



# The Magenta Book

## Guidance Notes for Policy Evaluation and Analysis

### Introduction

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## **The Magenta Book Objectives, Format and Uses**

*The Magenta Book* is not another textbook on policy evaluation and analysis. The field has plenty of such texts and these will be referred to throughout the *Magenta Book*. Rather, the *Magenta Book* is a set of guidance notes for policy evaluators and analysts, and people who use and commission policy evaluation. It has a strong focus on policy evaluation *in government* and is structured to meet the needs of government analysts and policy makers. It is hoped that it may also meet the needs of analysts and users of evaluation outside of government, and that it will stimulate dialogue and collaboration between the worlds of government, academia and the wider research and evaluation community.

*The Magenta Book* has been developed in the context of the demands of evidence-based policy making and the changing needs of analysis in and for government. A series of publications since 1997, including the Modernising Government White Paper (Cabinet Office 1999a), Policy Making for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Cabinet Office, 1999b), Adding-it-Up (Cabinet Office, 2000), and Better Policy Making (Cabinet Office, 2001) have stressed the importance of sound evidence, proper evaluation and good analysis at the heart of policy making. This, in turn, has generated a demand for guidance on how to undertake high quality evaluation, appraisal and analysis for policy making. This demand has been met by a number of important documents including a revised version of H.M Treasury's *Evaluation and Appraisal for Government (The Green Book* - [http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/economic\\_data\\_and\\_tools/greenbook/data\\_greenbook\\_index.cfm](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/economic_data_and_tools/greenbook/data_greenbook_index.cfm)), an *Integrated Policy Appraisal Framework* (ODPM, 2002 - <http://http://www.dtlr.gsi.gov.uk/downloads/dtlripa1.doc> – note that this link is currently only available to Government Secure Intranet (GSI) users) which takes into consideration the economic, social, environmental and distributional consequences of policies as well as risk assessment, and the appraisal and evaluation of regeneration projects and programmes (ODPM, 2003 – *to be published shortly*). The Regulatory Impact Unit has provided further guidance on how to assess the impact of any proposed regulation which

could affect businesses, charities or the voluntary sector (RIU, 2003 - <http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/regulation/scrutiny/betterpolicy.htm>.)

*The Magenta Book* complements these other sources of guidance by providing a user-friendly guide for specialists and generalists alike on the methods used by social researchers when they commission, undertake and manage policy research and evaluation. *The Magenta Book* endeavours to provide guidance on social research methods for policy evaluation in readable and understandable language. Where technical detail is required, or it is necessary to expand on methodological procedures and arguments, these are presented in boxed and shaded areas. *The Magenta Book* provides examples of evaluations that have used the available methods appropriately and effectively, and it highlights what it is that is good about them.

*The Magenta Book* covers the broad range of methods used in policy evaluation, and the approaches of different academic disciplines (social policy, sociology, economics, statistics, operational research). *The Magenta Book* is driven by the substantive policy questions being asked of analysts, rather than by methodological disputes between academic disciplines or different schools of thought. *The Magenta Book* includes guidance on how to use summative and formative, quantitative and qualitative, experimental and experiential methods of policy evaluation appropriately and effectively.

*The Magenta Book* is organised around a number of questions that are frequently asked about policy evaluation and analysis (see below). In answering these questions *The Magenta Book* provides guidance on:

- How to refine a policy question to get a useful answer
- The main evaluation methods that are used to answer policy questions
- The strengths and weaknesses of different methods of evaluation
- The difficulties that arise in using different methods of evaluation
- The costs involved in using different methods of evaluation, and the benefits that are to be gained

- Where to go to find out more detailed information about policy evaluation and analysis

The *Magenta Book* is published electronically and in instalments until the complete set of evaluation questions that it addresses has been covered. Electronic publication will enable fast production and dissemination, and its contents to be updated regularly. Electronic publication also allows some degree of interactive use in that readers can respond to its contents, challenge its guidance, raise new questions, offer new insights, and contribute to its regular updating.

Each chapter of the Magenta Book will have a set of *guidance notes* and a *background paper* which will provide more detailed information and guidance. The guidance notes will appear in HTML format on the Cabinet Office website Policy Hub (<http://www.policyhub.gov.uk>). The background papers will also appear on Policy Hub in PDF format.

*The Magenta Book* is linked to a series of training and professional development modules in Policy Evaluation and Analysis that are being developed by the Government Chief Social Researcher's Office (GCSRO) for government analysts and policy makers who use and commission policy evaluation. These modules are built around the principles of problem-based learning and problem-based assessment, so that analysts can develop their analytical skills by answering 'real life' analytical and policy problem that arise in their everyday work. The possibility of accrediting these modules at the Master's degree level is being considered.

## The Magenta Book – The Questions It Seeks To Address

- Chapter 1**      **What is Policy Evaluation?**
- Chapter 2**      **What Do We Already Know?**  
                         Harnessing Existing Research
- Chapter 3**      **Is it Statistically Significant?**  
                         Statistical Concepts & Sampling
- Chapter 4**      **What Do the Statistics Tell Me?**  
                         Statistical Inference & Data Analysis
- Chapter 5**      **How Are the Data Collected?**  
                         Data Collection & Survey Design
- Chapter 6**      **How Do You Know If Something Works?**  
                         Experimental & Quasi-Experimental Designs
- Chapter 7**      **What is the Theory Underlying a Policy**  
                         Theory Based Approaches to Evaluation
- Chapter 8**      **How Do You Know Why (and How) Something Works?**  
                         Qualitative Methods of Evaluation
- Chapter 9**      **Is It Worth Spending Money On?**  
                         Economic Appraisal & Evaluation
- Chapter 10**     **What Other Effects Might There Be?**  
                         Statistical and Econometric Modelling
- Chapter 11**     **How Can We Manage the Project Effectively?**  
                         Project Management for Policy Evaluation

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