

# Evaluating Behaviour Change Interventions in Social Policy

**Date(s)** Wednesday 27th June 2012 (09:00-16:30)

**Contact** **Workshop Leader:** Professor Kathryn Ecclestone

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## Rationale

It goes without saying that local and national governments have long aimed to change citizens' behaviour, using an array of tactics, and informed in various ways at different times in history by insights from behavioural and cognitive psychology. Although 'nudge' is currently attracting much political and academic interest, current government activity is much wider than this with initiatives exploring whether cognitive and behavioural psychology, neuroscience, sociology and behavioural economics might offer new ideas for more effective behaviour change strategies and measures across numerous areas of social policy. An explicit commitment to the policy goal of 'behaviour change' is also a strategic priority for the Economic and Social Research Council and is a key theme in the work of think tanks such as DEMOS and the Young Foundation.

In order to engage with a rapidly growing field of policy and practice and to identify research and development interests, the workshop brings together researchers from education, government, politics, applied social policy, ethics, psychology, and external experts from local anti-violent radicalisation projects, the government's Behavioural Insight Unit, social work and education advisory services. Through discussion of specific examples of behaviour change interventions, it addresses the following questions:

1. What political and research-based rationales are offered for behaviour change strategies, and what evidence is used to justify them?
2. What are the ethical implications of approaches based on behavioural science?
3. To what extent are ideas from 'nudge' influential?
4. What images of human nature do contemporary ideas in behavioural science offer, implicitly or explicitly?
5. What might historical perspectives illuminate about continuities and shifts between past and contemporary approaches?
6. What are the implications for the changing contemporary role of the state?
7. What research and development priorities might be worthy of further discussion?

## PARTICIPANTS

### University of Birmingham

- James Arthur, Professor of Citizenship, School of Education
- Stuart Derbyshire, Reader in Cognitive Psychology
- Catherine Hamilton-Giacritsis, Senior Lecturer, Forensic Psychology
- Lydia Lewis, Research Fellow, School of Education
- Will Leggett, Senior Lecturer, Government and Politics
- Brit Grosskopf, Professor of Experimental Economics
- Sue Morris, Director of Educational Psychology training
- Catherine Needham, Senior Lecturer in Public Policy
- Basia Spalek, Reader in Communities and Justice, Government and Politics
- Laura Zahra McDonald, Research Fellow, Social Policy
- Sue White, Professor of Social Work
- Jerry Tew, Senior Lecturer, Mental Health, Institute of Applied Social Policy

### Invited external participants

- Jessica Pykett, Lecturer Politics, University Aberystwyth
- Zubeda Limbada, Prevention Manager, Birmingham City Council
- Munir Zamir, Fida Management
- Member of the PATHs advisory team, Birmingham City Council (tbc)
- Ian Grundy, Detective Chief Superintendent, West Midlands Counter Terrorism Unit