# University of Toronto Faculty of Social Work

**Research use and impact: meeting the challenges for child and family services**
**Or, making more sense out of evidence-based practice**

**Wednesday 25th September 2013**
Sarah Morton
Co-Director, CRFR

**Centre for Research on Families and Relationships**

**www.crfr.ac.uk**

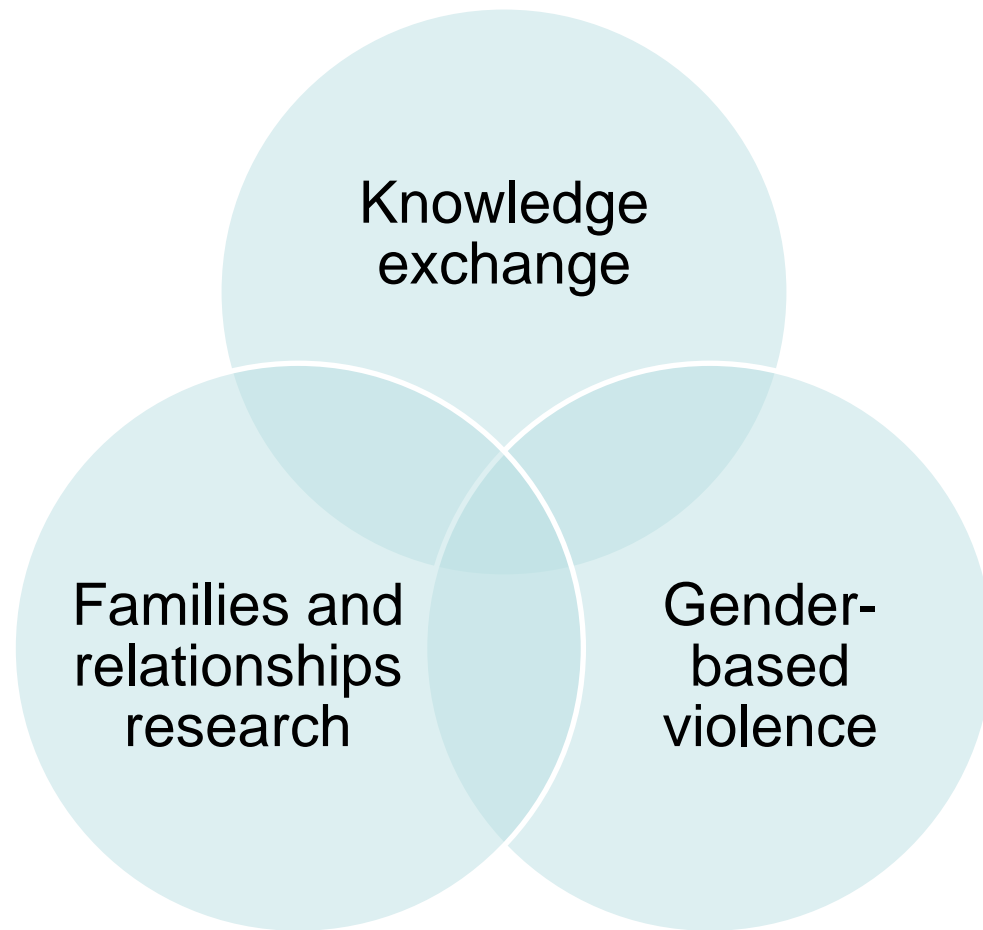# About me

- Third sector background
- Knowledge broker role, CRFR and others
- PhD looking at research impact
- Currently leading and developing KE

# My interests

Knowledge exchange

Families and relationships research

Gender-based violence

# Today's session

- What is evidence based policy or practice?
- What helps and hinders research use?
- Ways of thinking about research/policy practice in children and family services
- How can this enhance KE in different settings?

# Why use research?

# Why use research?

1. To increase understanding of social issues?
2. To help provide answers to social problems?
3. To challenge or help think about  policy or practice issues?
4. To inform decisions/ provide reassurance in practice?
5. To question policy directions taken by governments or practice decisions and directions?
6. others?

Nutley, S., et al. (2007). Using Evidence: How research can inform public services. Bristol, Policy Press.

# A quick word about terminology

K ⭐

Knowledge exchange

Reflexive practice

Knowledge mobilization

Evidence-based

Knowledge translation

Research Impact

KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

# Understanding research utilisation
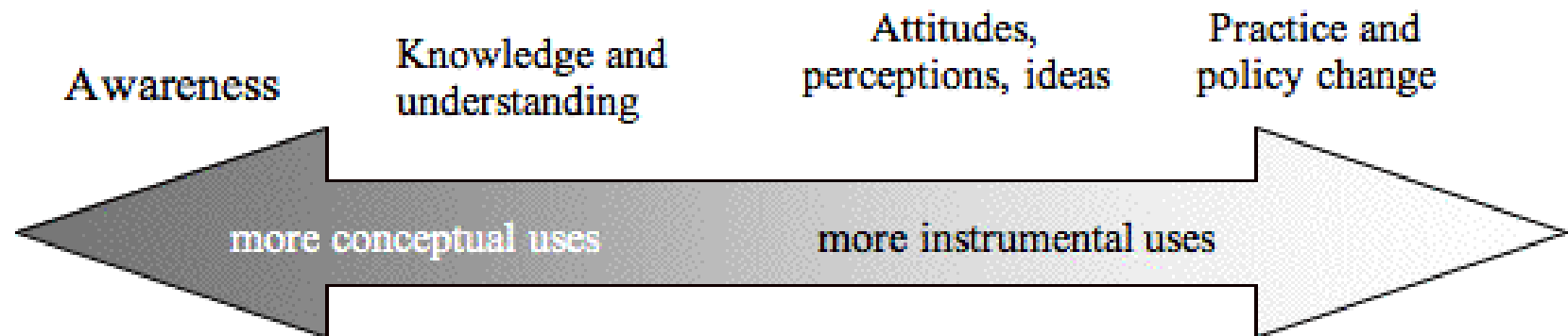
# What does it mean to be evidence-based?

- We have evidence this works for our clients

- Others have evidence this works and our clients are similar

- Broad research evidence

- 'what works' evidence

- Innovation in the evidence-gap

Forthcoming publication from CRFR 'What does it mean to be evidence based' 22 October 2013 www.crfr.ac.uk

# What does it mean to use research?

A continuum of research use (From Nutley et al 2007)



Awareness

Knowledge and understanding

Attitudes, perceptions, ideas

Practice and policy change

more conceptual uses          more instrumental uses

# Cool with change

- CRFR carried out research about children experiencing family change (divorce, separation, re-partnering, death of a parent).

- Key findings were that children didn't trust adults around them and usually turned to friends for support

- How might this research be used across the conceptual/instrumental spectrum?

https://www.era.lib.ed.ac.uk/bitstream/1842/2784/1/rb31.pdf

# What helps research use?

Findings from a cross-sector review

Walter, I., et al. (2003). Research Impact: A Cross Sector Review, Research Unit for Research Utilisation, University of St Andrews.
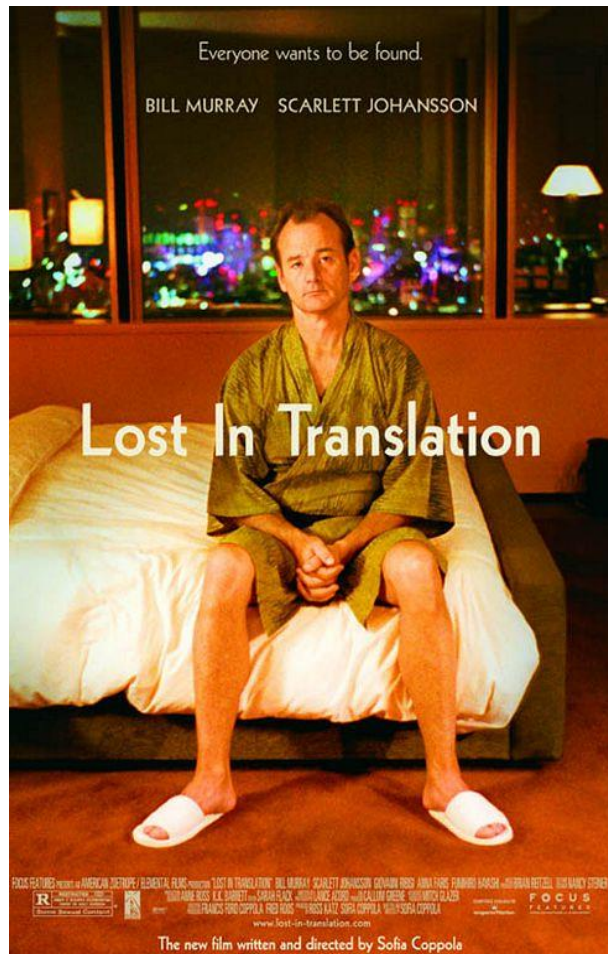
**Research must be translated**

specifically targeted and open to discussion

**1 in every 4 children**

will experience their parents separating or go through some change in their family by the time they're 16 years old

If you're looking for help and support because of family problems find out more from this

**www.crfr.ac.uk/cool**

or pick up a Cool with

Cool with Change is a re schools can really help youn

- suppor
- encoura
- working
- encourag

This poster is based on findings which was supported by the Com

LOTTERY FUNDED

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**COOL WITH CHANGE:**
YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILY CHANGE

"I went to my guidance teacher because of arguments between my parents and that. And she was, like, 'oh, right, we'll sort it out, and all that'"

(Kirsty, 13)

**www.crfr.ac.uk/coolwithchange**

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research briefing 34

centre for research on families and relationships

**It's my body:**

calls to ChildLine Scotland about sexual health and wellbeing

The last decade has seen increasing efforts by central and local government to target sexual health services and initiatives at young people in order to improve their sexual health. However, for Scotland's Sexual Health Strategy and associated initiatives to be effectively implemented, more information is needed about children and young people's own views, concerns and experiences regarding their sexual health and well-being.

This briefing reports on a research study funded by the Scottish Executive and carried out by the Centre for Research on Families and Relationships (CRFR) and ChildLine Scotland to explore over 14,000 calls made to the helpline in this area. Calls to ChildLine Scotland about sexual health and well-being issues, including sexual abuse, have increased steadily over the years and are the primary reason for calling in over a quarter of all calls. These calls reflect children's own agendas, supporting an approach which treats children and young people as competent reporters on their own lives.

**Key points**

- Children and young people aged 5 to 18 expressed a wide range of concerns about their sexual health and wellbeing.
- Concerns varied enormously from seeking explanation and clarification about 'normal' development and sexual terminology to seeking support and advice on pregnancy, relationships, sexual identity and sexual abuse
- Concerns about STIs were notably rare, relative to concerns about relationships, development, pregnancy, abuse and sexuality
- The ways in which children and young people communicated about their sexual abuse experiences varied in terms of the language used and the style of disclosure
- Children and young people described a range of barriers to disclosing sexual abuse, including being pregnancy to parents was, for many, a greater concern than the pregnancy itself they would not be believed
- often related to other problems in the family
- ships with peers, whether sexual or non-sexual, are extremely significant in the dren and young people. Sexual or 'romantic' relationships and emotions, whether or same-sex, are experienced by young people with a similar level of personal those experienced by adults
- nd young people described various concerns about relationships, including unfaithful ners, pressure to have sex, partner abuse and how to end relationships
- Children and young people drew extensively on support from peers as a source of help and support during times of sexual crisis, except regarding anxieties about same-sex attraction, which most young people anticipated would provoke a negative reaction from peers

october 2007

# Enthusiasm:

individual enthusiasts help carry the research

*"What a brilliant idea—hiring a smart and media-savvy person to package research for the potential users, including policymakers. We should clone Jennifer and each have a copy of her working for our organizations."*

*- Tim Nelson, Kennedy School, Harvard University*

Phipps and Morton (2013) *Qualities of knowledge brokers: reflections from practice* Evidence & Policy: A Journal of Research, Debate and Practice, Volume 9, Number 2, May 2013 , pp. 255-265(11)
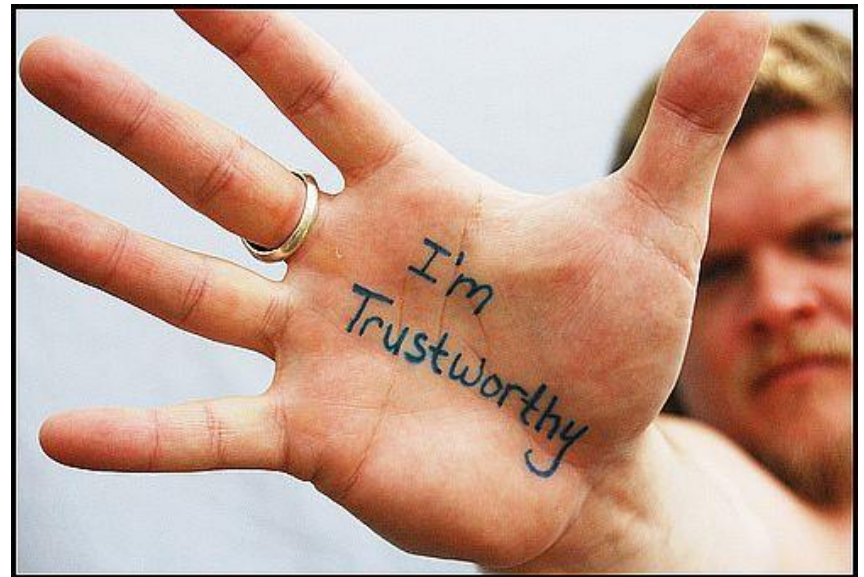
# Contextual analysis :

targeting specific barriers to and enablers of change

**Credibility :**

endorsement from opinion leaders and high levels of commitment

Domestic Abuse and Gender Inequality: An overview of the current debate

es and keep in place gendered orders. In other words,

CRFR research briefing 69

www.crfr.ac.uk
Centre for Research on Families and Relationships • Briefing 69 • August 2013

Dom... ...rview of the current debate

As this briefing makes clear, a gender-based analysis of violence against women is not only consistent with the vast body of evidence on the problem but far and away the most promising theoretical framework for moving the global response from intervention to prevention. Even as it answers critics of a gendered approach, it links women's oppression in abusive relationships to justice and full equality for women in Scotland and beyond.

Professor Evan Stark

http://www.crfr.ac.uk/assets/briefing-69.pdf

ure of who is doing what to whom

# Leadership:

strong visible leadership within organisations

**Support :**

financial, technical and emotional support – dedicated co-ordinators have been core to some initiatives

**Integration :**
research impact activities need to be integrated into organisational systems. All key stakeholders need to be involved

# Barriers to research use

What stops people from using research?

(from the same review)

**Barriers to research use**

- Lack of time – to read journals, attend presentations or conduct their own research

- Low priority

- Poor communication of research within organisation

- Research is not timely or relevant to user's needs

Barriers for research users….

- Lack of skills

- Not the most important source of information

- Organisational resistance

- Too difficult to access

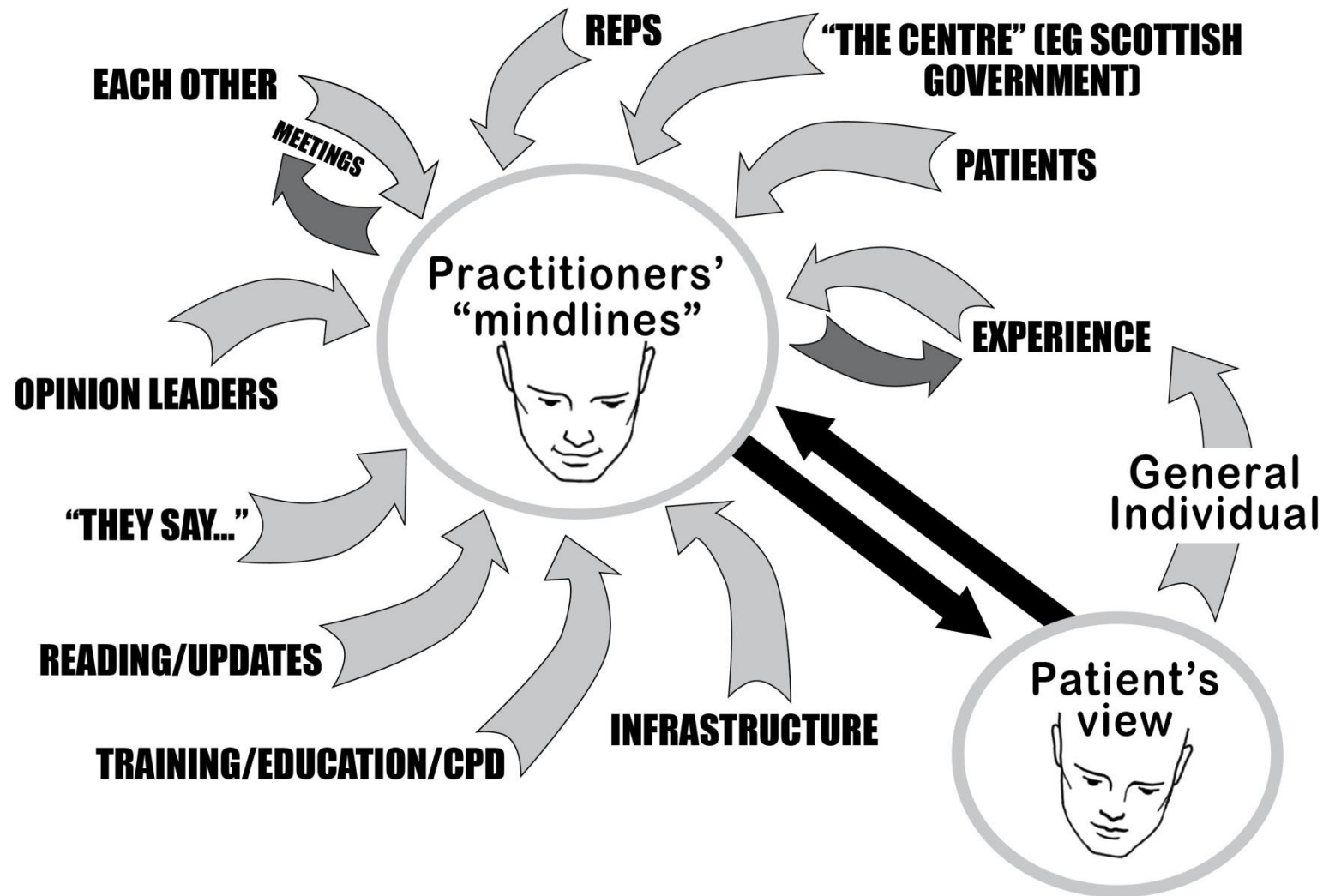- Particular barriers to groups of users e.g. access to computers

# Health check: Discussion

- For you/your organisation:
  - What are the key barriers?
  - What enablers exist?

# What does and evidence-based approach look like?

Gabbay, J. and A. le May (2004). "Evidence based guidelines or collectively constructed "mindlines?". BMJ **329.**

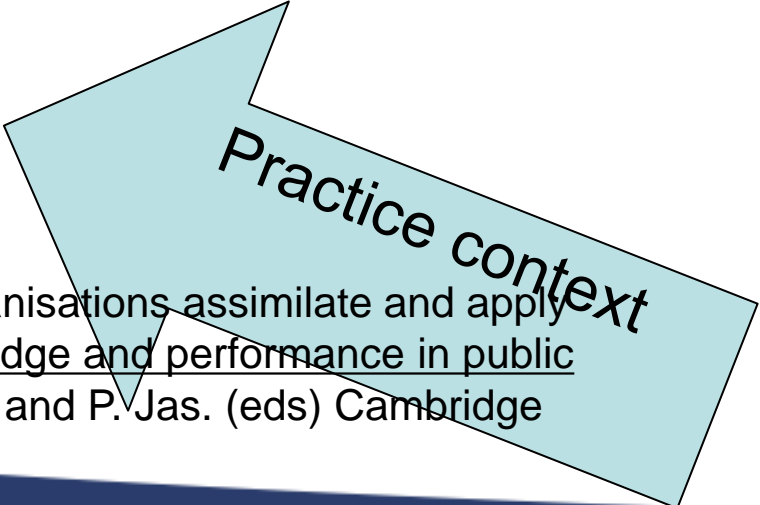# A framework for thinking about evidence

# Absorptive capacity

Organisations that:

- recognise and understand new knowledge,

- assimilate and combine it with existing knowledge,

- translate knowledge into actions that will benefit the organisation.

Practice context

Harvey, G., et al. (2010). Absorptive Capacity: how organisations assimilate and apply knowledge to improve performance. Connecting knowledge and performance in public services : from knowing to doing. K. Walshe, G. Harvey and P. Jas. (eds) Cambridge University Press.

# ChildLine example

- Identified issues in the research that provided challenges for the organisation
- Set up a process to help assimilate and combine with existing knowledge
- Identified the issues relevant to their practice context
- Devised actions, review process and on-going monitoring

Morton, S. (2012). Exploring and Assessing Research Impact. Social Policy. Edinburgh, University of Edinburgh. **PhD**.

# Absorptive capacity discussion

- How would you assess your organisations absorptive capacity?

# Generations of Knowledge Thinking 1: Linear Models (1960s-mid 90s)

| LANGUAGE | KEY ASSUMPTIONS |
|---|---|
| Dissemination | Knowledge is a product |
| Diffusion | Key process is a handoff from research producers to research users |
| Knowledge transfer | |
| Knowledge uptake | Knowledge is generalizable across contexts is a function of effective packaging |

Best, Hiatt, & Norman, *Patient Education & Counseling*, 2008

# Generations of Knowledge Thinking 2: Relationship Models (Mid-90s to present)

LANGUAGE          KEY ASSUMPTIONS

Knowledge exchange

Knowledge from multiple sources research, theory, and practice

Key process is interpersonal, involving social relationships

Networks of research producers and research consumers

Collaborate through production-synthesis-integration cycle

Knowledge is context-linked, and must be adapted to local setting

Degree of use is a function of effective relationships and processes

# Generations of Knowledge Thinking 3: Systems Models

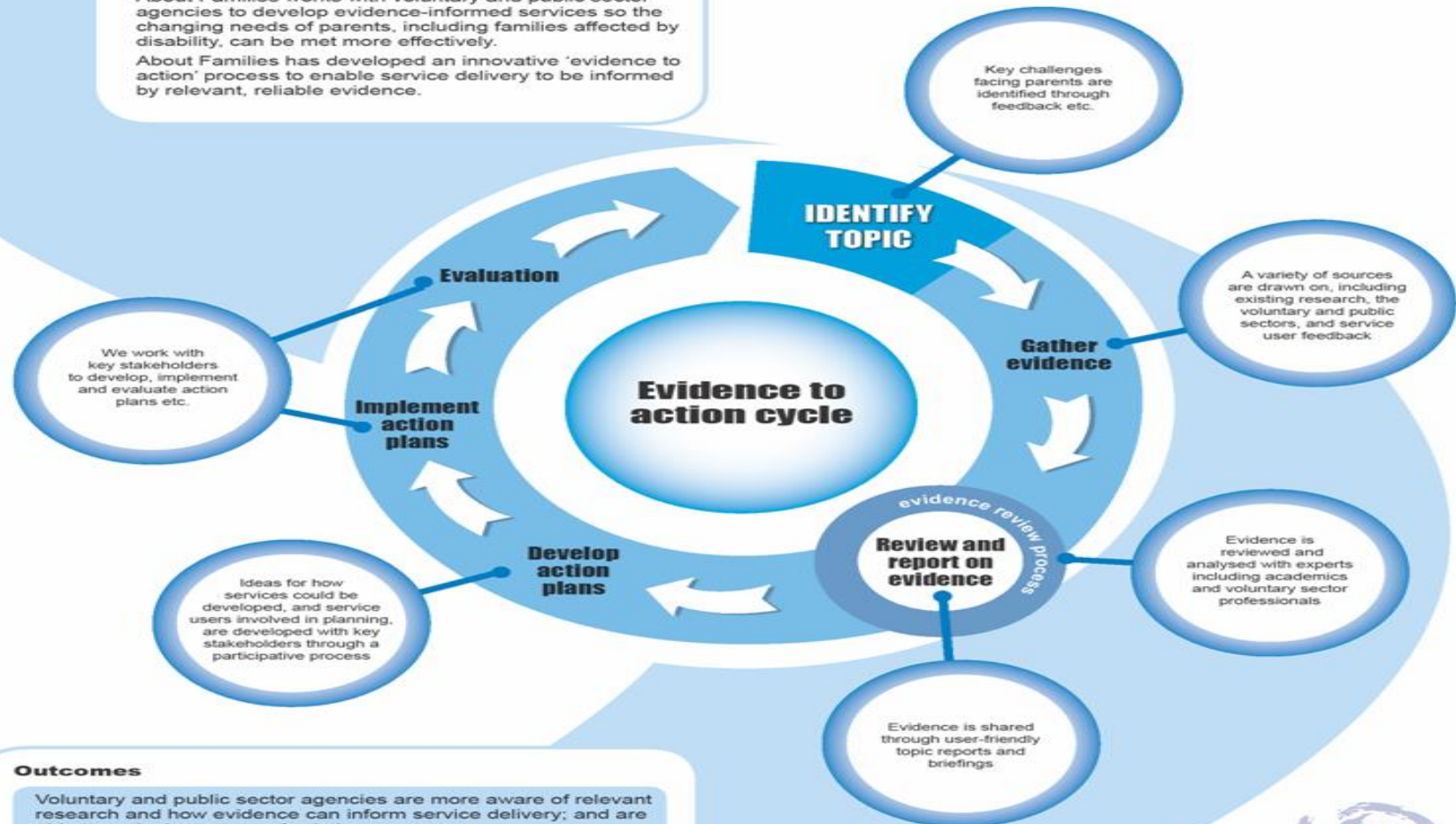| LANGUAGE | KEY ASSUMPTIONS |
|---|---|
| Knowledge integration | Knowledge cycle is tightly woven within priorities, culture, and context |
| | Explicit and tacit knowledge need to be integrated to inform decision making and policy |
| Knowledge translation | Relationships mediate throughout the cycle, and must be understood from a systems perspective, in the context of the organization and its strategic processes |
| Knowledge mobilization | |
| Knowledge exchange and uptake | Degree of use is a function of effective integration with the organization(s) and its systems |

# Push-pull exchange

**EXCHANGE**

**PUSH**

**PULL**
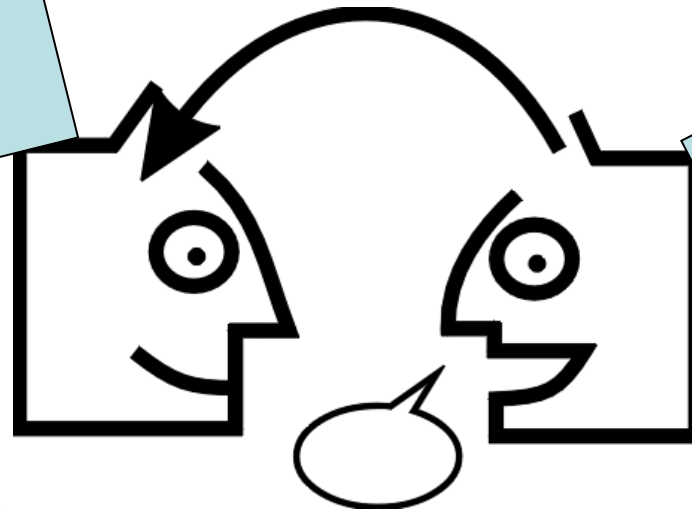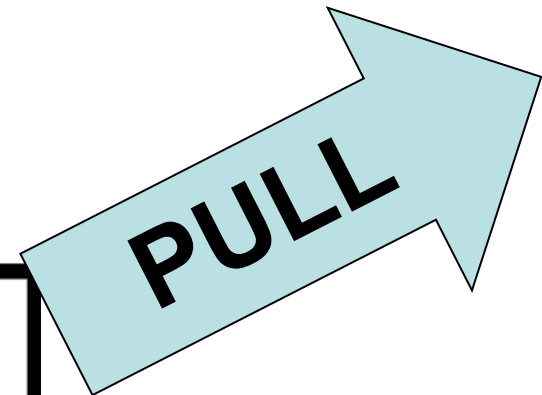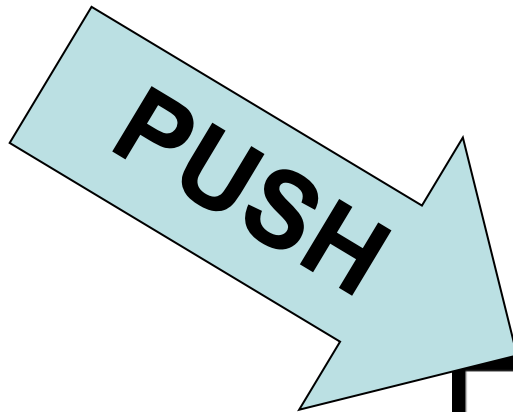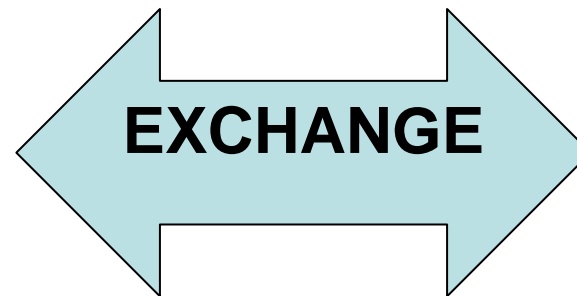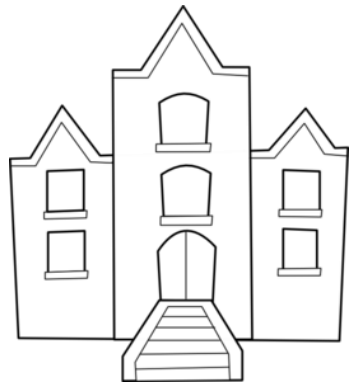
# about families

## gathering evidence • informing action

### Background

About Families works with voluntary and public sector agencies to develop evidence-informed services so the changing needs of parents, including families affected by disability, can be met more effectively.

About Families has developed an innovative 'evidence to action' process to enable service delivery to be informed by relevant, reliable evidence.

**Evidence to action cycle**

**IDENTIFY TOPIC**

Key challenges facing parents are identified through feedback etc.

**Gather evidence**

A variety of sources are drawn on, including existing research, the voluntary and public sectors, and service user feedback

*evidence review process*

**Review and report on evidence**

Evidence is reviewed and analysed with experts including academics and voluntary sector professionals

Evidence is shared through user-friendly topic reports and briefings

**Develop action plans**

Ideas for how services could be developed, and service users involved in planning, are developed with key stakeholders through a participative process

**Implement action plans**

**Evaluation**

We work with key stakeholders to develop, implement and evaluate action plans etc.

### Outcomes

Voluntary and public sector agencies are more aware of relevant research and how evidence can inform service delivery; and are able to make better use of existing resources.

Parents and families have greater confidence in articulating their needs to service providers by participating in the design of service delivery.

Voluntary and public sector agencies are more aware of the

CRFR ten years

Capability

# Mechanisms for promoting evidence-based practice

- Tailored dissemination
- Interactive approaches,,
- Opportunities to adapt and "test out" findings in the local context
- Social influence strategies
- Facilitative approaches that offer technical, financial, organizational, and emotional support
- Reminders and incentives
- Multifaceted interventions
- mechanisms interact

Nutley, S., I. Walter, et al. (2009). "Promoting Evidence-based Practice." Research on Social Work Practice **19**(5): 552-559.

# Sharing experience:

- What would you like to do to increase the utilisation of research in your organisation?

- What resources are available to you – inside and outside your organisation?

- What would you like universities to offer to your organisation to help with this?

# Conclusions

- Research-use is a complex process
- Organisational strategies, leadership and commitment necessary
- Resources for using evidence from a variety of places, not just research producers

# Image credits

- http://www.helentoons.com/2009_11_01_archive.html
- http://actstraining.com/2011/04/communicating-for-understanding/
- http://www.honkingdonkey.com/kids-coloring-pages/pre-k/10-pre-k_coloring-030.htm
- http://www.google.co.uk/imgres?imgurl=&imgrefurl=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.clker.com%2Fclipart-school-building.html&h=0&w=0&sz=1&tbnid=utn7dqPAjv5tkM&tbnh=237&tbnw=213&zoom=1&docid=A9r0BWXCm4oIIM&ei=YzA0UueNDaGI0AXotIHIDw&ved=0CAIQsCU
- http://government.pppst.com/3branches.html
- http://www.aperfectworld.org/clipart/Metaphors/idea_exchange.gif
- http://www.sleepscotland.org/sleepc.php

Thank you!

More about CRFR approach

www.crfr.ac.uk

And
http://www.crfr.ac.uk/reports/briefing%2057.pdf