

ENGAGEMENT WITH RESEARCHERS: GUIDANCE FOR POLICY ACTORS

The world today is facing enormous challenges and we look to our policy-makers – at local, national and international levels – to find and implement ways to address these challenges. Of course, solutions only work if those making the decisions are informed by evidence. But how, as decision makers, do you access that evidence, and what can you do to make sure it's reliable? We believe research carried out by academics at the University of Lincoln can help.

Why is research important to policy?

Evidence-based research should be at the heart of public policy decisions. [A study carried out in 2017](#) found that research was used by UK policy makers in a range of different ways: to provide background knowledge; to inform opinions; to test hypotheses; to provide credibility; and to provide balance. However, the same study found that academic research did not always 'cut through' to policy actors, either because it was submitted (or found) too late to be influential in the decision-making process, or because it was poorly presented, too technical or took too long to digest. Here at Lincoln Policy Hub, we've been working on ways to give you access – when you need it – to relevant research.

How can I get involved in research?

Our researchers are very keen to work with decision makers and policy actors, so that their research is as relevant and useful as possible. We'd encourage you to get involved in the research process as early as possible. Be open to approaches from researchers who are looking for research partners, expert advisors or sounding boards for their ideas. Be honest with them about the challenges and barriers you face, particularly in terms of putting research into practice. Tell researchers what you need so that their research is useful. Encourage researchers to meet with you and share their findings. Keep up-to-date with projects and outcomes, by following social media accounts and reading policy briefs. And follow-up with questions; our researchers will be delighted to hear from you.

Finding support at the University of Lincoln

The University of Lincoln has a great variety of researchers working on a wide range of topics. Specific areas of expertise are captured by our research themes:

- ⇒ [Rurality](#)
- ⇒ [Health and wellbeing](#)
- ⇒ [Sustainability](#)
- ⇒ [Digitalisation](#)
- ⇒ [Communities](#)
- ⇒ [Heritage](#)

Each of the themes is home to multiple research centres, reflecting the breadth and depth of expertise within the University. Websites for the individual research centres have lists of associated staff, so you can find direct access to specific researchers. You can also follow the Centres on social media, to get regular updates about their work.

The Lincoln Policy Hub is also there to help you identify and interact with different researchers. The policy briefs and blogs you'll find on this site have been developed to give you an introduction to just some of the research interests of our staff, illustrating how they have already helped to inform policy

decisions and with indications of where they might help in the future. Each brief and blog post also includes contact details for the relevant research team. You can also get in touch with the Hub by contacting the [Director, Dr Mark Bennister](#).

If you want to find out more about Lincoln's current connections within the UK policy scene, a good place to start is [ParliLinc – the Lincoln Parliamentary Research Centre](#). You'll find a list of staff associated with the centre, plus details of their research, on the website.

Finally, you can access [different research publications](#) and find [contact details for staff](#) on our website. Simply follow the links and search for areas or people of interest.

Further resources

- ⇒ Principles of scientific advice to government (2010):
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/scientific-advice-to-government-principles/principles-of-scientific-advice-to-government>
- ⇒ Evidence and evaluation in policy making (2012):
<https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/publications/evidence-and-evaluation-policy-making>
- ⇒ The role of research in the UK parliament (2017):
<https://www.parliament.uk/globalassets/documents/post/the-role-of-research-in-the-uk-parliament.pdf>
- ⇒ Institute of Government project on government, academia and policy making:
<https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/our-work/whitehall/government-academia-and-policy-making>