

NCRA PANEL ASSESSMENT

Where are we?

The panel of 20 experts was appointed in April 2007 and has been working since the official launch in June.

The panel was hugely popular when advertised and we had to turn away some very good applicants.

The panel has been very active and members have undertaken a wide range of tasks from seminars, to substantial research reviews and evaluations, to quick reactions to CLG issues.

The work and operation of the panel has been well received by the client and by the members.

What's the panel for?

The panel is designed to:

- Respond to the Capability Review.
- Make economics more central to policy delivery and analysis.
- Strengthen research evidence and policy.
- Engage academics and researchers.

What is the role of the panel?

- To improve the analytical capacity of CLG.
- Involve external expertise.
- Share knowledge.
- Act as critical friend.
- Provide challenge and fresh thinking.
- Add the clout of independent experts.
- Contribute to government's evidence base.
- Contribute to the development of policy.

What is its style of operation?

- High impact not high volume.
- Add value not displace traditional research programme.
- High profile.
- Flexible.
- Interactive.
- Informal.

What does it do?

- Set pieces for whole panel.
- Smaller workshops.
- Reviews, analysis, synthesis.
- Ad hoc advice.
- Peer review department documents.
- Discussion with officials and ministers.

Who is on it?

The panel has 20 of the most senior urbanists in the UK drawn from many institutions across the country. 16 are academics, 4 are consultants. They have a mix of backgrounds and skills – economics, sociology, government, planning. They have done both analytical and applied work at local, regional, national and international level on neighbourhoods, cities and regions.

What have we done so far? - seminars and presentations

The panel have made presentation to a number of CLG and Treasury meetings.

- We gave a presentation to the CLG Open Day in June on the purpose of the NCRA panel.
- We held a successful opening launch of the whole panel with CLG and other colleagues in September. This focussed primarily upon CLG's evidence base on NCR.
- Paul Cheshire, Henry Overman and Geoff Meen gave presentations at Treasury seminar in September on territorialisation of the economy.
- We held a successful seminar on people and place and the CLG narrative in October with reviews and presentation by two panel members Ivan Turok, and Patricia Rice.
- Danny Dorling gave presentation to CLG officials on measuring poverty in Britain in October.
- Paul Dolan gave a seminar on evaluating NDCs in December.
- Geoff Meen gave presentation on the methodology of assessing polarisation

What have we done so far? - reviews, assessment, reactions

- Stephen Syrett undertook a review of collaborative arrangements on economic development in local authorities as a basis for policy thinking about MAAs.
- Martin Crookston undertook a review of CLG commissioned research on Liveability.
- Stephen Fothergill undertook a review of evidence on coastal towns.
- Ivan Turok and Patricia Rice prepared papers on the NCRAs evidence base and analysis.
- Geoff Meen undertook a review of the Rowntree funded research on polarisation.
- Paul Dolan reviewed the evaluation methodology of NDCs.
- Graham Russell, Vince Taylor did a review of CLG position paper on Casinos and economic regeneration.
- Ian Gordon, Ivan Turk Stephen, Syrett and Anne Green undertook reviews of the evidence base on worklessness.
- Harvey Armstrong undertook a review of the methodology for the NSNR evaluation.
- Michael Parkinson is preparing and presenting a review on urban policy to the Permanent Secretaries'/ LGA away day in January 2008.
- The panel is exploring a work agenda on future trends and implications for policy.

How do we communicate?

- We have created a Panel Website which is about to go live.

Are we a success?

I think the panel has been a success for a variety of reasons.

- The panel have responded positively to all requests to undertake work and have been very willing to respond flexibly often at short notice to tight deadlines.
- The CLG colleagues who have commissioned work have been wholly happy with the quality and timeliness of the work and advice they have received. It has strengthened their understanding of key issues and allowed them to give more robust advice to ministers.
- The Panel has been very well served by its CLG lead officer Sarah Fielder who was enormously efficient, organised and supportive. It has also had excellent support and leadership from Andrea Lee
- Colleagues who were not originally selected to be members of the panel have responded well to invitations to undertake specific piece of work where the panel did not have sufficient expertise
- The panel has encouraged open, flexible and constructively critical relations between the panel members and different users

How will we build on success?

The panel is working well and I see no need for significant changes in processes, priorities or people. It has been excellent at responding to short and medium term requests.

I think six things need to happen to continue its success in future.

- It needs to have a slightly more proactive future oriented as well as reactive agenda.
- Links with the NCRA analytic team have been excellent. Given shifts in personnel in analysis and policy however, it would make sense to get greater or more systematic collaboration and buy in from more, senior policy colleagues in future.
- We need to market our achievements and offer a bit more to CLG
- It is important that the change in personnel does not lead to any loss of momentum the Panel has built up.
- Greater links with the other panels would be worth exploring.
- We must involve those panel members who have not yet been asked to undertake specific pieces of work.