THE EUROPEAN FAMILY SUPPORT NETWORK

Ensuring your research findings make a positive difference to families: engaging with practitioners and policy makers

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Researchers matter

- Family support is a value led work – we do it to improve the lives of children and their families. We must never forget why we do what we do.

- Family support is quite a “young” area of work. We need to be learning constantly from the best research and researchers from around Europe and around the world.

- There needs to be a direct link between research, practitioners and families themselves.

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Practitioners and Policy Makers matter

- **Practitioners**: Work directly with children and families. Often these families are struggling with parenting and in conditions of adversity. The Covid pandemic has made this struggle worse in many families

- **Policy Makers**: Work with politicians both local and national (and international) to develop the legal and policy agenda for family support

- These people are the link between your research and the families who really need to know what you have discovered!

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Parents and Children matter

- The vast majority of parents want the very best for their children.

- However, many families are struggling in conditions of adversity:
  - Financial pressures
  - Mental ill health
  - Substance misuse
  - Domestic violence and abuse

- This struggle is increased if there is a child with a disability in the home

- Families want to know what is the best thing to do

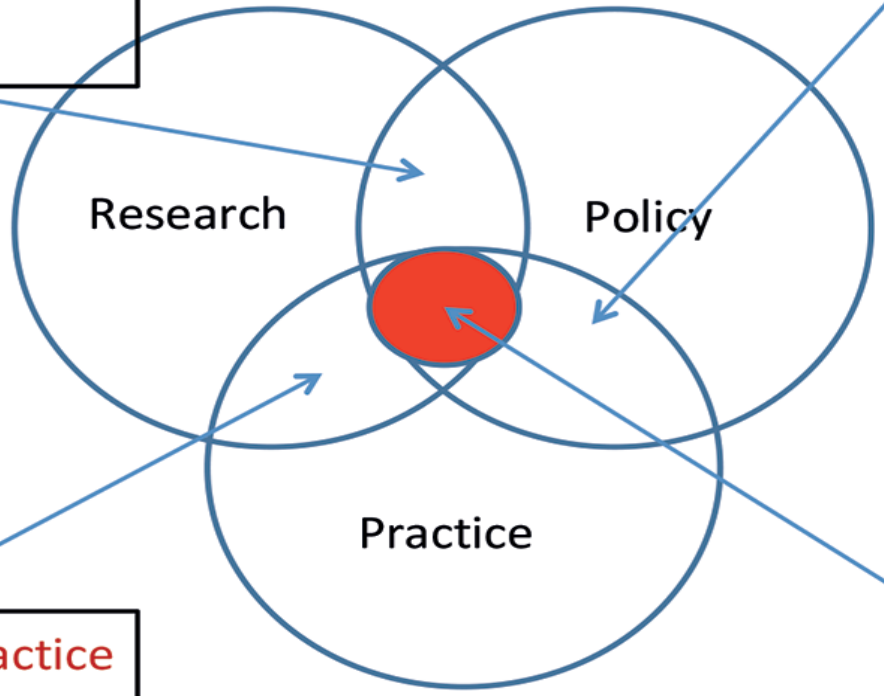
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The Research Policy Practice Diagram for Promoting Effective Work with Families

Research and Policy with no Practice = No impact on children's & families lives

Policy and Practice with no Research = Uninformed practice which may cause damage to children

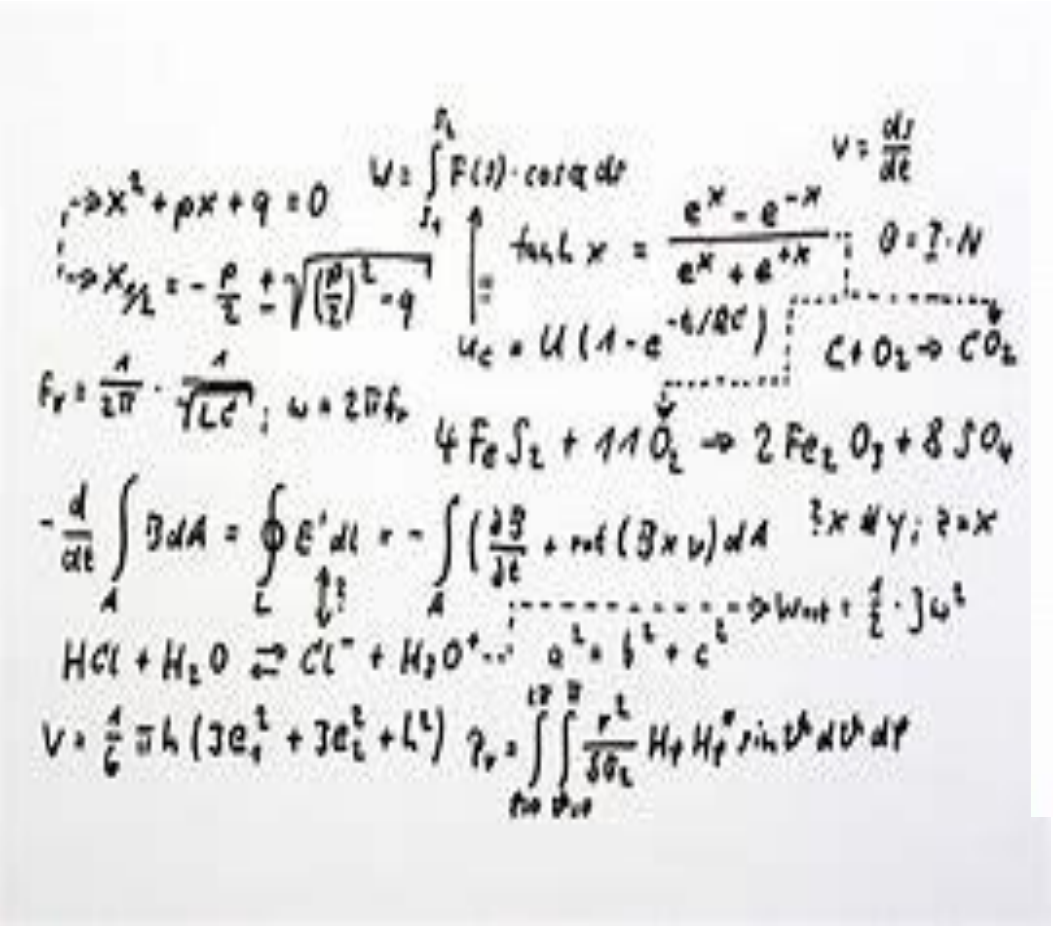


Research and Practice with no Policy = Isolated benefits for children & families but no system change

Policy, Practice and Research all present. Maximum benefit for children and families. Research informed practice embedded in clear policy frameworks

Promoting the rights of children and their families

It isn’t that complicated …





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… but it is really important

… because we want happy, healthy, strong and resilient families



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So, what is the issue?

- Too often, researchers and policy makers / practitioners are not speaking clearly to each other.
- Policy makers / practitioners sometimes don't feel they have the time to read and understand long and complex academic papers
- Researchers sometimes feel that there isn't any need to engage with anyone outside academia; their research is the end goal
- We don't always understand each other!



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Language Matters!

Cost kick a bow agen' a woe, y'ed it back an bost it?

Can you kick a ball against a wall, head it back and burst it?

‘ear all, see all, say nowt. Eat all sup all, pay nowt. ‘n if thar eva dos owt for nowt . . alus do it for thisen

Hear everything, see everything, say nothing.

Eat everything, drink everything, pay nothing.

And if you ever do anything for nothing, always do it for yourself!

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But, we can all work together

- We need all three groups of people if we are going to make a real difference to families
- We need to set up constant dialogue between research, policy and practice colleagues
- We need to recognise that sometimes language gets in the way and we misunderstand each other

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How do we do this (1)?

- Make connections with your policy makers and practitioners in your local region / municipality
- Meet with them regularly and intentionally – share your research at all stages.
- Ask what they are struggling with most at the moment. Can you help them with this?

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How do we do this (2)?

- When starting a new research programme ask yourself – **how will this make a difference to children and families?**
- Share your research outcomes with your practice and policy colleagues at all stages
- Repeat throughout your whole career!

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It’s all about relationships!



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So, what is the solution

- We need to take seriously the research / policy / practice diagram
- We need to see ourselves as partners in a **value-led** profession
- When you publish you have two audiences:
  - The academic audience
  - Policy makers and practitioners
  - … and they speak different languages!
- Consider producing a brief and easy to read digest of your research for policy makers and practitioners (and parents too!)

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