

# Supporting elements within an effective research-policy system learning from the ARI Fellowships

Kathryn Oliver and Annette Boaz  
SKAPE seminar 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb 2022

# What Transforming Evidence does ...

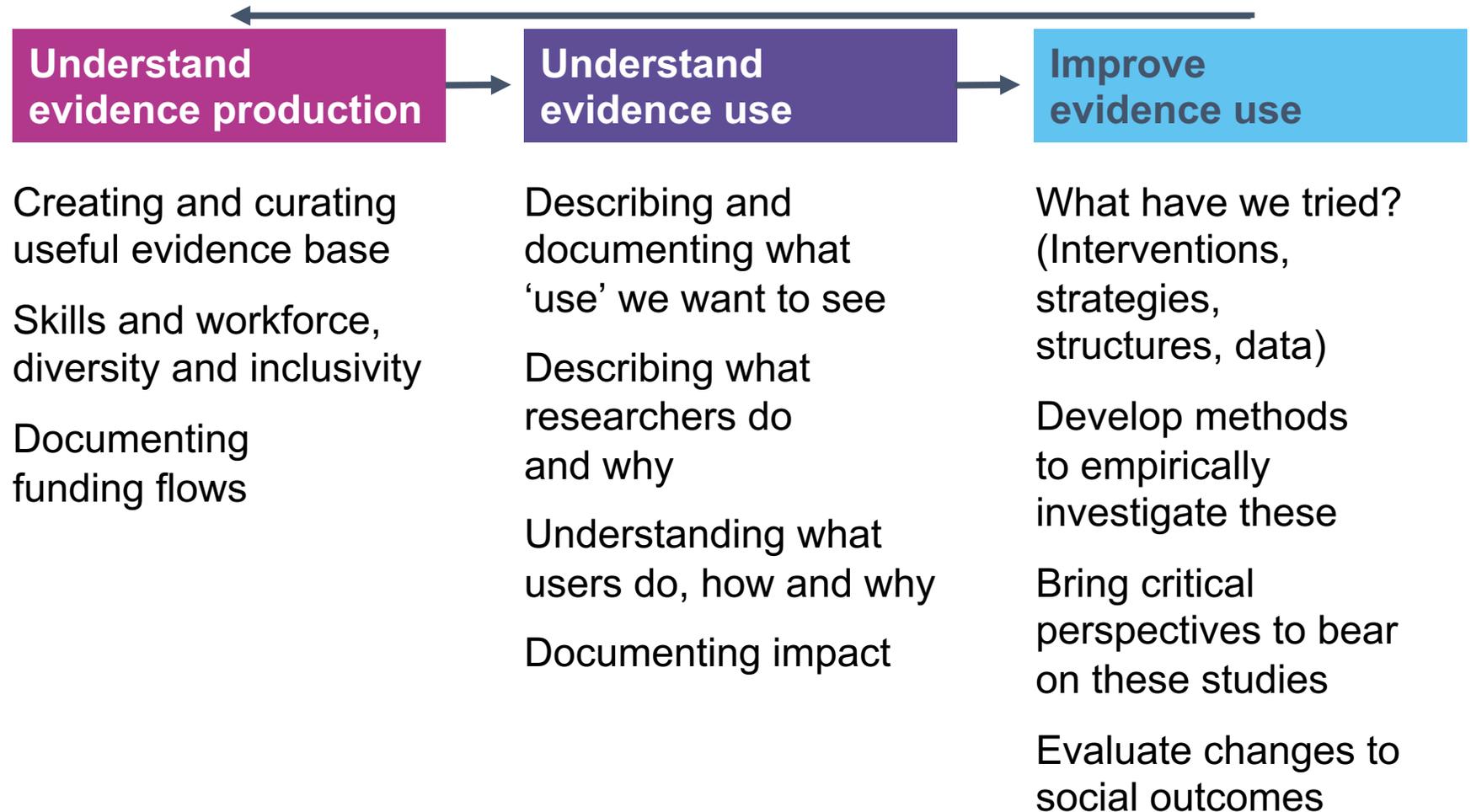
Connecting communities

Sharing expertise

Developing collaborative research programmes

# Research agenda

To transform how we think about what evidence is, how to generate it, and how to use it well, we must better capture lessons being learned in our different research and practice communities.



# The ARI Fellowships

- Areas of Research Interest proposed in Nurse Review (2015)
- GOS and ESRC designed intervention to catalyse work around existing ARIs
- Supported existing agendas of GOS, ESRC and us



# The plan

- Highly specified work programme
- Explicit deliverables...
- And a number of implicit deliverables we found out about later

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| <b>Dec-Jan 20</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Establish relationships within GO-Science, with CSAs and key academic partners (POST, UPEN, Academies, UKRI)</li><li>• Initial workshop with ARI officials to brief on fellows' work and begin prioritisation exercise</li></ul> |
| <b>Feb-March</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Prioritisation workshop with ARI officials and UKRI colleagues</li><li>• Analysis of existing ARIs and work with UKRI to identify gaps, cross-cutting themes and existing research and expertise</li></ul>                       |
| <b>April-May</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Departmental workshops with four departments to help develop, refresh and take forward ARI</li></ul>   |
| <b>June-Aug</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Workshop on cross-cutting themes</li><li>• Preparation of departmental reports</li></ul>   |
| <b>Sept-Oct</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Roundtable on optimising the ARI process for government stakeholders</li><li>• Roundtable on supporting effective and ethical engagement with university stakeholders</li></ul>  |
| <b>Nov-Dec</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Further engagement with stakeholders across UKRI, HE and government</li><li>• Preparation of final reports for ESRC and GO-Science</li></ul>   |



# ARI Fellows as an intervention



- Explicitly relational, but also system level
- Practical
- Aligned with our ethos and values as researchers
- Really interesting

## Prioritising ARIs

- Solicited priority ARIs from all government departments
- Workshop to co-create priority themes, with UKRI participation (25<sup>th</sup> Feb)

## Analysis of themes

- Sense-checked themes and allocation of >1500 ARIs against categories
- Addition of refreshed ARIs as published
- Presented 7 themes to CSA Network and JR (10th March)

COVID19

## Re-prioritisation

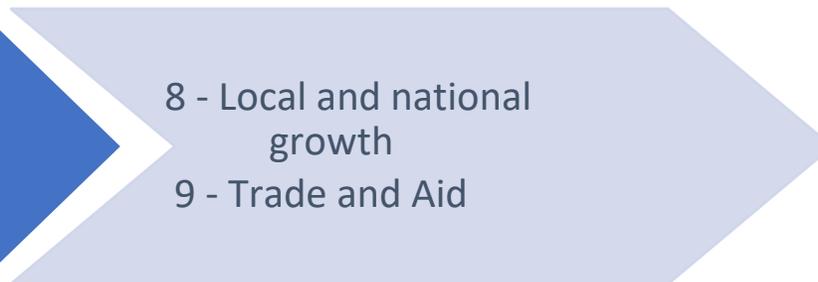
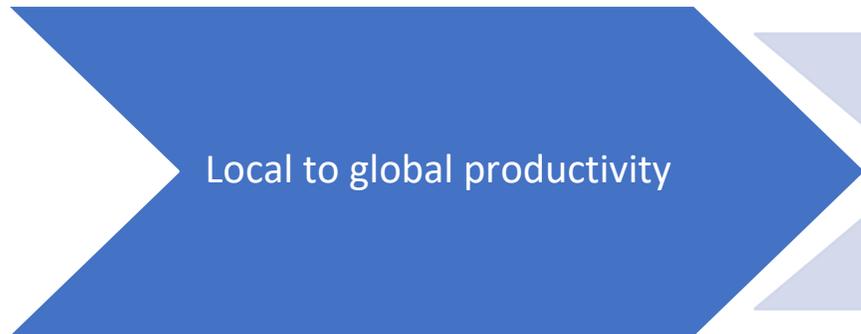
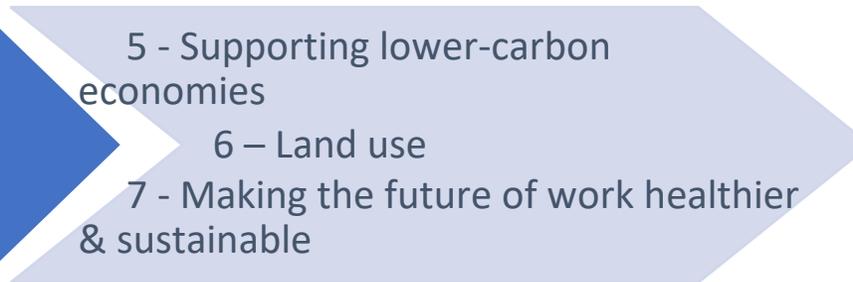
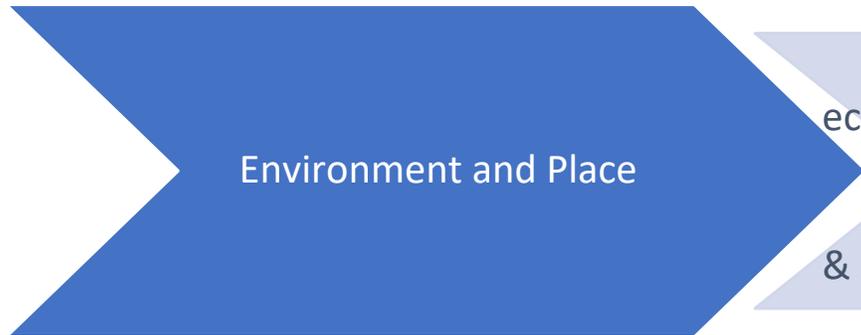
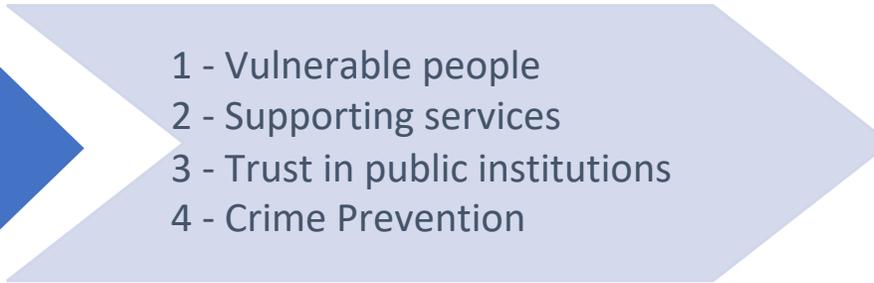
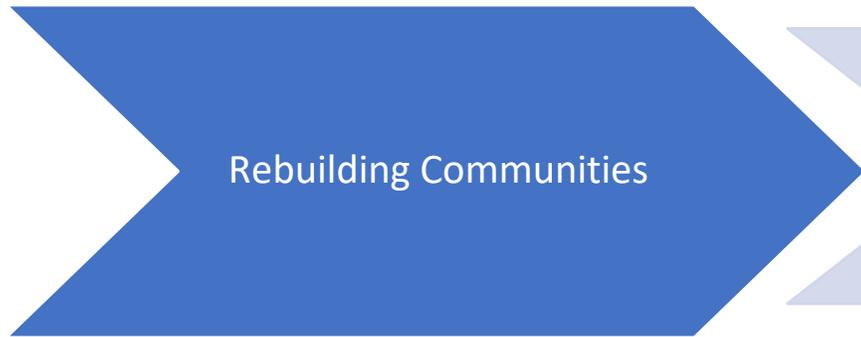
- Re-prioritising ARIs in discussion with CSAs, GCSA, ESRC, departments (March - Apr)
- Revised paper presented to CSAs (15 April)
- Robin Grimes (MoD - Nuclear) as lead CSA, presented “Rebuilding for a resilient Britain” to CST (21<sup>st</sup> May) for steer on work plan

## Engagement

- Launch of 9 Task and Finish groups to collate existing research, distil key messages, and identify research gaps – submissions currently under discussion with CSAs
- ESRC & UKRI involvement in all working groups, with diverse academics and Govt’ officials
- Closing Plenary 3<sup>rd</sup> November

## Meta-themes and work groups

## Engagement goals



# Task and Finish groups timeline



# In addition....

## Held

Workshops to identify cross cutting ARIs

Launch Rebuilding a Resilient Britain meeting, July 2020

Nine task and finish groups address the cross cutting ARIs, collating evidence, key messages and identifying gaps

Ongoing meetings with two departments (MCHLG and MoJ)

Ongoing departmental support around Stakeholder engagement mapping work and ARI refreshes

## Producing....

Reports from the nine cross cutting ARI working groups

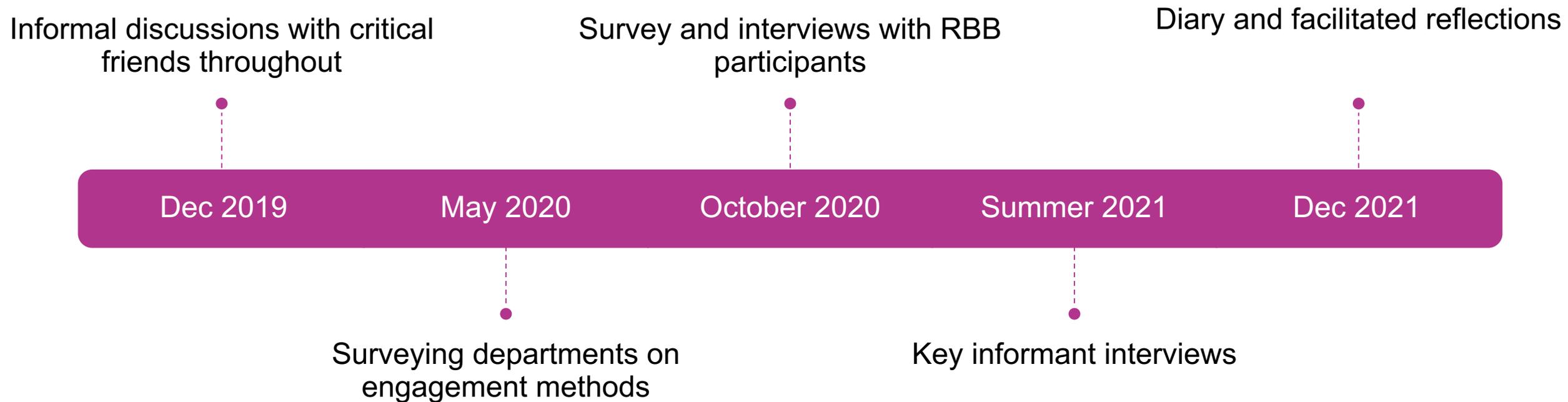
Two learning and reflection pieces

Presentations to key audiences such as UKRI, CST

Development of a communication plan

More diverse and larger networks between govt and academia

# Learning and reflecting



# What's worked well?



Kathryn Oliver  
Annette Boaz  
March 9th, 2021

## The hard labour of connecting research to policy during COVID-19

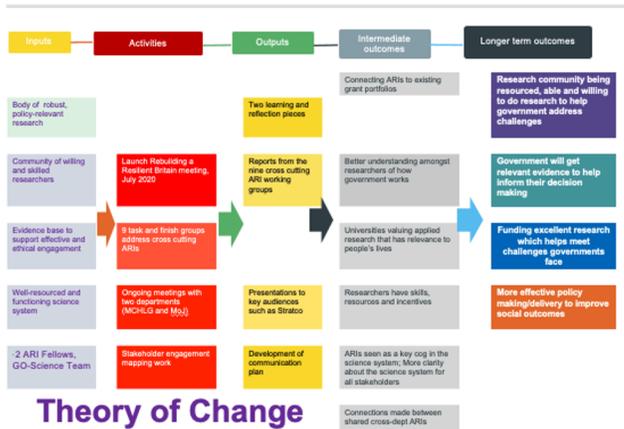


Annette Boaz  
Kathryn Oliver  
November 27th,  
2020

## Building new bridges between research and policy during a national lockdown



# Intermediate outcomes



## Researchers

- Good understanding of government processes and priorities
- Researchers skilled and incentivised to do relevant research and engagement
- Universities seeing policy and practice engagement as part of academic role
- Support for strategic, co-ordinated, evidence-informed engagement

## Government

- ARIs seen as cog supporting effective science system
- Connections made between x-govt ARIs and priorities
- ARIs cited in CSR bids and other R&D plans
- Clear connection between, and process to develop ARIs which reflect policy priorities

## Funders

- Good understanding of how ARIs compare with grant portfolios and research landscape
- Support for evidence-informed engagement techniques and methods

# Longer-term outcomes

- What would it look like if the research system was working well?
- Indicators of a well-functioning system
- ARI fellowships aiming to bear these in mind and work towards these goals via intermediary outcomes and activities
- All out of scope for ARI Fellowships but need to understand to work effectively.

## Researchers

- **Are willing, able and resourced to do useful research and engage constructively with decision-makers**

## Government

- **Has access to relevant evidence to help inform their decision-making**

## Funders

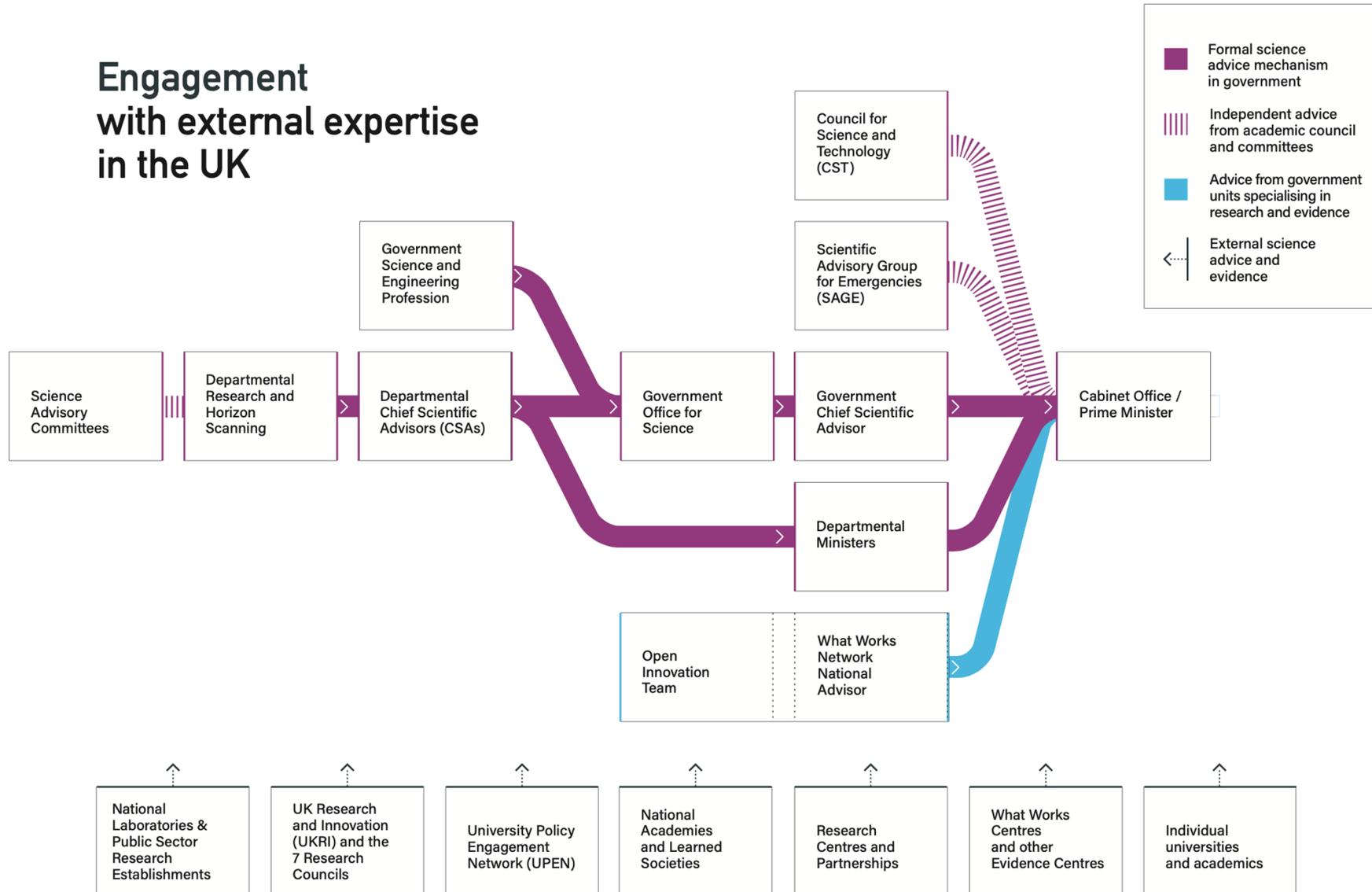
- **Support excellent research which helps decision-makers address the challenges they are facing**

## Improved social outcomes

- **Through more effective policy development, implementation, and service delivery**

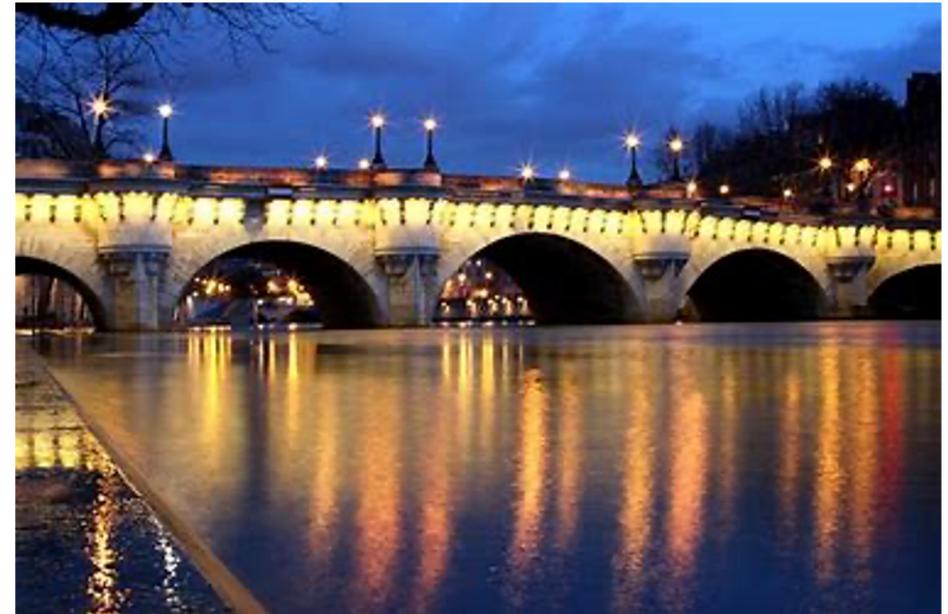
# Key lessons about the research-policy system

## Engagement with external expertise in the UK



# ARIs as boundary objects

- ARI documents and Fellowships as boundary objects (Bekker 2012, McLeish and Moon 2021)
- Boundary objects are explicitly situated as doing boundary-crossing work
  1. **Sense making** – laying the ground for policy deliberation, telling the story with the evidence
  2. **Allegation of use** – articulated role in ongoing processes
  3. **Training and practice** to write documents to fulfil these functions – guidance, networks, work of boundary actors



# Working at the boundary: objects, actors and work

- Communication journey and events
- ARI objects connected with ongoing processes, which are supported by actors and work
- Crossing internal as well as external boundaries



# Conclusions

- Had a clear role within a number of systems - a set of jobs which had to be delivered
- This required performance (in all senses)
- Multiple converging streams enabled our work...
- But multiple agendas confused and complicated it
- System needs coordination and support
- Current attempts to improve evidence use disrupt and muddy, and tend to amplify existing inequities
- Next challenge: thinking about the system, drawing on different disciplines

# Thanks

@transformure

@oliver\_Kathryn

@AnnetteBoaz