Section A: CPHE to complete	
Name:	Ray Pawson
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Address:	School of Sociology and Social Policy, Faculty of Education Social Sciences and Law University of Leeds
Guidance title:	Behaviour change
Committee:	Programme Development Group
Subject of expert testimony:	Mechanisms and processes of behaviour change
Evidence gaps or uncertainties:	
Provide the PDG with an overview of your perspective on the mechanisms and processes of effective behaviour change.	
Section B: Expert to complete	
Summary testimony:	

Invisible Mechanisms

Pawson's testimony suggested that the deliberations of the Programme Development Group should be led by an evaluation question – what are the components of behavioural change that an intervention must prompt in order to achieve lasting outcomes? Public health problems are often intractable, social and behavioural change happens slowly and painstakingly, a whole sequence of measures is often required to bring about profound and lasting change – and, alas, the methods of evaluation research are not always up to scratch in being able to identify the crucial concatenations.

The presentation went on to suggest that many crucial elements of behavioural change are overlooked because of the way programme evaluation is pursued. Policy-making is energised by the hot new idea. Attention is thus drawn immediately the unique properties and powers of the new 'measure', 'nudge', 'treatment', 'therapy', 'mechanism of action', or 'theory of change'. To be sure, other eyes are also on the prize, namely impact on the intended outcome. Accordingly, interventions find support and are brought to life if there are persuasive reasons to believe that a new-fangled idea might have a significant leverage on a long-standing problem.

But what happens next? The machine takes over. The intervention and is assembled in a series of standard, bureaucratic procedures. The programme has to be organised and delivered – sites are mulled over and selected, resources are drawn in and allocated, staff roles are planned and allotted, and subjects are recruited, processed, certificated and stood down. Pawson's hypothesis here is that these routine features, the generics of programming, often have as profound an influence on the behaviour of programme subjects as do the big ideas. People enter programmes at the margins and sometimes quite tangentially; they have an existing life outside programmes; there are always other programmes; life offers many new

opportunities besides programmes. And once within the ambit of a programme there are many opportunities to quit or stay. And even within those choosing to be camp-followers, there is a range of behavioural commitments from passing interest to dull compunction to abiding passion. There are many such collateral pathways for so-called 'programme subjects' to consider, and the manner in which participants choose to navigate their way in and around interventions has been overlooked in evaluation research. These strategies for journeying though, rather than responding to, interventions deserve a sustained programme of research and the presentation set out a brief agenda for such inquiries.

A simple seven stage model of programme-inspired behavioural change was presented. It describes the programme subject in different stages of preparedness for change and prescribes the sequence of mechanisms necessary to propel to subject towards the aims and objectives of a programme.

The model begins with the outsider (1), the disaffected subject at best indifferent to or at worst antagonistic in respect of the programmes goals. For a behavioural change programme to leave the starting blocks a close encounter is needed to accomplish the often forbidding preliminary step of persuading subjects about to the risks inherent in their current activities and to seed doubt about the wisdom of their continuation. An element of self-uncertainty (2), once inculcated, leads to the possibility of presenting alternatives to current behaviour and life-styles. These options are likely to vary in their palatability to different subjects and the intervention then needs to make a case that the particular programme pathway has some basic feasibility in the eyes of participants. An initial level of anticipation (3) is induced which may be hardened by further explanation of why the theories, ideas and resources within the specific programme are applicable to that particular subject. The subject then enters the programme with some cautious expectations (4), which are unlikely to be met unequivocally and are thus more likely to endure if immediate evidence of the promised success is presented. Regardless of such quick wins, subjects will face repeated challenges in adapting behaviour and the programme will need to assist in demonstrating how to be resilient in the face of adversity. We are now in the midst of the programme, by which stage the subject will have made make numerous recalculations (5) about the wisdom of continuation. The persistence of the subjects' motivational change can be tested and thus confirmed by ceding control of elements of the programme to the participants and assigning them responsibility for some programme goals. Playing an active part in co-producing the intervention is a sign of arrival at insider status (6) and of adherence to a new behavioural code. The programme is then in a position to attest success by 'certifying' the gains. Graduates (7) leave the programme without further need for its support and may even go on to act as ambassadors to other potential subjects.

A generic model of this kind might serve as a platform for NICE guidance on behavioural change.

References (if applicable):

Pawson R (2013) *The Science of Evaluation: A Realist Manifesto* London: Sage