
- Capacity building: mobilising the work of staff and students for public policy impact
- Evidence-based public policy: assisting local partners with policy development and research

Heseltine Institute Policy Briefings



Decarbonisation in social housing: From concept to delivery

Clare Rainsford
Sustainability Manager, Onward Homes

Policy Briefing 2(06)

December 2021

Responding to COVID-19 in the Liverpool City Region

Introducing the Heseltine Institute's
COVID-19 Policy Briefs

Policy Briefing 001

April 2020

Coronavirus Isolate your household Stay at home

If you or anyone in your household has a high temperature of at least 38°C and coughs/sneezes/stays in bed - even if it's mild

Everyone in your household must stay at home for 14 days and keep away from others

DO NOT go to your GP, hospital or pharmacy

Only call NHS 111 if you can't get advice or your symptoms worsen

PROTECT YOURSELF OTHERS & THE NHS

nhs.uk/coronavirus

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Responding to COVID-19 in the Liverpool City Region

COVID-19: How Modelling is Contributing to the
Merseyside Response

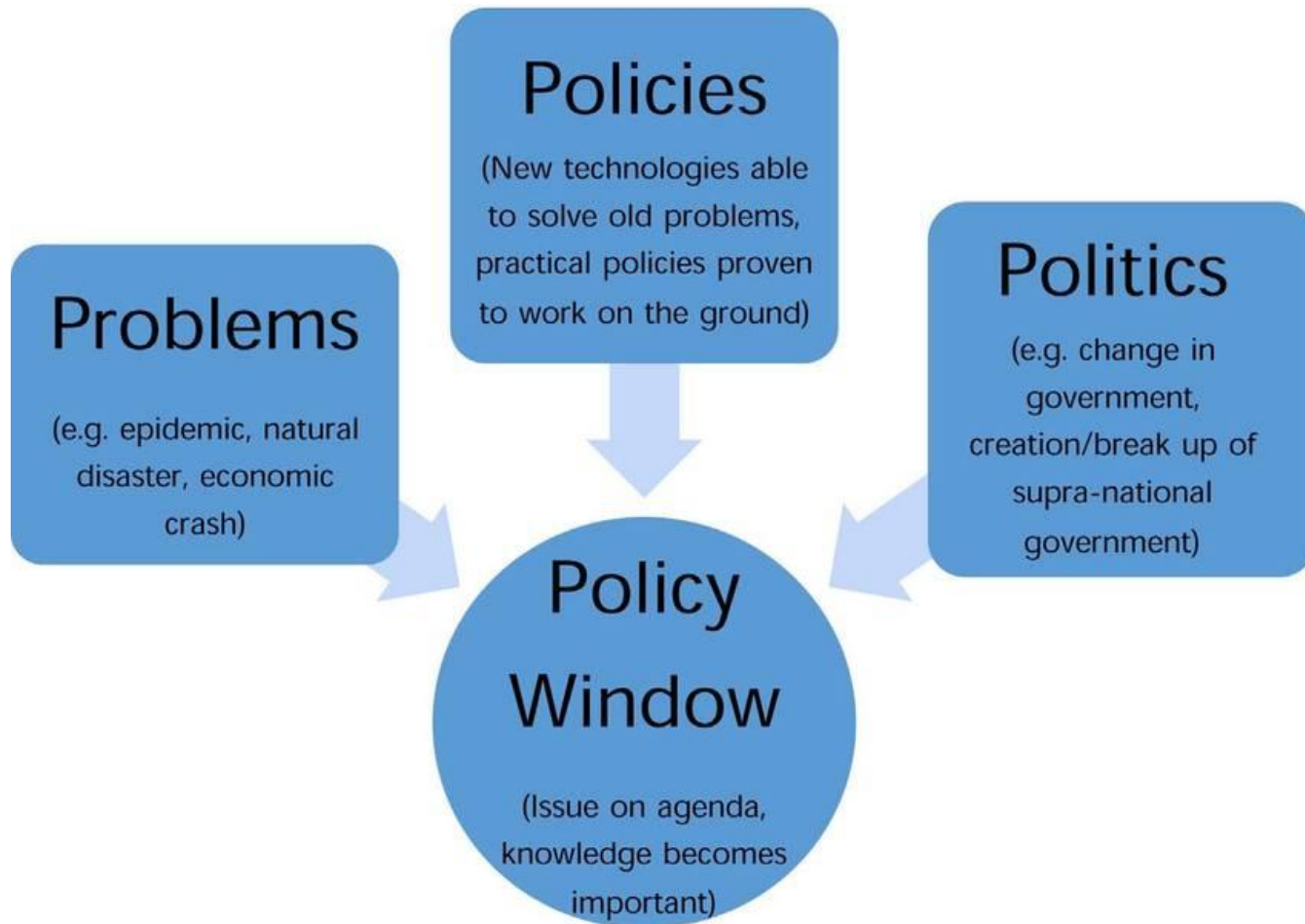
Dr Alex Alexiou, Matt Ashton, Prof Ben Barr, Prof Iain Buchan, Prof Martin O'Flaherty, Dr Chris Jewell, Dr Rachel Jaynes, Dr Chris Kyriodemos, Dr Roberta Piroddi, Dr Jonathan Read, Prof Sally Sheard

Policy Briefing 003

May 2020

- Launched April 2020 in response to Covid-19
- Aimed to facilitate rapid knowledge exchange
- Over 50 briefings published so far
- Series 2 launched September 2021: Recovery and Renewal – wider focus on range of policy issues
- 4 themes:
 - Economic futures
 - Inequalities
 - Climate change and resilience
 - Public service innovation

Influencing policymakers



- Policymaking is rarely ‘evidenced-based’...but it can be ‘evidence-informed’ if advocates act effectively (Mayne et al 2018).
- Policy change rarely happens quickly and directly – but sometimes a window opens.
- The policymaking landscape is complex and multi-scalar – important to understand who the main influences are and who ultimately makes decisions.
- You are the expert – policymakers will value your knowledge.

3 approaches for academics seeking to influence policy

Approach	Summary	Benefits	Costs
The 'State-the-Facts' Approach	Using tools such as social media and systematic reviews to improve engagement – simply providing content for others to engage with.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy for academics to maintain independence • Can be quick • Can be low cost 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not particularly effective at achieving policy change • Misunderstands practicalities of policy change
The Storytelling Approach	Crafting attractive narratives with the explicit aim of shaping policy options.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makes an emotional appeal to policy change • Can appeal more effectively to policymakers than 'dry' facts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be tempting to be selective with data • Relies on having personal charisma to engage diverse audiences
The Co-Production Approach	Collaborating with policymakers and those impacted by policy to produce research.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrated to be an effective way of promoting evidence to shape policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time consuming • Ethically complex • Vulnerable to external shocks • Hard to maintain independence?

Identifying your audience: what is a policymaker?



IP
PR
North

- Politicians: national / regional / local
- Special advisors (SPADs)
- Civil servants
- Public sector organisations (e.g. NHS)
- Charities
- Think tanks
- Pressure groups
- Trade bodies
- Businesses



What is a policy briefing?

TheKingsFund>

Ideas that change
health care

Briefing

Devolution: what it means for health and social care in England

Devolution of powers and funds from central down to local government has emerged as one of this government's flagship policies. The notion of devolving health care was not core to the original devolution agenda, which focused on driving local economic growth. The inclusion of health and social care in the so-called 'Devo Manc' agreement announced in November last year therefore came as a surprise to many. Along with powers over housing, skills and transport, the landmark deal between the Treasury and Greater Manchester paves the way for the councils and NHS in Greater Manchester to take control of the region's £6 billion health and social care budget.

Ahead of further devolution deals expected to be announced as part of the Spending Review 2015, this briefing describes the origins of the devolution agenda and charts its progress in relation to health and social care. Before drawing some broad conclusions, the penultimate section explores some of the key policy and implementation questions that remain unresolved.

Alongside secondary research, this paper is built on insights captured at events held at The King's Fund as well as a series of conversations with representatives from various national bodies, think tanks and local areas involved in devolution, for which we are immensely grateful.

What's happening and how did we get here?

A potted history of devolution and centralisation in England

Over the past 150 years, there has been a tendency for UK governments to centralise power. The result is a UK system that is one of the most centralised of all countries belonging to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD): 75 per cent of tax revenues were raised centrally in 2012 (OECD 2014), and in 2014 just under 25 per cent of public expenditure was by local government (OECD 2015).

By comparison, in Sweden (for example), almost half of revenues are spent at local government level (OECD 2014). Decentralised approaches within Europe also apply to health care; in countries including Sweden (Bidgood 2013), Denmark and Norway, for

- A concise summary of a particular issue
- Some policy options to deal with the issue
- A recommendation (or recommendations) on the best option
- Typically between 500-2000 words
- Often including images, charts and figures

Why produce a policy briefing?

- Short, sharp piece of writing that demonstrates the impact of your research
- More easily digestible for non-academic audiences
- Encourages writers to focus on what's important for policy audiences
- A 'product' you can use in a variety of situations
- Opportunity for collaboration with non-academic partners
- REF Impact: "An effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life *beyond academia*"

Two types of policy briefing

Advocacy

Objective

Identifies a problem or set of problems

Argues in favour of a particular course of action

Provides information for a policymaker to make up their own mind

Provides evidence to support an alternative to current policy

Provides information about a range of alternative courses of action

Convinces the reader that the problem must be addressed by adopting the recommendation(s) included in the briefing

Describes the problem to the reader and encourages them to consider a number of recommendations

Describes the results that could be achieved by adopting the recommendation(s)

Describes potential outcomes if the problem is or isn't addressed

Makes clear why the reader should be interested in your analysis

Example of an advocacy briefing



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Policy, Practice and Place



Responding to COVID-19 in the Liverpool City Region

The Liverpool City Region Doughnut: A Means
for Securing a Green and Resilient Recovery?

Fiona Brannigan

- The Problem: Economic shock to Liverpool City Region due to Covid-19
- Proposed course of action: Liverpool City Region should adopt the 'Doughnut Economics' model to promote a sustainable recovery
- Evidence: Uses Amsterdam as an example of a city that has adopted the Doughnut Economics model
- Aims to convince the reader that the Doughnut Economics model is the most appropriate model for Liverpool City Region
- Highlights several clear proposed benefits that could be gained by adopting the model
- Provides clear and tangible steps that should be taken to adopt the model and clarifies why the reader should be interested

Link:

<https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/media/livacuk/publicpolicyamppractice/PB012.pdf>

Example of an objective briefing

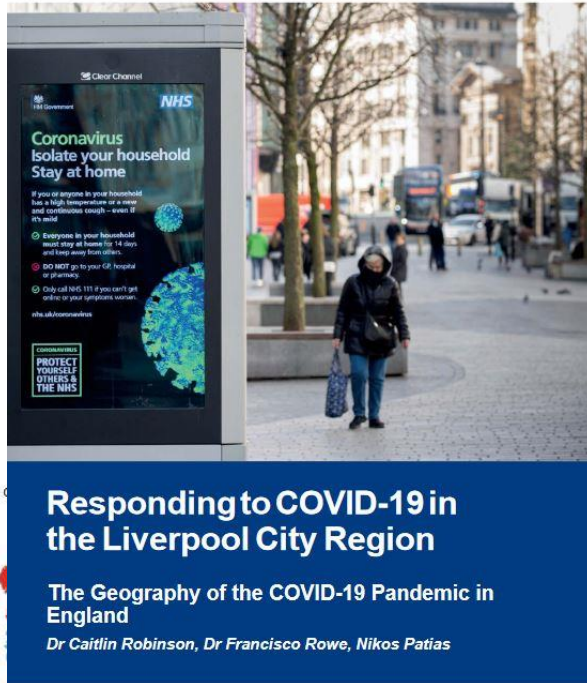
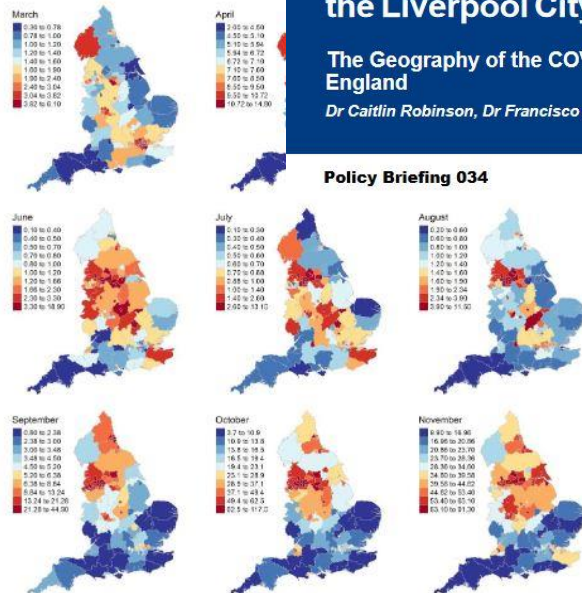


Figure 1. Relative distribution of average daily COVID-19 cases across UTLAs in England.



Policy Briefing 034

December 2020

- The Problem: Covid-19 has affected certain areas in England significantly more than others, with deprived localities most negatively impacted
- Information: A range of structural inequalities and their potential to explain this disparity are explored
- Evidence: Uses a regression model, GIS analysis
- Potential courses of action: Further local analysis of the factors contributing to high rates of Covid-19 infection
- Describes problem if issue isn't addressed: Entrenched inequalities and worsening Covid-19 situation in most deprived areas
- Why should the reader be interested?: Important for public health professionals to be aware of the how socio-economic inequalities shape the geography of Covid-19

Link:

<https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/media/livacuk/publicpolicyamppractice/covid-19/PB034.pdf>

Writing for academic journals vs writing policy briefings

Journal Papers	Policy Briefings
Often required to have extensive literature review and conceptual/theoretical framework	No need for long literature review – only the most policy relevant needed
Details on methodology required: depending on discipline this can be an extensive part of the paper	Extensive detail on methodology not needed – just the basics will do (and even this is sometimes not needed)
Abstract: a standalone summary of your paper	Key messages: the 3-5 things you want your reader to take away from reading your briefing
Discussion: bringing together the literature, conceptual framework and research findings	Broader context: identifying why it is necessary to tackle the problem
Academic terminology, often complex	Avoid jargon – use simple, clear and easy to understand language. Specialist terms ok depending on audience.
Contribution to knowledge	Impact on policy
References: extensive references required (particularly in humanities/social sciences)	Only essential references needed – web links are useful

Structure



Policy Briefing 011

Care Homes and COVID-19: How we can Prepare for Future Outbreaks



Policy Briefing 014

After COVID-19: Is Liverpool Still Beyond or Back on the Brink?



Policy Briefing 024

Going Hard and Going Early in New Zealand: The "Team of 5 Million" Unites Against COVID-19

Title

- Short (max 20 words)
- Catchy
- Relevant

Key Messages/Summary

- 3-5 key things you want the reader to take away

Introduction

- Grab the reader's attention
- Introduce the topic
- Problem > background > cause > effect

Main Body

- Structure in a logical way
- For each paragraph ask yourself – so what?

Policy Implications/Recommendations

- Can go at the end, the start or distributed throughout the paper
- Make them clear (e.g. bold typeface or in a separate box)






Conclusion

- Short – emphasise importance of subject

Key Messages

Care home practices, mental health and staff support: learnings from the pandemic and lessons for future policy

Key takeaways

1. This research highlights the many shortcomings of the care home sector during the COVID-19 pandemic. These issues have been in place prior to the pandemic, and exacerbated further by the events of the last two years.  One sentence summary of the paper. Provides context.
2. Our research indicates a need for an overhaul of social care career pathways and support structures: Staff need to receive adequate and freely accessible training and opportunities for career development to improve the value of the sector and staff retention. This also includes a need for easily accessible and free mental health support for all involved (residents, families and staff).  Recommendation 1: aimed at the care sector
3. Social contacts are vital for residents and should not be removed again in the future, as evidence from the pandemic has highlighted the detrimental effects that removal of social connections can have.  Recommendation 2: aimed at the care sector and government
4. Information and guidance from government, advising care homes of national protocol changes, must be clearly communicated, with social care staff involved in decision making.  Recommendation 3: aimed at government
5. Care homes must aim for equitable care provision and visiting rights nationally, supported by national, evidence-based, government guidance.  Wrapping it up

Using your policy briefing



Liverpool City Region
All Party Parliamentary Group

**Post-pandemic economic growth:
Levelling up - local and regional
structures and the delivery of economic
growth**



- All Party Parliamentary Groups
- Select Committees
- Parliamentary Inquiries
- Local and Regional
- Calls for evidence: charities, third sector, voluntary organisations
- Media coverage: use the UoL comms team
- Collaboration with academic partners

Heseltine Institute submission to English devolution inquiry:
[https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/media/livacuk/publicpolicyamppractice/c
onsultationresponses/Devolution,APPG,inquiry,submission.pdf](https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/media/livacuk/publicpolicyamppractice/consultationresponses/Devolution,APPG,inquiry,submission.pdf)

Resources

Research impact at the UK Parliament

Everything you need to know to engage with Parliament as a researcher

Why engage with Parliament?
Benefits of the process to get involved with Parliament

What interests Parliament?
Find out about what Parliament is interested in

How Parliament uses research
Learn more about how different people in Parliament use research

Ways to engage with Parliament
Discover the different actions you can now get involved with Parliament

training and events

Academic fellowships

UK Parliament
UK Parliament > UK Parliament for researchers > UK Parliament for early career researchers

Support your engagement

Twitter

Contact Us Knowledge Exchange, Research Partnerships and Innovation at Liverpool University
Find out more

What does the UK Parliament do?
Find out more

Study with Liverpool | Our research | About us

Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences Intranet (Staff)

Home | About us | Research | Teaching | Support | Partnerships | Events | Contact us

What is Impact for a PGR or ECR?

Impact, in its simplest form, is quite straightforward simply, what difference does your research make? It really is as easy as that.

The evaluation of the impact award is different to that of the peer. While the focus is on quality, not time, your research is a laboratory setting, people will be looking for an academic impact on the literature, or other of your research outside of the UK that is made by other academics, while your research evaluation is the quality and benefits of your work.

What is 'Non Academic Impact' and why does it matter to me?

'Non-academic impact' is the use which is made of an original from your research to users outside of Higher Education. There are other pages here which will go into greater detail on the formal definition, but there are two definitions you need to be aware of in this category.

Any non-academic research is defined as used in the following progression, raising public or local awareness of your research to a public specific, unless associated with it, and is part of the research itself, development and evaluation of UK activities.

'Impact' as a term is a relatively recent addition to the academic language.

Follow us
@LIVHSS

Contact
Dr Chris Wilkins
Research Impact Officer
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
c.wilkins@liverpool.ac.uk
Tel: 0751 734 2472

What is Impact?
Dr Chris Wilkins explains what impact really means at Liverpool University.

What is research impact at the UK Parliament

Parliament for Early Career Researchers: now to engage with the UK Parliament

This training session gives an overview of the UK Parliament and how Parliament uses and covers ways to work with the institution as a researcher including details on select committees, the House of Commons and House of Lords Libraries, and POST. It also covers working with individual parliamentarians.



This is a recording of an online training session, delivered on 28th October 2020 by Parliament's Knowledge Exchange Unit.

This training session is aimed at early career academic researchers, and explains how to engage with the UK Parliament while juggling research, teaching and educating your students. It features practical information and advice, with tips on when to contact your MP.

Welcome to Research, Partnerships and Innovation (RPI)

Helping academics and partners to change the world.

With eight departments provide support at every stage of the research, impact and knowledge exchange process, and act as a go-to for further information. Working flexibly and in close partnership with faculties and other professional services, we help academics to apply their expertise to the external environment through effective engagement with colleagues, partners and funders.

As well as our newsletter below, you can also access support for research and funding applications from your local Faculty teams: [Humanities and Social Sciences](#), [Health and Life Sciences](#), and [Science and Engineering](#).

Support we offer

Find out about the range of support offered by the Research, Partnerships and Innovation Directorate.

Recent successes and news

Read case studies showcasing our recent successes when working with colleagues from across the University and external organisations.

Collaborate

Funding opportunities

Use our searchable tools to find funding opportunities available to academics and researchers.

Collaborate

Events and training

RPI organises events for academics and professional services staff to help them make the most of our services.

Humanities and Social Sciences guide:

<https://www.liv.ac.uk/hss-impact>

Research, Partnerships and Innovation:

<https://staff.liverpool.ac.uk/research/rpi/>

UoL Library:

<https://libguides.liverpool.ac.uk/researcherknowhow>

UK Parliament:

<https://www.parliament.uk/get-involved/research-impact-at-the-uk-parliament/>

Heseltine Institute Policy Briefings:

<https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/heseltine-institute/policybriefs/>

Contact me: t.arnold@liverpool.ac.uk

Q&A