

Creating a common language around evidence

Imagine you could develop a common language within a local authority which demystified the use of evidence. That's exactly what Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) HDRC have done with their 'Evidence Pie'.

The Evidence Pie is split into 6 sections, each of which represents a source or type of evidence that should be present to inform decision making. NIHR HDRC RCT have found that this is a practical way to build structure around the use of evidence, meaning that regardless of the experience of the audience, a framework exists to illustrate whether a decision will potentially be made on a single or multiple sources of evidence. Ideally for each decision, evidence from each segment should be available and use of the Evidence Pie enables decision-makers to quickly identify which type of evidence is not currently available to them. It has been designed to be inclusive and accessible to all audiences involved with the HDRC, including Council colleagues, elected members and citizens.

The Evidence Pie is a practical and accessible tool. The HDRC Team have used it to work alongside local authority colleagues and councillors to explore what evidence is available to answer particular questions, how this evidence can be interrogated, and to ensure that information is presented in a meaningful and accessible way. These conversations have had the added benefit of identifying training needs to understand and access particular forms of evidence as well as providing a Council wide picture of where there are gaps in the evidence base by type, demonstrating where new/additional sources of evidence are needed.

The Evidence Pie has also been a useful way to demonstrate that there does not need to be a hierarchy of evidence and to communicate that it is important to look at a range of evidence (including less positive evidence) to make fully informed decisions.

Due to the complexity of a local authority setting, building confidence and trust in the process of gathering, interpreting and using different forms of evidence to make informed decisions across the local authority landscape takes considerable effort and time. The Evidence Pie has accelerated this process in RCT by providing an accessible framework for open discussion about the practical barriers faced by individuals and teams.





“Being able to sit alongside one another in a meaningful way; to share in the complexity and sometimes the messiness of using evidence is so important. It’s ok to sit there and say ‘this is complicated’. You’ve got to be honest and open about the challenges.

- *Zoe Lancelott, Head of NIHR HDRC RCT*

The Evidence Pie is central to the work of NIHR HDRC RCT and has also been integrated into key areas of Council business.

RCT County Borough Council Performance Management Framework cycle - annual Service Self Evaluations now utilise a range of evidence in reviewing performance and business and strategic planning decisions. The template has been amended to link directly to the Evidence Pie, supported by a HDRC help sheet providing direct links to sources of evidence.

Scrutiny Committee Working Group - piloting a new Terms of Reference structure for Scrutiny Committee Working Groups shaped by the Evidence Pie to ensure the work is evidence led.

Capacity Building - the HDRC training offer for Council colleagues and elected members is being developed to build skills and confidence to access, interpret, and use these six types of evidence in the everyday work of the Council.

Cabinet and Scrutiny Committee Reporting - work is underway to revise the formal report template to clearly identify the evidence base underpinning recommendations of officers, the Scrutiny Committee and decisions made by Cabinet.

Through building a common language around and shared understanding of what is meant by the term ‘evidence’ and how it can support decision making, the Evidence Pie is helping NIHR HDRC RCT to support colleagues at all levels of the organisation and councillors to understand the information they have access to and to grow in confidence to use it. [View the full Evidence Pie](#) under the documents tab on the right of the page.

For more information on the work being undertaken by NIHR HDRC RCT, please visit the website <https://makeachange.rctcbc.gov.uk> or contact HDRC@rctcbc.gov.uk



This case study was prepared with support from NIHR RSS Specialist Centre for Public Health delivered by Newcastle University and Partners. With thanks to RCT County Borough Council for providing the content for this case study.