# EVALUATION OF IPPO'S IMPACT

THE INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC POLICY OBSERVATORY (IPPO)

# FINAL REPORT

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The International Public Policy Observatory (IPPO) was launched in 2020 with an overarching aim to enable access to and use of evidence and knowledge to mitigate the social harms of COVID-19. It was focused on achieving this aim through:

- stimulating demand for research and evidence from a range of policy stakeholders in the UK;

- supplying a range of knowledge synthesis products;

- facilitating and enabling the creation and use of appropriate evidence, including building relationships and networks with policy and other stakeholders.

An evaluation of its first two years of operations—during the COVID-19 pandemic— found that the Observatory developed a range of mechanisms and networks that enabled it to fill critical gaps in demand for evidence and stimulate demand and use for that evidence.

IPPO received a second round of funding based on its success in providing evidence for policy during the COVID-19 pandemic. As the COVID-19 pandemic receded, the Observatory focused on four thematic areas (COVID Recovery, Net Zero, Place and Spatial Inequalities and Socio-economic Inequalities). This also led to revising IPPO's monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) plan. This included building in an evaluation at the end of its second two-year cycle.

This report gives an overview of the findings of this impact evaluation, which is focused on the period of operations during IPPO 2 (January 2023 to November 2024) with some connections made to IPPO 1 (2020 – 2022) work. The evaluation is based on quantitative and qualitative data collected from analysis of IPPO's documentation of its activities, interviews with 18 individuals (staff and external stakeholders) and the discussions during two learning workshops and an outcomes harvesting workshop during the evaluation period.

The evaluation highlighted that:

- **IPPO 2 has stimulated demand for research and evidence from a range of policy stakeholders in the UK.** It has increased the number of policy stakeholders engaging with social science research through IPPO's activities, significantly strengthening demand in the devolved nations.

- **New and innovative approaches to supplying knowledge synthesis products have been the hallmark of IPPO 2.** IPPO has consolidated its roundtable methodology, developed new policy engagement formats to supply knowledge (and facilitate demand) through policy schools and highlighted the value of systems mapping methodology in policy analysis.

- **IPPO 2 has facilitated the use of evidence in policy through a series of partnerships and created a discussion on innovations in facilitating evidence use.** IPPO's 'innovations in facilitating evidence use' events series during IPPO 2 allowed policy stakeholders to interrogate and reflect on what works within their environments.

**Overall, IPPO has 'left a legacy', as noted by one interviewee, and achieved its impact of developing a 'more informed policy environment', especially at the devolved nations level.** It has contributed to setting up new public policy centres in Northern Ireland and Scotland and worked with an existing centre in Wales. It has led to more interaction between policy stakeholders and sharing lessons and experiences across the devolved nations. It has highlighted the importance of evidence support at other levels of government, notably local, regional or municipal authorities.

The experiences of IPPO 2 have led to lessons learnt about the role of an evidence-policy interlocutor, the importance of time and a start-up phase, and the need for connections and an international evidence base. The evaluation also highlighted the importance of a clear and well-developed operational system. These lessons create the basis for recommendations for those planning to develop similar initiatives.

**Recommendation 1: Continued funding to provide interlocutor functions at the evidence-policy nexus is essential**

IPPO and similar other organisations (the Economics Observatory, the What Works centres, the devolved nations' centres for public policy) provide an essential function as a 'trusted gateway' that provides a neutral space for dialogue and discussion on key issues. While the evidence provided by IPPO was deemed necessary, more important and consistently mentioned by all external interviewees were the spaces created by IPPO to explore and discuss policy issues with supporting in-depth evidence. It is imperative that the vacuum created by IPPO's closing is filled. While the Centres of Public Policy in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales are a legacy of IPPO that remain, they will need continued support. Moreover, providing such support at sub-national levels (to regional and municipal government policy stakeholders) is essential, given England's continued devolution efforts and the lack of evidence capacity at local/ regional levels. These centres are built on networks and relationships that take time and funding to set up and maintain.

**Recommendation 2: Funding needs to be long-term to allow for the time it takes to make connections**

As noted above, building up the networks and connections required to provide these interlocutor functions requires time, which, in turn, requires funding mechanisms that are not short-term. Two-year funding cycles have jeopardised the ability of IPPO 2 to function effectively and efficiently. Initially, it was impossible to focus on getting the operational systems and relationships right. It led to a focus on outputs and milestones at the expense of outcomes and impact. While IPPO 2 has achieved its objectives, longer-term funding would have cemented its outcomes and impact. The traction that the Observatory has gained in key thematic areas and the relationships it has built have all been curtailed just as they were starting to bear fruit. Longer-term and/ or core funding cycles are required for this interlocutor function. Examples given during the evaluation were the Economic and Social Research Institute in Ireland, which receives a core grant accounting for 25% of its funding from the Irish government, or the Institute of Fiscal Studies, which benefits from five-year research centre grants from the Economic and Social Research Council. Longer-term or core funding would provide time for the development of systems and relationships as well as the development of a sustainability plan or phase-out plan that provides signals to partner organisations and policy stakeholders that are engaged in the next steps and/or alternatives.

**Recommendation 3: The complexity of providing interlocutor functions requires (a) a clear operational setup and (b) access to networks and the international**

The complexity of relationships, especially for an initiative that operates at a UK-wide level, requires a straightforward operational setup, especially for internal governance, reporting and communication lines. In addition, there must be time to enable the co-creation of objectives and strategic plans from the start, where all partners' interests can be aligned, and there is shared agreement on the value creation for each partner. IPPO 2 would have benefited from an initial six-month start-up phase that allowed it to implement a clear operational set-up with systems and procedures co-produced. To manage the multiple partners (core and peripheral) in these interlocutor organisations also requires regular check-in points. The networks and partnerships need to be regularly reviewed and augmented as the triple helix of evidence-policy interaction changes with demand and supply. This requires access to networks, including those from outside of the country, to learn from those with other experiences.

**Recommendation 4: More research on how to facilitate knowledge use as opposed to only developing systems to stimulate demand for, or supply of, knowledge is essential**

There was a tension within IPPO 2 between its focus on achieving its three objectives and conducting its function as an interlocutor between evidence and policy, with a need to do these at a thematic level and solve societal problems such as net zero or inequality. IPPO 2 addressed this head-on through its 'innovations in facilitating evidence use' event series. However, despite some internal rethinking of its double to triple helix approach to evidence-policy interaction, the team did not have the capacity to focus in any depth on the conceptual, theoretical and practical design of an interlocutor mechanism. More research is needed on the best way to work at the evidence-policy interface, what worked in the case of IPPO and other similar organisations, and where the lessons for others are.

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|---|---|
| **BAME** | Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic |
| **CAPE** | Capabilities in Academic Policy Engagement |
| **COVID-19** | Coronavirus disease 2019 |
| **ESRC** | Economic and Social Research Council |
| **EPPI Centre** | Evidence for Policy & Practice Information Centre |
| **ECO** | Economics Observatory |
| **INGSA** | International Network for Government Science Advice |
| **IPPO** | International Public Policy Observatory |
| **IPPO 1** | The first phase of IPPO from 2020 to 2022 |
| **IPPO 2** | The second phase of IPPO from 2023 to 2024 |
| **MEL** | Monitoring Evaluation and Learning |
| **PI** | Principal Investigator |
| **POST** | Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology |
| **SECA** | Centre for Sustainability, Equality and Climate Action |
| **SEPPA** | Systems, Evidence and Power for Policy Action |
| **STEaPP** | UCL Department of Science, Technology, Engineering and Public Policy |
| **UCL** | University College London |
| **WCPP** | Wales Centre for Public Policy |

# 1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The International Public Policy Observatory (IPPO) was launched in 2020 with an overarching aim to enable access to and use of evidence and knowledge to mitigate the social harms of COVID-19. It was focused on achieving this aim through:

- stimulating demand for research and evidence from a range of policy stakeholders in the UK;

- supplying a range of knowledge synthesis products;

- facilitating and enabling the creation and use of appropriate evidence, including building relationships and networks with policy and other stakeholders.

An evaluation of its first two years of operations—during the COVID-19 pandemic—noted that IPPO influenced demand from policymakers in national and local government.[1] For example, IPPO's work was included in Northern Ireland's policy discussions on gender and children's wellbeing. Similar demand-driven outcomes were noted with the Welsh Government, the UK's Department for Health and Social Care, and the Department for Education. IPPO responded to 13 direct requests for evidence. One outcome of these engagements was a collaboration with the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST) and Capabilities in Academic Policy Engagement (CAPE), which gave IPPO a direct line into Select Committees. The evidence products that IPPO produced during its first years included in-depth knowledge products such as its Global Scans, Rapid Evidence Reviews and Systematic Reviews. One of IPPO's strengths at that time was its ability to find experts in multiple areas because of its broad focus on the 'social harms of COVID-19'—filling critical gaps in demand for evidence. During the evaluation, IPPO was found to have a convening power (despite webinar fatigue during the pandemic).

Based on its success in providing evidence for policy during the COVID-19 pandemic, IPPO received a second round of funding from the UK's Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). This second phase of IPPO ('IPPO 2') started in January 2023 and as the COVID-19 pandemic receded, the Observatory refocused its efforts on four thematic areas (COVID Recovery, Net Zero, Place and Spatial Inequalities and Socio-economic Inequalities) while still addressing the three areas of action (stimulating demand, supplying knowledge and facilitating evidence use). IPPO bought in the Wales Centre for Public Policy (WCPP) and employed research fellows in Northern Ireland and Scotland who would spend between 80% and 100% of their time working on IPPO activities. In Wales, existing senior research fellows would split their time between IPPO activities and WCPP activities.

Given this reorientation of activity and focus, IPPO revised its monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) framework and their overarching Theory of Change. It developed a detailed MEL plan, including MEL rationale, data collection, and analysis methods. This was a collaborative process with staff and took several months at the start of the second phase of IPPO. The updated Theory of Change is provided in high-level format in Figure 1. The MEL framework that arises from this updated Theory of Change is outlined in Annex 1.

As IPPO ends its second phase (herein termed 'IPPO 2'), an evaluation was conducted to understand how IPPO has influenced the policy landscape across the UK nations and changed the behaviour of policy stakeholders. The evaluation focused on IPPO's ability to achieve its impact of a more informed policy environment across the four nations.

This report gives an overview of the findings of this impact evaluation and offers recommendations for those who engage at the evidence-policy interface.

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[1] Hanlin, R. and Leigh-O'Connell, A (2022) *Evaluation of IPPO's Intermediate and Final Outcomes*. Social Business Solutions Limited

**Figure 1: IPPO 2 Theory of Change**

| WORKSTREAM | ACTIVITIES | OUTPUTS | SHORTER TERM OUTCOMES | LONGER TERM OUTCOMES |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **STIMULATE DEMAND** | • Conduct events and stakeholder engagment activities<br>• Hold scoping roundtables<br>• Conduct communication activities<br>• Produce policy needs summaries | • Public event reports<br>• Meeting minutes<br>• Roundtable reports<br>• Policy need summaries<br>• Blog/commentary pieces by IPPO staff<br>• Newsletters<br>• Policy Briefs<br>• Survey/poll resutls | • Increased amount and type of evidence bineing requested by policy stakeholders<br>• New stakeholder groups (e.g. not just government units) utilise evidence to inform policy debates<br>• Increased understanding of local policy priorities by IPPO and stakeholders | • Establishment of demand driven request pipline<br>• More use of social science evidence visible in policy discussions<br>• Increased capacity to take up evidence built in the policy system |
| **SUPPLY KNOWLEDGE** | • Systems maps<br>• Rapid evidence reviews and other evidence review documents<br>• Conduct evidence showcase events<br>• Conduct communication activities | • System map documents<br>• Evidence review reports<br>• Case study reports<br>• Policy briefs<br>• Event reports<br>• Commmunication outputs e.g., blogs, opinion pieces etc. | • Recognition of IPPO as a core evidence supplier for UK governments<br>• New evidence supply mechanisms are developed outside of IPPO standard outputs<br>• Enhanced recognition of areas where there are knowledge gaps<br>• Academics gain improved understanding of policy evidence needs | • Increased support for knowledge and evidence from multiple sources<br>• IPPO establishes long-term partnerships (formal and informal) for evidence supply<br>• Academics tailor works to policy needs<br>• Improved knowledge absorption capacity to utilise supply |
| **FACILITATE EVIDENCE USE** | • Conduct events to facilitate evidence networks<br>• Conduct science on science workshops<br>• Develop infographics on policy strategies<br>• Conduct communication activities | • Blog/commentary pieces<br>• Policy briefs<br>• Event and workshop reports<br>• Database of experts<br>• Infographics on policy strategies | • Strengthened connections between policy makers and other policy stakeholders | • Joined up policy debate between multiple stakeholder groups and across nations |

**INPUTS**

• IPPO Staff
• Funding
• Partnerships
• Networks
• Data and knowledge
• Technology
• Premises, equipment and materials

**IMPACT**

*More informed policy environment across all UK nations enabling enhanced economic and social wellbeing.*

**ASSUMPTIONS**

• COVID-19 recovery or related issues remain a topic of discussion.
• Stakeholders actively participate in activities and outputs to support outcomes.
• Availability and effective utilisation of resources for activities and outputs.
• Science on science/ science for policy issues remain a topic of interest.

• Communication outlets are able to publish material i.e. other agendas do not crowd out the IPPO material.
• Outcomes replicated or expanded in different contexts or settings will lead to broader impact.
• Activities and outputs are appropriate and sensitive to the values, norms, and beliefs of community beneficiaries.

• Knowledge, skills, and best practices will be effectively shared and transferred between researchers, evidence providers and policy stakeholders.
• Capacity of individuals, organisations, or systems will be sufficient to enable IPPO to conduct its activities and more broadly will be enhanced through activities and outputs to strengthen the wider policy system.

## 2. OVERVIEW OF ASSIGNMENT AND METHODOLOGY

This document outlines the results of a summative evaluation between June and November 2024. This process follows an earlier formative evaluation that took place in 2022.[2] The 2024 evaluation focuses on impact, i.e. reviewing IPPO 2's progress towards the behaviour change in the policy environment and society outlined in the Theory of Change. In so doing, it focuses predominately on IPPO 2 activities with some connections made to IPPO 1 (2020 – 2022) work.

The evaluation methodology used in this second evaluation is premised on the following factors:

1. There is a need for some comparison between the first formative evaluation of IPPO 1 and this current summative evaluation of IPPO 2. While the scope of IPPO 2 has broadened to four thematic areas in this latest phase, the actions to address these areas remain the same as in the first phase (stimulating demand, supplying knowledge and facilitating the use of evidence). Many stakeholders with whom IPPO worked in IPPO 2 remained the same as in IPPO 1.

2. IPPO is clear on what it is trying to achieve. Its monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) plan outlines this, which incorporates its Theory of Change and results framework. Box 1 provides a snippet from the MEL plan developed at the start of IPPO 2, which outlines how the Observatory understands change.

3. IPPO is keen to use a theory-based approach to evaluation, recognising that context and external forces influence the success or failure of an organisation's activities. Such an approach places an emphasis on the assumptions underlying the evaluation's causal pathways of change.

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**BOX 1: What success looks like**

*"The work of IPPO2 is focussed on:*

- *Stimulating demand for research and evidence from a range of policy stakeholders in the UK.*

- *Supplying a range of knowledge synthesis products.*

- *Facilitating and enabling the creation and use of appropriate evidence, including through building of relationships and networks with policy and other stakeholders.*

*IPPO has identified ways in which it will work towards these and the kinds of change in these areas it hopes to achieve. These are outlined in the theory of change. However, IPPO is also aware that change can occur in ways that are not expected, and that change can have negative as well as positive outcomes. Therefore, IPPO places as much emphasis on spaces for learning as it does on routine monitoring and evaluation. Regular learning workshops across the year will be a space to explore broadly the changes that are occurring within different stakeholder groups and the organisation itself. Through this harvesting of outcomes (expected and unexpected), a series of stories of change will be written up during each two-year evaluation. These will include positive and negative stories as part of the learning focus."*

Source: IPPO MEL Plan 2024, p.4

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Given the above, this evaluation used a multi-pronged theory-based approach to the impact evaluation. As such, the evaluation focused on:

1. **Causal impact pathways**. The evaluation focused on the degree of achievement of the pathways outlined in the IPPO 2 Theory of Change, using tried and tested rapid evaluation techniques of document review and key informant interviews. Specifically, it looked for alternative impact pathways that had arisen during IPPO 2's activities. Such an approach required looking across the whole of IPPO's lifespan (not just IPPO 2), focusing on its three action areas of stimulating

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[2] Hanlin, R. and Leigh-O'Connell, A (2022) *Evaluation of IPPO's Intermediate and Final Outcomes*. Social Business Solutions Limited

demand, supplying knowledge and facilitating the use of evidence. As such, the evaluation enabled a retrospective review of expected and actual pathways. This approach enabled additional programme learning, which may not have occurred if the evaluation only asked questions relating to the causes and effects initially expected and theorised at the start of the intervention.

2. **Ideas of success and non-success**. Using outcome harvesting through document review, key informant interviews and learning and outcomes workshops, this evaluation heard various stories of change from those involved. This process focused on stories deemed 'success cases' to understand what made an activity so effective. This approach assisted in identifying activities and approaches that work in complex programmes at the interface of research, evidence and policy. The evaluation also looked at non-success to understand the barriers and weaknesses of IPPO 2's approach and activities, providing lessons for others.

3. **Longer-term outcomes and impact**. Since this was IPPO's second evaluation and the Observatory had been operational for four years, this evaluation tried to identify outcomes and the degree to which IPPO's efforts could be attributed to impact. Therefore, the evaluation questions (Annex 2) focused on impact and longer-term outcome levels. Many of the evaluation questions warrant qualitative results; however, quantitative data was collected where appropriate. These quantitative results were often focused on the shorter-term outcomes in the revised IPPO MEL framework. The impact has been measured qualitatively given the difficulty of attributing the effect of IPPO 2's activities at the impact level.

The outline of the evaluation matrix is presented in Annex 2. This matrix is based on the approved IPPO 2 MEL framework, which is based on its agreed Theory of Change (Figure 1). The evaluation questions used in the first IPPO evaluation have been utilised where appropriate to enable comparison.

## 2.1 EVALUATION ACTIVITIES

The evaluation kicked off with email exchanges with IPPO management and staff in late May and early June 2024 to sign off on the Evaluation Plan; this included agreeing upon the evaluation matrix, evaluation questions and indicators across the Theory of Change and MEL framework areas. The kick-off also finalised the list of interviewees and arrangements for the online workshop.

The evaluation team collected and reviewed all the routine MEL data collected during Phase 2 of IPPO's activities. This included reviewing various data sheets maintained by IPPO staff, their website and media activities, and all written outputs developed over the two-year period 2023-2024.

Interviews were conducted with IPPO staff and policy stakeholders to identify the extent to which causal pathways have resulted in the changes identified and to identify new and/or alternative outcomes. The interviewees were purposively selected based on their knowledge of IPPO's activities, strategic position within IPPO, and/or their knowledge of the broader policy landscapes in which IPPO was operating.

The interview schedules used for internal IPPO staff and external stakeholders are provided in Annex 3.

The interviewees consisted of:

1. Twelve (12) members of the IPPO team, including the Thematic Directors, Operations Manager, representatives of the partner organisations and research fellows.

2. Six (6) external stakeholders who worked for either the Welsh, Northern Ireland, Scottish or a UK government department.

In addition to the interviews and desk review, the data collected from two online learning workshops held in September 2023 and March 2024 was used. The evaluation also draws on the data gained from an online workshop with IPPO staff in September 2024 that discussed initial results from the evaluation and harvested further outcome stories. The notes from two IPPO advisory board meetings held during IPPO 2 were also used as data sources.

The data received across the interviews, workshops, meetings and desk review was analysed using the following approaches:

1. **Quantitative data** that provided results against the outcome indicators listed in the MEL framework was analysed using simple descriptive statistical techniques (frequency analysis mostly) and presented in tables, charts or graphs as appropriate.

2. **Qualitative data** from the document review activities, workshop and meeting transcripts/notes and interviews were analysed using thematic analysis. This entailed reading and re-reading all qualitative material and selecting quotes and notes to create thematic data groups. The thematic groups were developed by identifying (i) keywords, phrases or phenomena that are regularly referred to and/or (ii) identifying similarities in the context, sense or content of the text. This analysis established patterns that, when put together, allowed for the development of thematic areas. These thematic areas formed the basis for many of the headings for results section 3.3.

# 3. RESULTS OF THE EVALUATION

## 3.1 DESCRIPTIVE RESULTS

This section outlines the degree of achievement by IPPO 2 across its MEL framework indicators. It reflects on the targets the Observatory set in its revised MEL plan and the degree to which it has achieved these.

Each sub-section starts with the findings against the IPPO 2 MEL framework indicators before progressing to qualitative results. The baseline figures in the MEL framework indicator tables are taken from the IPPO 1 evaluation. The 2024 targets were agreed on at the start of IPPO 2 In some cases, it was agreed that a prescribed target for an outcome indicator should not be given. The IPPO 2 figure is the cumulative achievement figure across the two years of IPPO 2.

### 3.1.1 STIMULATING DEMAND

The focus of IPPO 2 in this first activity area of 'stimulating demand for research and evidence from a range of policy stakeholders in the UK' related to establishing a demand-driven pipeline for evidence requests that would ensure more use of social science evidence being visible in policy decisions and more capacity for evidence take up in the UK policy system. The results against the MEL framework indicators relating to stimulating demand are provided in Table 1 (longer-term demand outcomes) and Table 2 (shorter-term demand outcomes).

*Table 1. Summary of key indicators for longer-term demand outcomes*

| Longer-term outcome | Indicator | Baseline | 2024 Target | IPPO 2 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Establishment of a demand-driven request pipeline | # of requests for evidence from government policymakers, other stakeholders, academics or media | 14 | - | 27 |
| More use of social science evidence visible in policy discussions | # of IPPO evidence products referenced in policy discussions | 1 | 10% of baseline (1) | 19 |
| Increased capacity built in the policy system to take up evidence | # policy stakeholders attend IPPO events and then follow up on an activity with IPPO, e.g. contribute to knowledge product; speak at event, attend roundtable, etc. | 5 | 40 | 41 |

*Table 2. Summary of key indicators for shorter-term demand outcomes*

| Shorter-term outcome | Indicator | Baseline | 2024 Target | IPPO 2 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Increased amount and type of evidence being requested by policy stakeholders | # of requests for evidence from policy stakeholders | 14 | 10% over baseline (15) | 27 |
| New stakeholder groups (e.g. not just government units) utilise evidence to inform policy debates | # policy stakeholders and others (e.g. media) outside government utilise IPPO materials | No baseline | 5 | 19 |
| Increased understanding of local policy priorities by IPPO and stakeholders | # of policy need summary documents | No baseline | 6 | 13 |

There was increased awareness in IPPO 2 of the ability to stimulate demand more easily in the devolved regions than in central UK government departments. Mirroring IPPO 1, the bulk of evidence requests in IPPO 2 originated from the devolved regions, alongside targeted responses to 'Areas of Research Interest' defined by UK government departments. The policy stakeholders that utilised IPPO's materials included local governments, charities, and think tanks (Figure 2).

*Figure 2: Use of IPPO materials by policy stakeholders*
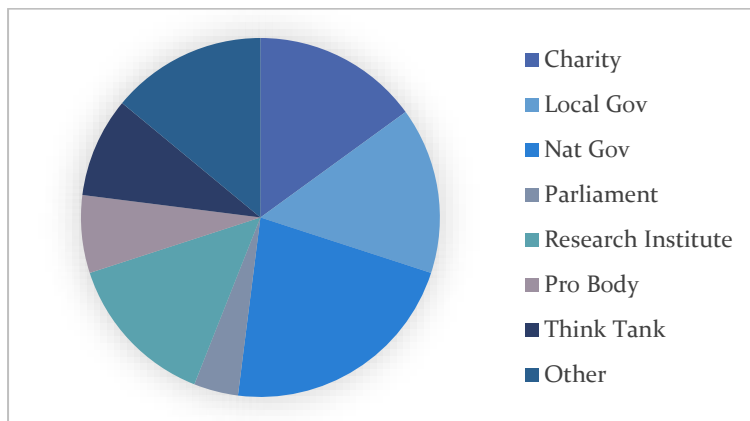


The types of evidence requested by policy stakeholders were similar between IPPO 1 and IPPO 2. Still, the numbers requested were more numerous, highlighting that IPPO was becoming known and recognised as a 'go-to' location for evidence. Figure 3 shows the difference in evidence-type requests between IPPO 1 and IPPO 2. As discussed in 3.1.2, in IPPO 2, a new type of evidence was introduced – the system map. Critically, it was noted by multiple interviewees that credibility, trust, and time were important for the increased stimulation of demand for evidence from policy stakeholders.

Several interviewees noted that the Areas of Research Interests requirement for UK government departments, following the 2015 Nurse review of UK research councils, had helped increase the demand for evidence and interaction with academia. However, all the policy stakeholders interviewed and many of the IPPO staff noted that funding for evidence and research was limited, with governments in the UK struggling increasingly with funding shortfalls. Despite this, there was a recognition of the importance of evidence-informed policymaking. As one interviewee put it:

> *"there's a desire... [for] getting cutting insights and translation of knowledge from elsewhere so that you can inform what you're doing, particularly when you've got fewer resources."*

Furthermore, several interviewees noted that the significant demand for evidence in devolved nations required careful management of expectations and articulation of IPPO capacity to meet evidence needs.

*Figure 3: Type of evidence requested by policy stakeholders*
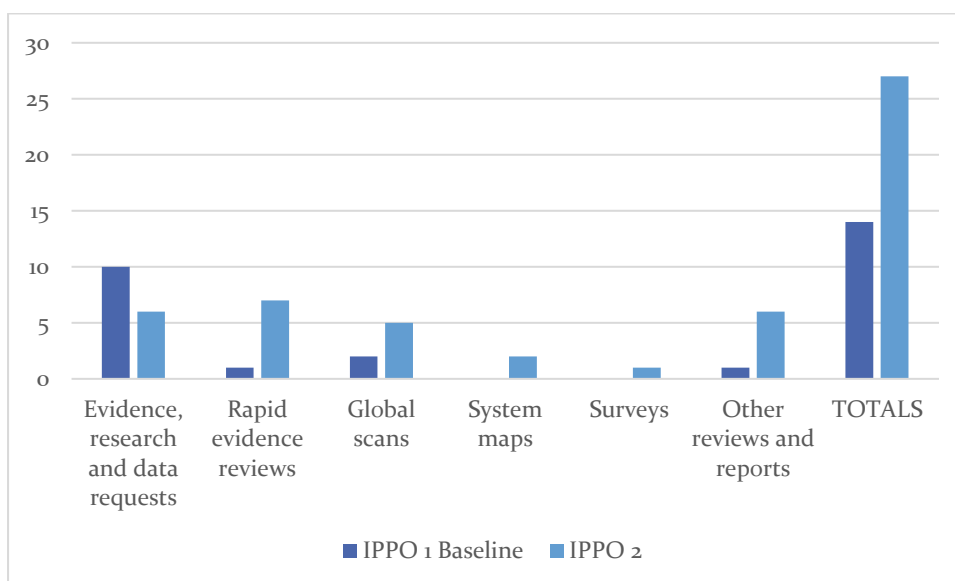


The degree to which IPPO's work is cited elsewhere is related to the indicator of the number of IPPO evidence products referenced in policy discussions. Tables 3 and 4 provide details of references to IPPO in reports, on websites, or in the media, as well as IPPO's referencing in peer-reviewed academic work

(this includes academic work by IPPO's staff). This includes references to work published or completed during IPPO 1 but which was being referenced during IPPO 2, highlighting the time it takes for demand to be articulated and the impact of research to be felt in policy environments.

*Table 3. Summary of references to IPPO*

| # | Reference Title | Date | Medium | Organisation | Stakeholder Type | Reference type |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Impact evaluation of UKRI's R&I funding response to COVID-19 | Jan-23 | Report | Technopolis Group | Think Tank | Data point |
| 2 | Final Technical Report: Generating Knowledge and Building Networks for Science Advice in Emergencies | Feb-23 | Report | INGSA | Other | Data point |
| 3 | Pandemic Watch News Brief: The News You Need To Know | Mar-23 | Website | Defending Democracy Together Institute | Charity | Newsletter |
| 4 | The Treasury during Covid What lessons can be learned from the pandemic? | Apr-23 | Report | Institute for Government | Think Tank | Output Citation |
| 5 | HEALTH SECURITY FROM THE GROUND UP 5 lessons for the future of the UKHSA | Aug-23 | Report | The Reform Research Trust | Think Tank | Output Citation |
| 6 | Dr Maurice Nagington & Dr Jaime García-Iglesias - Mpox Revisited | Aug-23 | Online | HIV Matters | Charity | Podcast |
| 7 | Why converting office space into flats won't solve the housing crisis | Nov-23 | Blog | The Unassuming Economist | Other (IMF Director) | Resource |
| 8 | Launch of the new Areas of Research Interest database. | Sep-23 | Lecture | Government Office for Science | National Gov/Agency | Resource |
| 9 | Why converting office space into flats won't solve the housing crisis | Nov-23 | Newspaper | Sun Journal | Other (media) | Article |
| 10 | Innovation in the news December 14, 2023 | Dec-23 | Newsletter | Innovation in the News | Other [confirm] | News |
| 11 | EPPI Christmas 2023! | Dec-23 | Website | EPPI Centre | Research Institute | News |
| 12 | The Transferability Question Curated on December 23, 2023 by Stefaan Verhulst | Dec-23 | Repository | The Living Library | Other | Resource |
| 13 | Despite throwing money at the problem, people still aren't buying heat pumps | Mar-24 | Website | Social Market Foundation | Think Tank | Opinion |
| 14 | Despite throwing money at the problem, people still aren't buying heat pumps | Mar-24 | Website | Smart Thinking (Think Tank Network) | Pro Body | Opinion |
| 15 | Tackling poverty stigma workshops | Mar-24 | Local Gov Workplan | Ceredigion County Council | Local Gov | Workshop |
| 16 | In the news in August | Aug-24 | Newsletter | Bevan Foundation | Charity | Report |
| 17 | Online compendium of Wales COVID-19 Evidence | n.d. | Website | Health Technology Wales | National Gov/Agency | Resource |
| 18 | Hybrid work and disabled people. Post-pandemic policy problems | n.d. | Report | Lancaster University | Academic | Resource |

*Table 4: IPPO referenced in academic work*

| | Reference Title | Date | Reference type | IPPO Output | Link |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Enabling knowledge brokerage intermediaries to be evidence-informed | 01/11/2022 | Journal article [confirm peer] | Organisation (IPPO) | https://doi.org/10.1332/17442642 1X16353477842207 |
| 2 | We are all in the same storm but not in the same boat': the COVID pandemic and the Further Education Sector | 27/11/2022 | Journal article (peer) | Organisation (IPPO) Living Map | https://doi.org/10.1080/13639080. 2022.2149715 |
| 3 | Informing evidence-based policy during the COVID-19 pandemic and recovery period: learning from a national evidence centre | 31/05/2024 | Report | Organisation (IPPO) as data source/collaborator | https://doi.org/10.1186/s41256- 024-00354-1 |
| 4 | Schwartz Rounds: Supporting the emotional wellbeing of our future healthcare workforce | 01/03/2024 | Journal article (peer) | Rapid evidence review (NHS staff wellbeing, 2022) | https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fhj.2024. 100010 |
| 5 | The state of British policymaking: How can UK government become more effective | 07/08/2024 | Journal article (peer) | Organisation (IPPO) | https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gsae01 9 |
| 6 | Time for a rebalance: Psychological and emotional well-being in the healthcare workforce as the foundation for patient safety | 22/07/2024 | Journal editorial | Rapid evidence review (NHS staff wellbeing, 2022) | https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjqs- 2024-017236 |
| 7 | Agents of change: A vision for psychology through the lens of tomorrow's leaders | 01/03/2023 | Journal Article | Rapid evidence review (NHS staff wellbeing, 2022) | https://doi.org/10.53841/bpscpf.20 23.1.363.74 |
| 8 | Public Inquiries and Policy Design | 05/02/2024 | Book (peer) | Blog (Range and variety in models of public inquiry, 2021) | https://doi.org/10.1017/97810092 86879 |
| 9 | Teaching for Synthesis at The London Interdisciplinary School | 01/05/2024 | Journal Article | Blog (The Synthesis Gap, 2021) | https://doi.org/10.1162/daed_a_0 2075 |
| 10 | In the shower crying…but we came back in the following day and did it all again'. Distress and resilience in care home staff during the COVID-19 pandemic– A qualitative interview study | 27/03/2024 | Journal article (peer) | Blog (Mental health and wellbeing, 2021) | https://doi.org/10.1186/s12877- 024-04804-w |
| 11 | Variation in the stringency of COVID-19 public health measures on self-reported health, stress, and overall wellbeing in Canada | 11/08/2023 | Journal article (peer) | Funder of Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker | https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598- 023-39004-w |
| 12 | Creating healthy workplaces in healthcare: Are we delaying progress by focusing on what we can do rather than what we should do? | 01/03/2023 | Journal article (peer) | Rapid evidence review (NHS staff wellbeing, 2022) | https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.202 3.1105009 |
| 13 | Applying Intersectionality in Policy and Practice: Unseating the Dominance of Gender in Responding to Social Inequalities | 02/06/2023 | Journal Article (check if peer) | Inequalities Matrix 2021 | https://doi.org/10.18753/2297- 8224-4030 |

| 14 | "Zero to Hero": Conceptualising Time as a Moderator of Nurses' Emotional Labour on the Front Line | 18/08/2023 | Journal article (peer) | Rapid evidence review (NHS staff wellbeing, 2022) | https://doi.org/10.1155/2023/9383167 |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 15 | Borders within borders (In: Pandemics, Public Health and the regulation of borders) | 2024 | Book Chapter | Blog (Navigating the crisis, 2022) | https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/87664/9781003861454.pdf;jsessionid=EBDC908940C0A5109CC004C7C6EB59DC?sequence=1 |
| 16 | Digital Knowledge Translation Tools for Disseminating Sexual and Reproductive Health Information to Adolescents: Protocol for an Evidence Gap Map Review | 01/01/2024 | Journal article (peer) | IPPO (EPPI-Mapper) tool to generate evidence map (Method) | https://doi.org/10.2196/55081 |
| 17 | 'You're not a REAL doctor': Exploring subjective wellbeing among clinical academics in the NIHR mentoring scheme | 30/04/2024 | Article | Rapid evidence review (NHS staff wellbeing, 2022) | https://pearl.plymouth.ac.uk/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1077&context=swcsj |
| 18 | Cross-sectional survey of sexual health professionals' experiences and perceptions of the 2022 mpox outbreak in the UK | 01/01/2024 | Journal article (peer) | Responding to Mpox: communities, communication, and Infrastructures | https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2023-080250 |
| 19 | Mpox Illness Narratives: Stigmatising Care and Recovery During and After an Emergency Outbreak | 10/03/2024 | Journal article (peer) | Responding to Mpox: communities, communication, and Infrastructures | https://doi.org/10.1177/10497323241234482 |
| 20 | Informed, but uncertain: managing transmission risk and isolation in the 2022 mpox outbreak among gay and bisexual men in Australia | 17/05/2024 | Journal article (peer) | Responding to Mpox: communities, communication, and Infrastructures | https://doi.org/10.1080/13691058.2024.2346540 |

### 3.1.2 SUPPLY KNOWLEDGE

IPPO has achieved many of its targets for its second focus area of 'supplying a range of knowledge synthesis products'. However, notably, it appears to have fallen short of its targets relating to academic engagements. This is despite, as highlighted in Figure 4, academics being its most frequent collaborator and contributor type. The reasoning for this shortfall in academic engagement appears to be related to the change in focus (the lack of a pandemic which demanded multiple and frequent sources of academic knowledge) and how IPPO 2 supplied targeted evidence to policymakers, which was focused much more on utilisation of its internal capabilities and a smaller group of collaborators. Details of its progress in this area against its MEL framework indicators are provided in Tables 5 and 6. Table 7 lists critical collaborations created, sustained and strengthened in IPPO 2.

*Table 5. Summary of key indicators for longer-term supply outcomes*

| Longer-term outcome | Indicator | Baseline | 2024 Target | IPPO 2 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Increased support for knowledge and evidence from multiple sources | # of collaborators working with IPPO | 25 relationships with key policy intermediaries and networks | 10 | 47 |
| New evidence supply mechanisms are developed outside of IPPO standard outputs | # of partnerships to supply evidence | 1 | 5 | 19 |
| Enhanced recognition of areas where there are knowledge gaps | # academics working with IPPO | 287 | 10% increase over baseline (316) | 151 |
| Academics gain improved understanding of policy evidence needs | # of requests for evidence from government policymakers and other stakeholders | 14 | 10% increase over baseline (16) | 27 |

*Table 6. Summary of key indicators for shorter-term supply outcomes*

| Shorter-term outcome | Indicator | Baseline | 2024 Target | IPPO 2 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Recognition of IPPO as a core evidence supplier for UK governments | # of IPPO evidence products referenced in policy and policy discussions led by government stakeholders | 14 | 10% increase over baseline (15) | 11 |
| New evidence supply mechanisms are developed outside of IPPO standard outputs | Development of new evidence supply mechanisms | No baseline | No target | 6 |
| Enhanced recognition of areas where there are knowledge gaps | # of policy need summary documents | No baseline | 8 | 13 |
| Academics gain improved understanding of policy evidence needs | # academic engagements with IPPO discussing policy with policy knowledge resulting from IPPOs' work evidence needs. | No baseline | 50 | 73 |

*Figure 4. Profile of IPPO collaborators and contributors*
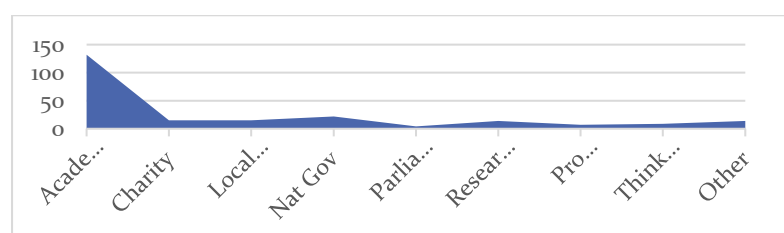
*Table 7. Critical collaborations created, sustained and strengthened*

| Stakeholder Type | Organisations | Stakeholder Type | Organisations |
|---|---|---|---|
| **National Government/ Agencies** | Capabilities in Academic Policy Engagement | **Academic and Research Institutions** | Cardiff University |
| | Cities and Local Growth Unit, UK Government | | Centre for Senior Policy |
| | | | Economic Social Research Institute |
| | Cross-Government Social and Behavioural Science for Emergencies (SBS-E) Steering Group | | Elsevier |
| | | | Institute for Government |
| | Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office | | Institute for Public Policy Research |
| | | | University of Bristol |
| | Government Office for Science (Go Science) | | University of Edinburgh |
| | | | University of Manchester |
| | Healthwatch England | | University of Glasgow |
| | National Assembly for Wales | | WCPP |
| | National Health Services | | |
| | Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology | | |
| | Scottish Government | | |
| | UK Health Security Agency | | |
| | What Works Centre for Local Economic Development | | |
| | Welsh Government | | |
| **Local Government** | Belfast City Council | **Charities, Think Tanks, Consultants and Policy Intermediaries** | Bevan Foundation |
| | Ceredigion County Council | | Bloomberg Philanthropies |
| | City of London | | Campbell Collaboration |
| | Greater Manchester Combined Authority | | Centre for Cities |
| | Leeds City Council (UK) | | New Local |
| | Manchester City Council | | Public Policy Exchange |
| | Northern Ireland Civil Service | | Social Market Foundation |
| | North of Tyne Combined Authority | | The Develeco Group |
| | Oxford City Council | | Together for Change |
| | Reading Borough Council | | |
| | Birmingham Combined Authority | | |
| | Greater London Authority | | |
| | Rhona Cynon Tax Council | | |
| | West Yorkshire Combined Authority | | |

IPPO 2 introduced new and improved previous knowledge supply mechanisms used during IPPO 1. Specifically:

1. **IPPO experimented with a new roundtable format**

   IPPO 1 utilised roundtables to bring a multitude of policy stakeholders together to discuss a specific topic, usually online. In IPPO 2, these continued to be used but with a more focused invitation list to ensure the discussions were more targeted. In addition, a new approach was introduced, which became known as the 'café style' roundtable event. These focused on multiple issues as opposed to just one single issue. Both approaches were useful in "bringing together experts and decision-makers with an evidence base to talk about its implications and have a dialogue." Key to these events was their ability to be 'co-creation' and 'exploratory' spaces' - words used to describe them by members of IPPO and external policymakers. In this way, these events both stimulated demand and supplied knowledge.

2. **It introduced a policy school**

   In January 2024, IPPO 2 held a 'knowledge exchange winter school' for policy stakeholders in Northern Ireland. The success of the first policy school led to a similar event being convened in
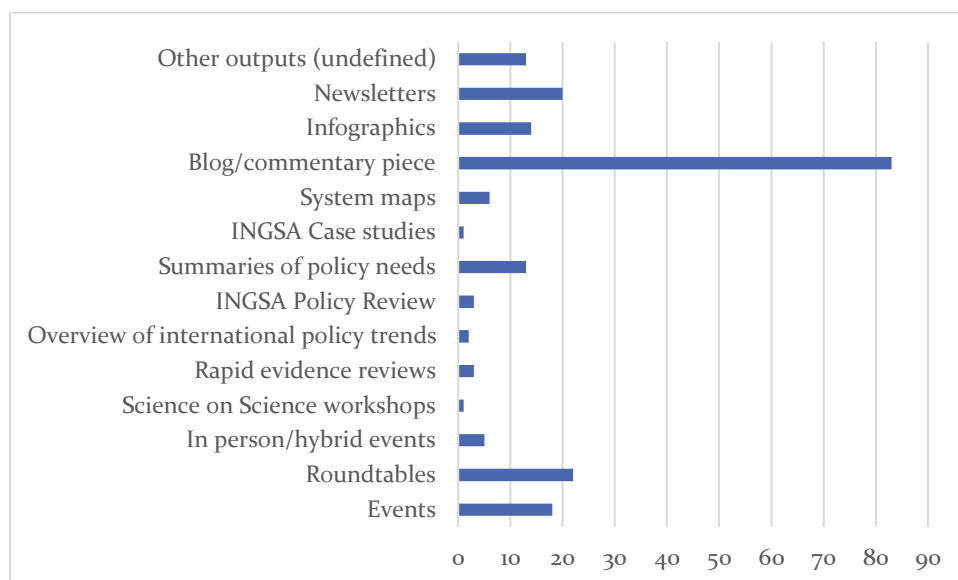
Scotland in August 2024. These events brought together mid-career civil servants from the government and experts from IPPO and beyond. These explored key issues in using evidence for more informed policymaking and the policymaking process more generally. Moreover, they highlighted the extent of demand for research in a fiscally constrained environment. As one staff member articulated: "After that winter school came a flood of research requests—and some of them were way outside of our remit."

3. **IPPO 2 produced systems maps**

The team at IPPO produced six systems maps as part of their efforts to supply relevant knowledge to policy stakeholders during IPPO 2. The team members developed the 'SEPPA Method' for systems mapping or 'Systems, Evidence and Power for Policy Action'. The method is made up of five steps: initial sketching out of the system, collaborative working to develop further the map with a broader range of stakeholders, a review of the evidence to support the mapping, cocreation with policymakers to identify policy options to address gaps and a final refinement element that drills down on how to address the gaps. IPPO's advisory group highlighted these as an essential tool for supplying knowledge that moves beyond the silos that policymakers often work in.

An overview of the knowledge output types supplied during IPPO 2 is provided in Figure 5 and Table 8.

*Figure 5. IPPO 2 Outputs*

*Table 8. IPPO 2 knowledge outputs summary list*

| Output | Description | Completed and active |
|---|---|---|
| Events | Public events demonstrating IPPO's work, garnering interest for future research by stakeholders. | 18 |
| Roundtables | Small expert focused invite-only online or in-person meeting to explore IPPO work area with academic practitioner/policymaker, and/or to establish policy demand. | 22 |
| In person/hybrid events | Public in-person/hybrid events to demonstrate IPPO's work, gauge appetite for future research and grow our stakeholder network. | 5 |
| Science on Science workshops | International roundtable discussions to consider what can be learned from understanding how evidence informed policy and science advice is evolving in different national contexts. Followed by a roundtable briefing for the website. | 1 |
| Rapid evidence reviews | Conceptual mapping, executive summary and review by the EPPI Centre | 3 |
| Overview of international policy trends | International overview (Latin America / Africa / Southeast Asia) of policy trends across each IPPO theme and makes use of reliable and current national and regional media sources and parliamentary information. | 2 |
| INGSA Policy Review | Short policy review (formally known as global scan) usually looking at the formulation and implementation of policies, including tacit knowledge not yet published or easily findable through desk research, online or in databases, in response to a specific policy-related question for which they would like international intelligence across a broad range of countries/jurisdictions in their region of focus. | 3 |
| Summaries of policy needs | Summaries and accounts/reflections of ongoing work related to a thematic area. | 13 |
| INGSA Case studies | Short policy review (formally known as global scan) usually looking at the formulation and implementation of policies. This includes tacit knowledge not yet published or easily findable through desk research, online or in databases, in response to a specific policy-related question using international intelligence across a broad range of countries/jurisdictions in their region of focus. | 1 |
| System maps | A visual representation of current policy levers across a topic area within an IPPO theme. | 6 |
| Blog/commentary piece | 800-word blog written by an academic/practitioner/policymaker working on a project that's related to IPPO's thematic areas and projects for IPPO website. | 83 |
| Infographics | Infographics that amplify effective/provocative policy strategies and key messages based on research by the entire partnership. Usually found in reports and on social media. | 14 |
| Newsletters | A newsletter distributed to IPPO stakeholders to inform them of upcoming events, possibilities to get involved in our work, as well as to highlight recent and planned activity. | 20 |
| Other outputs (undefined) | Additional outputs proposed by the entire partnership, or by the funder (for example if additional funding is rewarded, or a clear interest from stakeholders) | 13 |

A further breakdown on how IPPO 2 supplied knowledge is provided in Table 9 which outlines details of IPPO 2's online and social media engagement.

*Table 9. Summary of IPPO 2 online and social media engagement as at 31 October 2024*

| Channel/Medium | Followers/Subscribers | Engagement |
|---|---|---|
| Twitter/ X | 1754 | N/A[3] |
| YouTube | 124 | 3155 views |
| Eventbrite | 657 | 5103 attendees |
| Newsletter | 2904 | 37% Open Rate[4] |
| LinkedIn | 1039 | 26,683 impressions[5] |
| Website traffic | N/A | 39,000 views |

[3] Twitter, now X, topped providing detailed engagement data during the period of IPPO 2.
[4] From Nov 26 2023 - Nov 26 2024
[5] LinkedIn only gives one year's worth of data at any time. This is from Nov 27 2023 - Nov 25th 2024

Finally, regarding how IPPO has supplied knowledge thematically in IPPO 2, Figure 6 provides a graphic representation of the breakdown by theme. Socio-economic inequality has been the thematic area with the most activity, followed by the Net Zero theme. An additional thematic area has been added during IPPO 2 that was not in the original thematic list at the start of this last phase: the theme of 'Innovations in Making Evidence Useful'. This thematic area focuses on the evidence to the policy process.

*Figure 6: Proportion of IPPO's knowledge supply by thematic area*
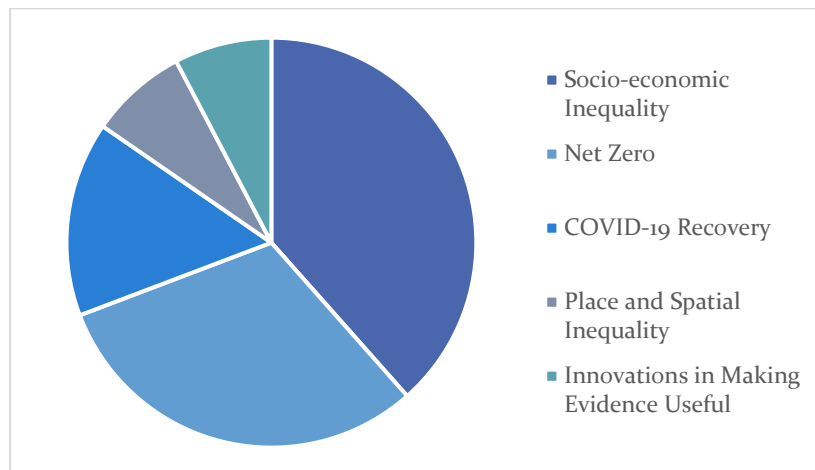


### 3.1.3 FACILITATING KNOWLEDGE USE

The final area of IPPO's activities is 'facilitating and enabling the creation and use of appropriate evidence, including through building of relationships and networks with policy and other stakeholders'. This area has only two main outcome areas, the first related to joined-up policy debates or examples of collaborations or discussions between multiple stakeholder groups due to IPPO activity (see Table 10). During IPPO 2, the Observatory has had the most joined-up policy debate in the socio-economic inequality thematic area (19 examples), followed by 14 that were cross-cutting across multiple thematic areas. Figure 7 shows a breakdown of these joined-up policy debates by thematic area.

Related to this is the number of connections made between government policymakers and other policy stakeholders due to IPPO's activities (Table 11). This stands at eight connections, up from two at the start of IPPO 2.

*Table 10. Summary of key indicators for longer-term demand outcomes*

| Longer-term outcome | Indicator | Baseline | 2024 Target | IPPO 2 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Joined up policy debate between multiple stakeholder groups and across nations | # of joined up policy debates | No baseline | - | 48 |

*Table 11. Summary of key indicators for shorter-term demand outcomes*

| Shorter-term outcome | Indicator | Baseline | 2024 Target | IPPO 2 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strengthened connections between policymakers and other policy stakeholders | # of connections made between government policymakers and other policy stakeholders from IPPO activities | 2 | 10% over baseline (2) | 8 |

*Figure 7. Profile of joined up policy debates*
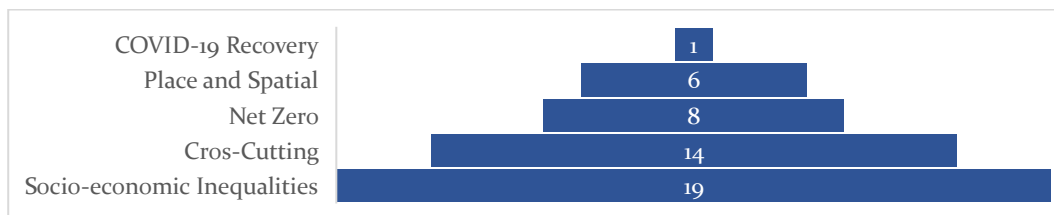


Although not an official indicator for IPPO of facilitating knowledge use, a key aspect of strengthening connections between policy stakeholders and academics relates to partnerships and network building. As such, Table 12 outlines details of the 19 research collaborations and/or partnerships that were orchestrated through IPPO 2. A new initiative under IPPO 2 has been to utilise policy fellowships to embed researchers into local government. As part of IPPO and the University College London's (UCL) Department of Information Studies' Building Local Data Capabilities project, five Data for Policy Fellows were embedded in partner local government bodies across the United Kingdom.

*Table 12. Partnerships and collaborations on research*

| # | Stakeholders | Stakeholder type | Details |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | ↶Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) local authority | Local government | Working with RCT to support the trajectory of the Health Determinants Research Collaborations (HDRC) initiative. Part of the Data Policy Fellowship at the Department of Information Studies, for Building Local Capabilities co-led by Dr Bonnie Buyuklieva and Jeremy Williams from IPPO. |
| 2 | ↶New Local | Think Tank | Partnership with New Local on a research project exploring how local authorities are responding to financial pressure |
| 3 | ↶City Intelligence Unit (CIU) | Local government | Policy Fellowship placement at the Greater London Authority (GLA) facilitated by IPPO in collaboration with UCL's Dept Information Studies, I am working with the City Data team within the City Intelligence Unit (CIU) and the Energy team to validate the outputs of the new London Building Stock Model (LBSM) |
| 4 | ↶Greater Manchester Combined Authority<br><br>↶University College London (UCL) | Local government | A public sector and academic collaboration (between the GMCA, UCL and IPPO) to support Net-Zero |
| 5 | ↶Welsh Government | National government | Working in partnership to provide the Welsh Government with evidence to inform further research and policy decisions on supporting Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic children and families in Wales |
| 6 | ↶Belfast City Council | Local government | Policy Fellowship working with the Belfast City Council to introduce a Labour Market Observatory (LMO) to help tackle long-term unemployment. |
| 7 | ↶Local authorities across the UK | Local government | A series of roundtables to gather attitudes on fiscal constraint among local authorities across the UK, and to better understand the common threads that underpin responses to budget cuts. |
| 8 | ↶UCL STEaPP Master's Programme<br><br>↶INGSA | Academic | Understanding how science advice operates in different national contexts, and how countries are sourcing international expertise under the supervision of an IPPO team member, an INGSA member and a STEaPP professor. |
| 9 | ↶INGSA<br><br>↶UCL | Academic | The 'INfluence of Culture and LangUages on Science adVice in Europe' or 'INCLUSIVE' project aims to explore how language, culture and context affect the provision and use of scientific evidence in Europe and to consider any implications for future practice and research. |

| 10 | ✑Queen's University Belfast ✑University of Glasgow | Academic | IPPO teams at Queen's University Belfast and the University of Glasgow have been gathering evidence on policy responses to economic inactivity. |
|----|----|----|----|
| 11 | ✑Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST) ✑Capabilities in Academic Policy Engagement (CAPE) | Parliament Government body/agency | Guide to Rapid Evidence Assessments developed from on the findings from a pilot project, where five REAs were conducted for select committees in the UK Parliament, as part of a partnership between POST, IPPO, CAPE. |
| 12 | ✑Queen's University Belfast | Academic | Developed a research note on advice on how to organise society-wide conversations on routes and choices for Net Zero. Developed from written evidence products, including intelligence from QUB in Northern Ireland. |
| 13 | ✑Develeco | Other (Specialist consultants) | Worked with Develeco and a wide range of industry professionals, to bring forward a Retrofit Systems Map. |
| 14 | ✑Economics Observatory (ECO) | Research Institute | Hosted two roundtables with the ECO with a focus on the Northern Irish and Scottish experiences of inactivity and related policy interventions |
| 15 | ✑Bloomberg Philanthropies | Other (Foundation) | IPPO Cities: Place and Spatial Inequality workstream is part of the International Public Policy Observatory - and supported by Bloomberg Philanthropies. |
| 16 | ✑GO-Science | Government body/agency | IPPO, in partnership with GO-Science, convened a roundtable of experts to discuss what we do and don't know about the effect that changes to working patterns are having on individuals' wellbeing and economic productivity. |
| 17 | ✑Universities of Edinburgh, Bristol, and Manchester, and the UK Health Security Agency | Academic Government body/agency | IPPO collaboration with the Universities of Edinburgh, Bristol, and Manchester, and the UK Health Security Agency to fill previously-identified social science research gaps related to the M-Pox outbreak. |
| 18 | ✑Social Market Foundation | Think Tank | The Social Market Foundation provided commentary on the IPPO report on home energy change, and supported IPPO in convening a roundtable discussion with government and non-government stakeholders. |
| 19 | ✑Centre for Sustainability, Equality and Climate Action (SECA) ✑INGSA | Research Institute | Intelligence from SECA, supported Society-Wide Conversations on Net Zero, alongside a global scan of best practice. |

A key contribution to the evidence-policy interface landscape by IPPO 2 has been the conduct of a series of 'Innovations in Making Evidence Useful' events. Eight of these events were held during 2023 and the first half of 2024. These events provided an opportunity to discuss how evidence informs policy decision-making and how evidence can be more effectively supplied to facilitate its use in policy processes. These events were the most well-attended of IPPO 2's online activities, with over 700 participants in some of the events. The content of each session was either supply-led (i.e. considered an important topic based on the experiences of the IPPO team) or demand-led, as in the case of the event on Rapid Evidence Review methodology, which came out of previous engagements with the UK's POST which had started under IPPO 1. The engagement with POST on rapid evidence synthesis led to a commissioning tool being developed on how to do rapid evidence synthesis, which became a focusing device for the event.

While most of these 'Innovations in Making Evidence Useful' events were highly regarded and attended, the IPPO team acknowledged that one event focused on disability was less successful. During a learning workshop with the evaluation team, the lack of event success was discussed in terms of the tension within IPPO of being thematically focused while also focused on the evidence-policy interface process. The IPPO team members noted, during the workshop, that while the overall workstream under which disability fell (the socio-economic inequality thematic area) was considered to have worked well when they tried to do a public-facing seminar, there was pushback from stakeholders. This was deemed due to IPPO's lack of

credibility in the subject area – IPPO was not seen as subject specialists and, as one workshop participant put it, *'there were subject specialists that were already doing similar things - it raised a credibility issue.'*

Another critical insight was the role that IPPO could play in facilitating policy discussions which involve complexities or sensitivities that can make the policy issue challenging to address. These might include issues with far-reaching consequences, contested values, or implications for powerful stakeholders. Engaging in discussions on such topics may expose policymakers to political, reputational, or social risks, as decisions or statements could provoke backlash or unintended consequences. When such conversations are facilitated and led by intermediaries such as IPPO, they provide a neutral space that mitigates these risks, enabling policy stakeholders to explore possibilities without direct attribution or immediate accountability.

### 3.1.4 CROSS-CUTTING WORK AND BROADER LEGACY

While IPPO's work in its first and second phases focused on three distinct activity areas (stimulating demand, supplying knowledge and facilitating knowledge use), the Observatory has consistently recognised the interconnections between these three activity areas. In IPPO 1, the Observatory utilised a 'double helix' inspired conceptualisation of the interconnections (see Figure 8).

The double helix approach developed during IPPO 1 provided a conceptual framework for understanding the linkages between stimulating demand, supplying knowledge, and facilitating knowledge use. At the project level, this framework guided the delivery of project initiatives by emphasising the interconnectedness of these activities. Each project was intentionally designed to address all three interrelated activity areas and approached holistically as part of a broader project framework. This ensured that all activities contributed to a cohesive strategy.

During its second phase, there has been recognition of the limitations of the double helix and the need to think in terms of the triple helix – bringing in the facilitation of evidence use. The Observatory used the 'Innovations in Making Evidence Useful' events as mechanisms to consider other ways of thinking about the interaction between supply and demand for evidence within the policy process. It also considered the best ways of ensuring evidence use. Through these events and its other activities, the Observatory has enabled stakeholders to think differently about how evidence can be used in the policy process. Critically, it has led to new collaborations between IPPO's member organisations (who hadn't worked together before) e.g. colleagues from Queens University of Belfast are now working with the WCPP. In addition, through IPPO's activities, a new policy centre is being set up in Northern Ireland at the Queen's University of Belfast, and a Centre for Public Policy was set up in late 2023 at Glasgow University to serve the Scottish policy community.

*Figure 8: IPPO 1 double helix approach*
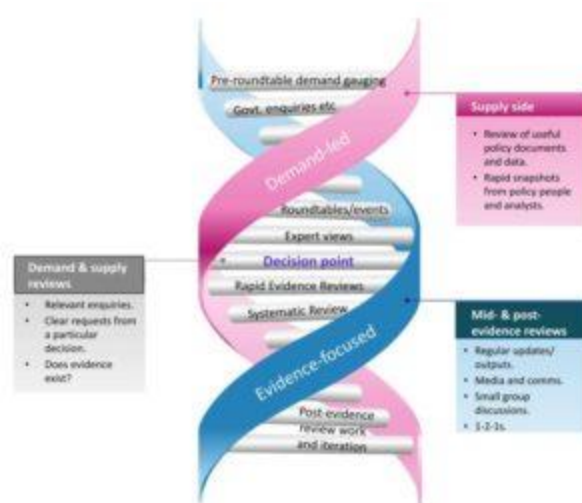
In this way, IPPO 2 has achieved its impact of developing a 'more informed policy environment' because it leaves in its wake more people working on providing information, evidence and knowledge for policy decision-makers. It has further left a more engaged policy environment, especially in devolved regions.

### 3.1.5 IMPACT

IPPO 2's MEL framework outlines impact indicators, including a 'more informed policy environment'. Table 13 outlines the details of these impact indicators. It was determined not to quantitatively measure these impact indicators given that not even two full years had passed since the MEL framework was developed and impact takes time to occur. Furthermore, it is well recognised that impact is usually outwith the direct control of a project or programme. As such, while IPPO includes impact indicators, it was not expecting to be able to show causation or even correlation between its activities and the broader indicators of impact it includes in its results matrix. These indicators are included to reiterate the causal pathway of change that IPPO's work has been working towards.

That being said, and as noted in 3.1.4, the Observatory has enabled stakeholders to think differently about how evidence can be used in the policy process and, as such, could be argued to be leaving behind a 'more informed policy environment'. To illustrate this, here is a quote from one policymaker talking about IPPO 2's work that allowed them to evaluate the differences between policy content from one devolved region to another:

> '[what was] interesting to explore was opportunities given by diverging policies in England and Scotland... they [IPPO] very helpfully prepared us for that.'

They went on to say:

> ', 'What strikes me is having the... having networks, having somebody you could turn to and say, 'How does policy on this particular topic differ across a range of countries? And has anybody ever published any research on this? And where would I find out more? It's always helpful, because I've been involved with trying to track these things down in the past. It can be nightmare.' (Interview#14)

Certainly, the fact that IPPO 2 has resulted in the strengthening and set up of two public policy centres in the devolved regions (Northern Ireland and Scotland) is an important impact that ensures a more informed policy environment. This was reiterated by one policymaker interviewed from one of the devolved regions who noted:

> '[There are] multiple interventions and multiple kind of funding streams for doing things which are about translational work between social research and policy, and it's a little bit of a chaotic landscape... when you're running government... for a country of 3 million people, even you've got 6000 civil servants, you need to be able to kind of short circuit some of the kind of evidence gathering, the research capacity so people [who] are doing that kind of translational work [are] incredibly useful... So I think work which is generat[ing], you know, getting involved and engaged on that level is really helpful for us, because it gives us better insights about devolution.'

*Table 13. Summary of key indicators for impact*

| Impact | Indicator |
|---|---|
| More informed policy environment across all UK nations enabling enhanced economic and social wellbeing | Increased # policy mechanisms across UK nations that explicitly request social science evidence input |
| | Increased economic and social wellbeing and movement towards achievement of nations' COVID-19 recovery, net zero, place/space inequality, and socio-economic inequalities targets |

Stories of change highlight how activities have led to modifications or shifts in the lives or activities of stakeholders. By focusing more deeply on what has occurred, the narratives surrounding these activities and the actors involved, it is possible to get a deeper understanding of the causal pathways of change.

We have found that IPPO 2's work has contributed to change in two ways. The first is through its focus on key thematic areas. Two stories of change are presented below that highlight the change it has achieved in two of its focus themes (socio-economic inequality and place/spatial inequality). IPPO 2's convening power as an evidence-policy interlocutor (see Section 3.3) has enabled it to contribute to policy change within its thematic areas of focus despite not having deep expertise in these thematic areas.

The second form of change that we have identified as taking place relates to IPPO's introduction of new methodologies and approaches or the systematisation of existing methodologies and approaches to the evidence-policy interface. In so doing, it could be argued that IPPO 2 has conducted policy experimentation.

## 3.2.1 THEMATIC STORIES OF CHANGE

### ECONOMIC INACTIVITY

The theme of socioeconomic inequalities arose from IPPO's first phase of work and a recognition that the COVID-19 pandemic had exacerbated socioeconomic inequalities across the four UK nations. In June 2021, before the start of IPPO 2, IPPO held an 'Actions on Inequality' event which utilised an evidence tool developed by IPPO, the inequalities matrix, and it brought together "several hundred policymakers, researchers and practitioners from all parts of the UK to discuss how best to address the many inequalities that COVID-19 has highlighted and exacerbated in each nation."[6]

Over the first year of IPPO 2, several different areas of socio-economic inequality were focused on. One example of work that was demand-driven and devolved nations led related to a desire within Northern Ireland and Scotland to understand the extent and implications of rising economic inactivity amongst the under-25s and over-50s that had been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

During separate discussions with the Northern Ireland Executive and the Scottish Government, IPPO partners in these devolved nations found the issue of economic inactivity was high on the agenda. There was a request from the Northern Ireland Executive, which was struggling with a constrained budget, to "*give... some advice on what's the best use what money we have*" (Interview#7).

Several interviewees noted that the recognition of the similarity between the two devolved regions on this issue came about during a routine project meeting when Northern Irish colleagues reported back to the wider IPPO management team on discussions that had taken place with the Northern Ireland Executive. This resulted in the Scottish squad acknowledging they had had similar sets of discussions. One interviewee noted that the issue had been a long-standing one in Northern Ireland and that much thought had been given to it but that it had been very theoretical. They went on to note that it took discussing the issues with IPPO colleagues from the Scottish team to develop a practical response.

The practical response was a series of activities in 2023 as follows:

1. A website piece written by Graeme Roy and Muiris MacCarthaigh on economic inactivity and the need for policy solutions in July 2023 as a precursor to two round table events. (https://theippo.co.uk/policy-solutions-to-address-economic-inactivity-among-over-50s/)

2. A roundtable event held online on 13th September 2023 entitled Addressing Economic Inactivity Among Over 50s. This focused specifically on audiences in Northern Ireland but

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[6] Mulgan, G. (2021) *How should we address the many social inequalities amplified by COVID-19? The case for social multipliers.* Blog [Online]. Available at: https://theippo.co.uk/address-social-inequalities-amplified-covid-19-social-multipliers/ (accessed 16/10/24)

included speakers and perspectives from other regions and countries. See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lphNAZdT7-U

3. A policy review on economic inactivity in Northern Ireland was conducted and launched at the roundtable event. The details of which were published on the IPPO website (https://theippo.co.uk/policy-interventions-needed-to-reduce-economic-inactivity-in-northern-ireland/)

4. A second roundtable event was held online on 10th October 2023 and looked at the issue of inactivity due to reported ill health and focused on stakeholders in Scotland (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X2J8fSgsaEM)

5. An online event on 6th November 2023 entitled How Policy Interventions Can Reduce Economic Inactivity Among Older Workers launched IPPO's evaluation of what works to reduce economic activity among people with poor health and disability, conducted by IPPO's partner, the EPPI Centre.

6. The final rapid evidence review report was made available in mid-2024 (https://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/cms/Default.aspx?tabid=3942)

7. A further roundtable on policy interventions for reducing economic inactivity in older people will take place online in late November 2024 (https://www.eventbrite.com/e/how-policy-interventions-can-reduce-economic-inactivity-among-older-workers-tickets-1042101552797?aff=ebdsoporgprofile&keep_tld=1)

8. A presentation to a cross-government forum in Belfast, at the invitation of the Northern Irish government, also in late November 2024.

9. Several other write-ups on the activities undertaken have also occurred:

   a. 22 November 2023 - https://theippo.co.uk/economic-inactivity-and-poor-health-towards-place-based-policy-responses/

   b. 22 November 2023 - https://theippo.co.uk/policy-responses-to-economic-inactivity-addressing-a-cross-cutting-problem/ - this has been termed by IPPO as a 'summary blog of the overall conclusions' from this set of work on economic inactivity.

**Contribution**

Despite one interviewee (Interview#1) noting that IPPO's work on economic inactivity was 'still a bit of a work in progress', it was recognised that the events had contributed to discussions on a 'labour observatory' in Northern Ireland. In addition, and despite being focused predominately within the regions of Northern Ireland and Scotland, the work led to a bid on economic inactivity, which was national in focus (which ultimately was unsuccessful) to the UK's Department of Work and Pensions.

The discussions on economic inactivity in NI and Scotland were related to a broader set of discussions on fiscal constraints, as noted above. These discussions continued alongside the work on economic inactivity. It was noted that the RER on economic inactivity contributed to a set of work at the national level on fiscal constraints within local governments and authorities (Interviewee#12). This work is being conducted in partnership with NewLocal, a think tank and network focused on local government in the UK.

**Significance**

The story of IPPO's work on economic inactivity across 2023 and 2024 highlights the importance of demand-led efforts where researchers listen to and act on the needs of the policy community.

It also provides a strong example of IPPO's work within the devolved nations and the ability to learn and share experiences across devolved nations. One interviewee (Interviewee#15) from the policy space in Northern Ireland noted that the roundtable events involved at least one participant from each government department and have 'scratched an itch' with them, creating excitement for the possibilities of more use of evidence in policy decision-making. The same interviewee also noted the importance of

the connection-building opportunities that IPPO's activities created with their counterparts in other regions of the UK.

Furthermore, it highlights the interconnected nature of IPPO's work and how one activity has fed into and helped stimulate another area of work, often cutting across the thematic boundaries. Much of the work on economic inactivity includes a place and spatial inequality element, and the increase in economic inactivity immediately after the pandemic highlights the linkages with the COVID recovery thematic area.

## ACCESS TO CHILDCARE BY MIGRANT COMMUNITIES (WALES)

This project was driven by the Welsh Government's concern about low participation rates of Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) children and families in early years childcare. Initial scoping discussions began in November 2023 with nine representatives from the Welsh Government, including officials from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, the Equality, Poverty and Children Evidence Support Division, and the Office for National Statistics. The project exemplified IPPO's triple helix approach, integrating efforts to stimulate demand for evidence, supply demand-led knowledge, and facilitate its use to inform policy.

Three workshops were conducted to refine the project focus and outputs. The first two workshops involved policymakers and stakeholders to incorporate professional and lived experiences, contextualising the issue and identifying barriers, enablers, and actors. These workshops informed the creation of a systems map using IPPO's SEPPA method. The third workshop tested draft findings and recommendations with Welsh stakeholders to refine key priorities for future actions. Outputs included a Rapid Evidence Review, Systems Map, Evidence Synthesis Map, Theory of Change document, Policy Summary, and an International Policy Scan. The project culminated in a launch event on 3 October 2024, featuring speakers such as Chantelle Haughton from Diversity and Anti-Racist Professional Learning and Neil Leitch, Chief Executive Officer of the UK Early Years Alliance.

Key activities and outputs in 2024 include

1. A blog authored by Alexis Palá and Amanda Hill-Dixon on 11 July 2024: Increasing Access to Early Childhood Education and Care among Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Children and Families in Wales. https://theippo.co.uk/increasing-access-to-early-childhood-education-and-care-ecec-among-black-asian-and-minority-ethnic-children-and-families-in-wales/

2. A blog authored by Alexis Palá, Amanda Hill-Dixon and Urte Macikene on 1 October 2024: How Policy Can Increase Access to Early Years Childcare Support for Ethnic Minority Families. https://theippo.co.uk/how-policy-can-increase-access-to-early-years-childcare-support-for-ethnic-minority-families/

3. An international policy scan, authored by Tatjana Buklijas (INGSA), Felicia Low and Chloe Wilkinson (Knowledge Hub for Knowledge Hub for Maternaland Child Health at Koi Tū: Centre for Informed Futures, University of Auckland), and Moara Almeida Canova (National Institute for Amazonian Research, University of Campinas, Brazil). https://theippo.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/INGSA-Policy-Scan_FINAL-for-upload.pdf

4. A systems map

5. An evidence synthesis map

6. A theory of change workshop

7. A Rapid Evidence Review, published in Welsh and English, Increasing Access to Childcare for Ethnic Minority and Disadvantaged Communities. https://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/cms/Default.aspx?tabid=3936

8. An IPPO Policy Summary distilling evidence and recommendations from the package of associated outputs. https://theippo.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/IPPO-Policy-Summary-Eng_FINAL-for-upload-1.pdf

**Contribution**

This project exemplified IPPO's capacity to align evidence synthesis with specific policy needs. The research outputs were refined through sustained engagement with the Welsh Government to address identified challenges, ensuring relevance and applicability. Collaboration across IPPO partners, including the EPPI Centre, IPPO's thematic director of Socio-economic Inequalities, and the WCPP, leveraged diverse expertise and networks to inform policymaking. The project also facilitated knowledge exchange, supporting broader evidence-informed decision-making within the Welsh policy ecosystem.

**Significance**

The project highlights the value of integrating stakeholder engagement into evidence synthesis to develop actionable policy recommendations. It demonstrates IPPO's role in addressing socio-economic inequalities by fostering collaboration among policymakers, academics, and practitioners. Outputs and activities from the project have contributed to a more informed policy environment, particularly in Wales, and underscore IPPO's unique approach to supporting locally grounded yet nationally relevant policy development.

### 3.2.2 POLICY EXPERIMENTATION STORIES

During a learning workshop held in 2023 as part of the evaluation process, IPPO team members talked about the importance of being able to 'initiate projects without certainty of their outcome or how they'll be received' and how this 'requires a willingness to experiment'. During the discussion that followed, it was noted that IPPO has developed a culture that allows them to experiment with innovative approaches to stakeholder engagement and event planning.

The evaluation team found that this held true: IPPO has experimented with approaches to policy engagement, and policy stakeholders have received these well. In particular, three areas of policy experimentation have been highlighted during this evaluation: roundtable events, the IPPO in-person stakeholder meetings, and the policy school. Two of these have already been discussed in previous sections (the roundtables and the policy school). These two mechanisms are not radically new innovations, and many organisations are utilising these two networking mechanisms. However, the 'IPPO method' – if we can call it that – of arranging the roundtable events (carefully crafted, short, highly interactive) was found – as in the IPPO 1 evaluation – to be a 'breath of fresh air' and, more importantly, the move to a 'café style format' enabled busy policymakers to consider a range of different topics – instead of just one – in a focused, carefully crafted, highly interactive manner. Such an approach is the epitome of the interconnections of the double helix approach, where knowledge is supplied to incentivise demand from policy stakeholders. The policy schools were deemed to be a similar coming together of supply push and demand pull for evidence from policy stakeholders.

Furthermore, it was noted that the IPPO 2 approach of dedicated 1-2-1 meetings with partners and policy stakeholders was an important convening activity. Specifically, early in IPPO 2, IPPO London staff visited their devolved partners to meet key policy stakeholders (who were identified by the devolved partners) to talk through the work of the Observatory and ask them what areas they were interested in and how IPPO could support. While the format was not radically different from that used by many other similar groups and entities, the approach used to provide space for policymakers from different environments to share experiences, challenges faced, and mechanisms to overcome them (in a similar manner to the policy schools) was experimental in approach, in this setting. As noted by one IPPO staff member, these 1-2-1 meetings 'sparked topic interest on socio-economic inequality, economic inactivity, and return to work'.

## 3.3 LESSONS LEARNT ON EVIDENCE-POLICY INTERFACE

Given the focus on providing new ways to stimulate demand, supply knowledge and facilitate knowledge use within with evidence to policy process, it is not surprising that the experiences of IPPO 2 provide lessons for now evidence-policy interface. Several interviewees noted that IPPO, in its second phase, has struggled with being seen as an expert authority in the thematic fields it was focusing on (as the case of the disability roundtable in Section 3.1.3 highlighted) as opposed to being seen as the entity responsible for 'bringing the expertise to the table'. The lessons learnt in this area are discussed below, together with lessons relating to time, connections and the international focus of IPPO. A final lesson learnt relates to the operations of IPPO 2.

### 3.3.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF AN INTERLOCUTOR

Several interviewees from within and outside IPPO spoke of the Observatory as 'a knowledge broker'. One interviewee noted *"There are good links with the unis [universities] but the big problem is knowing who to ask. This is where groups like IPPO come in – providing a first point of contact and a network of others."* Others referred to IPPO as a 'trusted gateway'.

The broader environment and complexity of the evidence-policy interface is summed up in this quotation from one policy stakeholder interviewed:

> *'it's also about kind of use understanding and using evidence and research within the policymaking process, and I do quite a lot of things to try and strengthen the way in which the demand side for evidence is mobilised to kind of support ministers and do better policy work. But then also kind of a lot of interaction with academia about 'How do we get supply side of evidence working so it's timely, efficient and relevant', and kind of get the dialog between the academic systems into the policy world.'* (Interviewee #16)

IPPO's function as a trusted gateway for discussions between academia and policy across the devolved nations of the UK means that it functions more than just as a knowledge broker but instead works as an interlocutor. This term is used in the political and linguistics fields – and defined in the Oxford English Dictionary – as a person who participates in a dialogue, sometimes acting as an intermediary or 'go-between'. In recent years, the term has been utilised in the international development field to describe an entity that acts as a coordinator in multi-stakeholder initiatives and ensures "mutually optimal conditions" for discussion and dialogue.[7]

IPPO has used innovative experimental policy mechanisms for dialogue to stimulate demand for evidence, supply knowledge and evidence to policymakers and facilitate that knowledge use. These include the roundtables or policy schools, the use of different methodologies such as systems maps or asking policymakers and those providing evidence to think through how facilitation of evidence for policy is done. Perhaps more importantly, IPPO has provided these mechanisms for facilitating dialogue in a neutral environment that mitigates the risks of engaging in difficult conversations, enabling policy stakeholders to explore possibilities without direct attribution or immediate accountability.

### 3.3.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF TIME AND A START-UP PHASE

IPPO's first phase ran for a two-year period from January 2020 to December 2022. Its second phase – currently being evaluated – runs from January 2023 to December 2024. In its first phase, IPPO was focused on stimulating demand, supplying knowledge, and facilitating knowledge use, with one thematic focus being the COVID-19 pandemic. In its second phase, IPPO has broadened to focus on four thematic areas, each with sub-themes, several of which are also cross-cutting across the main thematic areas. Regularly during our discussions with IPPO team members, individually in interviews and within the group learning sessions, there was a feeling that a key hindrance to its activities has been the short time frames that the

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[7] Fowler, A., & Biekart, K. (2017). Multi-stakeholder initiatives for sustainable development goals: The importance of interlocutors. *Public Administration and Development*, 37(2), 81-93. Page 85.

Observatory has been working with. Critically, the need to produce outputs and achieve its milestones within a short two-year project funding period was deemed to have significantly changed the way the organisation functioned in IPPO 2. Specifically, most of the team members interviewed noted the lack of a dedicated start-up phase for the second two years. This intensified the difficulty of developing a team spirit within IPPO, given the number of new partners and individuals who joined IPPO 2 for the second phase. A start-up phase was also deemed necessary given the new thematic focus of IPPO 2, which, together with the new partners and staff members, meant that the Observatory was not a continuation of what had gone before.

During discussions with the advisory board in late 2024, the importance of time and, related to this, funding cycles came up. Specifically, advisory board members discussed other examples of similar organisations that benefited from long-term funding and mixed-funding models (that included core funding) to ensure long-term sustainability. Examples were the Irish Economic and Social Research Institute and the Institute for Fiscal Studies. The WCPP's funding from the Welsh government was also highlighted during the evaluation.

### 3.3.3 THE IMPORTANCE OF CONNECTIONS

Time is an essential requirement for building connections, a key function of IPPO in its role as an interlocutor. Connections take time to develop, and several IPPO staff who had been involved since the start of IPPO in 2020 noted that many of the connections that had been started to be made in IPPO 1 were beginning to 'bear fruit'. However, it was also acknowledged that the changes in government that have taken place during the four years of IPPO's existence have hindered the ability to maintain some of the original relationships established, particularly at the Westminster level.

A key lesson that many of the IPPO staff are taking away from their experiences of working with the Observatory relates to the importance of a networked entity working at the devolved national level to provide important interlocutor support between a broad range of evidence providers and the needs of the devolved government. Many of the IPPO staff – and policymakers working in other devolved nations – noted the value of having a group such as a WCPP within IPPO 2. It was noted that they brought a lot of experience to the Observatory, and those working in other devolved nations were able to learn from their experiences. At the same time, the fact that the WCPP has existed for a longer time than IPPO and many of its partners meant that IPPO could leverage its connections. Its knowledge of the policy environment in Wales was deemed extremely valuable for ensuring a joined-up and triple helix approach to the demand for, development of, and use of knowledge (e.g. in the case of the economic inactivity work and development of the rapid evidence review).

In fact, the difficulty of working at the Westminster level and the centrality of working at this level, as opposed to the closeness of connections that are possible at the devolved nations and regional levels (e.g. through IPPO's work with West Yorkshire Authority, for example,), was well recognised across many interviewees. In fact, one interviewee from within IPPO went as far as to say, *"if an observatory was to be done like this again, I suppose my advice would be that it's not hosted in London. Yes, host it in Wales and make London a partner."*

### 3.3.4 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL

A key connection within IPPO's network has been its partnership with INGSA, the International Network for Governmental Science Advice. INGSA provided IPPO with its international evidence. It was an original partner within IPPO 1.

A key part of IPPO's work – the international in IPPO's name – relates to the value of learning from the policy experiences of other parts of the world or, as one of IPPO's staff noted, *"they contributed really valuable international case studies, providing international context for how countries around the world have dealt with particular issues."* (Interview #12)

As one policy stakeholder interviewee noted:

*"it's adding to that body of knowledge and approach that there are kind of international kind of experience that can be translated and brought into kind of policy context for British policymakers. And I think it's an under invested, underdeveloped area where actually some of their reports will have an enduring value. And I think, and I think quite possibly some of the insights on the approach that they've taken would be of relevance to others to embarking on this kind of work."* (Interview #16)

That said, one interviewee from within IPPO noted that the value of the international evidence base that IPPO bought for the policy environment in the UK was limited by the time it takes to identify good case studies from elsewhere. To really understand what is working well in different countries and what might be relevant in a particular context in the UK requires time. The interviewee noted that the two-year time frame for IPPO 2 did not allow sufficient time for an in-depth analysis of international evidence, given the quantity of international evidence available.

### 3.3.5 THE IMPORTANCE OF OPERATIONAL SYSTEMS

As already noted, IPPO 2 suffered from the lack of a start-up phase. Relatedly, staff also noted that IPPO 2 was run very differently from IPPO 1 and that the lack of clear operational systems hindered their work. The consistency from IPPO 1 to IPPO 2 in the operations manager role in IPPO's head office was noted by all staff as an essential operational role to ensure coordination and coherence across the work programme. This role was particularly important when there were coordination issues within the senior management team as a result of staff illness and a period of experimenting with the use of two principal investigators (PI) as opposed to the usual approach of a single PI and several co-investigators.

### 3.4 ANSWERING THE EVALUATION QUESTIONS

To summarise the evaluation, we outline below in Table 14 the answers to the evaluation questions which were developed against the MEL framework and have guided the evaluation activities.

*Table 14: Answering the evaluation questions*

| **Impact evaluation questions** | |
| --- | --- |
| To what extent has there been an increase in social science evidence input in UK policy?<br><br>To what extent can it be evidenced that IPPO's activities have contributed to this change? | As noted in sections 3.1.4 and 3.1.5, IPPO's activities have contributed to increasing the social science evidence input into UK policy, especially at the devolved nations level. The Observatory's activities have led to a new centre for public policy advice being established in Northern Ireland and Scotland, as well as the strengthening of one in Wales. These centres have been set up because of a demand for more evidence entering the policy process within the devolved nations.<br><br>IPPO has increased the demand for social science research from baseline and continued to supply IPPO 2 with a range of different evidence types. |
| **Stimulating demand evaluation questions** | |
| To what extent have IPPO activities been influenced by demand from the policy community? | 27 requests for evidence have been received in IPPO 2, up from 14 in IPPO 1. In addition, a ten-fold increase in references to IPPO's work has been seen in policy materials in IPPO 2 from IPPO 1. |
| What thematic areas have received the most demand from policy stakeholders? | Most demand has come from within the socio-economic inequality thematic area, although there are significant examples of evidence being provided within this thematic area, which cuts across other thematic areas, too. |
| Are there any examples of policy stakeholders who have adopted the recommendations and/or referenced the material of IPPO? | As noted above, there has been a 10-fold increase in references to IPPO's work in policy materials in IPPO 2. 19 policy stakeholders and others (e.g. media) outside the government utilised IPPO materials during IPPO 2. This includes some use of IPPO 1 materials during the IPPO 2 time period – highlighting the time it takes for evidence to percolate through the policy process into use.<br><br>The thematic stories of change in economic inactivity and childcare provide examples of where policy discussions or focus have changed due to IPPO and its partners' work. |
| How engaged have policy stakeholders been with IPPO's activities? | IPPO 2 has seen a eight-fold increase in the number of policy stakeholders who have attended IPPO events and followed up on an activity with IPPO (a rise from 5 in IPPO 1 to 41). |

| | |
|---|---|
| Are there stakeholder groups within the policy community who have been more interactive with IPPO, and if so, why?<br><br>To what extent has demand from sub-national and/or international policy stakeholders been witnessed? | Most evidence requests in IPPO 2 originated from the devolved regions, alongside targeted responses to 'Areas of Research Interest' defined by UK government departments. The policy stakeholders that utilised IPPO's materials included local governments, charities, and think tanks, while IPPO materials provided the basis for several multi-stakeholder events<br><br>There was consensus among all interviewees that the need for new or improved evidence sources was higher in the devolved nations than in Westminster. |
| **Supplying knowledge evaluation questions** ||
| What is the extent of reach of IPPO's work across different stakeholder groups?<br><br>Has IPPO increased the number and type of policy stakeholders it supplies knowledge to? | As noted above, demand was highest from the devolved nations, and as such, the supply of knowledge was greatest to these nations.<br><br>IPPO increased its work at the regional level in the UK in its second phase, working with ten regional or municipal authorities. It also worked with 15 charities or non-profits during IPPO 2, with a significant collaboration taking place with New Local, a think tank focused on strengthening local government authorities. |
| Has IPPO established long-term partnerships (formal or informal) to supply evidence to different policy stakeholders, and how have these changed over time? | No formal memoranda of understanding or similar agreements have been signed during IPPO 2. However, as a result of IPPO 2, there is now an established relationship between the Northern Ireland Executive and Queens University Belfast for policy advice and strengthened connections between the Scottish Government and the Centre for Public Policy at the University of Glasgow.<br><br>Several interviewees noted that the activities of IPPO created opportunities for policymakers from different nations to make connections. It is too early to tell if these will be maintained post-IPPO. |
| What mechanisms are in place to understand the demands of the policy community?<br><br>What evidence is there that internal IPPO structures and systems support space for researchers to consider the value of strategically engaging with stakeholders? | IPPO has spent considerable time during its second phase understanding the evidence-policy nexus and the demands of the policy community. The 'Innovations in facilitating evidence use' events are a case in point. That said, one of the critiques from IPPO staff has been the limited time available to plan and reflect on what is working and what is not – given the short two-year timeframe of the funding provided. |
| Have there been changes in the policy landscape or in the workings of individual actors that have improved the opportunity for uptake of IPPO's knowledge products? | The period of IPPO 2, January 2023 to late 2024, has been a period of turbulence for Westminster. At the devolved nation level, Northern Ireland suffered in 2023 with no Executive, which made decision-making difficult. The NI Executive returned in February 2024.<br><br>Increasingly, in Westminster departments, there has been a use of policy fellows embedded within government departments. IPPO introduced policy fellows into five local government authorities. |
| **Facilitating knowledge use evaluation questions** ||
| Have members of the policy community been involved in the selection of supply & demand channels?<br><br>Are there examples of co-design and co-creation in evidence/ knowledge outputs?<br><br>Have any of these been formalized, i.e. with memoranda of understanding? | As already noted, there have been no formalized MOU or equivalent agreements signed in IPPO 2. However, this does not mean that members of the policy community have not been involved in the selection of supply and demand channels or in the co-creation and co-design of evidence/ knowledge outputs.<br><br>IPPO almost doubled its relationships with key policy intermediaries and networks in its second phase from 25 to 47. It also entered into 19 informal partnerships to supply evidence. IPPO, in its second phase, produced 13 policy need summary documents. |

## 4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This evaluation focused on the period of operations during IPPO 2 (January 2023 to November 2024). It looked at the degree to which IPPO has achieved its desired impact of creating a more informed policy environment in the UK using social science research and evidence. The evaluation is based on an analysis of quantitative and qualitative data collected from analysis of IPPO's documentation of its activities, interviews with 18 individuals (staff and external stakeholders) and the discussions during learning workshops held periodically during 2023 and 2024.

The evaluation was based on the IPPO MEL framework, which outlines the outcomes and impacts the Observatory aims to achieve and is augmented with an evaluation questions matrix. Both the MEL framework and the evaluation questions matrix were focused on three overarching objectives and activity areas that guided IPPO's work both in its first and second phases:

- stimulating demand for research and evidence from a range of policy stakeholders in the UK;

- supplying a range of knowledge synthesis products;

- facilitating and enabling the creation and use of appropriate evidence, including through the building of relationships and networks with policy and other stakeholders.

During IPPO 2 these activities were also conducted through four thematic areas: COVID-19 recovery, net zero, place/space inequality, and socio-economic inequalities. The evaluation has noted that various sub-themes often cut across more than one thematic area of focus.

The evaluation highlighted that:

- **IPPO 2 has stimulated demand for research and evidence from a range of policy stakeholders in the UK.** It has increased the number of policy stakeholders engaging with social science research through IPPO's activities with a 10-fold increase in references to IPPO's work in policy materials and a eight-fold increase in the number of policy stakeholders who have attended IPPO events and then followed up on an activity with IPPO. There has been a significant strengthening in demand at the devolved nations level.

- **New and innovative approaches to supplying knowledge synthesis products have been the hallmark of IPPO 2**. During this second phase, IPPO has consolidated its roundtable methodology, developed new policy engagement formats to supply knowledge (and facilitate demand) through policy schools and highlighted the value of systems mapping methodology in policy analysis.

- **IPPO 2 has facilitated the use of evidence in policy through a series of partnerships and created a discussion on innovations in facilitating evidence use.** IPPO 2 used 19 partnerships and 47 networks or collaborations to facilitate knowledge use, with most evidence-based work falling in the socioeconomic inequalities thematic area. IPPO's innovations in facilitating evidence use events allowed policy stakeholders to interrogate and reflect on what works within their environments.

**Overall, IPPO has 'left a legacy', as noted by one interviewee and achieved its impact of developing a 'more informed policy environment', especially at the devolved nations level.** Here, it has contributed to the setting up of new centres for public policy in Northern Ireland and Scotland and helped maintain an existing centre in Wales. It has built on its convening power developed during IPPO 1 to become an important interlocutor between the evidence and policy worlds. It has led to more interaction between policy stakeholders across the devolved nations and the sharing of lessons and experiences across the devolved nations. It has highlighted the importance of evidence support at other levels of government, notably local, regional or municipal authorities. IPPO 2 has also further contributed to thinking on the specificities of the evidence-policy nexus and highlighted the importance of thinking about a triple helix of interactions that go beyond stimulating demand and facilitating the supply of knowledge.

Several lessons can be learned from IPPO 2, and these create the basis for recommendations for those planning to develop similar initiatives.

**Recommendation 1: Continued funding to provide interlocutor functions at the evidence-policy nexus is essential**

IPPO and similar other organisations (the Economics Observatory, the What Works centres, the devolved nations' centres for public policy) provide an essential function as a 'trusted gateway' that provides a neutral space for dialogue and discussion on key issues. While the evidence provided by IPPO was deemed necessary, more important and consistently mentioned by all external interviewees were the spaces created by IPPO to explore and discuss policy issues with supporting in-depth evidence. It is imperative that the vacuum created by IPPO's closing is filled. While the Centres of Public Policy in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales are a legacy of IPPO that remain, they will need continued support. Moreover, providing such support at sub-national levels (to regional and municipal government policy stakeholders) is essential, given England's continued devolution efforts and the lack of evidence capacity at local/ regional levels. These centres are built on networks and relationships that take time and funding to set up and maintain.

**Recommendation 2: Funding needs to be long-term to allow for the time it takes to make connections**

As noted above, building up the networks and connections required to provide these interlocutor functions requires time, which, in turn, requires funding mechanisms that are not short-term. Two-year funding cycles have jeopardised the ability of IPPO 2 to function effectively and efficiently. Initially, it was impossible to focus on getting the operational systems and relationships right. It led to a focus on outputs and milestones at the expense of outcomes and impact. While IPPO 2 has achieved its objectives, longer-term funding would have cemented its outcomes and impact. The traction that the Observatory has gained in key thematic areas and the relationships it has built have all been curtailed just as they were starting to bear fruit. Longer-term and/ or core funding cycles are required for this interlocutor function. Examples given during the evaluation were the Economic and Social Research Institute in Ireland, which receives a core grant accounting for 25% of its funding from the Irish government, or the Institute of Fiscal Studies, which benefits from five-year research centre grants from the Economic and Social Research Council. Longer-term or core funding would provide time for the development of systems and relationships as well as the development of a sustainability plan or phase-out plan that provides signals to partner organisations and policy stakeholders that are engaged in the next steps and/or alternatives.

**Recommendation 3: The complexity of providing interlocutor functions requires (a) a clear operational setup and (b) access to networks and the international**

The complexity of relationships, especially for an initiative that operates at a UK-wide level, requires a clear operational setup, especially for internal governance, reporting and communication lines. In addition, there must be time to enable the co-creation of objectives and strategic plans from the start, where all partners' interests can be aligned, and there is shared agreement on the value creation for each partner. IPPO 2 would have benefited from an initial six-month start-up phase that allowed it to implement a clear operational set-up with systems and procedures co-produced. To manage the multiple partners (core and peripheral) in these interlocutor organisations also requires regular check-in points. The networks and partnerships need to be regularly reviewed and augmented as the triple helix of evidence-policy interaction changes with demand and supply. This requires access to networks, including those from outside of the country, to learn from those with other experiences.

**Recommendation 4: More research on how to facilitate knowledge use as opposed to only developing systems to stimulate demand for, or supply of, knowledge is essential**

There was a tension within IPPO 2 between its focus on achieving its three objectives and conducting its function as an interlocutor between evidence and policy, with a need to do these at a thematic level and solve societal problems such as net zero or inequality. IPPO 2 addressed this head-on through its 'innovations in facilitating evidence use' event series. However, despite some internal rethinking of its double to triple helix approach to evidence-policy interaction, the team did not have the capacity to focus in any depth on the conceptual, theoretical and practical design of an interlocutor mechanism. More research is needed on the best way to work at the evidence-policy interface, what worked in the case of IPPO and other similar organisations, and where the lessons for others are.

The MEL framework focuses on outcomes. It also includes indicators for impact. These impact indicators are included to provide a focusing device for action within IPPO. There is no expectation that IPPO's activities can have a direct cause and effect relationship at impact level. Activities and outputs are routinely measured through the process monitoring activities outlined in the MEL plan.

1. **Impact**

| Impact | Indicator | Source of data | Frequency of collection/ review | Baseline figure (2023 or nearest figure) | Target figure (2028) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| More informed policy environment across all UK nations enabling enhanced economic and social wellbeing | Increased # policy mechanisms across UK nations that explicitly request social science evidence input | Academy of Social Sciences monthly reports | Every five years | 52[8] | TBC |
| | Increased economic and social wellbeing and movement towards achievement of nations' COVID-19 recovery, net zero, place/space inequality, and socio-economic inequalities targets | UK's Office of National Statistics National Wellbeing Dashboard; Nations' statistics offices. | Every five years | 33.1%[9] | TBC |

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[8] Number of requests for policy evidence - https://acss.org.uk/policy-monitor/2022-12/

[9] Gini coefficient, 2023 for UK - https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/articles/ukmeasuresofnationalwellbeing/dashboard

2. **Stimulate demand**

| Longer-term outcome | Indicator | Source of data | Frequency of collection/ review | Baseline figure (2022)* | Target figure (2024) | Target figure (2026) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Establishment of demand-driven request pipeline | # of requests for evidence from government policymakers, other stakeholders, academics or media[10] | IPPO stakeholder engagement tracker; key informant interviews during impact evaluations; IPPO progress reports | Every two years | 14 | N/A | 20% increase over baseline |
| More use of social science evidence visible in policy discussions | # of IPPO evidence products referenced in policy discussions[11] | IPPO output tracker; IPPO evidence use tracker | Every two years | 1 | 10% | 50% |
| Increased capacity built in the policy system to take up evidence | # policy stakeholders attend IPPO events and then follow up on an activity with IPPO e.g. contribute to knowledge product; speak at event, attend roundtable etc.[12] | IPPO stakeholder engagement tracker; IPPO output tracker; key informant interviews during impact evaluations | Every two years | 5 blogs/ rapid answers authored by policy stakeholders | 40 | 60 |

[10] The types of evidence request might include: IPPO outputs (excluding, blogs and newsletters); presentations, workshops, consultations and other engagements to facilitate the dissemination of evidence; research, academic insights, policy briefs and notes (not included in IPPO outputs); bespoke tools and frameworks.

[11] References to be found in any government publication, third party reports on policy mechanisms (including advisory committee meeting minutes, public inquiry reports etc.) or in non-public policy discussions e.g. memos, meeting agendas or emails from policy stakeholders.

[12] Policy stakeholders here refer to those who work in parliament, national or local government, government agencies or bodies. It also includes those who work charities, not for profit organisations, think tanks or policy intermediaries or business and engage in policy discussions.

| Shorter-term outcome | Indicator | Source of data | Frequency of collection/ review | Baseline figure (2022)* | Target figure (2024) | Target figure (2026) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Increased amount and type of evidence being requested by policy stakeholders | # and type of requests for evidence from policy stakeholders | IPPO stakeholder engagement tracker; key informant interviews during impact evaluations | Every two years | N = 14. Evidence/ research/ data requests x 10, RERs x 1, global scans x 2, other review x 1 | 5% increase over baseline | 10% increase over baseline |
| New stakeholder groups (e.g. not just government units) utilise evidence to inform policy debates | # policy stakeholders and others (e.g. media) outside government utilise IPPO materials[13] | IPPO evidence use tracker; IPPO outputs tracker; IPPO progress reports | Every two years | No baseline | 5 | 10 |
| Increased understanding of local policy priorities by IPPO and stakeholders | # and focus areas of policy need summary documents | IPPO outputs tracker; IPPO progress reports | Every two years | No baseline | 6 | 12 |

*Baseline target taken from 2022 external evaluation of IPPO*

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[13] Policy stakeholders outside government include those in regulatory bodies, charities or non-profit organisations, think tanks or policy intermediaries, professional bodies and membership organisations, businesses and social enterprises or academics.

3. **Supply knowledge**

| Longer-term outcome | Indicator | Source of data | Frequency of collection/ review | Baseline figure (2022)* | Target figure (2024) | Target figure (2026) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Increased support for knowledge and evidence from multiple sources | # and type of collaborators working with IPPO | IPPO stakeholder engagement tracker; key informant interviews during impact evaluations | Every two years | 25 relationships with key policy intermediaries and networks | 10 | 40 |
| IPPO establishes long-term partnerships (formal and informal) for evidence supply | # of partnerships to supply evidence[14] | IPPO contracts tracker; IPPO progress reports | Every two years | 1 (cities work) | 5 | 7 |
| Academics tailor work to policy needs | # academics working with IPPO; case studies of tailored policy work | IPPO stakeholder engagement tracker; key informant interviews and case studies during impact evaluations | Every two years | 287 | 10% increase over baseline | 15% increase over baseline |
| Improved knowledge absorption capacity to utilise supply | # of requests for evidence from government policymakers and other stakeholders; documented stories of improved absorption capacities | IPPO stakeholder engagement tracker; key informant interviews and case studies during impact evaluations | Every two years | 14 | 10% increase over baseline | 15% increase over baseline |

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[14] Partnerships will be evidenced by formal memoranda of understanding or agreements, other formal contract types or informal agreements that are evidenced in correspondence e.g. agreeing to work together on an event or publication.

| Shorter-term outcome | Indicator | Source of data | Frequency of collection/ review | Baseline figure (2022)* | Target figure (2024) | Target figure (2026) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Recognition of IPPO as a core evidence supplier for UK governments | # of IPPO evidence products referenced in policy and policy discussions led by government stakeholders | IPPO stakeholder engagement tracker; key informant interviews during impact evaluations | Every two years | 14 | 10% increase over baseline | 20% increase over baseline |
| New evidence supply mechanisms are developed outside of IPPO standard outputs | Development of new evidence supply mechanisms[15] | IPPO progress reports to ERSC; IPPO publications on methodological approaches developed | Every two years | No baseline | No target | No target |
| Enhanced recognition of areas where there are knowledge gaps | # and focus areas of policy need summary documents | IPPO outputs tracker | Every two years | No baseline | 8 | 12 |
| Academics gain improved understanding of policy evidence needs | # academic engagements with IPPO discussing policy evidence needs or with policy knowledge resulting from IPPOs' work | IPPO stakeholder engagement tracker; key informant interviews during impact evaluations | Every two years | No baseline | 50 | 60 |

*Baseline target taken from 2022 external evaluation of IPPO*

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[15] This will include anything that is not a standard output. Standard outputs are: Event reports, roundtables, in-person/hybrid events, summaries of policy needs, blogs, commentary pieces, newsletters and review reports.

4. **Facilitating knowledge use**

| Longer-term outcome | Indicator | Source of data | Frequency of collection/ review | Baseline figure (2022)* | Target figure (2024) | Target figure (2026) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Joined up policy debate between multiple stakeholder groups and across nations | # and focus areas of joined up policy debate[16] | IPPO stakeholder engagement tracker; reviews of policy landscapes by IPPO; IPPO events tracker; IPPO outputs tracker | Every two years | No baseline | No target | No target |

| Shorter-term outcome | Indicator | Source of data | Frequency of collection/ review | Baseline figure (2022)* | Target figure (2024) | Target figure (2026) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strengthened connections between policymakers and other policy stakeholders | # of connections made between government policymakers and other policy stakeholders from IPPO activities[17] | IPPO stakeholder engagement tracker<br><br>Key informant interviews<br><br>IPPO events tracker | Every two years | 2 | 10% over baseline | 20% over baseline |

*\* Baseline target taken from 2022 external evaluation of IPPO*

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[16] Joined up refers to examples of collaborations or discussions between multiple stakeholder groups as a result of IPPO activity.
[17] Connections here are defined as concrete examples of where stakeholders conduct activities together. For example, this could be two stakeholders holding a meeting after an IPPO event or it could be two or more stakeholders coming together and writing a blog for the IPPO website.

## ANNEX 2: EVALUATION MATRIX

The evaluation questions inform how quantitative and qualitative data are collected and analysed for this evaluation.

1. **Impact**

| Impact | Indicator | Evaluation questions |
|---|---|---|
| More informed policy environment across all UK nations enabling enhanced economic and social wellbeing | Increased # of policy mechanisms across UK nations that explicitly request social science evidence input | To what extent has there been an increase in social science evidence input in UK policy?<br><br>To what extent can it be evidenced that IPPO's activities have contributed to this change? |
| | Increased economic and social wellbeing and movement towards achievement of nations' COVID-19 recovery, net zero, place/space inequality, and socio-economic inequalities targets | *This will be measured quantitatively using relevant indicators. There is no expectation that IPPO can have attributed or contributed to these measures. The indicator data is provided as reference only.* |

2. **Stimulate demand**

| Longer-term outcome | Indicator | Evaluation questions |
|---|---|---|
| Establishment of demand-driven request pipeline | # of requests for evidence from government policymakers, other stakeholders, academics or media | To what extent have IPPO activities been influenced by demand from the policy community?<br><br>What thematic areas have received the most demand from policy stakeholders? |
| More use of social science evidence visible in policy discussions | # of IPPO evidence products referenced in policy discussions | Are there any examples of policy stakeholders who have adopted the recommendations and/or referenced the material of IPPO? |
| Increased capacity built in the policy system to take up evidence | # policy stakeholders attend IPPO events and then follow up on an activity with IPPO, e.g. contribute to knowledge product, speak at event, attend roundtable, etc. | How engaged have policy stakeholders been with IPPO's activities?<br><br>Are there stakeholder groups within the policy community who have been more interactive with IPPO, and if so, why?<br><br>To what extent has demand from sub-national and/or international policy stakeholders been witnessed? |

### 3. Supply knowledge

| Longer-term outcome | Indicator | Evaluation questions |
|---|---|---|
| Increased support for knowledge and evidence from multiple sources | # and type of collaborators working with IPPO | What is the extent of reach of IPPO's work across different stakeholder groups? |
| | | Has IPPO increased the number and type of policy stakeholders it supplies knowledge to? |
| IPPO establishes long-term partnerships (formal and informal) for evidence supply | # of partnerships to supply evidence | Has IPPO established long-term partnerships (formal or informal) to supply evidence to different policy stakeholders, and how have these changed over time? |
| Academics tailor work to policy needs | # academics working with IPPO; case studies of tailored policy work | What mechanisms are in place to understand the demands of the policy community? |
| | | What evidence is there that internal IPPO structures and systems support space for researchers to consider the value of strategically engaging with stakeholders? |
| Improved knowledge absorption capacity to utilise supply | # of requests for evidence from government policymakers and other stakeholders; documented stories of improved absorption capacities | Have there been changes in the policy landscape or in the workings of individual actors that have improved the opportunity for uptake of IPPO's knowledge products? |

### 4. Facilitating knowledge use

| Longer-term outcome | Indicator | Evaluation questions |
|---|---|---|
| Joined up policy debate between multiple stakeholder groups and across nations | # and focus areas of joined-up policy debate | Have members of the policy community been involved in the selection of supply & demand channels? |
| | | Are there examples of co-design and co-creation in evidence/ knowledge outputs? |
| | | Have any of these been formalized, i.e. with memoranda of understanding? |

All interviews started with warm-up questions about the person's main responsibilities, relationship to IPPO, etc. Interviews were kept to 60 minutes, wherever possible, to reduce the demand placed on interviewees. This approach required a small number of very targeted questions supported by a set of probing questions that were used as required.

| | **Internal staff** |
|---|---|
| 1 | What is the extent of **demand** for IPPO's knowledge products and activities? |

- Are there particular stakeholder groups who have demanded more from IPPO than others? Specifically, at sub-regional and international levels? What are the possible reasons for this?

- Are there particular thematic areas where there has been more demand than others, and if so, why might this have been?

- What are the main channels that you have used in your work to enhance demand from policy stakeholders?

- What do you think IPPO could have done better over the last couple of years in terms of enhancing demand for its knowledge products and activities?

| 2 | How successful has IPPO been in facilitating **supply** of knowledge in its thematic areas in the last couple of years? |
|---|---|

- What have been the most successful knowledge dissemination activities?

- What other knowledge supply mechanisms have been successful?

- Has IPPO been more successful with its knowledge supply activities with:

   o Certain policy stakeholder groups

   o Thematic areas

   o Regions or internationally?

- What explains IPPO's success in these areas?

- In your specific activity area within IPPO, what is your most important achievement in terms of supplying knowledge to policy stakeholders (what are you most proud of) and why?

- What could IPPO have done more effectively to enhance the supply of knowledge across its thematic areas?

| 3 | How has IPPO been **facilitating knowledge use** in the last two years? |
|---|---|

- What are the main mechanisms IPPO has been using to facilitate knowledge use?

- Have you been involved in these activities and if so, what do you think has accounted for your success in this area or otherwise?

- Are there certain partnerships or relationships with policy stakeholders that stand out to you as being important in ensuring use of the knowledge IPPO has been supplying?

| 4 | What **operational mechanisms** are in place within IPPO to ensure its successful execution of its three activity areas? |
|---|---|

- What are the activities that you think IPPO should continue to continue achieving its goals? Why should these be continued?

- What activities do you think IPPO should change or stop to more effectively achieve its goals? What is your rationale for this answer?

| | |
|---|---|
| | - To what extent are different policy stakeholders involved in the planning and execution of IPPO's activities? |
| 5 | Reflecting on the work you do with IPPO, what will you be taking away from your experiences with IPPO in terms of how you can make your work more impactful? |
| 6 | Is there anything else we should know/ consider with regard to IPPO's work and its ability to positively impact the learning and behaviour of relevant policy communities? |
| 7 | Why is policy research important? How can we ensure it is given the attention it deserves? |
| 8 | What does "international" in IPPO's title mean for IPPO staff and stakeholders, and was the international component important and useful, and in what way? |
| | **External staff** |
| 1 | To what extent do you think the policy environment and decision making is supportive of the inclusion of social science research as an evidence source? <br><br> - Do you think there is more acceptance of social science research in the last few years? <br><br> - What are the barriers hindering the use of more social science research in policy decision making? |
| 2 | Do you use social science research in your work? <br><br> - If so, what, when and how? |
| 3 | Have you used any of IPPO's materials or products in any of your activities? <br><br> - What and how? <br><br> - Have you referenced any of the IPPO materials in internal documents? <br><br> - Have you modified any of your activities due to the information you have received from IPPO? |
| 4 | What other interaction have you had with IPPO? <br><br> - When did your interaction start? <br><br> - Are there particular activities you have been involved in/ how diverse is the level of involvement you have had with IPPO? <br><br>     o Attended an event they have put on/ been involved in discussions with them/ commissioned work from them/ something else? <br><br> - Do you have an official partnership/ MOU or other agreement with IPPO that helps structure your engagement? |
| 5 | Have you taken any of the findings or information you have received from IPPO and shared it with colleagues?  If so, what and why? |
| 6 | Going back to the first question on the status of inclusion of social science research in policy decision making, to what extent do you think IPPO's activities have been influential in changing attitudes on the value and importance of social science research? |
| 7 | Why is policy research important? How can we ensure it is given the attention it deserves? |
| 8 | What does "international" in IPPO's title mean for IPPO staff and stakeholders, and was the international component important and useful, and in what way? |
| 9 | If you had one recommendation for IPPO as it starts to plan its next steps, what would it be and why? |