



UNIVERSITY OF
LIVERPOOL

Policy Briefings

How to craft a successful
briefing to engage with a
policy audience

Heseltine Institute
for Public Policy,
Practice and Place



About this workshop

1. What is a policy briefing and why might you write one?
2. Engaging with policymakers
3. Identifying key messages from your own research
4. Academic writing vs policy writing
5. How to structure and write your policy briefing
6. Using a policy briefing

By the end of this workshop you will...

- Know what a policy briefing is and how it differs from other types of publication
- Recognise different approaches to influencing policy
- Understand what policymakers value in a policy briefing
- Develop your understanding of key messages and how to craft them
- Think about how to use your policy briefing

About the Heseltine Institute



Established 2013

Based in Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (but work cross-faculty)

Three roles:

- Research and thought leadership on urban and regional issues
- Work with local partners to develop research and evidence
- Promote the work of UoL researchers on policy issues

Heseltine Institute policy briefings

Responding to COVID-19 in the Liverpool City Region
The Geography of the COVID-19 Pandemic in England
Dr Caitlin Robinson, Dr Francisco Rowe, Nikos Patias

Policy Briefing 034 December 2020

The Levelling Up The UK White Paper: what's the problem?
Professor Michael Parkinson CBE
University of Liverpool

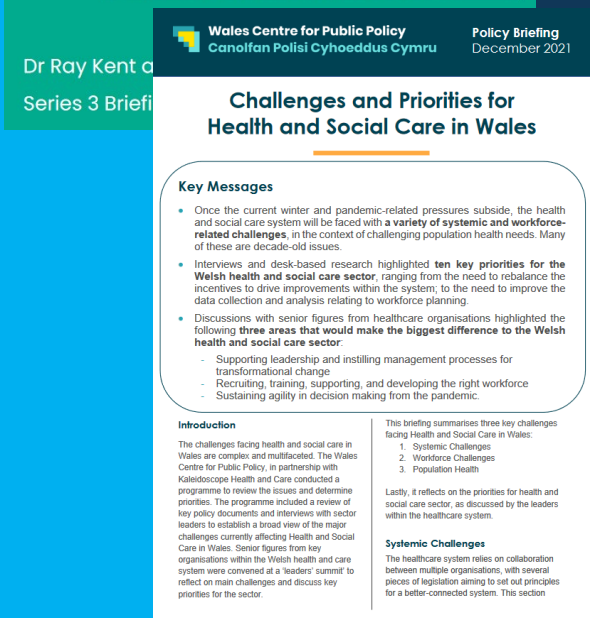
Understanding place value in high street regeneration
Creative methods in public engagement
Dr Fei Chen
Series 3 Briefing 14 April 2024

Eurovision 2023
Delivering a Eurovision legacy for Liverpool's music sector
Dr Mathew Flynn
Eurovision Policy Briefing 3 April 2023

- Launched April 2020 in response to the Covid-19 pandemic
- Aim to facilitate rapid knowledge exchange
- Over 70 briefings published across three series and one mini-series
- Current series: Policy in an Age of Uncertainty
- We publish policy briefings from researchers at all career stages: PGRs, early career academics, lecturers, professors

What is a policy briefing?

- A concise summary of a particular issue
- Some policy options to deal with the issue
- A recommendation (or recommendations) on the best option
- Typically between 500-2000 words
- Often including images, charts and figures
- Uses straightforward language
- Targeted at a specific audience
- Published by universities, think tanks, businesses, NGOs and many more



Why produce a policy briefing?

- Short, sharp piece of writing that demonstrates the impact of your research
- More easily digestible for non-academic audiences – a ‘product’ you can use
- Encourages researchers to focus on what’s important for policy audiences
- Opportunity for collaboration with non-academic partners – particularly for PGRs and ECRs
- Opportunity to increase your profile
- REF Impact: “An effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life beyond academia.
- REF 2028: Engagement & Impact 15% > 25% of assessment weighting

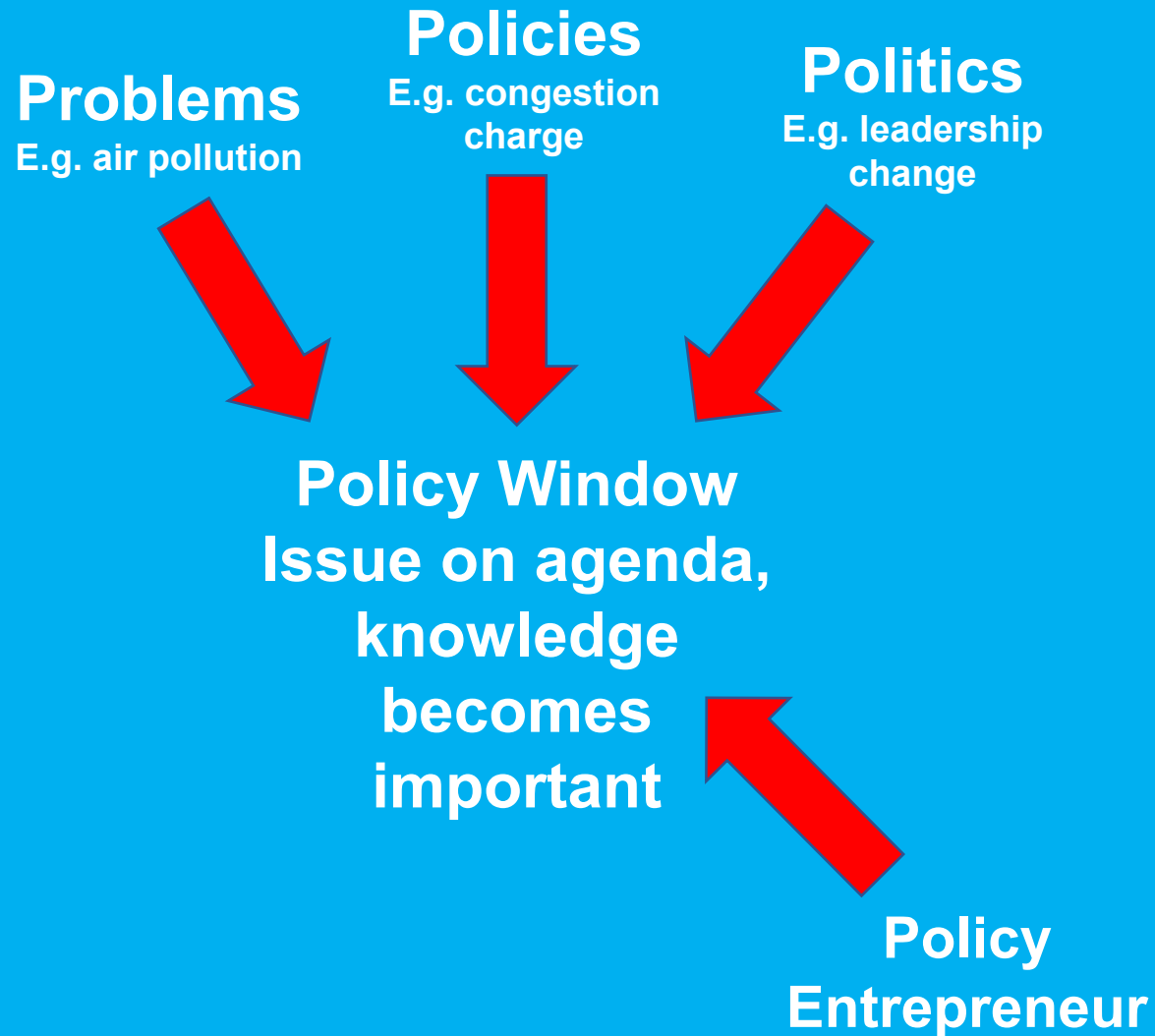
What is a policymaker?



- Politicians: national / regional / local
- Special advisors (SPADs)
- Civil servants
- Public sector organisations (e.g. NHS)
- Charities
- Think tanks
- Pressure groups
- Trade bodies
- Businesses



Influencing policymakers - some theory



- Policymaking is rarely purely 'evidence-based' but it can be 'evidence-informed' if advocates act effectively
- Policy change can be slow.....but sometimes a window opens
- The policymaking landscape is complex and multi-scalar – it is important to understand who the main influencers are and who makes decisions
- You are the expert – policymakers value your knowledge...but how you present it matters

3 approaches to influencing policy

Approach	Summary	Benefits	Costs
The 'State-the-Facts' Approach	Using tools such as social media and systematic reviews to improve engagement – simply providing content for others to engage with.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy for academics to maintain independence • Can be quick • Can be low cost 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not particularly effective at achieving policy change • Misunderstands practicalities of policy change
The Storytelling Approach	Crafting attractive narratives with the explicit aim of shaping policy options.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makes an emotional appeal to policy change • Can appeal more effectively to policymakers than 'dry' facts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be tempting to be selective with data • Relies on having personal charisma to engage diverse audiences
The Co-Production Approach	Collaborating with policymakers and those impacted by policy to produce research.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrated to be an effective way of promoting evidence to shape policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time consuming • Ethically complex • Vulnerable to external shocks • Hard to maintain independence?

Two types of policy briefing

Advocacy	Objective
Identifies a problem or set of problems	
Argues in favour of a particular course of action	Provides information for a policymaker to make up their own mind
Provides evidence to support an alternative to current policy	Provides information about a range of alternative courses of action
Convinces the reader that the problem must be addressed by adopting the recommendation(s) included in the briefing	Describes the problem to the reader and encourages them to consider a number of recommendations
Describes the results that could be achieved by adopting the recommendation(s)	Describes potential outcomes if the problem is or isn't addressed
Makes clear why the reader should be interested in your analysis	

Example of an advocacy briefing



- The problem/challenge: ensuring a positive legacy for the local music industry in Liverpool after Eurovision
- Proposed actions: improve late night public transport, promote local live music, utilise Liverpool's UNESCO City of Music status, support young talent
- Evidence: Research from the Liverpool City Region Music board
- Highlights the benefits for policymakers of adopting the recommendations

Example of an objective briefing

UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL | Heseltine Institute for Public Policy, Practice and Place | LIVERPOOL CITY REGION COMBINED AUTHORITY

Clear Channel

NHS

Coronavirus
Isolate your household
Stay at home

If you or anyone in your household has a high temperature or a sore and continuous cough - even if it's mild

- Everyone in your household must stay at home for 14 days and keep away from others.
- DO NOT go to your GP, hospital or pharmacy.
- Only call NHS 111 if you can't get online or your symptoms worsen.

nhs.uk/coronavirus

COMBINED AUTHORITY
PROTECT YOURSELF OTHERS & THE NHS

Responding to COVID-19 in the Liverpool City Region

The Geography of the COVID-19 Pandemic in England

Dr Caitlin Robinson, Dr Francisco Rowe, Nikos Patias

Policy Briefing 034 | December 2020

- The problem/challenge: Covid-19 affected the most deprived parts of England more than others
- Supporting information: a range of structural inequalities and their potential to explain the disparities in Covid-19 outcomes
- Evidence: Uses a regression model and GIS analysis
- Problem if the issue isn't addressed: Covid-19 spreads more rapidly
- Why does it matter?: Public health professionals need to know how socio-economic inequalities shape the geography of Covid-19

Structure

- Title: short, catchy, relevant
- Key Messages: 3-5 things you want the reader to remember
- Introduction: problem > background > cause effect
- Main Body: for each paragraph – so what?
- Policy Implications/Recommendations: at the end or distributed through the briefing
- Conclusion: short recap – emphasise urgency

Title and Key Messages

Pandemic-proof cities: creating resilient healthcare systems to prevent, prepare for and respond to future health shocks

Short and snappy title

Key takeaways

1. An effective response to emerging and endemic infectious disease lies in creating and maintaining a resilient public health-care system.
2. Building such a system on the scale of a city or city-region necessitates that all of the key actors come together in 'peacetime' to design and rehearse an integrated, multi-partner response to emerging infections that can be activated during 'wartime'.
3. Resilience planning requires the participation of community representatives as well as healthcare experts, to explore ways of integrating the unique knowledge possessed by each set of actors.
4. Regular stress-testing and updating of resilience plans is essential. This can be carried out by running simulation exercises at a sub-national level and encouraging the sharing of knowledge between cities and city-regions.
5. Local resilience plans should be benchmarked against international good practice, for example through the use of a resilience index consisting of key indicators.

One sentence summary of problem

More context

Recommendation 1

Recommendation 2

Ongoing evaluation

Title and Key Messages

What next for sub-national spatial planning in England? Assessing the new Liverpool City Region Spatial Development Strategy

Key takeaways

1. Liverpool City Region (LCR) has published the latest version of its Spatial Development Strategy (SDS), which is now out for consultation. The SDS provides high-level guidance on where housing and other development is likely to take place over the next 15 years.
2. With the planning system in a state of flux and many city-regional combined authorities still grappling with what role they should play in planning, the SDS provides a welcome strategic approach to development, and builds upon LCR's Plan for Prosperity.
3. However, the SDS is as interesting for what it does not address as what is included. Unlike the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (now known as Places for Everyone), the SDS does not allocate land for release from the Green Belt, and so avoids the most politically sensitive of planning decisions.
4. While the future of the national planning system is uncertain with a General Election on the horizon in 2024, city-regional combined authorities will remain and should play a role in spatial planning. National government needs to provide combined authorities with the tools to engage fully in strategic planning at a city-regional level.
5. The lessons from London over the last 20 years suggest city-regional planning should be seen not just as a politically tricky hurdle to navigate, but as an opportunity by metro mayors to imprint their long-term vision on a city-region and achieve a physically tangible legacy. The LCR SDS is the first step of a longer-term process embedding strategic planning at the city-region scale.

Start with a question

Contemporary policy issue

Broadening the context

Identifying possible problem

Recommendation

Reframing the issue

Developing your own key messages

- In the breakout groups, discuss your research and what the key messages might be
- If you want someone in an influential position to take three things from your research, what would they be?
- Identify 3 key messages
- Create a short title for your policy briefing
- Post your title and 3 key messages in the chat

Writing for academic papers vs policy briefings

Journal Papers	Policy Briefings
Often required to have extensive literature review and conceptual/theoretical framework	No need for long literature review – only the most policy relevant needed
Details on methodology required: depending on discipline this can be an extensive part of the paper	Extensive detail on methodology not needed – just the basics will do (and even this is sometimes not needed)
Abstract: a standalone summary of your paper	Key messages: the 3-5 things you want your reader to take away from reading your briefing
Discussion: bringing together the literature, conceptual framework and research findings	Broader context: identifying why it is necessary to tackle the problem
Academic terminology, often complex	Avoid jargon – use simple, clear and easy to understand language. Specialist terms ok depending on audience.
Contribution to knowledge	Impact on policy
References: full references required (particularly in humanities/social sciences)	Only essential references needed – web links are useful

Design

Health priorities for the new government

Here's what we think is needed from the new government to ensure a healthier population, supported by high quality health and social care.



Invest in the nation's health

Action is needed across the wider factors that shape health, including in housing, social security and early years services



Take action on the workforce challenge

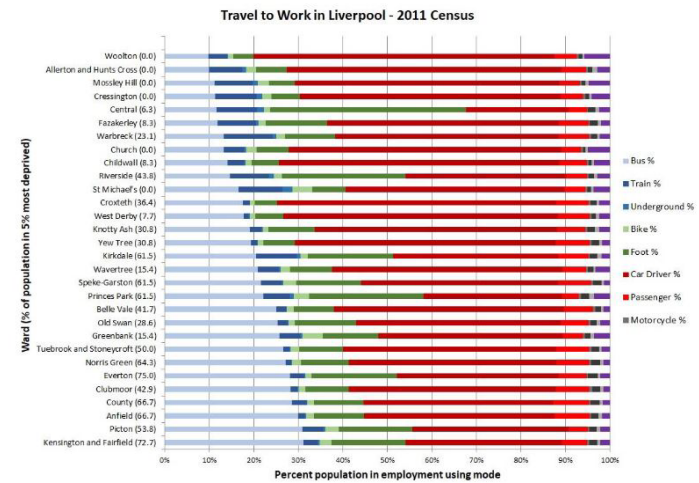
Make sure migration policy supports international recruitment in the NHS and social care, and increase financial support for nursing students

Fix adult social care

Stabilise and improve the current system, and commit to fundamental reform to make the system fairer



Figure 2. Public transport and deprivation in Liverpool City Council



Charts

Photos: <https://unsplash.com/>

Infographics

Text boxes

Bullet points

Long paragraphs

Big blocks of text

Loads of colours

How to use your policy briefing

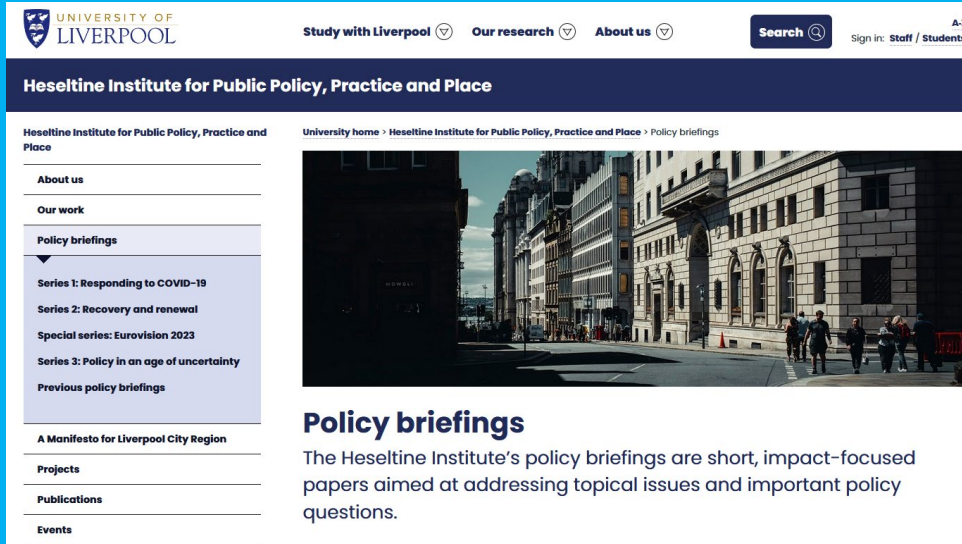


- All Party Parliamentary Groups
- Select Committees
- Parliamentary Inquiries
- Areas of Research Interest (ARIs) <https://ari.org.uk/>
- Local and Regional
- Calls for evidence: charities, third sector, voluntary organisations
- Media coverage: use the UoL comms team
- Collaboration with academic partners
- Benefits for PGRs and ECRs

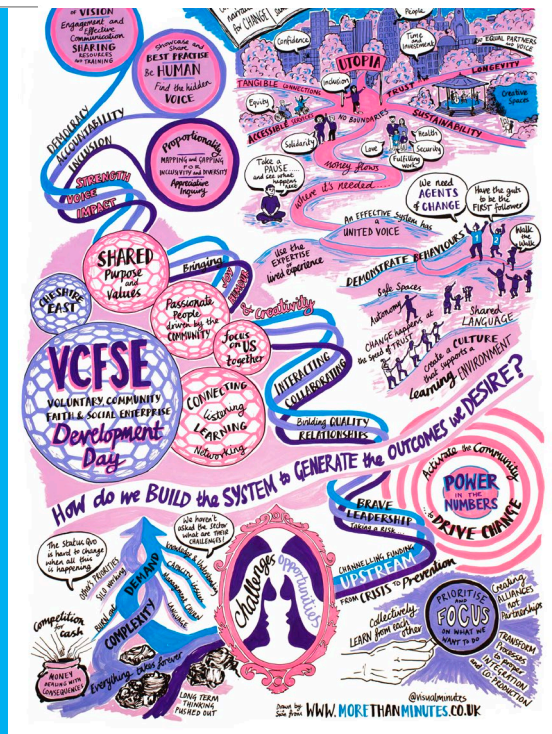
**Post-pandemic economic growth:
Levelling up - local and regional
structures and the delivery of economic
growth**



Some outcomes from Heseltine Institute policy briefings



- PB312: Used as a short version of full report on health outcomes to lobby policymakers
- PB311: New participatory methods tested with local community bids
- PB308: Developed ideas for a collaborative multi-partner research funding bid
- PB305: Written by PGR during PhD research – helped to flesh out policy recommendations section of thesis
- PB215: Helped develop international networks resulting in collaborative workshops and research projects on ‘left behind places’
- PB204: Used as basis for a parliamentary evidence submission on care homes



Q&A

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