



checklist

- Do you have a research question that requires you to see whether a particular programme or policy works?
- Through your research question, are you looking to make recommendations on how an organisation or institution can improve their working practices?
- If you answered yes to either (1) or (2), are you clear about what precisely is being evaluated and why? Who will benefit from the research?
- Having read evaluation research on your topic or designed your own, are you clear on the most appropriate methodological approach to take in order to carry out a satisfactory evaluation?
- Are you sensitive to the unique, contextual factors within an institution or organisation that may or may not make a process/outcome work better?



project

In order to gain experience of critically engaging with different approaches to evaluating policy programmes and interventions, you are required to provide a critique of a published piece of evaluation research from any area of social policy. A lot of policy in the UK is evaluated through 'impact assessments', with such documents available online at: www.gov.uk/government/publications. Select 'impact assessments' in the 'publication type' search option to find relevant publications. You can also narrow this search down by topic (education or crime and policing, for example). Having selected a report, work through the following questions:

- Is there a clear and accurate description of how impact is assessed? What are the programme goals and operational objectives?
- What is (are) the evaluation question(s)?
- Who are the major stakeholders and how might they influence the nature of the study?
- What is the 'impact model' underlying the theory?
- What use has been made of existing findings from evaluation studies and/or mainstream social science research?
- Research design: Why was a particular design chosen? What are the main practical, technical and conceptual issues posed by the chosen research design? What steps have been taken to identify and compensate for confounding factors?
- How were outcome measures selected? If 'proxy measures' were used, how were they chosen?
- What data collection methods and techniques were used and why? Was use made of any existing data sources?
- What sampling strategy was employed?
- Has the study any ethical considerations and, if so, how are these addressed?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses as far as the presentation and interpretation of the findings are concerned?
- How might you have approached the study differently?