

SETTING THE RESEARCH AGENDA

Pre 1965

- Most research funded by charities/trusts
- An empirical tradition in UK – Rowntree, Booth, Poor Law etc. (Unlike France, Germany and Southern Europe)
- Very few child care studies until the 1960s

1965

- New labour Government -National economic and social plan
- Government commissioning of research to inform committees of inquiry
- Government links to sympathetic academics
- Social Science Research Council established to complement MRC, SRC.

1960s-70s

- Growth in higher education
- Growth in social sciences
- Technological changes – computers
- Research reviews began to appear

GOVERNMENT POLICY

- ROTHSCHILD PRINCIPLES AND EFFECTS
- Customer-contractor relationship
- Gave customer power over research, advisory committees, RLGs, chief scientists
- Value for money, priority areas, short projects, less in-house research
- Some research areas cut (e.g. benefits), others increased (e.g. family law)

1980s

- Changes in research/teaching balance in universities – universities had to compete for research funds
- SSRC became the ESRC (E=economic), more practical/useful projects
- Central government became a major customer (child care in health where the context was auspicious for research)

Situation now in children's services

- A lot more research than before
- Profiles, needs, user views clear
- Policy more informed
- Overviews available and dissemination centres established

Research accepted as one influence alongside:

- Socio-legal concerns
- Pragmatic concerns
- Users' views

SOURCES OF FUNDING

- Central government
- Research councils
- Private Foundations
- Local and health authorities

- In theory, each has a specialist interest
- Some programmes of work commissioned and some units have been continuously funded

WEAKNESSES OF THE CURRENT SITUATION -1

- Tendency for short-term projects – expediency has replaced ideology
- No theoretical content
- Same type of studies repeated – descriptive, simple factor analysis
- Virtually no replication
- Evaluation of development work less sophisticated than projects that inform it

**WEAKNESSES OF THE
CURRENT SITUATION -2**

- To move forward we need a different type of research
- Clearer measurement of factors
- Robust methods
- Focus on causes and mechanisms, not associations
- Test alternative explanations of findings
