Galway School 2015:
Using evidence-based practice to improve child policy

Julie Bélanger, PhD
Roundtable on Evaluation Methods
3rd December 2015
What is an evidence-based practice?

• An approach that considers the “conscientious, explicit, and judicious use of current best evidence in making decisions about the care of individuals”

• Not tradition, marketing, or word of mouth

What is an evidence-based practice?

Sharing good practice: vs. Evidence-based practice

“The most popular mosquito repellent. Top 10 app in 56 countries”
- iTunes Store

"Better than your mother’s homemade mosquito-bite remedies"
- Vogue Magazine

10 field studies in the past 15 years “have found no evidence to support any repelling effects of electronic mosquito repellents, hence no evidence to support their promotion or use.”
- Enayati et al. 2010, Cochrane Library
What constitutes an evidence-based practice in social policy?

• Criteria for EBP in the medical profession are rigorous and rigid:
  
  *established via multi-site, double blind, randomised-controlled trials*

• “Evidence” is difficult to define outside of the laboratory

• Human interactions are complicated and external conditions are difficult to control for

• Need to be more inclusive about acceptable evidence
EBP definitions share elements of programme evaluation

- Is designed to maximise likelihood that impacts are due to programme itself
- Has sufficient sample size
- Shows effects that are statistically and practically significant
- Utilises outcome measures that make sense
There is an emerging role for Evidence-Based Practice Platforms in Europe

• Support mutual learning and sharing of best practices between Member States

• Align with the principles of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC)

• Promote a culture of evaluation and evidence-based policy

• Offering value for money in times of austerity
European Platform for Investing in Children (EPIC)

• Follows from the EC’s recommendation on ‘Investing in Children- Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage’

• An EU evidence-based platform that aims to collect evidence on child focused policies and practices

• In addition to a dedicated website as a knowledge bank (http://europa.eu/epic/), EPIC brings EU and government representatives together in thematic seminars
Policy objectives of EPIC

- Support parents’ participation in the labour market
- Invest in early childhood education and care
- Provide for adequate living standards through a combination of benefits
- Support children’s right to participate in play, culture and decisionmaking
- Enhance family support and the quality of alternative care settings
2013 Recommendation
Investing in children – Breaking the cycle of disadvantage

Access to adequate resource
- Support parents’ participation in the labour market
- Provide for adequate living standards through a combination of benefits

Access to quality & affordable services
- Investing in early childhood education and care
- Education systems
- Universal right to health care
- Safe, adequate housing and living environment
- Enhance family support and the quality of alternative care settings

Children’s right to participate
- Promote children’s participation in decision making that affects their lives
- Support the participation of all children in play, recreation, sport and cultural activities
Two registries that complement each other

**User Registry**
- Capturing a variety of interesting and innovative practices
- Sharing relevant experiences with users and stakeholders

**Evidence Based Practices**
- Practices where evidence of effectiveness is available
EPIC: A two-pronged approach to sharing practices

Practices implemented in MS

- Within scope of EPIC?
  - Yes
    - Has practice been evaluated?
      - Yes
        - Does evidence for effectiveness satisfy criteria?
          - Yes: Evidence-Based Family Practices
          - No: Family Practice User Registry
      - No: Discard
    - No: Discard

- Resource for sharing ideas and lessons learned
- Users submit content on practice experience in the field and practices being evaluated
- Resource for evidence-based practices
- Reviewers rank practice evaluations across several domains of quality
- Only practices that prove to be robust in at least one domain are posted
Evaluation Framework: Three Evaluation criteria

< PRACTICE NAME >

Evidence of Effectiveness

Transferability

Sustainability
## Requirements for effectiveness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Requirements for +</th>
<th>Requirements for ++</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comparison group</strong></td>
<td>Evaluation utilizes at the minimum pre/post design with appropriate statistical adjustments employed in order to control for selection</td>
<td>Study design uses a convincing comparison group to identify practice impacts, including randomized-control trial (experimental design) or some quasi-experimental designs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Statistical significance</strong></td>
<td>Significant (p&lt;0.1), positive results are shown on at least one relevant outcome</td>
<td>Significant (p&lt;0.05), positive results are shown on at least one relevant outcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Effect size</strong></td>
<td>No requirement</td>
<td>Effect size of at least 10% of a standard deviation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sample size</strong></td>
<td>Sample size of at least 20 in each group</td>
<td>Sample size of at least 50 in each group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcomes</strong></td>
<td>Outcomes are directly or indirectly related to outcomes identified in topic definitions No significant negative outcomes reported (excluding those negative outcomes that might be due to chance)</td>
<td>Outcomes are directly related to outcomes identified in topic definitions No significant negative outcomes reported (excluding those negative outcomes that might be due to chance) Outcome assessments have been validated, where applicable Outcome assessments conducted at baseline and follow-up, where applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attrition</strong></td>
<td>No requirement</td>
<td>Attrition is less than 25% or has been accounted for using an acceptable procedure, where applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location</strong></td>
<td>At least one evaluation that meets the above criteria must have been conducted within EU member state(s)</td>
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### Requirements for transferability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Replication</td>
<td>Practice has been evaluated in at least one additional population beyond the original study population (broadly defined) in such a way that at least meets the basic criteria for internal validity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice materials</td>
<td>Practice materials (curriculum, etc) are available, or documentation is sufficient, such that program can be replicated.</td>
</tr>
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### Requirements for enduring impact

<table>
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<tr>
<td>Follow-up conducted</td>
<td>An evaluation of the practice which meets the basic criteria for inclusion has conducted a follow-up of at least 2 years, and finds at least one positive outcome (p&lt;0.1).</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The evidence levels are tiered

Evidence of effectiveness

Transferability  Sustainability
The evidence levels are tiered

- Evidence of effectiveness
- Transferability
- Sustainability

Emergent practice
The evidence levels are tiered

Evidence of effectiveness

Transferability

Sustainability

Promising practice
The evidence levels are tiered.
How do we identify practices that work?

• Initially drawn from the European Alliance for Families website
• Further practices continue to be identified through a combination of:
  – Literature review
  – Suggestions from our expert panel
  – Reaching out to stakeholders, and Member State correspondents
  – Practices submitted to the user registry

• If documented evaluations are available, they are subjected to the evaluation framework
• Further review by external experts
• If successful, they are included as Evidence-Based Practices
## Practices that Work: Policy Category

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Policy Category</th>
<th>Evidence-Based Practices</th>
<th>User Registry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facilitating Positive Transitions to Adulthood</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fostering Family-Friendly Workplaces</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping Vulnerable Children</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting Families’ Financial Well-being</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting Parenting and Assisting with Childcare</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>40</strong></td>
<td><strong>162</strong></td>
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</tbody>
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The evidence levels are tiered

- Evidence of effectiveness
- Transferability
- Sustainability

Emergent practice
The evidence levels are tiered

- Evidence of effectiveness
- Transferability
- Sustainability

Promising practice
The evidence levels are tiered

Evidence of effectiveness

Transferability

Sustainability

Best practice

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Please feel free to contact us!

Rebecca Kilburn
Director, Promising Practices Network
Senior Economist, RAND Corporation
kilburn@rand.org

Chris van Stolk
Director, Home Affaires and Social Policy, RAND Europe
stolk@rand.org

Stijn Hoorens
Director, Brussels Office, RAND Europe
hoorens@rand.org

Julie Bélanger
Research leader, Home Affairs and Social Policy, RAND Europe
belanger@rand.org

http://europa.eu/epic/index_en.htm