

Evidence for Action shortlisted for BMJ award

Evidence for Action have been shortlisted for a British Medical Journal award on Getting Research into Practice. This is for the programme's work as part of the Sexual Health and HIV Evidence into Practice (SHHEP) Group. SHHEP were nominated by the Department for International Development, and were one of 4 groups shortlisted from the 127 groups that were nominated. The winners of this prestigious award will be announced at the BMJ Group Awards Ceremony on 10th March.

The SHHEP Group involves researchers and communications staff from 4 DFID-funded programmes: Evidence for Action, Realising Rights, Programme for Research and Capacity Building in Sexual and Reproductive Health and HIV in Developing Countries, and Addressing the Balance and Burden of HIV/AIDS. Work done by the group includes research led by Sally Theobald of Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, and Jo Chrichton of the African Population and Health Research Centre into how the 4 programmes have been getting research into policy and practice. The group have also had a workshop to share experiences, produced a Health Insights on Getting Research into Policy and Practice, and are now working on a special issue of Health Policy and Planning.

“If we are serious about tackling these very serious health issues which are often neglected, contested and difficult to talk about then the uptake of evidence is enormously important. A major feature of SHHEP has been its investment in improving health research communications. Increased reflection and experimentation with research communication techniques has enhanced confidence, knowledge and skills and enabled academics to be strategic about the tools they used to target particular audiences,” said Sally Theobald.

This work has highlighted the importance of:

- Undertaking reflective assessments of the policy relevance of your research evidence, its scope and limitations and the ethical implications of communicating the research.
- Carrying out strategic scoping of opportunities and levers for influence through analysis of the policy context, actors and processes, including the political or cultural acceptability of your research findings.
- Assessing the nature of the research evidence and consulting with other key actors on how best to frame it in ways that increase local decision makers’ receptivity.
- Keeping communications strategies flexible and relevant to partners’ objectives to keep them effective.
- Using creative and innovative techniques, without jargon, to make the communications work less alien or off-putting for researchers.