

# **The Utilisation Of Research Evidence In The Scottish National Mental Health Policy Making Process**

## **Researchers**

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## **Background**

With the introduction of the New Labour government came the aim for a less ideologically driven approach to policy making in favour of the modernised and more rational approach of what works (Davies et al 2000) in an attempt to "deliver outcomes that matter" (Modernising Government White Paper 1999). Recent government rhetoric, guidance and research favours a more rational approach to value for money policy making based on a culture that is open to learning from and being informed by what works (National Audit Office 2001, Performance and Innovation Unit, 2001).

Whilst acknowledging that there are other sources of information and influences on policy decision making, the focus of this study is on the relationships between local and international research evidence and national mental health policy making. The study will ask if, how and why research evidence is utilised to inform policy direction and policy decisions at the agenda setting, formulation, implementation and evaluation stages of the Scottish national mental health policy making process.

## **Aims of the study:**

- To understand if, how and why the Scottish Executive mental health policy makers have used research evidence to determine their steps in the policy making process.
- To inform on the utility of current policy making and research utilisation models in providing insight into the use of research evidence in modern national policy making
- To achieve an increased understanding of the criteria for a healthy exchange relationship between policy making and research institutions.
- To identify the extent to which the national and international mental health policy subsystems and networks facilitate constructive relationships between research and policy making institutions and how this might be improved to increase research utilisation in mental health policy making

## **Methods of working**

The study is comprised of two case studies of recent Scottish mental health policies, Choose Life, a suicide prevention strategy, and the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) Act (2003). Guided by the theoretical models of policy making and research utilisation that this study is concerned with, the data collection will include the use of a number of data collection sources, perspectives and methods, in particular documentary analysis and face to face interviews with those involved in the policy making process.

For more information about this project contact [joanne@sdcmh.org.uk](mailto:joanne@sdcmh.org.uk)