

Department's response to the Analytical Review

In July 2012 the Department for Education (DfE) conducted an Analytical Review that looked into the role of research, analysis and data in the DfE, English schools and - to a lesser extent - children's services. It assessed current systems and looked at the role for evidence in today's more autonomous, diverse education sector. The Department asked independent reviewers - Dr Ben Goldacre and Roger Plant - to contribute to the review.

The review was a timely reminder about just how much data, research and analysis matters: when we fail to use quality evidence, we waste public money and we fail to improve outcomes for children. The review set out to consider how the Department and the sector need to change in response.

The vision for change from the external reviewers, Dr Ben Goldacre and Roger Plant, is ambitious and the Department's intends to change its role in response. Dr Ben Goldacre has recently presented his vision on how the profession and wider education sector can become more evidence based. His paper on 'Building Evidence into Education' sets out the detail. The Department agrees with the vision of an evidence driven Department and education sector - there are significant benefits from moving towards this vision.

Today the Department has published Roger Plant's findings and recommendations on Data Systems and on the role of the Department which sit alongside Dr Goldacre's paper.

In the Data Systems report, Roger Plant reviews our existing data systems and identifies a clear need for a real time data system to enable sharing of more data more efficiently. We accept the recommendations set out and have already made progress towards implementation. We are engaging with data experts and suppliers to create a significantly more efficient system – a data exchange model - that will ensure real time information on schools and pupils (plus wider Children's Services) is available to government, schools, parents and third parties.

The report on 'The Department' sets out recommendations on how the Department can support the vision. The Department has a part to play in supporting and enabling the sector, and also in building evidence into our policy work. We have begun to so by:

- investing significantly in the Education Endowment Foundation which was recently named as a 'what works' centre as part of the focus this Government is placing on evidence. We are considering what more the Department can and should do ourselves and how we support teachers, the profession and researchers too;
- establishing an internal Research Board to oversee the transformation of our research activity by identifying the most important evidence gaps, working with external organisations to fill those gaps through

robust research, and ensuring the findings are clearly communicated and more accessible;

- raising awareness of Randomised Control Trials (RCTs) in the department – kicked off with a seminar by Dr Goldacre held on 25 February - and considering where we can use this approach more actively: including through new National College initiatives with Teaching Schools such as the ‘Test and Learn’ scheme; and
- driving behaviour and culture change across the Department to increase the use of evidence in policy and delivery.

Achieving the vision will be a challenge that requires change in the way both the Department and the sector work. Reform will also be an opportunity to make a bigger impact on improving outcomes for children and young people.