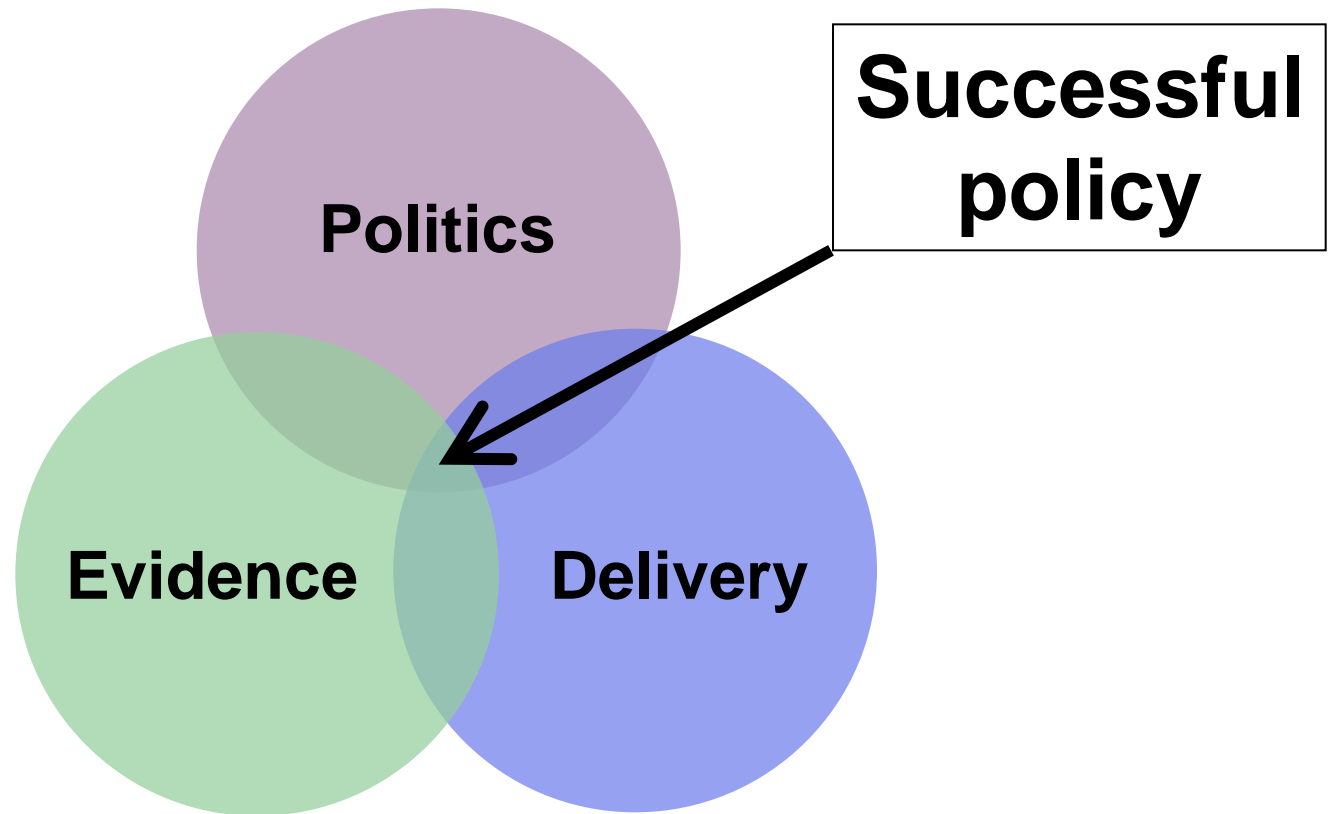


Policy making and its relationship with evidence and research

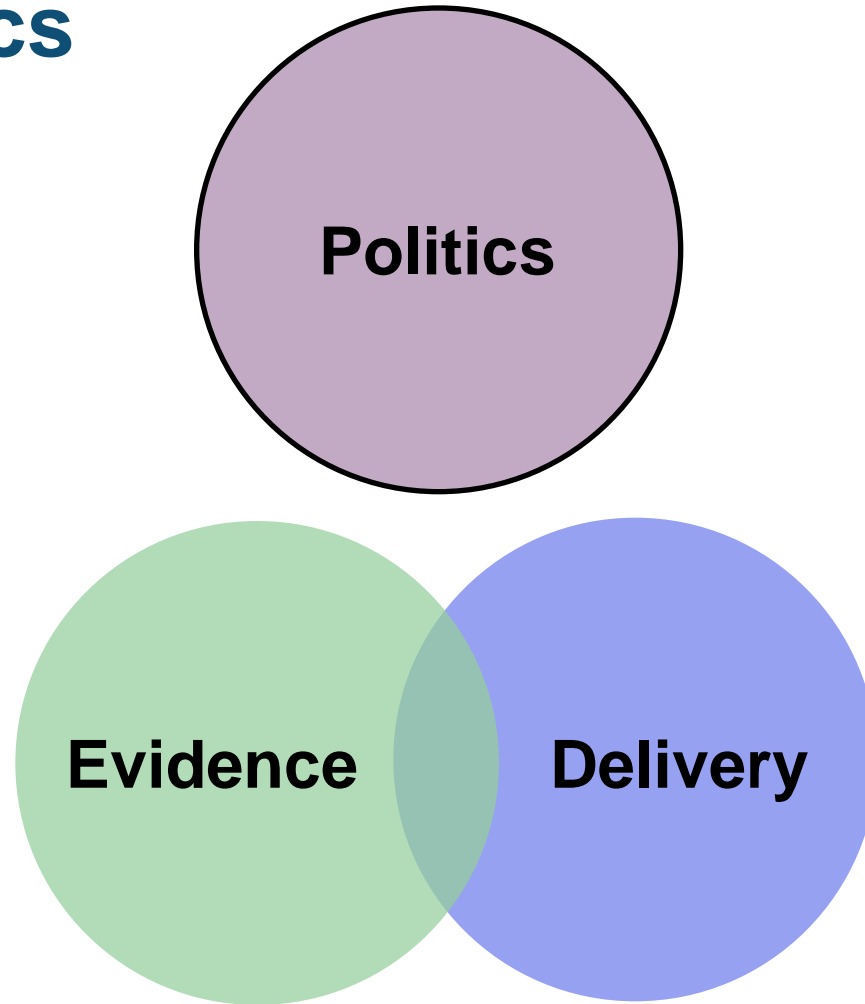
Summary

- **The principles / context of policy making**
- **The policy making process**
- **What policy makers look for from research**
- **How policy makers can help researchers**
- **What this might mean on alcohol**

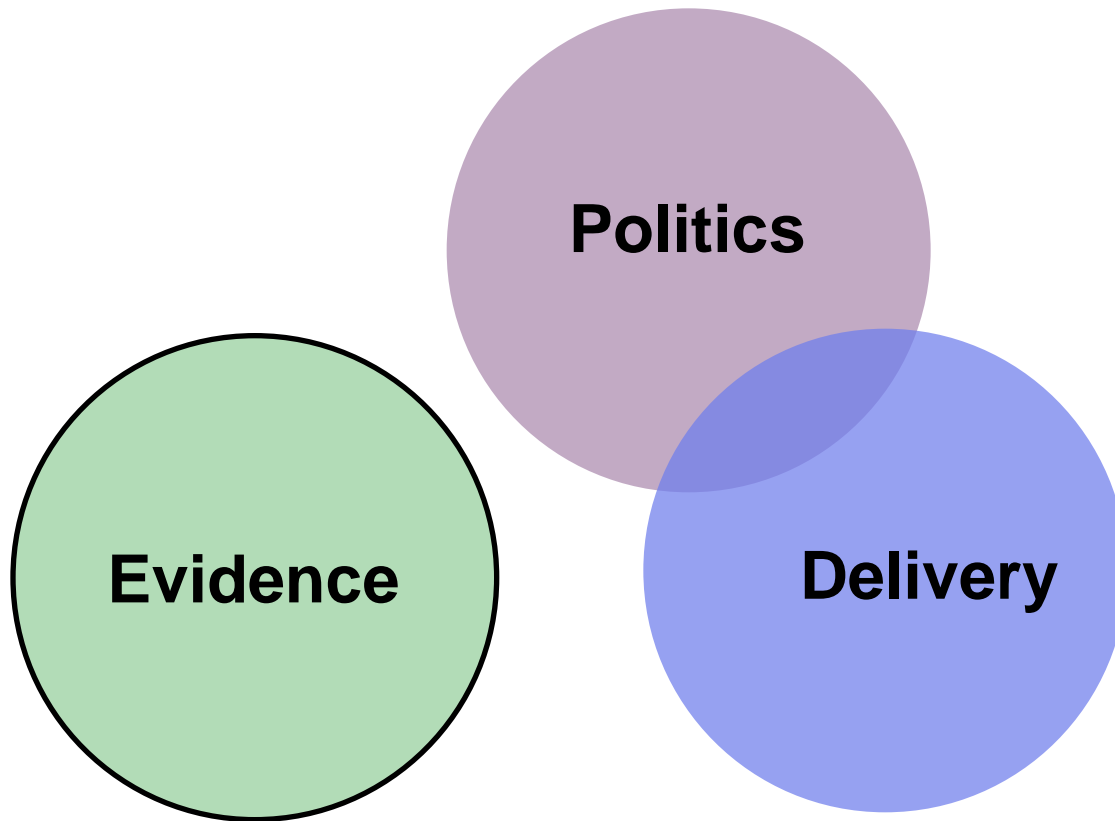
The policy elements: the principles



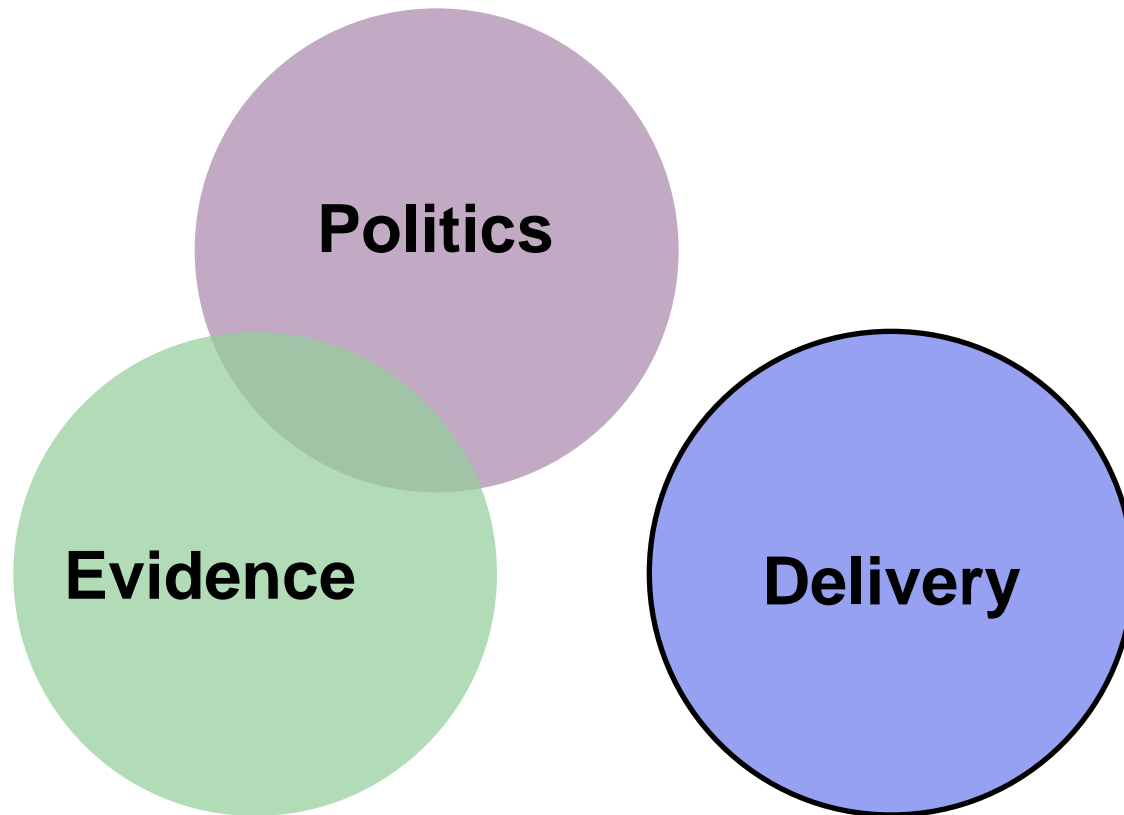
1. Politics



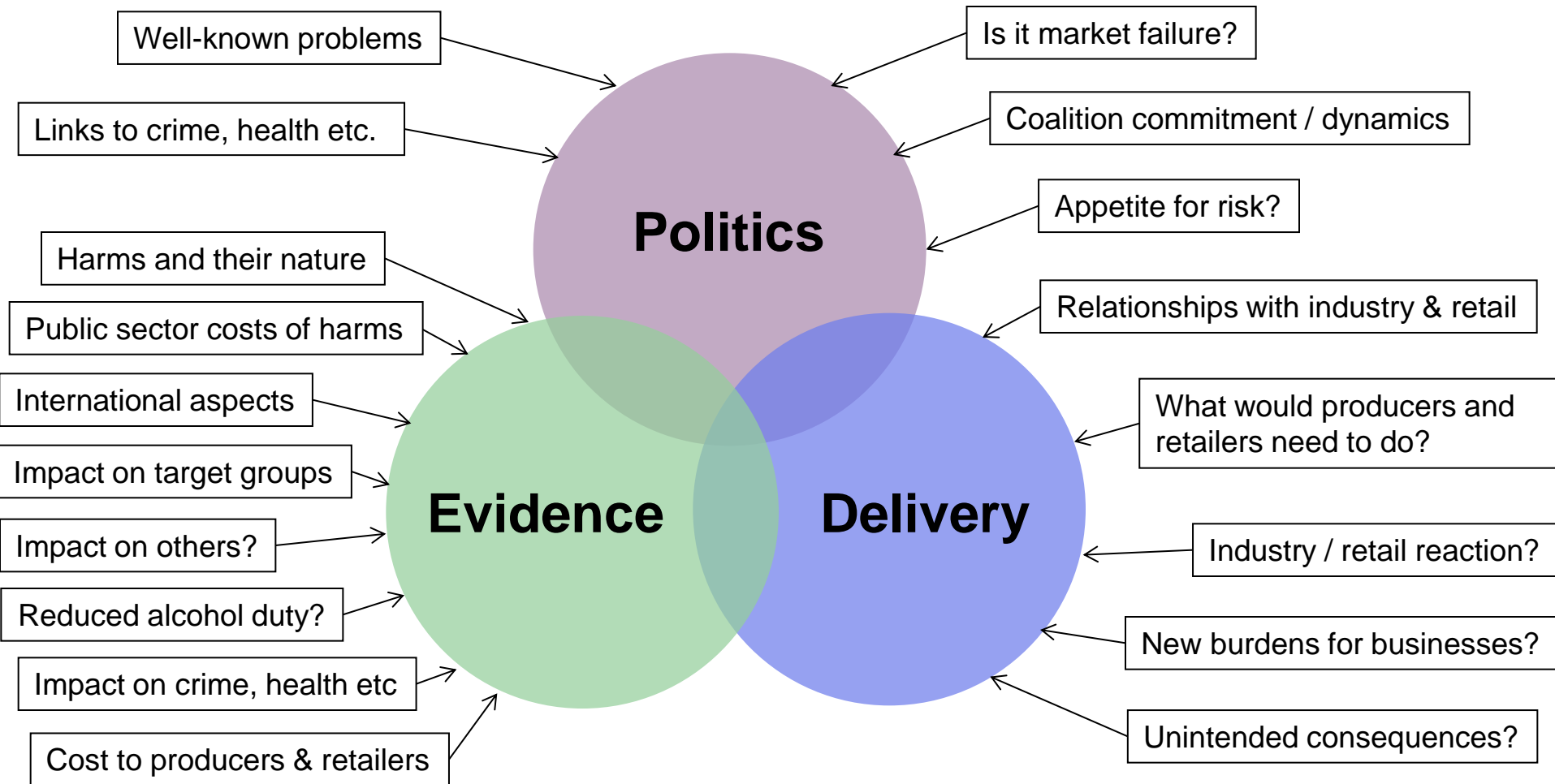
2. Evidence



3. Delivery



For example... alcohol minimum unit pricing



The policy making process



1. Understanding the context

What is the problem you are trying to solve?

Does Government need to intervene or not?

- explore the issues with Ministers and stakeholders
- talk to analysts about the evidence and rationale for acting - or not
- find out about issues, the situation and international approaches
- consider the groups who may be affected



Evidence and research is used to:

- understand the problem: cost, scale, groups etc
- decide whether or not intervention is appropriate
- what might work and what might not

2. Developing options

What is the widest range of options you can think of?

What are their strengths, weaknesses, impacts?

- explore evidence, using many perspectives to generate innovative options
- explore local, behaviour change, collaborative approaches before traditional policy routes (e.g. legislation)
- identify impacts on equality, sustainability and bureaucracy
- work with analysts on cost / benefit for most likely options
- consider & discuss risks and mitigations with Ministers / stakeholders



Evidence and research is used to:

→ know what works elsewhere

→ understand what works in different circumstances

→ judge where gaps in evidence might create risk

3. Getting to a decision

Which is the most viable solution?

How can you build maximum support?

- simple and light touch solutions preferred, with clear accountability
- ensure Ministers can take informed decisions
- broker cross-Government, sector & stakeholder support
- ensure robust funding & delivery plans, incl. piloting and/or pathfinders
- sign off assessments of likely impact on different groups
- agree how to communicate the solution



Department for
Education

Evidence and research is used to:

- weigh up costs / benefits
- clarify risks / mitigations
- work out how delivery would work in practice
- assess the likely impact of the solution
- judge an option's sustainability

4. Making it happen

How is it working in practice?

How can you share evidence and lessons?

- work with delivery partners to secure desired impact
- agree how to deal with success and failure
- have an exit strategy / check if continued intervention is required
- collect evidence about what is happening
- review the effectiveness of accountability arrangements
- identify, record and share lessons learned



Evidence and research is used to:

→ monitor (preferably light touch), evaluate impact and modify approaches

→ share lessons learned

→ identify an appropriate point for withdrawal

What policy makers look for from research

- Relevance
 - to the subject area
 - to the Government's approach
- Clarity
 - messages / learning / interpretation of findings
 - about strengths and weaknesses
 - about assumptions made
- Timeliness
 - demanding timescales
 - developments are ever-accelerating
- Links
 - to expertise & learning from other fields / countries.
 - policy affects more than one policy area?
 - benefits to the economy?
- Innovation
 - questioning received wisdom / tradition
 - scarce money makes this all the more important
- Practicality
 - not just of intellectual interest
 - understandable, summarised, outcomes-focused

How policy makers can help researchers

- Commission research and use it!
- Be clear on the question / issue and what they are trying to find out
- Ensure researchers know and understand the big policy questions in the context of the Government's approach
- Avoid stretching research implications into areas they weren't meant to go, even if it's politically convenient
- Demonstrate the importance of evidence to Ministers

Involving researchers from the start helps with all of these

What this might suggest for alcohol-related research

Some thoughts:

- Learning from other areas (e.g. exploring approaches to drug education which also work on alcohol consumption?)
- Understanding the long-term impact of interventions – i.e. what is the ultimate cost / saving of an intervention.
- Identifying reasons for trends, e.g. falling consumption, UK drinking more than Europeans
- Exploring factors that can lead to (problematic) alcohol consumption

From DfE's perspective:

- The relationship between alcohol consumption and school performance
- The protective factors of participation and attainment

Policy making and its relationship with evidence and research

Neil.Dube@education.gsi.gov.uk

0114 274 2410