



UEL Research & Knowledge Exchange Conference 2013

Call for Abstracts

Name & Title of Presenter:	Alice Sampson
School:	LSS
Co investigators:	
Title of Abstract:	Aspiring to evidence-based policy and practice; but what type of evidence is useful?
Key Theme/ Key words:	Evidence-based policy; strong theories and reliable information; young people's initiative

Abstract (No more than 400 words):

Over the last twenty years or so policymakers, commissioners, and those delivering social programmes have been encouraged to make decisions on the basis of evidence. But evidence-based policy is not as simple as often presented and dominant research methods do not necessarily enhance our ability to predict whether a policy or social programme will be effective. In practice, parts of East London remain some of the most economically and socially disadvantaged, despite a succession of urban policies; and, social programmes can be effective in some places but not in others, for example, Sure Start, Youth Inclusion Programme and New Deal for Communities.

Using findings from an evaluation of a successful programme to increase the potential of young people and to rehabilitate young offenders, this presentation explores what types of information are relevant to predict the effectiveness of policies and social interventions. It is argued that policymaking is conjecture, and information about how social problems are characterised creates strong theories about how policies and programmes are expected to work. Thus, the young people's project is successful because of the way in which it characterises problems experienced by young people living in violence prone areas, and from this conceptualisation has developed strong hypotheses about how to respond. These theories inform the values of the organisation, and its activities, and generate a change process that alters young people's attitudes and behaviour.

The information collected and collated annually by the organisation has enabled it to expand and to implement programmes in various locations in different countries by transferring practice principles. This transfer of principles to other community organisations gives insights into thinking about what types of information are relevant to making reliable policy decisions.