

Researching civil renewal

Gerry Stoker. IPEG

gerry.stoker@manchester.ac.uk

civil renewal research programme

- Run out of The University of Manchester, funded by the Home Office
- Projects details and background papers available at www.ipeg.org.uk
- Also committed to developing a general research strategy appropriate to civil renewal agenda

What is a civil renewal experience?

- It will be focused on more active engagement by citizens
- The experience will lead to some change in the citizen
- It will change the provider body
- It will stretch from agenda setting to implementation, including production
- It is an activist, creative agenda of intervention

What sort of research could support it?

- The limits of best practice case studies
- The limits to after the event evaluation, even if well funded and sophisticated
- The case for a deliberately experimental approach
- A formative phase: design experiments
- Establishing what works: randomised controlled trials

Features of a design experiment

- A specified intervention underwritten by an explanation of the mechanism(s) of change
- A close observation of progress by researchers and practitioners
- A reformulation of the intervention in the light of that observation; adjusting for better performance
- A cycle of repeated assessment until effectiveness of intervention reaches desired standard

Randomised controlled trials

- Comparing treatment and non-treatment groups
- Gold standard of evaluation
- Challenges in research design
- A strategy that has been unwisely neglected in UK but not elsewhere