

Developing Academic Policy Engagement

1. Overview of Developing Academic Policy Engagement

What is Developing Academic Policy Engagement (DAPE)?

DAPE is an NTU staff-development scheme in which academics provide expertise in an area and interpret evidence to have an impact on a priority policy issue. DAPE provides defined support to create evidence-based output(s) for a partner organisation (e.g. the Ministry of Justice). Projects within the DAPE initiative will support a variety of priority policy areas within external organisations, focusing on making a link between academic knowledge and skills and the partner organisation in a mutually beneficial way.

Why might I find DAPE useful?

DAPE supports academic colleagues to share with confidence and competence when translating their expertise into policy and helps them to create impactful outputs. As a result of DAPE, previous participants (academics and assistants) have felt more confident in translating their expertise into policy. They have developed new partnerships and produced outputs promoting direct and positive action relating to important research results.

What does 'policy' mean here?

DAPE outputs should be designed to translate a body of evidence into a policy or its implementation, or to influence practice change. Whilst this could be achieved through informing policymaking, policy-in-practice changes are also welcomed (e.g. what does the evidence mean for front-line staff and/or their day-to-day practices?).

Think of it as a knowledge exchange.

It may help to consider the development of outputs as a form of knowledge exchange, in which the sharing of ideas, knowledge, and expertise is encouraged. Knowledge exchange is mutually beneficial and allows for a broad range of collaborative outputs.

Key points:

- DAPE is a collaborative initiative;
- your expertise will be used to review the available evidence;
- there are many different types of outputs you can create;
- you will be supported.



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1. Overview (continued)

Who is involved?

DAPE is a team programme, with a Facilitator (who creates the team), a team (1× academic, 1× external partner, and 1× Research Assistant), a copy editor, access to an NTU Support Team, and a “Writing for Knowledge Exchange” training workshop.

How long will the project take?

DAPE is designed to be a quick programme. From initial scoping meetings to presenting a final output, it has been designed to run for no more than four months. For academics, this is around 2–3 hours per week. Although the time is limited, this ensures that the outputs are timely and reflect current priorities, maximising their relevance, and you will have lots of support.

How have others found the support?

Previous participants have said that DAPE was enjoyable, and they have found the level of support to be very good and have praised the collaborative nature of the initiative. Here are some quotes from a few of them:

“It’s been a really useful experience and a really good learning experience too with thinking about how to collaborate with people.” (Academic)

“ Just knowing that you have got a contribution to make and that contribution is valuable, I think, and the way that everyone has worked together in a facilitated way – I think that has been really valuable.” (Academic)

“ We have all shared the responsibly and lots of learning from one another as well – I’ve learnt loads from them, and they said they’ve taken quite a bit from us.” (MoJ Mentor)

“ I think it is a really useful exercise, definitely – it’s using expertise at the end of the day, isn’t it? We are not all experts at everything, and we have to work in partnership to gain that, so I think it’s been a really good example of partnership working.” (MoJ Mentor)



2. DAPE outputs

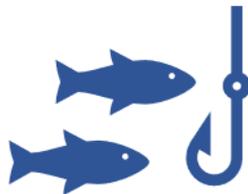
What should the outputs look like?

- ✓ Poster, evidence-based summary, presentation, FAQ document, policy or practitioner briefing paper, etc.
 - ✓ Clear, logical, and easy to read
 - ✓ Translates a review of the evidence to policy/practice
 - ✗ An academic journal article
 - ✗ An overly complicated policy document
 - ✗ A change in legislation
- Outputs should be formal, non-academic documents that concisely summarise the evidence base and consider relevant implications for policy and practice.
 - The intended audience and format should inform the length of the output.
 - Outputs should not be long or overly academic documents containing an extensive literature review, nor should they replicate the style of an academic journal article.
 - Equally, outputs should not be complicated policy or legislation guidance.

Additional top tips for outputs



Think about the amount of time your audience will have to engage with your output.



Use a 'hook' to capture the reader's attention. Short, catchy points can help with this.

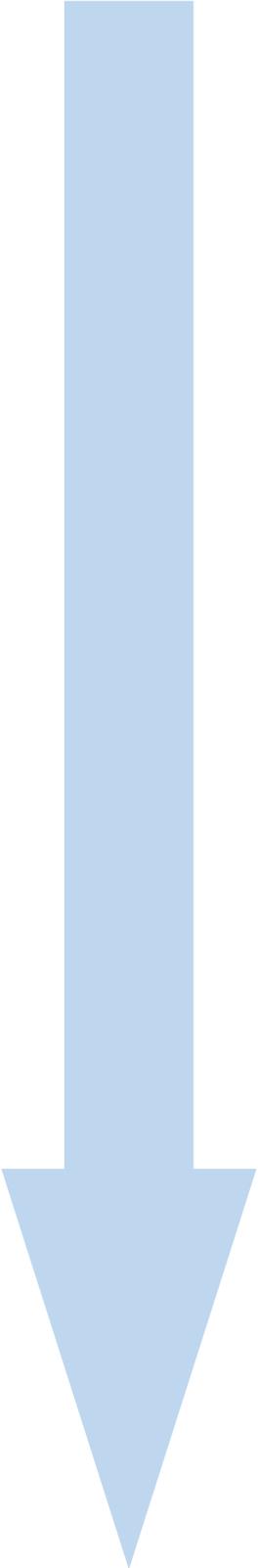


Make the output visually appealing. This will help with engagement.



3. Working through a DAPE example

The process: From scoping meeting to final output



1. Matching the academic team with Policy Lead

The Link Facilitator (LF) will identify the best matches and hold initial conversations to ensure sufficient fit between teams and a shared understanding of the scope and timelines.

2. Initial scoping meeting

Academics meet their organisational colleagues and research assistant, and broad topics and output styles are discussed, supported by the LF, to ensure a shared understanding of the activities and approach.

Things to consider: Who should the output target, and what should it aim to achieve?

3. Follow-up meeting

Topic and output ideas are discussed. Ideas surrounding useful literature-review methods are shared. **Things to consider:** What are the key literature search terms? Who is reviewing what literature?

4 Literature review

The academic and research assistant review relevant literature and decide together on key areas. **Things to consider:** What are the central themes in the literature? How can the literature be summarised and interpreted?

5. Workshop

This is a workshop for the academic and research assistant that aims to develop an understanding of writing for policy and some of its principles.

6. Output meeting

Specific details of the output are decided together, drawing on all three team members' expertise. **Things to consider:** How can the literature be effectively summarised? How can the output capture the audience's attention?

7. Draft output

The output is collaboratively developed, which will likely include several edits. **Things to think about:** How can you best make use of the Copy Editor and your organisational colleagues?

8. Final output

The output is signed off, shared between all group members, and presented to the DAPE co-ordinators.



3. Working through a DAPE example (continued)

Tips from previous DAPE participants



Have short, sharp meetings between all three group members and work together as a team.

"I think communication has been really open." (MoJ Mentor)

"It's just been a really good collaborative effort – I feel like they've brought ideas as much as we have." (MoJ Mentor)

"They made it feel like a really safe place to have good, honest conversations." (MoJ Mentor)



Use Microsoft Teams to share files and communicate.

"From our experiences, this has been very short, sharp and proactive really, just being really effective, an efficient way of working, and I really like that." (Academic)

Overcoming challenges

The following potential challenges, and their solutions, have been noted by previous DAPE participants:

Challenge: Deciding on a specific topic to focus on.

Solution: Use the Link Facilitator to help navigate through uncertain waters. Engage in an early group meeting to hear what other teams are doing/asking.

Challenge: Conducting a sufficiently thorough literature review.

Solution: Split the review between the academic and the research assistant. Report findings back to the external colleague for reflection and guidance.

Challenge: Using appropriate tone and terminology for output.

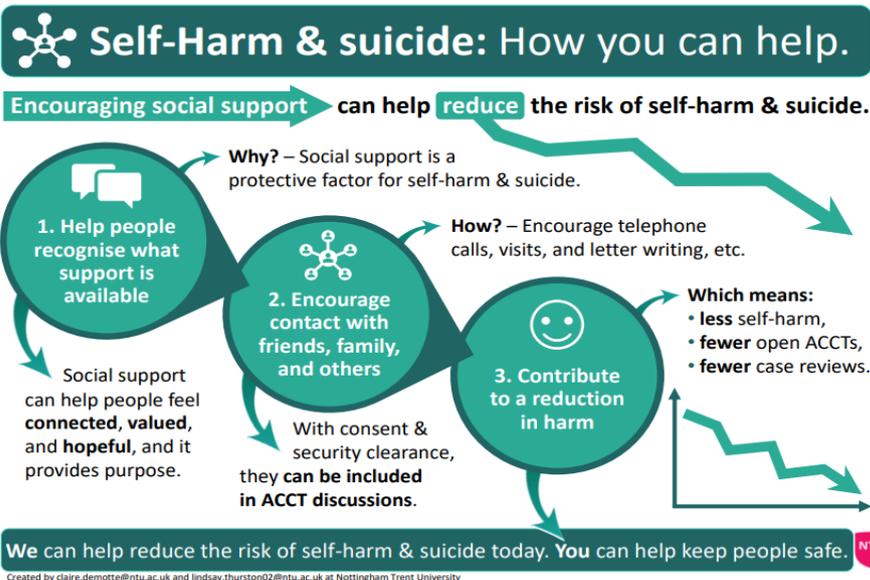
Solution: Use the external colleague to learn the language of policy/practice, in addition to the copy editor.

4. The first DAPE initiative projects and outputs

With thanks to HMPPS & MoJ for their engagement with the project

Team	Theme	Output style	Audience	Link to output
1x criminology academic, 1x psychology RA, and 1x external MoJ Mentor	Encouraging social support to reduce self-harm and suicide risk	Poster and evidence-based summary	Poster: Frontline prison staff Evidence-based summary: Safer Custody (specialised staff)	http://bit.ly/DAPEigCDMLT http://bit.ly/DAPEesCDMLT
1x psychology academic, 1x psychology RA, and 1x external HMPPS Mentor	Supporting engagement with health services for people in contact with probation	Poster	Probation staff	http://bit.ly/DAPEpostAEJC
1x criminology academic, 1x psychology RA, and 1x external HMPPS Mentor	Criminal justice and inequality: addressing disparities in reoffending	Evidence report and presentation	Presentation: HMPPS managers Evidence report: HMPPS staff, academics & practitioners	http://bit.ly/DAPEpresIMRC http://bit.ly/DAPEreportIMRC

Output snippets



Health & Wellbeing: Can you help?

People on probation often don't register with a GP and don't engage with health services until they reach a crisis point.¹ Here's how you might help...

The Problem	What You Can Do
<p>People in contact with probation are more likely to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-harm or die by suicide Misuse drugs and alcohol Experience anxiety or depression <p>1 in 4 with a current mental illness do not access mental health services.</p>	<p>Things you can do to help service users:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote GP registration: So people can get help, and access social prescribing.² Promote wellbeing: Using the NHS Every Mind Matters Mind Plan https://qr.co.uk/NHSEMM Focus on activities Consider activity-based initiatives to promote health and wellbeing (local non-clinical services such as sport, cookery, volunteering, mentoring). Group activities based on peoples' interests can support health and wellbeing.³

Use activities to promote wellbeing

According to research by the Samaritans³, activities can be effective in **supporting wellbeing before people reach a mental health crisis**. Communicating and making connections is important, but they found that men are most keen on **initiatives based on an activity**, in particular activities that can foster a **sense of achievement**.

"With these talking group things, there's no anchor. Nothing other than the chat. No table, no games, no food. Nothing in between the people. That's intimidating."
Alex, 36

"It would be nice if there was a goal you could chip away at."
Dion, 33

Quoted from Samaritans report

5. DAPE costs

Associated time commitments

Nottingham Trent University	External partner
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support Team: 5 hrs in total• Link Facilitator: 5 hrs in total• Academic: 2–3 hrs per week• Research Assistant: 8 hrs per week• Copy Editor: 25 hrs in total	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mentor: 10 hrs in total

Associated benefits

Nottingham Trent University	External partner
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expertise from 1 external organisation colleague• 3x staff members to engage with policy influencers• Provide staff with knowledge and confidence to impact policy through dissemination• Co-author impactful outputs• Build collaborative relationships with external organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3x sets of co-developed outputs on priority policy areas that are collaboratively agreed• Expertise from two NTU colleagues• Experience for 3x staff to engage with academics and a new programme to exchange knowledge• Future relationship building within a fixed time window

The first DAPE initiative funded the research assistant and copy-editing time, which was £9k for three outputs. Future options will depend on the internal investment available or external willingness to invest.



6. How to set up a DAPE partnership

Contact information

DAPE was developed by Dr. Karen Slade and Rich Pickford. If you have further questions, or are interested in forming a DAPE collaboration please contact:

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Authors

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Rich Pickford is a Knowledge Exchange and Impact Officer for the School of Social Science. He leads NTUs think tank Nottingham Civic Exchange supporting colleagues and partners to make a difference with our research and expertise. He is currently undertaking research on the informal economy and emergencies. Email: richard.pickford@ntu.ac.uk

Dr Karen Slade is Associate Professor and forensic psychologist, currently on secondment to HMPPS to lead work on improving mental health and suicide prevention. She has worked for criminal justice agencies for over 25 years specialising in the development and implementation of evidence-based policy and practice; with expertise in suicide, self harm and dual harm management. Email: karen.slade@ntu.ac.uk



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