

Using evidence to improve public services and government policies

The Wales Centre for Public Policy enables public services and Welsh Government ministers to access and apply evidence that helps to build a better Wales.

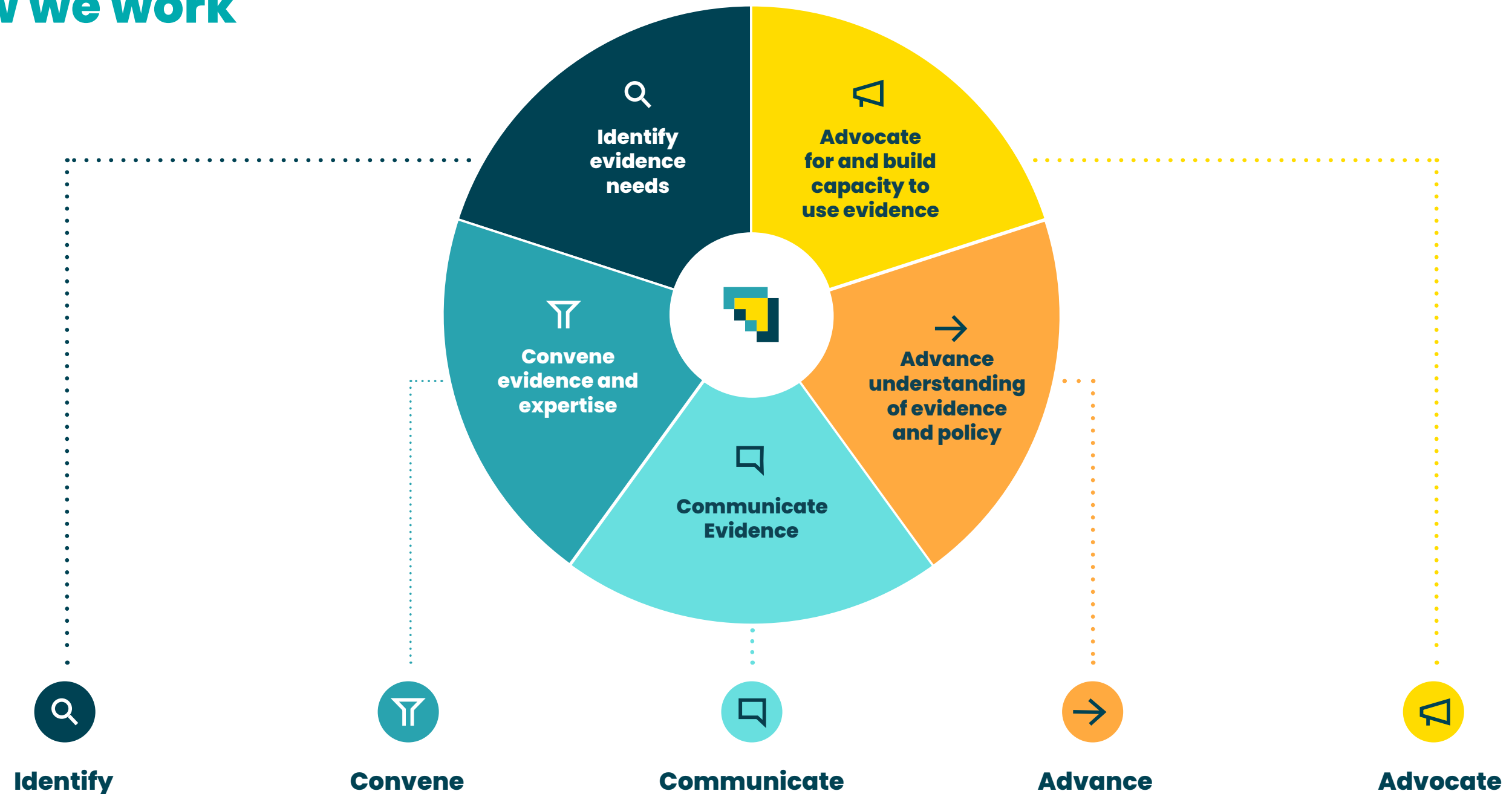
We work with experts from across the UK and internationally to understand the economic, social and environmental challenges facing Wales and identify the best ways to tackle them.

We know that using good evidence produces better policy making and more effective service delivery. So we look both at what needs to be done and at how to do it.



Wales Centre for Public Policy
Canolfan Polisi Cyhoeddus Cymru

How we work



- We work with ministers, officials and public service leaders to identify their evidence needs.
- We identify leading policy experts who can meet evidence needs.
- We identify and work with policy makers, practitioners and academic networks to mobilise evidence.
- We monitor policy developments so we can anticipate future evidence needs.

- We act as a bridge between evidence producers and policy makers/practitioners.
- We work with policy experts to synthesise the best available evidence.
- We support policy makers and practitioners to access and apply the evidence.
- We bring experts and policy makers together to discuss how to apply the evidence in Wales.

- We communicate evidence that supports better policy making and public services.
- We publish evidence reviews, reports and policy briefings .
- We disseminate evidence through events, blogs, and social media.
- We share evidence in user-friendly formats that can speak to a broad audience.

- We conduct research on how evidence can inform policy and practice.
- We evaluate how our work makes a difference so we can keep improving what we do.
- We study how other evidence centres work.
- We disseminate what we learn through academic networks and journals.

- We promote evidence use by showing how it can support policy makers and practitioners.
- We enable researchers to engage with policy makers and practitioners.
- We encourage policy makers and practitioners to use evidence.
- We sponsor Research Apprenticeships and PhD placements to build future capacity.



Identify

We set out to inform policy and practice by answering five questions:

What evidence do policy makers need?

Identifying what evidence is needed is an important first step towards improving government policy and public services.

We work with ministers, officials, and public service leaders to identify the evidence they need to answer questions which span a wide range of policy areas.

We also monitor emerging policy developments in Wales, and beyond, so we can anticipate and respond to future evidence needs.





Convene

What does the evidence say?

There are lots of types and sources of evidence. We help policy makers and public service leaders to access and apply evidence by synthesising the key messages from independent research and leading experts.

We want policy makers and public service leaders to have the best available evidence. So, once we have identified what they need, we analyse the existing research and who the leading experts are.

By bringing together evidence from experts – in Wales, the rest of the UK and internationally – we play an important convening role, supporting ministers and public service leaders to access independent evidence and helping experts to speak directly with them.

We commission experts to write reports with us and invite others to peer review our work. We also organise workshops so that policy makers and public service leaders can hear from experts and use social media and podcasts to share the evidence more widely.





Communicate

How can we communicate the evidence?

We believe that evidence should inform policy making and public services and we communicate evidence in ways which facilitate this.

That is why we produce a variety of outputs in a range of formats that are tailored for specific audiences. Our work is disseminated through reports, briefing papers, blogs, podcasts, press and traditional media, social media, research papers, conferences, roundtables, and events.

We make our findings accessible and ensure that they are communicated clearly to our policy makers and public service leaders. All our reports and policy briefings are written in clear, non-specialist language, and can be downloaded from our website.

We aim to be a trusted, independent source of evidence. Our publications are, therefore, thoroughly checked to ensure that they are accurate and reliable.





Advance

How does our evidence inform policy and practice?

We aim to advance understanding of how evidence can inform government policy and the delivery of public services.

We do this by analysing the impact that our work has and reflecting on what has worked and what hasn't. Drawing on our own experiences and those of other evidence producers, we gain insights into how evidence is used in policy making and practice. We share what we learn with the What Works Network and disseminate our findings through academic conferences and journals.

The case studies below, outlining our work on the impact of Brexit, children looked after, and sharing best practice across the What Works Network, illustrate some of the ways in which we track the impact of our research. These include collecting data such as the number of times our work is cited in government policy documents and ministerial statements.





Advocate

How can we encourage the use of reliable evidence?

We advocate for evidence use by demonstrating its usefulness to policy makers and public service leaders and helping researchers to engage with them.

We aim to increase policy makers' and public service leaders' understanding of the value of reliable evidence. We know that policy making is complex and that it can be difficult for those outside of government to know how to present their evidence. So, we also help experts to engage with the process.

Our Research Apprenticeship programme and PhD internships are equipping a new generation of researchers to undertake policy-relevant research and communicate with policy makers and public service leaders.



Our approach in action



Improving outcomes for children looked after

We are generating important new evidence about the care system in Wales.

Children and young people who come into contact with social services are among the most vulnerable in Wales, and there are longstanding concerns about the costs and quality of care for children looked after. We have undertaken in-depth analysis to find out: Why Wales has higher rates of children in care than the UK average and why rates vary across Wales? How is care experienced by children and their families? And what can we learn from how placement provision is managed internationally?

We worked with experts, national policy makers, Directors of Social Services and social workers, local and national organisations focused on fostering, adoption and social care, and children, young people and families with experience of the care system.

We have made practical recommendations that can help improve outcomes for vulnerable children and young people. The Justice Commission used our work in its analysis of the family courts, and our findings informed the work of the Ministerial Advisory Group on Improving Outcomes for Children, and the framework was developed for effective escalation/de-escalation.

The relationships and networks we have helped to create, and our ongoing data analysis and evidence synthesis work, have led to a better understanding about care for children looked after, and provide the basis for better decision making in the future.

Our approach in action



Helping Wales get ready for Brexit

We undertook several projects to analyse the impact on Wales of post-Brexit migration policy and how the Welsh Government and public services could respond.

Brexit has major implications for immigration policy and the labour market. The Welsh Government and NHS Confederation asked us for evidence to inform their responses, so we worked with experts at King's College London to find out which sectors depend on migrant workers and the impacts of a range of possible post-Brexit immigration policies on the Welsh economy and labour market.

On the basis of this high-quality evidence, we recommended strategies and policies that would bring the greatest benefit for Wales in the long term. This work had a significant impact on the Welsh Government's thinking and informed its approach to post-Brexit planning, including its negotiations with the UK Government.

Our approach in action



Increasing evidence-informed policy and practice across the UK

We are Wales' main link to the UK's What Works Network and we work hard to ensure that policy makers and public services here are aware of evidence produced by other What Works Centres.

We want evidence to be part of the conversation at every level of decision-making throughout Wales. That's why we are an active member of the What Works Network – a community of research and practitioner organisations around the UK that helps us share best practices and examine our own work to drive the field forward, learning and showing how to generate and use better evidence.

We led an ESRC-funded project to increase the Network's reach and impact in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales and have worked with other What Works Centres to mobilise evidence on youth homelessness, youth mental health, children and young people's outcomes, and local economic growth.

About us

The Wales Centre for Public Policy helps to improve policymaking and public services by supporting Welsh Government ministers and public service leaders to access and apply rigorous independent evidence about what works. The Centre works with leading researchers and policy experts to synthesise and mobilise existing evidence and identify gaps where there is a need to generate new knowledge.

The Centre is independent of government but works closely with policymakers and practitioners at national and local level to develop fresh thinking about how to address some of the key economic, social and environmental challenges facing Wales.

The Centre's work covers a wide range of policies but is currently focused in particular on:

- Promoting equality
- Tackling loneliness and social isolation
- Children looked after
- Economy and skills
- Health and adult social care
- Effective governance and implementation

For further information and to download our reports and policy briefings on these and other topics please visit www.wcpp.org.uk

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