



Alliance for
Useful Evidence

Evidence use in mini publics

Eight case studies

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Background

These case studies present a detailed picture of how evidence was used, presented, engaged with and collected in eight mini-publics. Drawing on interviews with experts, organisers, and some participants, they explore what can make deliberative democracy effective and impactful, and how mini-publics can bring citizens and evidence together.

Beginning in Omagh, Northern Ireland in 2007 and finishing with a 2018 Citizens' Assembly on

adult social care in England, the cases include examples from the UK, Europe and Australia. Insights from these cases provide background to a report titled *Evidence vs Democracy: How 'mini-publics' can traverse the gap between citizens, experts, and evidence*, published by the Alliance for Useful Evidence with our partners Agence Nouvelle des Solidarités Actives (ANSA).

To read the report, please visit our website at alliance4usefulevidence.org

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Eight case studies

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Case study 1

A Deliberative Poll on educational reform, Omagh, Northern Ireland, 2007

Context

In January 2007, a Deliberative Poll on educational reform was held in Omagh District Council. Like the rest of Northern Ireland, Omagh's education system is almost entirely segmented - 93 per cent in a recent report by the Integrated Education Fund¹ - with separate systems for Catholic and Protestant students and teachers. In 2007, less than 5 per cent of students in state-managed schools were Catholic, and only 1 per cent of students at Catholic-maintained schools were Protestant.² Lower numbers of school-age students, and the need for changes to the curriculum, led to an interest in consulting the public on options for reform.

Deliberative polling is a method developed by James Fishkin and Robert Luskin and applied in many countries from the [Stanford Centre for Deliberative Democracy](#). Like a conventional poll, it works by collecting survey opinions. Unlike a traditional survey, a Deliberative Poll looks at public opinion before and after a deliberative event, analysing how its changed. This aims to get a snapshot of what 'informed public opinion' looks like.

The Omagh poll covered a range of options for educational reform in Northern Ireland, particularly policy that involved the integration of Catholic and Protestant teachers and students. It also explored whether deliberation could produce learning and attitude change in a 'deeply divided' public.³

The research team was led by Ian O'Flynn, a political theorist specialising in deliberative democracy, two education policy experts from Queens University Belfast, who held research positions at the Department of Education (DENI), and James Fishkin and Robert Luskin, from the Stanford Centre for Deliberative Democracy and the University of Texas. It was funded by the American charitable foundation Atlantic Philanthropies.

At a glance

The Poll collected survey data on educational reform options, including: age grouping, school types, school collaboration projects, shared facilities, pupil and teacher exchange schemes. Many of these had implicit or explicit consequences for how – and if – Catholic and Protestant students mixed. The survey also measured opinion on increasing integration in education and community beliefs and attitudes.

	Deliberative Poll on education policy in Northern Ireland	Key features of a Deliberative Poll ⁴
Number of participants	127 participants	130-500 participants
Cost	£147,420	£200,000
Number of days	1 day	2-3 days
Selection of participants	Random selection	Random selection
Activities	Information and deliberation	Information and deliberation

Dr Stephen Elstub and colleagues, in a 2018 review of mini-publics for the Alliance for Useful Evidence, looked at the potential of mini-publics to promote evidence uptake in social policy and practice. The report highlighted that mini-publics generally have five phases.⁵ These case studies cover each stage and record some reflections on impact.

Planning and recruitment

Deliberative Polls are designed to achieve statistically representative results through robust random sampling.⁶ This means that participants are randomly selected from the population using a robust method. Deliberative Polls also use a comparison or control group: a group of the public who don't deliberate, and whose survey results can be used as a point of comparison. Deliberative Polls use a much larger group of citizens than other mini-public methods, so that they can be more representative of the wider population.

In an interview, organiser Ian O'Flynn, pointed out that randomly selecting a large sample of citizens is key strength of the Deliberative Polling method;

"[Representativeness] is a big claim of Deliberative Polls. A lot of mini-publics, like Citizens' Juries, where the numbers are just too small, they can't be representative. With 12, 20 people, they can't claim to be speaking on behalf of the population."

O'Flynn also highlighted the importance of having a control group;

"The control is important because we want to know if the treatment – the deliberation – has made any difference, or if it was something in the water, something in the general environment. You need a control group to do this."

Ipsos Mori polled 565 parents of school-age children in Omagh, in what is referred to as the Time 1 (T1) survey. After the survey, they were invited to a day of deliberation on the future of the local education system. There were high levels of attrition – or drop out – meaning that only 127 attended the deliberation and completed the Time 2 (T2) survey. This was a smaller sample than the organisers had hoped for, but it was generally representative.⁷ Some significant demographic bias was noted in the gender of participants (many more women attended than men) and in levels of education (participants were in general more highly educated). A statistical analysis of the impact of these biases, and others such as self-selection for participation, was conducted and reported.⁸

In the divided political context of Northern Ireland, the recruitment of experts was challenging. Religious organisations were initially reluctant to be involved, and it was feared that some speakers wouldn't show up on the day. Televising the deliberations, and securing national and international press coverage, was key to ensuring buy-in from diverse and often opposed stakeholders.

Learning

Briefing materials put together by the research team were sent to participants two weeks before the event. Briefing materials were then signed off by the expert panel, composed of representatives from DENI, the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education, the Western Education and Library Board, Comhairle Na Gaelscolaíochta (Council for Irish Language Schools), Trustees of the Christian Brothers, Trustees of Loreto Convent and the Community Relations Council of Northern Ireland. The briefing document laid out a menu of policy options and listed the related pros and cons. Representatives of stakeholder organisations had to agree, through rounds of comments and redrafting, that their views were accurately represented. In an article on the poll, the organisers admit that *"Even achieving agreement on the overall menu and description of advantages and disadvantages was a challenge."*⁹ O'Flynn pointed out that as well as preventing bias, this process aimed to protect the poll from political criticism; *"It's not just about giving balanced information, it's also about providing information that you can protect from the kinds of attacks politicians often make and the kinds of attacks that newspapers also level on evidence."*

In the literature on mini-publics there is debate on the value of sending evidence to participants in advance. In Fishkin's work on Deliberative Polls, learning is divided in to two parts, one 'imbalanced' learning period at home and one 'balanced' learning period at the deliberative event.¹⁰ But, it isn't clear how much participants engage with information that's sent to them in advance.

Deliberation

The 127 participants were randomly assigned to small groups of about ten people, for a series of one and a half hour discussions, facilitated by moderators familiar with the method. In groups, participants came up with questions that were put to the panel, who were given limited time to respond.

Fishkin and Luskin define 'deliberation' as the 'weighing of competing considerations' through discussion that is informed, balanced, conscientious, substantive, comprehensive.¹¹ The method has specific ways of addressing balance in evidence provision; for example, long speeches or presentations are not permitted so that 'arguments are considered sincerely on their merits, not how they are made or who is making them'. Speakers are briefed in advance that time to respond will be limited and that moderators can cut them off. Ian O'Flynn says that deliberation at Omagh was *"Like a David Dimbleby kind of thing. It's quite mechanical, every single one of them has to answer every single question... **They are not to convince people of anything. They are not to bring people to their side. They are there to answer the question and give people the information.**"*

Results

Like other mini-publics, Deliberative Polls are interested in 'what the public would think of a policy issue if they had time and resources to learn and deliberate about it.'¹² Unlike other models, they do not ask members of the public to arrive at a collective position, reach consensus, or even share their final opinions. In Omagh, participants confidentially completed a shorter version of the same questionnaire as before deliberation. This aims to avoid social comparison effects. Ian comments that *"The problem with a decision is that it can have a distorting effect on the deliberations."* In his experience, deliberation often produces agreement without requiring people to reach consensus - *"If there is agreement, it'll show up anyway in the post-deliberation questionnaire, but without the kinds of distortions which a decision would induce."*

The research team undertook statistical analysis of T1 and T2 survey results to look at how deliberation had effected changes.¹³ They measured policy attitudes, finding statistically significant change in 5 of 17 areas. They also looked at Catholic and Protestant policy attitudes, whether attitudes changed in similar or opposite directions, and whether there was more agreement or disagreement. There were no areas in which Protestant and Catholic opinion changed significantly in opposite directions. The team also analysed inter-community beliefs and attitudes, and how trustworthy and reasonable they viewed each other. Results showed more support for religious mixing and majority support for shared education - although this was the case before deliberation. Support for some forms of shared education was higher after deliberation, and more participants perceived those from other communities more positively. The participants as a whole came to agree more with the statement that changes in the education system could benefit children from both communities equally.¹⁴

Impact

The results of the poll were given to the Department of Education in Northern Ireland in a 2007 report.¹⁵ Two journal articles were published, one in 2008 on the implications for education policy¹⁶ and one in 2013 on the use of Deliberative Polls in divided societies.¹⁵ Extracts of the deliberation were broadcast by BBC Northern Ireland in a *Hearts and Minds* documentary. There was national and some international press coverage and presentations to DENI, Belfast County Council, and others.

In a REF2014 Impact Case Study Ian O'Flynn wrote that the poll *"Made a distinct contribution to how education policy actors understand public attitudes in sharing education and have been used to support arguments for shared education policies because they are widely accepted as providing robust and reliable evidence of informed parental support."* The poll was cited by the Ministerial Advisory Group on Advancing Shared Education, the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council (NICRC), Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI), and the Good Relations Forum. Educational organisations such as the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools developed a policy response to the poll, which was also cited in the 2012 development proposal for the Drumragh Integrated College. The poll was a 'catalyst' for the development of six shared primary schools on a public site in Omagh.¹⁸

O'Flynn reflects that the policy impact might have been comparatively easier to achieve in Northern Ireland, 'it's a small place, everybody who's anybody in education knew it was happening'. He also discussed how hard it was to trace the impact of the poll, which he did through citations and qualitative research;

"The Department of Education says it does make a difference and it's still getting referenced to this day, it's still having impact, but in a diffuse way. But still, because this wasn't government mandated... it gets very hard to trace."

O'Flynn is clear about the need for pragmatism in understanding the 'real world import' of 'clever academic experiments'. He thinks it's important to understand how the Omagh poll related to the broader political process, and how the quality of mini-publics impact on the kind of evidence they create.

Interviewee: **Ian O'Flynn**, Senior Lecturer in Political Theory, Newcastle University

Case study 2

A Deliberative approach to pandemic planning, South Australia, 2008

Context

FluViews was a public consultation aiming to gather and clarify community perspectives on planning for pandemic influenza – a flu epidemic - in Adelaide, South Australia. Two deliberative forums took place in 2008 against the backdrop of the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Avian Influenza A (H5N1). The decade saw widespread implementation of national pandemic influenza (PI) plans, and 2009 World Health Organisation (WHO) Guidance emphasised the need for the involvement of civil society, families and citizens in planning policy.¹⁹

FluViews addressed a gap in pandemic planning in South Australia at the time. It used a small Citizens' Jury model, described by the organisers as a 'deliberative forum', to get public input in key policy and planning areas:

- a. How to allocate pharmaceutical drugs in conditions of scarcity.
- b. How acceptable isolation, social distancing and quarantine measures were.
- c. How to communicate about risk and crisis.

FluViews was funded through an industry-university linkage grant by the Australian Research Council (ARC) and the Department of Health. Organisers at the University of Adelaide hoped to overcome the challenges involved in collecting community views on pandemic planning. This was a challenge because in general the public have limited knowledge about complex public health issues.

At a glance

Two deliberative forums with nine to 12 participants were held over one or two days. The forums addressed the following questions:

Forum 1 (two days):

"Who should be given the scarce antiviral drugs and vaccine in an influenza pandemic?"

Forum 2 (two days):

"Under what circumstances would quarantine and social distancing measures be acceptable in an influenza pandemic?" and "What, how and when should the public be told about pandemic influenza and by whom?"

A cash contribution of \$60,000 AUS (plus an in-kind contribution of \$75,350) from the State Department of Health showed they were keen to get public input.

	Deliberative forum on pandemic planning	Key features of a Citizen Jury ²²
Number of participants	Forum one: 9 participants Forum two: 12 participants	12-25 participants
Cost	Total grant \$84,000 AUS (Current conversion £47,210) Included funding for 0.5 FTE research post	£10,000 to £30,000
Number of days	Forum one: 2 days Forum two: 2] days	2-5 days
Selection of participants	Random stratified selection	Random selection
Activities	Information and deliberation	Information and deliberation

Planning and recruitment

A series of systematic reviews were conducted in preparation for the forums that brought together existing evidence on pandemic flu management strategies.

The research team held four focus groups to prepare for the forums: 11 adult participants in two community focus groups, and two youth groups with 24 young people. The focus groups identified and explored issue to define questions and content for the forums. Organiser Professor Annette Braunack-Mayer describes developing the framing as a 'mix and match' process that took in to consideration focus group outcomes, government and research priorities. Focus groups gave the organisers clear indications on what public priority areas were.

Participants were randomly selected with some problems in retention for the first forum, this resulted in a group of nine participants with more women than men. In response to recruitment challenges the organisers increased honorarium payments for participants from \$100 AUS to \$300 AUS for the second forum, and also kept male participants in reserve.

An Oversight Committee fed into all aspects of design and content. It was composed of stakeholders in university and government, including academic researchers at the University of Adelaide, the Director of Communicable Diseases, the Director of Research Ethics and Policy at the Department of Health, staff from Infectious Diseases and Policy branches, and members of a government pandemic planning working group, on which organiser Dr Jacqueline Street (University of Adelaide) was also sitting. Annette reflects that the varied composition of the Committee meant in needed careful management. Some members of the Committee voiced mixed feelings about public engagement;

"They felt it was an incredibly sensitive area and didn't want the broader community being anxious and concerned about the likely impact of a pandemic on society. From their point of view, it was actually better not to talk about it in the public sphere."

Systematic review and qualitative research was used to design a detailed brief for witnesses, information for the Oversight Committee, and shorter, take-home information for participants. No information was provided to participants in advance of the forums.

Learning

Short summary modules (two pages max) on each issue area were put together for participants from systematic reviews and literature reviews. Evidence provided also included case figures developed from statistical modelling of a projected pandemic in South Australia. These projections were used to build some 'scenarios' used in deliberation.

Participants were asked to work on the basis of these scenarios: assumptions about the type virus, how it spread, where it spread geographically, and how available drugs and vaccines were.

Presenters from government and research covered science, policy and planning aspects. Annette comments that it was important to secure speakers who were good science communicators and also able to deal with the sensitivity of the topic; one speaker was for example a former Director of Infectious Diseases. Researchers who presented were mostly from the research team in Adelaide.

An article by co-organiser Wendy Rogers describes how the organisers aimed to minimise bias:

"Where evidence was contentious the forum was informed about the nature of the controversy, the range of views in the peer-reviewed literature and the strength of available evidence."²¹

All modules were approved by the Oversight Committee. Annette reflects that in this consultation they were less concerned with bias and more with how to present sensitive information: *"We were dealing in the most part, I suppose, with evidence which was generally and widely accepted; what a virus is, what a vaccine is etc."* In comparison to the four other juries she has been involved in, there was greater concern about the public's capacity to handle some kinds of information. She provided us with an example of some members of the Oversight Committee being 'appalled' by a researcher's suggestion that they collect participants' opinions on mortuary process and the disposal of dead bodies.

Deliberation

Forum members were briefed on relevant topics by experts in infection control, virology, and public policy. Short presentations were followed by small and large discussion group formats. An independent facilitator led the deliberation and decision-making process and supported interactions. There was no private deliberation by participants alone.

Deliberation on two questions was aided by the use of scenarios, constructed using review evidence, modelling and qualitative findings from focus groups. For example, in forum two, six scenarios outlined a range of real-life situations in which quarantine and social distancing measures might be used. The scenarios dealt with some potentially charged content on when people might be isolated from their families and how quarantine should be enforced. Annette describes the need for the scenarios: *"We put [them] together in consultation with the steering group and it was because **people were really having a lot of trouble getting their heads***

around what these situations meant in concrete terms, it was hard to get a concrete set of ideas about what the issues were." The scenarios helped to focus topics for the jurors and ground policy problems in everyday situations. They also served to distil, for the organisers, what the range of issues were within a given problem area.

Participants also received a presentation on ethics which taught them different models for thinking about ethical problems. Annette described this as "A ten minute introduction to how ethical reasoning works', and thinks 'it makes a difference... I think [jurors] get the idea that there are a number of ways that you can think about a problem."

Decision-making

Decisions were reached through a combination of voting and consensus. Participants generated and then ranked possible responses or options, and later reached consensus on their priorities.

Forum one produced a ranking and explanation of who the priority groups to receive anti-viral drugs and vaccinations should be. Forum two produced a series of recommendations on social distancing measures and communication strategy - but didn't reach a unanimous decision on one question. A range of responses was explored in the forum and revealed new insights into public concerns, as well as the kinds of policies, such as counselling or support, that might mitigate them. The forum recommended the provision of comprehensive information by experts using varied media and highlighted as a public preference for frank and open communication on uncertainty. It also showed the need for a strategy that worked for the whole communities, and that local perceptions and values were different in different areas.

Data consisted of whiteboard screens with recommendations, transcripts and notes of the discussion.

Follow up

Telephone interviews were conducted at most four weeks after the forum and asked former participants about process, interaction with specialists, and how they felt about the consensus findings.

Feedback from participants reflected discomfort with some of the choices made at the forum. In particular, around the prioritisation of drugs in scarcity, for example on provision for children, which was not made. Participants expressed confidence in expert witnesses.

Impact

Three academic articles on the forums were published in *BMC Public Health*, *Journal of Public Health Policy* and *Health Expectations*, in addition to one book chapter.²² A summary concluded that 'citizens can provide important information about community values and beliefs which may impact on the success and acceptability' of policy and be a valuable local source of evidence for planners and implementers.²³ One article also argues that the confidence expressed in the expert witnesses, and the recommendations reached on communication showed that there was greater public tolerance for uncertainty than often assumed by government.²⁴

A report was provided to the Pandemic Influenza Sub-committee of the Coalition of Australian Governments and presented at national and international conferences and meetings. It also fed in to the State Pandemic Planning Committee.

Annette describes the impact the consultation had on policymakers in government as 'transformative'; Some government officials attended the forums in person, and she says it helped convince them that:

"Ordinary people can do pretty amazing things when they are trusted with appropriate evidence and given support to think about it."

Annette also described how the impact of the forums was limited by changes in South Australian government in the intervening time between the grant application and the start of the research. During that time, the Head of the Infectious Diseases Unit had been replaced, and a state level pandemic working group set up. The forum organisers lost some key sympathetic relationships with government and their informal mechanisms for feeding in to policy; *"It should have been a recipe for success [but] something that everyone had been very optimistic about suddenly became something quite complicated."* Without formal processes agreed the research group found they *"Weren't actually in the place where all of the action was happening. We were kind of side on to it as a group of university researchers working together."* The research team received no feedback on how the report was received at national, rather than state, level.

Annette highlights the importance of buy-in and the need for consistent engagement with government, noting that ideally mini-publics would be *"built in to the mechanisms of decision-making. **When you get a confluence of policymakers and politicians who believe that mini-publics are a meaningful way to inform decision-making by government they can have a profound effect.**"*

Interviewee: **Annette Braunack-Mayer**, Professor and Head of School of Health and Society at the University of Wollongong

Comments from: **Jacqueline Street**, Research Fellow in the School of Health and Society at the University of Wollongong

Case study **3**

European Consensus Conference on homelessness, 2010

Context

The European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA) was established in 1989. Its 130 member organisations hail from 30 countries, including 28 EU member states. FEANTSA's ultimate goal is to end homelessness in Europe. A key strand of its work is engaging with European institutions to promote the development of effective measures to end homelessness. Up until 2010, this influencing work had not achieved the results hoped for. The European Commission had never provided support for a European Homelessness strategy, nor integrated homelessness into its key strategic documents.

"We'd been failing for a long time to convince the Commission to adopt a homelessness strategy, and the countries to make reports to the commission on tackling homelessness. We felt that FEANTSA was respected in what it said, but... we wanted a broader endorsement."

Robert Aldridge, former Chair of Consensus Conference Preparatory Committee

FEANTSA was keen to strengthen the commitment of European institutions to the issue of homelessness by integrating it into the Europe 2020 strategy. But what should be in this strategy and how should it be monitored?

"We realised we didn't have a straight answer [to these questions]. We realised there was dissensus amongst our FEANTSA network and beyond. We realised we needed to build up a consensus to put to the European Commission."

Freek Spinnewijn, Director, FEANTSA

FEANTSA's Director, Freek Spinnewijn, had been involved in the French Consensus Conference on homelessness that had taken place in 2007. He felt this approach would be the most effective way to come up with proposals that could unite the homelessness community. FEANTSA also took advantage of the Belgian presidency to gain political sponsorship and funding for the process, with support from the Director of the Social Affairs Ministry.

The European Consensus Conference on Homelessness at a glance

	European Consensus Conference on homelessness	Key features of a Consensus Conference ²⁵
Number of participants	7 participants	10-25 participants
Cost	350 000 €	£30,000 and £100,000
Number of days public hearings and deliberation	2.5 days, plus 4 preparatory meeting	7-8 days
Selection of participants	Expert panel selected by Preparatory committee	Citizens selected by stratified random sampling
Activities	Information and deliberation	Information and deliberation

Planning and recruitment

In late 2009, representatives from FEANTSA, the Belgian Presidency and the European Commission met to put together a list of members for the Preparatory Committee, or Prep Comm. Its twenty-seven members were all homelessness specialists but were carefully selected to cover a broad spread of sectors – research, homelessness shelters, social housing, local and national government – and countries – with 22 member states represented. The Prep Comm Chair, Robert Aldridge, was a former President of FEANTSA and ensured a close link with the organisation. He was able to draw on his experience of the Scottish Homelessness Task Force, which was formed in 1999 and fed into major national legislation.²⁶

Crucially, the European Commission had a civil servant representing it on the Prep Comm. The members of the Prep Comm committed to follow the recommendations made by the Consensus Conference – they aimed to 'lock in' European Commission support for future proposals from the start. The Prep Comm met from January 2009 to December 2010. Its role was to define the key questions, recruit the jury, identify expert witnesses and oversee the production of a report synthesising existing research.

To identify questions to be put to the Conference, the Prep Comm agreed to identify a few key issues on which there is lots of disagreement; areas that are an obstacle to advancing the homelessness agenda in Europe.

"A Consensus Conference is only useful when evidence points in different directions... the idea is that "in light of these different types of evidence, we think that this approach is the best"

Freek Spinnewijn, Director, FEANTSA

Whilst Prep Comm members quickly agreed on certain questions – such as the definition of homelessness – others were the subject of a long debate. The issue of migration was particularly divisive. Certain members felt that, as one of the key drivers of increasing homelessness, it must be included. Others felt that it would be impossible to effectively address migration policy as part of a conference that already had a broad scope.

"I pushed for the inclusion of the migration question, but it didn't seem important [to other Prep Comm members]. I was convinced that we live in a century of migration, and that the question of homelessness could not be treated in isolation from these issues. I had to fight hard for that question to be included."

Alain Regnier, former Prep Comm member, senior civil servant, current Head of French Migrant Integration Unit.

Key questions

1. What does homelessness mean?
2. Ending homelessness: A realistic objective?
3. Are 'housing-led' policy approaches the most effective methods of preventing and tackling homelessness?
4. How can meaningful participation of homeless people in the development of homelessness policies be assured?
5. To what extent should people be able to access homeless services irrespective of their legal status and citizenship?
6. What should be the elements of an EU strategy on homelessness?

The Prep Comm was also responsible for ensuring the Jury members were provided with the information they needed to respond to the key questions, both before and during the public hearings. There were three strands to this work:

- **Evidence synthesis:** FEANTSA set up the European Observatory on Homelessness in 1992. The Prep Comm commissioned the Observatory to produce an overview of research on homelessness. Produced by its team of researchers, the report drew largely on work undertaken by the Observatory over the previous twenty years. It addressed broad questions, including definitions of homelessness, pathways into and out of homelessness, current welfare provision in Europe, and homelessness service provision. It drew on a broad range of sources, including public statistics and published research from the fields of sociology, political sciences, and public health. These sources used a range of research methods – from qualitative research to surveys and impact evaluations.²⁷
- **Expert witnesses:** One of the most difficult things for the Prep Comm was to identify expert witnesses. They had to identify two or more witnesses who would provide divergent viewpoints on a key question, because, as Freek Spinnewijn put it *"On certain questions there isn't for or against... the reality was more nuanced..."*. They had to look beyond researchers to practitioners and policy makers. Once identified, these expert witnesses were asked to submit a written contribution, which would be presented at the public hearings.

- **Views of homelessness people:** The Belgian presidency was very keen to include the views of homeless people in the conference process, in part because Belgium has a strong tradition of involving 'experts du vécu' ('experience experts') in public policy. The FEANTSA commissioned the Belgian NGO Front Commun des SDF to conduct a consultation to collate the views of homeless people. National-level NGOs in 8 Member States held consultation events with 225 people.²⁸ The consultation reports were then translated and Front Commun drew out key themes in an overarching report that was published in October 2010.²⁹ The overall process was felt to be worthwhile by those interviewed, but the final report appears to have been too broad brush to strongly influence the process.

Finally, the Prep Comm was also responsible for recruiting the members of the conference. Taking after the French Consensus Conference, it was decided that participants should be a 'comité des sages' (or committee of wise men), without direct links to the homelessness sector.

"It was a comité des sages, people whose conclusions could carry some weight because of who they are."

Freek Spinnewijn, Director, FEANTSA

Members of the Prep Comm suggested potential candidates to the Chair who identified a shortlist that provided a mixed group, in terms of gender, country and expertise. The seven-strong group included people with experience in the fields of research and policy, trained in the law, economics, geography and urban planning. The Chair, Frank Vandenbroucke, was an economist and politician, Member of the Belgian Senate who had held several ministerial posts. He had also been involved in social policy development at EU-level and taught at the University of Leuven and Antwerp.

FEANTSA's conference team brought the participants together four times prior to the conference itself. These sessions provided an opportunity to present the Consensus Conference method and respond to any questions. They also helped create a group dynamic, in order to make the deliberation process as constructive as possible.

Deliberation

The public hearings took place over one and a half days in December 2010 in Brussels in front of a public audience. After a short presentation of Front Commun's consultation report and the Observatory's evidence synthesis, the hearings consisted of six 90-minute sessions on each of the key questions. Each session involved ten presentations from the three expert witnesses, followed by questions from the conference group.

The conference allowed participants to get to grips with the key issues for each of the questions. However, the people interviewed did not feel this was the strongest aspect of the process. Firstly, the hearings took place over a relatively short period – under two days. This was felt to be insufficient to provide an in-depth presentation of the key issues.

"We were trying to get people to stick to eight minutes to present, because there were six questions and several sides to the question, so it was only ever a summary."

Robert Aldridge, for Chair of Consensus Conference Prep Comm

Secondly, given that many of the issues were not highly divisive, it was difficult to find experts with radically divergent viewpoints. For some, this meant it felt too similar to a classic conference: a series of presentations by expert speakers.

"It was difficult given the questions we had to find controversial experts who would say "you should leave people in the streets", you don't real have dissensus on this sort of issue".

Alain Regnier, former Prep Comm member, senior civil servant, current Head of French Migrant Integration Unit.

Decision-making

Once the public hearings were closed, the group withdrew for deliberation. The Chair facilitated discussions, and Ruth Owen from FEANTSA, who had overseen the conference set up, was responsible for writing recommendations based on the their views.

Given the small number of conference participants , all discussions and write-up were conducted in plenary sessions. By the end of the process, the conference members had coproduced a recommendation for each of the questions that they all agreed on.

The recommendations are written with precision and often include concrete, actionable policy recommendations. For instance, they concluded that ETHOS should be used as a common framework definition of homelessness underpinning a future EU strategy. Other recommendations provided a clear policy direction, but not always actionable measures. For example, it called for a shift from using shelters and transitional accommodation towards 'housing led' approaches. On the issue of migrants, it concluded that all people, regardless of legal status, be given access to accommodation, social and health support.

Many of the recommendations are consistent with the conclusions of the evidence review. For example, the review concluded that *"There is a growing consensus that, in the great majority of cases, any presenting difficulties can best be tackled by **the provision of flexible support in regular housing rather than in special institutions for homeless persons**"* (page 46, emphasis added). The conference group appears therefore to have drawn heavily on the conclusions of the review.

Follow up

FEANTSA's Director and the Conference Chair spent the months following the conference seeking support from the European Commission for their recommendations. This included two meetings with the relevant EU Commissioner. In the end, the impact of the conference on European-level policy has been very limited. The only concrete measure taken was the adoption of the ETHOS framework by the European Commission as its definition of homelessness. The conference didn't manage to achieve its initial objective of ensuring homelessness was included in the 2020 strategy, and of attracting EU investment to the issue. Those interviewed attributed this disappointing result to the inertia of EU institutions, and the absence of political commitment to the issue from the Commissioner and his team. More broadly, homelessness is not a competency of the EU institutions, making it easier for them to ignore it.

"We underestimated the resistance of the big machinery of Brussels."

Freek Spinnewijn, Director, FEANTSA

"My own impression is that a lot of it depends on the personal enthusiasms of the senior members of the commission. Had there been other people at senior level in the commission, they might have run with it."

Robert Aldridge, former Chair of Consensus Conference Prep Comm

The conference does appear to have had some impact on support for homelessness from EU institutions, and in particular the European Parliament. *"Since 2010, Parliament has been more supportive, with amendments and proposals"* commented Freek. *"[The Conference's report] was used as part of the background material for the equivalent of an early day motion, which got very significant support in the EP – 400 or 500 votes"* added Robert.

Beyond these impacts on EU institutions, the conference also provided a useful resource for FEANTSA members for national level lobbying. It was used in at least a dozen countries, mainly in Eastern and Southern Europe, to help gain access to national level policy-makers.

"In countries where they had difficulty getting homelessness on the agenda, it was useful to start the conversation, to set up meetings with important people."

Robert Aldridge, former Chair of Consensus Conference Prep Comm

The conference has had a long-term impact on FEANTSA itself. It was felt to have given them greater legitimacy in discussions with EU institutions and has helped structure much of their strategy and their influencing work. For instance, picking up on the recommendation on housing-led approaches, FEANTSA has developed several programmes in this area including a Hub to support the development of Housing First in Europe.³⁰

Interviewees: **Freek Spinnewijn**, Director, FEANTSA
Robert Aldridge, former Chair of Consensus Conference Prep Comm
Alain Regnier, former Prep Comm member, senior civil servant, current Head of French Migrant Integration Unit.

Case study 4

A deliberative forum on ageing, Finland, 2011

Context

Finland is the fastest ageing country in Europe. With people living longer than ever before, often with periods of ill-health, there is a risk that elderly people are increasingly seen as a burden on society. In order to address the urgent issue of care, the Finnish government decided to draft a new piece of legislation in 2011: the Care Services for the Elderly Act. The Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health was keen to involve elderly citizens in this legislative process, through consultation on key issues. After this initial impetus from the Ministry, Innovillage³¹ – an open innovation community – sought support from an academic expert in mini-publics, Harri Raisio, to give elderly citizens the opportunity to express their views. He and his colleagues agreed to set up a Citizens' Jury because, as he put it, *"It was a significant law, so we were happy to play our part in the process"*. The Citizens' Jury was implemented in collaboration with Citizen's Voice, a research project led by University of Vaasa, regional BoWer network (Bothnia Welfare - Coalition for Research and Knowledge) and Innovillage. Harri and collaborators were, however, keen for the Citizens' Jury to be firmly anchored locally in the Ostrobothnia region where they are based so it could have an impact on policy decision-making at a local, regional and national level: *"That has always been important to me, I've always wanted decision-makers to commit to the process, so I want it to be an influential exercise."* However, by his own omission, the link back to national decision-makers was, in the end, not as strong as it could have been: *"We didn't have any contract [with the Ministry]. A person from Innovillage acted as a link between jury organizers and the ministry. That wasn't an ideal process. There was some confusion about the role of the ministry and what is the real connection, and how much we can influence [the legislation]"*.

The Citizens' Jury for elderly people at a glance

The Citizens' Jury displayed many of the key features of a typical jury, in particular with regards to the number of participants, length and activities. Unlike a classic jury, however, participants self-selected (see 'Planning and recruitment').

	Citizens' jury for elderly people	Key features of a Citizen Jury ³²
Number of participants	23 participants	12-25 participants
Cost	< £10,000	£10,000 to £30,000
Number of days	4 days	2-5 days
Selection of participants	Stratified sampling from pool of self-selected candidates	Random selection
Activities	Information and deliberation	Information and deliberation

Planning and recruitment

A 16-strong steering group was established to oversee the citizens' jury, bringing together local decision-makers, elderly care experts, and other stakeholders from civil society. The group decided that the jury should respond to a question that was much broader than the narrow scope of the legislation: *"What is elderly people's good life and good residence and how is it to be realized?"*

Harri Raisio and a second facilitator – Susann Sjöström – organised the recruitment of the jurors themselves from amongst citizens of the eight municipalities of the Ostrobothnia region. Citizen Juries often involve a costly recruitment process based on random selection. Given the limited resources available for this jury, recruitment was based on self-selection. Elderly citizens – 65 years or older – were informed of the jury via flyers, events, and newspaper and radio marketing. 55 people applied to participate, and 26 were individually picked in order provide as heterogeneous a group as possible, representing different municipalities, genders, and age groups. Ostrobothnia being a bilingual region, the team recruited a mixture of Swedish and Finnish speakers.

The Steering Group decided to conduct the Citizens' Jury over four days in order to allow enough time for expert testimony, discussion and deliberation. The group also identified the six experts who would present to the jury – a mixture of researchers, public officials and elderly people. The jurors did not receive any information about the issues to be discussed in advance, and no ad hoc evidence synthesis or research was conducted as part of the project. The process therefore relied heavily both on the expertise of the expert witnesses and the lived experience of the elderly people who would participate. In a complex ever-changing world, Harri Raisio felt it important to present many kinds of evidence taking in *"Existing needs, future scenarios, and citizens' viewpoints"* and not just evaluations such as randomised controlled trials.

Deliberation

The jury took place either side of a weekend in November 2011. Days one and two followed a similar structure: expert testimony at midday, and small group discussions later in the afternoon. Day one was designed to provide factual information about the needs of elderly people, and the services aimed at them, in the Ostrobothnia region. Presentations were provided by a researcher and a public official, which together lasted an hour, followed by questions, and an afternoon of small group discussions. The second day focused on futures scenarios, with presentations by a civil servant specialising in elderly housing, and a designer who presented the ways in which new technology could support better ageing in the future. The third day touched on values related to ageing. In addition to a presentation from a local university professor, the jury were also shown a video of a short interview with a very elderly woman living with Alzheimer's in a local care home. Prepared in advance at the request of the Steering Group, this video aimed to give voice to elderly people who were unable to participate because of a physical handicap or cognitive difficulties. *"It opened the eyes of many of what their lives would be quite soon, so that changed the nature of the discussion"* commented Harri.

Decision-making

The jury began working on a declaration on the third day, drawing on the notes taken by the facilitators on days one and two. Initial suggestions were collected during small group discussions, which were then prioritised in a plenary session. Translation by the facilitators ensured everyone was able to understand the proposals put forward. The facilitators collected these suggestions and drafted them into a declaration. A first version was ready for a media event which took place at the end of the fourth day, though Harri admitted that *"We were in a real hurry, we hadn't finalised the declaration."* The jurors were therefore brought back together on 23 January 2012 to sign the final proof-read version.

The declaration includes a number of recommendations on how to ensure elderly people lead active and fulfilling lives, and relating to a range of issues, including housing, urban planning, social care, access to services, physical activities, and participation in civic life. Whilst a handful of these are precise proposals that are actionable by national or local government, a large number are broad suggestions.

Follow up

The finalised signed declaration was given to an MP who was present at the 23 January launch event. An official response from the Social and Health Ministries was sent back to the jurors two months later, signed by the 15 members of the steering group for the Care Services for the Elderly Act. They claimed that they had taken into account the suggestions made in the jury's declaration in drafting the legislation. However, Harri conceded, the response was *"Very high level...That is the problem with many Citizens' Juries, that it's really hard to see how it had an influence. Was it the jury that raised the issue, or was it cherry-picking the suggestions they [the steering group members] have already agreed on?"* Harri suggested that *"When decision-makers give their response, it should be as exact as the declaration itself, they should talk about each of the suggestions, explain what they think about each one, and if they don't want to adopt it, then why not."*

Harri feels that *"It is hard to read the law and deduce the impact [of the jury],"* though the declaration *"Has been cited in other national level documents, including guidance."* The question addressed by the jury was "probably too broad" Harri admits. He believes that *"If the scope had been narrower, the impact on the law probably would have been greater."* However, in order to strengthen the link back to decision-making, there is a risk that the process becomes too top-down.

"The ideal is that mini-publics are bottom-up, so that the question isn't fixed. [However] the more the process is bottom-up, the weaker the link with decision-making, it could be less relevant to decision-makers."

Another explanation for this apparently limited influence on national policy was the lack of direct involvement of national decision-makers in the process. The Ministry was not represented in the Steering Group, and no contract or formal agreement was established between the Ministry and the jury organisers.

Interviewee: **Harri Raisio**, University Lecturer, Department of Social and Health Management, University of Vaasa

Case study **5**

Prevention of re-offending Consensus Conference, France, 2012-13

Context

On 15 May 2012, François Hollande was elected President of France and gained a parliamentary majority the following month. The previous government, under President Nicholas Sarkozy, had sought to be 'tough on crime' by passing punitive criminal legislation. The new left-wing government's criminal policy, summed up in Hollande's manifesto, was very limited in scope, consisting of three proposals to repeal the most punitive measures of Sarkozy's government. Christine Taubira, the new Justice Minister, hailed from the left of the cabinet, and was keen to pass more ambitious criminal policy legislation.

Taubira was aware that political consensus would be difficult to achieve given the sensitivity of the topic of reoffending. Much of the policy debate on the issue was relatively nuanced, with consensus between the two main parties of government on key issues, including the ineffectiveness of short sentencing. However, the public debate, much more about ethics than evidence, was highly polarised along a 'soft on crime' versus 'hard on crime' axis. Taubira therefore felt it necessary to raise the quality of debate in this field, to create a platform for passing more progressive legislation.

She was convinced to launch the Consensus Conference by two of her special advisors who had worked for many years on criminal policy and were keen to put the evidence base into practice. One advisor, Valérie Sagant,³³ had been director of a research centre in the field of criminology in Canada, and was knowledgeable about new approaches to preventing reoffending that had been pilot tested abroad.

"The Consensus Conference was designed to provide a counterweight to the debate in France, which was highly marked by politics and popular misconceptions. We had to reintroduce some reason, with the idea that we could gain approval for solutions that had been implemented abroad."

Maud Morel-Coujard, civil servant, member of the Consensus conference team

From the outset, the Minister and her team had a clear objective: to use the recommendations of the conference to pass policy measures, including in the form of major criminal justice legislation. This gave the conference a strong institutional anchor, ensuring it was well-resourced and politically supported.

The preventing reoffending Consensus Conference at a glance

	Prevention of reoffending Consensus Conference	Key features of a Consensus Conference ³⁴
Number of participants	20 participants	10-25 participants
Cost	500 000 € (estimation including all spending and seconded civil servants)	£30,000 and £100,000
Number of days	4 days	7-8 days
Selection of participants	Expert panel selected by Organisation committee	Citizens selected by stratified random sampling
Activities	Information and deliberation	Information and deliberation

Planning and recruitment

The preparatory stage of the conference took place over 5 months from September 2012 to February 2013.

The first stage of the process was for Christiane Taubira to designate a Chair of the Steering Committee that would organise the conference. She chose Nicole Maestracci a magistrate who had presided over three Consensus Conferences over the previous decade, and was well-known to her advisors. Nicole Maestracci quickly established a project team, initially including two PhD students and two civil servants (1.5 FTE) seconded from the Ministry of Justice. This team was later reinforced by the addition of a secretary, a Masters student for the literature review, a communications consultant and a probation services inspector.

The Chair set up a Steering Committee composed of a cross-section of stakeholders from the criminal justice field, seeking to achieve a balance between different professional groups and political persuasions. Its 23 members ranged from researchers to probation officers, from local politicians to charity chief executives.

The committee oversaw the preparation of the process. Weekly meetings were held over a period of nearly three months during the autumn of 2012. They helped define the questions to put to the conference, identified stakeholders to interview, solicited experts to present, and oversaw the research programme. Some also wrote an 'evidence synthesis' on a specific topic.

Consistent with a classic Consensus Conference process, the project team put together information packs for participants, based on a review of available evidence. This review drew on a broad range of published sources:

- International research literature, including but not exclusively evaluations of alternative sentencing approaches from countries such as Canada, Australia and the UK;
- Analyses of the French context, which included:
 - Reports from government administrations on criminal justice and penal policy, written primarily by the inspectorates and Parliamentarians;
 - Observational studies, both qualitative and quantitative, looking at key trends in sentencing and reoffending in France;
 - Criminal law in France, with some comparative analysis of laws from other countries.

Other aspects were a clear departure from a typical Consensus Conference. For instance, a large programme of stakeholder hearings were held by the Chair of the Steering Committee, and written up in a report by the seconded inspector. Given the high level of complexity of the issue of criminal policy, it was felt essential to enable conference participants to take their views into account. These hearings also aimed at building buy-in for a process that, it was hoped, would lead to concrete policy measures.

Unusually, a multi-pronged communications strategy was implemented alongside the whole conference process, beginning months before the public hearings. Given the political explosiveness of the issues, and the need to build public support for a new policy agenda, a communications consultant was recruited to work full time on the project team. Her work included both ensuring that all outputs were in accessible 'plain French', and also engaging a dialogue with key institutional stakeholders and the mass media. This was done via a dedicated web space, press releases and press relations. In the three months prior to the public hearings, weekly interviews were organised between the Chair and journalists from the mainstream press, with the aim of stimulating more evidence-based journalism on the issue.

"She [Nicole] had in mind to have a communications plan... to get out of the debate based around "prison or not prison", and towards a debate based on hard statistics and research".

Sylvaine Villeneuve, communications consultant for the Consensus Conference

Unlike Danish Consensus Conferences, the Steering Committee decided that the conference group would not be made up of ordinary citizens. The Chair suggested that as the topic of criminal justice was sensitive, four days of public hearings and deliberation would be insufficient to change the views of citizens likely to have already formed a clear opinion. The Committee accepted her proposal to create a conference composed of 'wise men (and women)', mixing people with direct experience of criminal justice and experts with no criminal justice background (researchers, philosophers, politicians). Françoise Tulkens, Belgian lawyer and expert in criminal and penal law, and Vice-President of the European Court of Human Rights, was named chair of the conference. As a lawyer, she brought the legal expertise that the committee felt was needed, and as a Belgian national she was perceived to have a form of neutrality on French debates. Her experience in the field of research³⁵ further strengthened the case for her candidacy.

The conference group met once to be briefed on the process but received no in-depth training. They then received an information pack made up of two tomes – one consisting of evidence syntheses, the other bringing together key findings from the stakeholder hearings and written contributions from expert witnesses.

Deliberation

The public hearing took place over two days – 14 and 15 February 2013 – in a large amphitheatre in Paris. In front of an audience of around 2,300 people, the 23 experts each delivered a short presentation followed by questions from the conference participants. For each of the six questions put to the group, two to three experts presented complementary viewpoints. The experts were a mixture of researchers and professionals from the field (judges, police officers etc.), though the latter were in the majority. Whilst many of these presentations referred back to the research evidence, they also exposed the key ethical, legal and practitioner debates relating to the conference questions.

Participants asked questions, most of which had been prepared in advance. Members of the public were also able to submit questions, which were collected and asked, time permitting, after questions from the conference group itself.

Two aspects of the hearings were particularly unusual. Firstly, they were attended by a number of high-profile figures from the sector, not least the Justice Minister herself who attended the whole first day. The process appeared to have achieved buy-in from key decision-makers. Secondly, the conference heard expert testimony from a group of offenders, including some who were still prisoners in a facility in Arles. Their presentation had been prepared by a professional facilitator but caused an immediate stir as some members of the High Court left the conference in protest. The polemic around their testimony also inevitably became a focus of the press coverage of the conference.

Decision-making

Deliberation took place over the weekend of the 16-17 February 2013 in Paris. Participants debated in isolation, facilitated by the Chair. Notes were taken by the two civil servants who had been seconded to the project team.

The Chair broke the 20-strong conference in to smaller discussion groups. At regular intervals, each of these groups would feed back to the rest of the conference in plenary sessions. These sessions enabled the conference to identify those points where a broad consensus had been reached, and those where participants had been unable to reach a shared conclusion.

Drawing on the literature review and expert testimony, the conference was able to reach consensus on several key issues. However, there were other issues on which there was less agreement.

“The jury got really stuck on the issue of offender risk assessment. These were substantial issues, relating to the scales and algorithms used, including actuarial methods. This topic relates back to professional practice: can one really predict an offender's chances of committing crime in the future?”

Maud Morel-Coujard, civil servant, member of the Consensus Conference team

In an intensive 48 hours of deliberation, the conference agreed and wrote up 12 recommendations. The recommendations were heavily oriented towards national policy measures, some of which could be implemented through legislation, but others that were broader, ranging from improvements to government statistics to the reorganisation of government departments.

Follow up

The recommendations of the conference were launched at a press conference, in the presence of the Justice Minister and the Prime Minister – Jean-Marc Ayrault. Soon after, the Minister asked to prepare legislation based on the recommendations of the conference, reforming sentencing laws and adding measures aimed at improving reintegration of ex-prisoners. Draft legislation was presented to the Ministerial Council in October 2013 and adopted by Parliament on the 17 July 2014. The Individualisation of sentencing and prevention of reoffending act was enacted in August 2014. The legislation included a number of key measures: the end of minimum sentencing, a new type of open prison sentence ('la contrainte pénale'), and included measures aimed at better preparing the end of incarceration to improve the reintegration of prison leavers. These measures were all recommendations made by the conference.

On the surface, the process therefore had a tangible and direct impact on legislation. However, it was not a direct translation of the conference's recommendations. The opposition called the draft legislation 'lenient' and divisions emerged between Christiane Taubira and Manuel Valls, Interior Minister and advocate of a "tough on crime" stance. A number of amendments were adopted that substantially diluted the more reformist measures. For instance, one initial aim of the legislation was to replace suspended sentences with probation, through the new open prison sentence. In the end, the latter was introduced without removing the former, meaning the act did not simplify sentencing law in the way some had hoped.

In addition to this legislation, the conference had two other tangible impacts on penal policy according to those interviewed:

- In 2014, the government agreed a substantial budget increase to recruit 1000 integration and probation officers³⁶ to better support prison-leavers and to enable more open prison sentences.
- Probation services began working on their support services for convicted felons, and a substantial training programme for integration and probation officers was implemented with the support of Denis Lafortune, a specialist in the field.

Those interviewed were unanimous in their conclusion – the legislation was a disappointment for many of those involved, and the conference did not allow for the root and branch reform of the criminal justice system that was hoped for.

Another objective set by the conference team was to shift public debate away from one polarised by 'tough versus soft on crime', to a more nuanced, evidence-based one. The media strategy appears to have an immediate impact on the tone of reporting on the issue. Amongst other things, a number of articles cited statistical analysis on the high rates of reoffending amongst prisoners, and successful experiments with prison alternatives from abroad.

"We managed to neutralise misinformation campaigns. We ended up with articles in Valeurs actuelles and the Figaro [right wing papers], who [traditionally] thought alternative sentencing was soft on crime. We found ourselves with a calmer debate."

Sylvaine Villeneuve, Communications consultant for the Consensus Conference

Those interviewed felt this showed how good communications strategy can ensure more 'evidence-based reporting'. This effect appears to have rapidly petered out once the conference was over. However, one interviewee felt the conference had contributed to a small shift in the terms of public debate on the issue of short sentences.

"Short prison sentences were the reasons the prisons were full. The Consensus Conference managed to get out the message that we mainly had short sentences, and these sentences made it impossible to work on reintegration. That enabled the President [Macron] today to say that, under two months, it wasn't worth handing out a prison sentence, that short sentences were counterproductive."

Maud Morel-Coujard, civil servant, member of the Consensus Conference team

However, those interviewed unanimously felt the dissemination of evidence relating to criminal justice policy should have been continued beyond the conference.

The risk with these initiatives is that it stops as soon as the conference is over. That's what happened, all of sudden we moved on to other things. If we want a more intelligent debate around criminal policy, you have to continue this work over the long-term.

Nicole Maestracci, Chair of the Consensus Conference Steering Committee, and Member of the Constitutional Council

Similarly, the Chair of the Steering Committee felt that transformative reform of public policies in a field also requires long-term concerted effort.

"Unfortunately [the law] didn't empty the prisons... Making a law gives the impression that you have done something, but implementing a public policy takes ten years, that's what I have learned."

Nicole Maestracci, Chair of the Consensus Conference Steering Committee, and Member of the Constitutional Council

Interviewees: **Nichole Maestracci**, Chair of the Consensus Conference Steering Committee, and Member of the Constitutional Council
Maud Morel-Coujard, civil servant, former member of the Consensus Conference team
Sylvaine Villeneuve, former Communications consultant for the Consensus Conference
Corentin Durand, PhD student and former member of the Consensus Conference team

Case study **6**

Numbers and calculations at primary school consensus conference,³⁷ France, 2014-15

Context

The National Council for School System Evaluation (CNESCO)³⁸ was created by a law passed in July 2013. As well as evaluating the effectiveness and results of the French school system, it also disseminates the findings of evaluations and research in order to support evidence-based decision-making at all levels in the education system.

"We aim to root discussions in scientific evidence, whilst ensuring they are shared so that they then impact practice on the ground."

Jean-François Chesné, Chief Executive, CNESCO

CNESCO uses six different methods to achieve these missions, ranging from thematic reports to Consensus Conferences. Three Consensus Conferences were planned as part of their first three-year programme from 2014-2017, in discussion with a Steering Committee that brings together a range of education sector stakeholders. This process aims to ensure that CNESCO produces recommendations for which there is demand in the sector.

"A key principle [in the choice of topics] is that there is no point in conducting an evaluation that the sector isn't awaiting."

Thibaut Coudroy, Research & Communications Officer, CNESCO

Their Steering Committee agreed that one of these conferences should cover numeracy at primary school, an issue of real concern for education specialists in France. In 2012, PISA's analysis of maths results in 65 countries placed France in the middle of the table, a worse result than in 2003. These results confirmed existing research that underlined real limitations in numeracy teaching at pre-school and primary school levels in French, in part linked to shortcomings in teacher training. The timing of the numeracy Consensus Conference also improved chances of having impact on policy.

"The end of the Consensus Conference coincided with the finalisation of the new school curricula and the preparation of material for teachers. We hoped that the conference would influence these documents."

Jean-François Chesné, Chief Executive, CNESCO

The conference was therefore to provide recommendations for national level policy, and for numeracy teaching practices in the classroom.

The CNESCO Numeracy Consensus Conference at a glance

	Numeracy Consensus Conference	Key features of a Consensus Conference ³⁹
Number of participants	18 Jury members	10-25 participants
Cost	Approx £40 000 external costs & approx. 1.5 FTE for a year of CNESCO staff.	£30,000 and £100,000
Number of meetings	3 days public hearings and deliberation, and 2 preparatory meetings	7-8 days
Selection of participants	Professionals and parents selected randomly from candidates	Citizens selected by stratified random sampling
Activities	Information and deliberation	Information and deliberation

Planning and recruitment

For CNESCO, the role of Consensus Conferences is to produce evidence-based recommendations. The team therefore began by ensuring that there was sufficient evidence to submit. They were reassured to find a rich research literature, much from the fields of education sciences and neurosciences.

The overall conference process took place over a year from September 2014 to December 2015, ensuring there was enough time to respect all the stages in the process, from framing the questions with the organising committee, to preparing information packs, and briefing participants. Prior to the conference, CNESCO's team had taken time to prepare their Consensus Conference methodology, based on existing best practice.

A key specificity of the CNESCO approach is the naming of a 'Conference President', who has a very hands-on role, particularly in the preparation of the conference. For the numeracy conference, Michel Fayol, an academic in the field of developmental psychology specialising in language and numeracy learning, was named early in the process. He not only facilitated the Organising Committee but also produced a report synthesising available research from the field. The Organising Committee brought together 15 people representing CNESCO's key national stakeholders – the Ministry of Education (including its statistics department), the Education Inspectorate, the National College for Education (ESENER) – as well as a number of leading University departments. The Committee therefore combines national stakeholders, whose buy-in was key to the conference's success, and the expertise of specialists from the field.

This Committee met three times over the course of almost a year, with each meeting covering a distinct topic:

- At its first meeting, the Committee agreed the **scope** of the conference, the key questions, and the evidence that should be presented. The Committee also decided on the profiles of conference members and the recruitment method. The Committee agreed the content of the information pack. In addition to the written contributions from experts, it commissioned four reports from academics to summarise existing evidence (cf. box below).
- At its second meeting, the Committee agreed the **experts** who would submit contributions and present to the conference during the public hearings. The experts were all academic researchers, identified via both the research review and suggestions from the Committee.
- At its third and final meeting, the Committee discussed the **programme** of the public hearings in detail.

After the Committee's first meeting, the CNESCO team began the recruitment process. They had decided to have an open call for candidates rather than hand pick participants. A call for candidates was sent out via Le café pédagogique, an online network for education professionals.⁴⁰ A stratified sample of candidates was then taken, to ensure that different types of professionals and parents were represented. A final review of candidates was conducted to ensure none had strong preconceptions about the topic area. This stage ensured the participants arrived with relatively open minds so that they can be receptive to the evidence and able to deliberate in a balanced, thoughtful way.

The 18 conference members were professionals from all levels of the education system - teachers, headteachers, inspectors, civil servants from local education services - but also included a teacher training lecturer, an education NGO, and two parents. By recruiting practitioners and parents 'from the frontline', the aim was to ensure the conference produced concrete recommendations for the education system. The President of the conference group - Jacques Grégoire - was an academic from the field of child psychology and educational sciences. In addition to his research expertise, he had two strengths. Based in Belgium, he was perceived as a neutral as he wasn't engaged in France-specific education debates. He had also presided over a Consensus Conference just a few years prior, ensuring he had experience of a method that was relatively in the education field in France.

Participants met twice prior to the public hearings. A first meeting was held four months prior to the public hearings, where the President and CNESCO explained their role and the objectives of the conference. This session also involved a briefing on the different types of research evidence that would be presented, and media training for conference members, some of whom would be asked to speak to the media. This session was also key for creating a group dynamic between participants who had very different kinds of expertise. The conference President, and the CNESCO team, were key in ensuring all members felt comfortable contributing to discussions.

"During the first preparation meeting, I found myself with inspectors, teachers, teacher trainers. I had never sat around a table with these sorts of people. I was intimidated because I didn't know if I was going to be able to contribute. Jean-François Chesné was very considerate, I didn't feel like the token [parent], I realised that what I said would really be listened to."

Claire Bisquerra, parent, Jury Member, Numeracy at primary school consensus conference

A second meeting was focussed primarily on identifying the questions they would ask experts. Participants had received the written expert contributions prior to this meeting, allowing them to prepare questions to discuss. The agreed questions that were sent to the experts to allow them to prepare their responses for the public hearings. The expert contributions, whilst short, touched on complex academic debates that were not easy for all conference members to fully understand.

Shortly prior to the hearings, participants also received the four evidence reviews that had been commissioned by CNESCO and written by academic researchers.

Evidence reviews

In addition to the expert contributions, the Committee commissioned reports on four topics. The first two included primary research whilst the last two summarised existing research:

- School textbooks' content and usage, based on textual analysis and qualitative research – interviews and observation – on their use in the classroom;
- Trends in primary pupils' attainment in numeracy over the past 20 years, by analysing French test results statistics;
- Inequalities in numeracy learning, drawing mainly on qualitative studies from underprivileged areas;
- A review of evidence relating to numeracy, drawing on published academic research in particular from the field of neuroscience and cognitive sciences.

Whilst short, these documents were still seen as complex, and at times difficult to understand, by the parent interviewed. Her experience reveals the challenge in striking the right balance between exposing the Jury to the nuances of these academic debates whilst ensuring information is accessible.

"I don't know how the other [Jury members] got on with [the document], but I had to underline it, re-read it, ask my husband what he thought. I found it pretty dense. There were subjects I felt immediately excluded from, like number sense and numeration."

Claire Bisquerra, parent, Jury Member, Numeracy at primary school Consensus Conference

Deliberation

The public hearings took place over two full days on the 12 and 13 November 2015 in front of an audience of around 200. The conference came together for dinner on the evening of the 12th, giving them the chance to further strengthen their group dynamic.

"These convivial moments are really important, and the President is chosen for his facilitating skills. There was always a good group dynamic, and three years on they are still in touch."

Jean-François Chesné, Chief executive, CNESCO

The morning of the first day of hearings was dedicated primarily to four short presentations of the evidence syntheses by their academic authors. This provided participants with an initial overview of the 'state of evidence'.

"The state of the evidence is key because there are now some well-established facts. For example, there was a time when we slapped the hands of children who were counting on their fingers. We now know that children start by visually representing numbers on their fingers, but that they move on from that in time. In this instance we had research evidence that was virtually undisputable."

Jacques Grégoires, Jury President, Numeracy at primary school Consensus Conference

The remainder of the public hearings were dedicated to presentations by the academic experts on the six questions.

Conference questions

1. How do children learn about the notion of numbers?
2. What difficulties do they meet in writing numbers?
3. What are the challenges relating to numeracy in primary school?
4. What are the links between problem solving and mathematical operations?
5. How should differences between students be taken into account?
6. How precise should the school curriculum be?

Each expert had around 20 minutes to present, followed by minutes of questions. Depending on the scope of the question, the number of expert speakers varied from one to four. All were academics, the majority of whom hailed from the fields of psychology and educational sciences. For the most part these experts provided complementary perspectives, though on one issue their viewpoints were more directly opposed. Respecting their brief, the experts did not simply present differences of opinion, their presentations had to set out a thesis based on published research.

"We seek complementarity between expert witnesses. For numeracy, we had a divisive question, with experts with clearly opposing views."

Jean-François Chesné, Chief Executive, CNESCO

Decision-making

Once the public hearings had concluded, the Jury withdrew for a day to deliberate and write their recommendations. The discussions were overshadowed by terrorist attacks that had struck the heart of Paris the evening before, on the 13 November. Shocked, and in some cases in fear for their safety, the conference members unsurprisingly took time to settle down and focus on the deliberation.

The President began discussions in earnest by separating the jurors into break out groups, each of which focussed on a theme. The groups were asked to produce recommendations based on the expert testimony and information packs provided. The President encouraged each group to isolate the recommendations that were the subject of a clear consensus, and to set aside those that were less clear or contentious. To avoid getting bogged down on the issue of precise pedagogical techniques, he suggested they focus on broad principles of good numeracy teaching.

"Based on the latest evidence, what are the practical rules that should be implemented in schools. So, you can't have 500 recommendations..."

Jacques Grégoires, Jury President, Numeracy at primary school Consensus Conference

Whilst the group debates were rich and productive, not all groups had time to feedback to the plenary session. Each sub-group was given until the end of the following weekend to amend and finalise their text by email. The President was then responsible for pulling these texts together into a coherent document, setting out 20 principles for numeracy teaching, and including recommendations both for practice and for policy making.

The final document was sent by the President to the conference members for comment and sign-off, helping to ensure the document reflected their views. Efforts were made to ensure the process was transparent, but this experience showed that a single day was insufficient to deliberate and co-produce the recommendations. CNESCO has learned the lessons of this experience, and now conducts the deliberation over two days instead of one.

Example of a recommendations

Section 1: Change primary school teachers' everyday practices

Recommendation: Encourage the use of objects [for numeracy learning] throughout primary education, not just in nursery.

Follow up

Disseminating evidence-based recommendations is one of CNESCO's missions. The CNESCO team therefore dedicates real time and resources to ensuring their recommendations are shared and influence policy and practice.

A media strategy ensured the numeracy conference achieved good press coverage. The recommendations report was published during a press conference that involved presentations from a parent and teacher. To increase coverage, CNESCO's communications team supplied journalists with concrete examples of promising numeracy projects in France that illustrated the conference's recommendations. The Chair of CNESCO's Board, Nathalie Mons (an academic and former journalist), was also available for interviews. This strategy ensured relatively good media coverage, with 58 articles relating to the project in the press.

The media strategy combined with dissemination through education sector networks ensured the report has been consulted by a large number of education professionals. Indeed, it is amongst CNESCO's three most downloaded publications. The public hearings were filmed, and the video, which is available on the CNESCO's web-site, has been viewed 39 000 times.

The recommendations also appear to have had an impact on the numeracy materials developed by the Education Ministry. Late 2017, the Education Minister also tasked the MP Cédric Villani with producing recommendations on improving maths learning in schools. The report was published in February 2018 and makes 21 recommendations. It explicitly promotes the conclusions of the Consensus Conference *"In particular with regard to the acquisition and memorisation of tables (addition and multiplication)."*⁴¹

Whilst the conference appears to have had some limited impact on national policy, its impact on practice in the classroom is harder to assess, as the CNESCO team admitted. Finally, participation in the process appears to have had an effect on some conference members. The participant interviewed said that the conference gave her the confidence to participate in other such consultation exercises at a local level.

Interviewees: **Jean-François Chesné**, Chief Executive, CNESCO
Thibaut Coudroy, Research & Communications Officer, CNESCO
Emily Helmeid, Head of Research and International Relations, CNESCO
Jacques Grégoire, Conference President, Numeracy at primary school
Consensus Conference, Doctor of Psychology, Professor at the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences at the Louvain Catholic University
Claire Bisquerra, parent, Conference Member, Numeracy at primary school
Consensus Conference

Case study 7

A Citizens' Jury for NHS Citizen, England, 2015

Context

The NHS Citizens' Jury was a part of a wider process of promoting people and patient participation in NHS England - NHS Citizen. This programme began in 2013, and lasted for about two and half years, with the aim of increasing public involvement in NHS decision-making. It was developed in an open manner by four organisations, including Involve, which ran the Citizens' Jury. Three distinct phases were designed and implemented in 2015. Phase One was an online process soliciting ideas from the public on what areas of health NHS England should be prioritising (Gather); Phase Two was the Citizens' Jury to narrow down these options to five; Phase Three was a Citizens' Assembly to discuss the options with the NHS England Board and agree actions. The programme included a strong learning component and learning reports and case studies are available.⁴²

The purpose of the Jury was to prioritise topics to be taken to the Citizen Assembly, to be held between the NHS England Board and interested, lay people.

The NHS Citizen Citizens' Jury at a glance

The Citizen Jury displayed many of the key features of a jury: see table below.

The Citizens' Jury displayed many of the key features of a jury. However, the context was unique with the jury being a part of a wider process to inform an assembly. The charge, or key question, for the jurors could be considered wider, more general than in other cases. It was: *"Which five health topics (generated from the Gather process) should go to the Citizens' Assembly?"*

	NHS Citizen	Key features of a Citizens' Jury ⁴³
Number of participants	15 participants	10-25 participants
Cost	Cost £16,650 budgeted, possible underspend	£10,000 to £30,000
Number of days	2 days	2-5 days
Selection of participants	Random selection	Random selection
Activities	Information and deliberation	Information and deliberation

Planning and recruitment

Involve held a pilot for the jury with just three topics, and learning from that was used in the design of the jury, for example around how to encourage the prioritisation of the topics at the end. The Jury was held in one town, Stoke on Trent, and people were recruited through a market research company, which was asked to select people in line with the demographics of the English population at large, so the jury would be representative of the wider population.

The event was planned and implemented in a hurry. It had to be completed, in October, in time for the November Assembly. The inference is that having more time both for preparation and the event (which was two days) would have enabled more thorough preparation and presentation of the evidence around each of the ten topics.

No advisory group was recruited and Involve primarily had control of the quality of the process, including the source and quality of the evidence. However, it was an open process, subject to scrutiny, and learning from it was documented by one of the other partners, the Tavistock Institute, a British social science not-for-profit organisation.

Learning

The organisers relied on NHS England to prepare briefing documents for the jury, both short versions to send out prior to the event and longer documents for use on the day. As advised by a market research company, the organisers decided not to give out the big packs prior to the event, as people might be overwhelmed; and they wanted people to 'come fresh' to the jury. However, a few jurors gave feedback after the event that it was a lot to digest in two days and they would have preferred to receive the larger documents prior to the start of the jury.

It was difficult to have the briefing documents prepared on time and for some of the topics no detailed background report was prepared for the weekend. In those cases, then jurors' sole source of official information was the presentations on the day.

Most of the experts who presented at the jury were people who'd chosen the topic on Gather, and were advocating for its inclusion in the Assembly. They were close to the subject, and not impartial. In fact, the point was made that the presentations that had most impact on the jurors were those 'given from the heart', which had an emotional impact.

Deliberation

On the day, after introductory presentations, the available packs of information were handed out, and a presentation followed by Q&A was given on each topic.

Some topics were delivered and discussed in plenary and some in small groups, using a carousel, which worked well. Most of the topics were presented by people from 'Gather' but the learning was that these citizen presenters needed support. The March 2016 Learning Report said:

"There was some inconsistency in the information available to the jury members for the different issues. Four of the ten issues were represented in person by NHS England experts and written briefings were provided for six issues. There were two issues that did not have either a written briefing or a presenter from NHS England. Jury members felt that this meant that all issues were not put on an equal footing."

The deliberation was led by independent facilitators recruited for the weekend by Involve.

Decision-making

After learning from the pilot, the jurors were given decision-making criteria to help them narrow down the topics, to five. The two facilitators supported this process.

Initially the jury prioritised openly, putting sticky dots against the ten options. This map was discussed, and then, finally there was a secret ballot to decide on the five preferred options.

Follow up

The results of the Jury were shared online, and comments invited but there were few responses. The Jury was not expected to have a wide impact as it was a precursor for the assembly and it seemed to serve its function well. The five topics chosen were reasonably in line with the interests of NHS England, which was a relief to those who had worried that opening up the topics of debate could lead to some wild ideas outside of Board's remit.

In terms of having a sustainable impact, as in the case of many other mini-publics, this was affected by the context. In this case the NHS Citizen programme was mostly disbanded soon after the November 2016 Assembly, although learning reports of the process were produced.

Interviewee: **Clive Mitchell**, Head of Operations, Involve

Case study

Citizens' Assembly on Funding Adult Social Care, England 2018

Context

Held over two weekends in April and May 2018, the Citizens' Assembly on Social Care aimed to inform a parliamentary enquiry in to the long-term funding of adult care in England.⁴⁴ The assembly was commissioned by the Health and Social Care Committee and the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee, to inform their joint inquiry.

Organised by Involve, a charity specialising in public participation, the Assembly aimed to address areas of policy challenge in the funding of adult social care for both older people and working age adults, including:

- The core principles that should underpin social care funding.
- The differentiation between health and social care.
- What public and private financing options are preferred by the public.
- What the balance between public and private financing should be.

The select committee enquiry aimed to identify funding reforms that could command broad political consensus.⁴⁵ Tim Hughes, Director of Involve, believes there is interest in the assembly providing a way to 'break the deadlock' on an urgent, and so far intractable, policy issue.

"I think there's a real feeling that something must be done but also a fear that history will repeat itself; that the conventional ways that we try and solve these problems don't seem to be adequate to the task."

In a 2018 review of mini-publics for the Alliance for Useful Evidence, Citizens' Assemblies were identified as 'potentially the most radical and democratically robust' model.⁴⁶ Organisers aimed to support the assembly members to arrive at a series of 'workable solutions', over the course of four days of deliberation in central Birmingham. Because it was commissioned by parliament organisers hope this might set a new example for public engagement by Select Committees.

At a glance

Broadly, the first weekend (27-29 April) provided learning and introduced participants to policy challenges and options through presentations from a range of experts and stakeholders on public and private models of funding for adult social care. The second weekend (18-20 May) offered lived experience perspectives from users of social care, talks from Select Committee chairs, and a range of deliberative and decision-making exercises.

Parliament provided £50,000 of funding for the assembly and Involve secured an additional £100,000 from charitable foundations the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation and The Omidyar Network.

The assembly reached a series of recommendations that were reported to the Parliamentary committees to inform their findings. As detailed in the table below, the assembly was smaller and shorter than international examples found to date, although it aimed to address just one specific policy area.

	Citizens' Assembly on adult social care	Key features of a Citizens' Assembly ⁴⁷
Number of participants	47 participants	100-160 participants
Cost	£50,000 parliament £100,000 foundations	Unknown
Number of days	Weekend one: 2 Weekend two: 2	20-30
Selection of participants	Random stratified sampling	Random selection and self-selection
Activities	Information and deliberation	Information, consultation and deliberation

Planning and recruitment

Involve approached the Select Committees about the assembly following a piece of work for the Clerk of Committees on public engagement. After meeting with clerks, they secured buy in from committee chairs, Sarah Wollaston MP and Clive Betts MP. It was agreed that the assembly would feed in to the traditional committee enquiry and separately publish a report.

Due to the need to sequence the assembly with the Government's Green Paper, which was expected in June, organisers were working to tight timescales. An informal Advisory Group was established on the basis of recommendations from the assembly experts (see below) and Select Committees, and composed from university researchers, think tanks and stakeholder organisations.⁴⁸ The Advisory Group aimed to ensure balance and minimise bias during the assembly and oversaw the provision of evidence and choice of speakers.

Recruitment was through a combination of random stratified sampling and self-selection. Involve contracted ICM Unlimited to run a randomised poll of 5,500 people producing a sample of 1,200 available and interested in attending the assembly. Involve stratified this sample using six criteria, including attitudinal preference for increased public spending or tax cuts. 47 assembly members were selected with only small measurable differences (average 2-3 per cent reported) from general population. Assembly members were provided with honorarium of £150 per weekend.

Learning

The majority of evidence at the assembly was delivered through presentations by knowledge experts, stakeholders and those with experience of adult social care.⁴⁹ Speaker recruitment was guided by the experience of the Advisory Group and committee clerks. Two expert leads were recruited from scoping calls on the basis of 'knowledge and impartiality on the subject of social care.'⁵⁰ The expert leads, Professor Martin Knapp and Professor Gerald Wistow, both at London School of Economics, prepared briefing materials for speakers.

The expert leads structured the provision of evidence at the assembly, providing opening presentations on the social care system and the challenges facing it. Two expert panels presented on the first weekend on options for private financing; options for public financing; and options for funding splits between the two. Panel members included representatives from the Care and Support Alliance, Alzheimers Society, Carers UK, Reform, Kings Fund, Centre for Social Justice, Age UK, University Birmingham, Mencap and LGA.

Panel presentations were followed by discussion in small groups, who formulated questions for panellists that were asked by the expert leads. During the second weekend, assembly members heard from people with lived experience of the adult social care system, and from Select Committee Chairs.

Deliberation

During the first weekend deliberation was focussed on learning and digesting evidence from panellists, with space for small group discussion, formulating questions, and time for interaction with expert leads. During this time assembly members drew up a series of 'considerations' regarding the funding options, with small groups arriving at an agreed eight top considerations. During the second weekend assembly members were taken through more structured deliberative exercises and decision-making points, including developing 'values and principles' from the considerations to work as a reference point throughout discussions. The expert leads also developed a series of 'personas' – fictional cases of adults interacting with social care, across age ranges – as a tool to help assembly members to think about policy options in concrete terms. In groups, participants generated pros and cons around different funding solutions and produced lists of options.

Decision-making

The agenda of decision points were focussed on issues and policy topics *"Put on the table by policymakers, by think tanks and the wider sector."* (Tim Hughes, Director, Involve).

Decision-making focussed on ranking options by voting. A series of underlying values and principles on how decisions about funding adult social care should be made were identified and prioritised. These played a key role in decision-making; Tim Hughes writes in a blog on the assembly, *"Reaching this consensus on what social care provisions should achieve laid the groundwork for then discussing how this could be achieved."*⁵¹

Assembly members voted on options around the balance between public and private financing; whether (and/or which) social care services should be free at the point of delivery; taxation sources for public financing; lifetime caps, and asset ceilings and floors for private financing options; whether (and/or how) funding for social care should be considered alongside funding for health. Finally, the assembly produced a series of 'key messages' – examples reported by Tim are 'need for urgent action' and 'need for cross-party political support'.

The assembly's final recommendations were ranked top preferences on policy options, and accompanying pros, cons and considerations. This narrative on the underlying rationale for decisions has been included in the report, along with raw data.

Follow up

Early insights from Involve's follow up work supports Tim's feeling that the assembly generated 'huge amounts of learning' for the members of the public involved. In a follow up survey 46 out of 47 participants agreed with the statement 'I have learnt a lot during the assembly about adult social care funding', with 38 out of 47 strongly agreeing. 46 out of 47 reported that the assembly helped them clarify their views on social care funding, and 31 out of 47 said their views had changed as a result of the assembly process. Tim comments that feedback reflects the shock expressed by members of the public during the assembly;

"There was a lot of shock I think as to scale of the issue and the extent of the crisis of funding social care. There was a real sense that unless people had experience of the social care system they had no understanding of the funding situation or just how complex the system was."

Assembly members were asked for feedback on evidence provision with 36 out of 47 strongly agreeing with the statement 'the information I have received has been fair and balanced between different viewpoints', with eight agreeing, two expressing no opinion, and one disagreeing. Tim reflects that they struggled to give people a sense of the scale of funding required and the wider impact that different funding options might have, noting a lack of firm research evidence in this area.

Impact

A report of the assembly's finding was submitted to the Select Committee enquiry and considered 'alongside other evidence submitted, when deciding on their own recommendations for how adult social care should be funded.'⁵²

The Assembly's report was published in June 2018 and detailed public recommendations for a social care system underpinned by principles of sustainability; fairness and equality; universality; high-quality care; and treatment of people with dignity and respect. In its report the Assembly proposed "To pay for such a system through public funding, with social care free at the point of delivery like the NHS."⁵³ However it acknowledged that "An element of private financing may be required (e.g. perhaps covering 'hotel costs')." The preferred funding

mechanism was an ear-marked tax that created *“Clarity and assurance about how the money would be spent but recognised that a mix of general and earmarked taxation might be necessary to raise sufficient funds and provide some flexibility.”*⁵⁴ Measures supported were a new compulsory social insurance scheme, an increase to income tax, or the extension of National Insurance to be paid by people working beyond state pension age. In relation to private financing, the assembly supported generous high floor, low cap options. As well making specific recommendations, assembly members reached some key messages for decision-makers, including the need for a cross-party solution, and greater levels of investment alongside reform.⁵⁵

Tim reflects that process was driven by shifting timescales for the publication of the government’s Green Paper, meaning that was no opportunity for assembly members to present findings to the committees in person. However, the Select Committee’s joint report on the long-term funding of adult social care, published June 2018, was substantially influenced by the assembly’s recommendations, with the findings and report referenced throughout. Many of its recommendations were adopted, including ‘earmarking’ contributions in order to maintain public support, and the need for cross-party consensus.⁵⁶

In a forward to the assembly’s report, Clive Betts MP, Chair of the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee and Sarah Wollaston MP, Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee, state that:

*“We have taken close account of the views expressed by the Assembly members and the way they voted on key decisions. The process has been invaluable in gauging informed public opinion on the difficult questions facing social care and has helped us as we debated the recommendations we set out in our own report.”*⁵⁷

They also reiterate a commitment to public involvement, saying that the assembly is *“One of the largest scale and in-depth examples of public engagement undertaken so far”* by parliament.⁵⁸

Interviewee: **Tim Hughes**, Director, Involve

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44. For more information visit: <https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/communities-and-local-government-committee/inquiries/parliament-2017/long-term-funding-of-adult-social-care-17-19/>
45. Hughes, Tim (2018) Citizens' Assembly on Social Care, FAQs. Involve Blog. Available at: <https://www.involve.org.uk/2018/04/22/citizens-assembly-social-care-faqs/>
46. Elstub, S., Johnson, I., Puttick, R., and Wilkinson, M. (2018) Assessing the Potential of Mini-Publics to Promote Evidence Uptake in Social Policy and Practice, Newcastle: Newcastle University.
47. Adapted from Table One in Elstub, S., Johnson, I., Puttick, R., and Wilkinson, M. (2018) Assessing the Potential of Mini-Publics to Promote Evidence Uptake in Social Policy and Practice, Newcastle: Newcastle University.
48. Advisory Panel members were: Caroline Glendinning, University of York; James Lloyd, formerly of the Strategic Society Centre; Kari Gerstheimer, Mencap; Raphael Wittenberg, London School of Economics; Warwick Lightfoot, Policy Exchange.
49. For a discussion of different kinds of experts see Elstub, S., Johnson, I., Puttick, R., and Wilkinson, M. (2018) Assessing the Potential of Mini-Publics to Promote Evidence Uptake in Social Policy and Practice, Newcastle: Newcastle University.
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