



Events Related to this Issue Brief

Rico Catalano will be speaking at several events during his visit to the UK. On the 17th of May, he will present a seminar at the Centre for the Analysis of Social Policy at the University of Bath.

On the 18th of May, Rico will talk about Communities that Care at London's Living Room in City Hall, at a half-day conference jointly sponsored by The Social Research Unit and Catch22. He will be joined at that event by David Utting, who facilitated the recent Independent Commission on Youth Crime and Antisocial Behaviour.

Catalano will also participate in several private events, including a seminar at the Department of Health on public health approaches to drug, alcohol and tobacco prevention.

The Social Research Unit is grateful to Catch22 and the University of Bath for being partners to Professor Catalano's visit, and the Greater London Authority for making available meeting rooms at City Hall.



Social Research Unit Events Series

The Social Research Unit at Dartington is an independent charity with nearly 50 years of experience in bridging science and public policy for children. The goal of the Unit is to improve children's health and development, demonstrably so.

SRU Goals

- Research, into the causes of poor outcomes and into effective policy and practice
- Development of innovation based on science in real world situations
- Dissemination via a free daily online publication, Prevention Action, and the peer-reviewed Journal of Children's Services

Recent Speakers

Part of the Unit's charitable commitment is to offer a series of free events for policy makers, practitioners and researchers.

Recent speakers have included:

- **Tom Dishion**
Oregon Social Learning Center
2008 Annual Lecture
- **Del Elliott**
Blueprints for Violence Prevention
2009 Annual Lecture

- **Steve Aos**
Director of the Washington State Institute for Public Policy
2010 Annual Lecture
- **Roger Weissberg**
CASEL initiative on children's social and emotional learning
- **David Hawkins**
The co-developer of Communities that Care with Rico Catalano came to speak at a conference organised for Birmingham City Council in 2008

Forthcoming Events

- **Jack Shonkhoff** Harvard University will deliver the Unit's 2011 Annual Lecture: "Leveraging Developmental Science to Strengthen the Foundations of Lifelong Learning, Behavior and Health"
- **Christina Salmivalli** from the University of Turku, Finland will talk about effective ways of reducing bullying in schools
- Seminars bringing together the business community and public sector experts on the challenge of taking proven models to scale

Events are generally free, and advertised on the web. Major events are preceded by an Issue Brief and are captured on video that can be viewed at the [Social Research Unit website](http://www.dartington.org.uk).



Bringing the Big Society to bear on the Prevention of Adolescent Crime and Drug Use

Community is enjoying a political renaissance. The focus is currently most clearly manifest in the UK in the idea of the 'Big Society', discussed more below. But much of what is being said today has been said before. It brings to mind, for example, the Victorian settlement movement that encouraged the middle class to volunteer, share knowledge and culture with, and help alleviate poverty of the working class.

What is at stake here is the relationship between state and community, or what some call 'civil society', those aspects of life outside the reach of the state. This is something distinct from the relationship between state and individual, reflected in concerns about the boundaries of civil liberties, calls for more consumer choice for public services or in conversations about the rights of children and families.

At least two questions are being asked. Who should be responsible for healthy human development, the state or civil society?

This inquiry extends to the provision of services, including a greater role for small, local, independent, socially-minded organisations. It is then asked whether community members should exercise greater accountability over what the state spends on their behalf, and how that accountability can involve more than expressing a vague desire at the ballot box every few years. This includes questions of priority. Can local citizens get involved in deciding whether improving children's mental health deserves more attention than say boosting educational outcomes?

At least two questions are being asked in this issue:

- Who should be responsible for healthy human development, the state or civil society?
- Can local citizens get involved in deciding whether improving children's mental health deserves more attention than say boosting educational outcomes?

There are many forces leaning the see-saw from state to civil society and back again. Both sides are capable of misuses of power, evidenced by numerous atrocities over the ages. Each side mistrusts judgements made by the other. For example, in the UK the state has rejected the use of the death penalty that a

significant proportion of people, possibly the majority, support. The state welcomes neighbourhood watch schemes but draws the line at vigilantes.

Each side harbours suspicions about the motives of the other. Many, for example, have characterised the UK Government's promotion of civil society as an excuse to cut and privatise public sector services. At the same time, many parents whose children are suffering impairments to their health or development are asking whose interests advocates of a robust public sector are protecting.

Running into this ethical discussion is the scientific evidence about the power of people to influence each other's behaviour, for good and for ill. As a society, we have collectively decided to drink and eat more than our parents' generation. Could we not collectively decide to drink and eat less? To do so would have much greater impact than any government law or state-sponsored intervention.

This is the science of public health, and is known to work for many aspects of human development and has been the foundation for improvements in our physical health and longevity. In recent years it has been supplemented in popular and political culture by the idea of Nudge, the title of a book by University of Chicago professors Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein. Nudging deals with the relationship between state and public health. It is both paternalistic -- it is OK for the state to influence people's behaviours to make them healthier -- and libertarian -- the state should stop short of intrusion or compulsion. Continued over...

Rico Catalano



Rico Catalano (above) is Director of the Social Development Research Group (SDRG) at the University of Washington, which he founded with David Hawkins. SDRG has been at the forefront of research into the risks and protective factors associated with antisocial behaviour in young people, particularly drug, alcohol and substance misuse, but also crime.

The driver behind Catalano and Hawkins's work has been a desire to see a shift from rehabilitation to habilitation. The team sought to find out what would be needed to equip children with the skills and resources that led them to pass over the opportunity to use drugs or engage in delinquent behaviour in the first place. Their studies quickly led them to understand the need for healthy family, school and community environments.

The primary foundation for Catalano's work has been the Seattle Social Development Project, a 30-year follow-up of a cohort of over 800 children. The study has provided the data on risk and protective factors that has informed SDRG's intervention design work.

Among several products of this research, two have stood out. Raising Healthy Children is a public health programme that targets risks to adolescent development in the family, in schools and friendship groups.

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Bringing the Big Society to bear on the Prevention of Adolescent Crime and Drug Use continued...

In practical terms, this means reminding people that most of us do not drink to excess, a strategy that can coax potential heavy drinkers into a more sober lifestyle. Putting fruit near the check out counter in school canteens can prod students into eating more healthily. Changing the default options on donor cards can draw more people into volunteering their organs following death.

Child development scientists are not so interested in the ethics of the relative power of the state or civil society. What matters to them is the contribution one or the other makes to child outcomes. The primary speaker at the events surrounding this Issue Brief, Rico Catalano from the Social Development Research Group at the University of Washington has found that, in some contexts, community engagement does make a difference.

Catalano and his colleagues have developed Communities that Care, a manualised set of activities that can be thought of as an 'operating system' to help local people gather data about risks and protective factors bearing on young people in their neighbourhoods, and to use these data to implement evidence-based programmes to address risks and boost protection.

Trials of the Communities that Care programme show that the engagement

of local people makes a contribution to outcomes such as reduced drug, alcohol and substance misuse, and criminal behaviour, over and above the interventions they sponsor.

The focus of the events surrounding this Issue Brief will be on the role of evidence in mediating the relationship between state and civil society. This means reflecting on the role of proven models like Communities that Care in the UK. It means considering the potential of public health approaches, initiated by the state, but gathering pace and impact in the community. It also involves a consideration of what kinds of objectives community members might set for themselves. Should they be allowed to look away from outputs like better health, reduced crime and improved school performance that has animated the state in recent decades? If communities are to take a greater role, how can they be made aware of the products of science, such as evidence-based programmes, policies and practices?

The events organised by the Social Research Unit will disproportionately cover the potential to involve communities in the reduction of antisocial behaviour by young people, extending from drug and alcohol misuse to all types of criminal behaviour.



Rico Catalano continued...

The programme provides training for teachers, parent workshops and cognitive and emotional training for children. Rigorous evaluation shows impact on school achievement, adolescent criminal behaviour, and adult mental health.

Communities that Care was created as a vehicle to deliver evidence-based interventions to families, schools and communities. It brings together community leaders and provides them with high quality data on local risks to healthy adolescent development.

The model guides the community towards proven models that can operate in local schools, families and other neighbourhood contexts that will reduce risks. Community members retain responsibility for monitoring the impact of these interventions. A major experimental trial shows that Communities that Care significantly reduces adolescent antisocial behaviour and mental health problems over and above the interventions it sponsors.



On the 18th of May, Rico will talk about Communities that Care at London's Living Room in City Hall.

The Social Research Unit Interest in this Area



The Social Research Unit is driven by better outcomes for children. In recent years the Unit has given considerable attention to finding out what works, for whom, when and why. This has resulted in databases of proven models, now charting costs and benefits of competing investment options.

But knowing what works is just one part of the puzzle. Getting people to implement what works, and to do so with consistency, commitment and skill, is another.

The Social Research Unit has tried several strategies to bring proven programmes and practices to children. On the island of Ireland, supported by a major investment by the Atlantic Philanthropies, the Unit worked in several economically disadvantaged communities with the goal of demonstrating to public sector agencies new ways of working.

Another major initiative in Birmingham started with the big public sector systems working with children, health, education, social care, police and youth justice, looking to get agreement on... continued over...



The Social Research Unit Interest in this Area continued...

investments and activities that would produce better outcomes for the City's children.

These efforts have resulted in what are called 'operating systems' – carefully worked out methods that allow a community or system to use high quality data, local knowledge, evidence about what works and a clear understanding of finance to design and implement an agreed strategy to improve child well-being. Common Language is the name we gave to the operating system used in Ireland and Birmingham.

The Communities that Care operating system, developed by Rico Catalano and colleagues at the Social Development Research Group at the University of Washington, is unique in that it has been rigorously tested in a randomised controlled trial. In other words, there is clear evidence that using Communities that Care will add value to child outcomes over and above the implementation of the evidence-based programmes it supports.

The Social Research Unit is to partner with Catch22 to bring Communities that Care up to date for widespread use in England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

We are now seeking partner communities and local agencies willing to thoroughly test the approach as a way of preventing crime and antisocial behaviour by young people.

Dartington has also collaborated with SDRG and the Annie E. Casey Foundation in the US to develop a third operating system called Evidence2Success. In addition to the benefits of Common Language and Communities that Care, Evidence2Success explicitly seeks to improve the relationship between public systems and local communities, allowing the former to understand and use the strengths of the latter, and allowing the latter to share accountability for public funds with the former.



The Social Research Unit is also considering applications by local authorities and communities to partner in a testing of the UK version of Evidence2Success. This work extends from conception to 24 years of age.

As with all of the products it develops and tests, the Social Research Unit is committed to making this technology freely available to central and local government, and to local communities.



Public Policy Relevance

As discussed above, the relationship between the state and civil society has become a focal point of public policy in the UK. The need to reduce antisocial behaviour by young people has been an omnipresent component of public policy in most economically developed countries for several decades.

Although there has been confusion about the meaning of the 'Big Society', the policy intent can be seen in the culture of the new government and several emerging policies.

There is clearly a shift in the way in which government departments go about their business. Although it stops well short of devolution of powers, Government is more reluctant to tell local authorities what to do. The steady stream of central government backed interventions has dried up.

There has been a significant drive to boost support for organisations with a social mission that are owned by local people

and not by the public sector. Co-ops, mutuals and charities are once again fashionable, especially if they are small and efficient. Government is encouraging public sector managers to establish social enterprises to deliver their work outside the public sector, including for example youth offending teams.

In a policy environment that shies away from explicit targets, Government has been explicit about making more public sector activity open to private and social sector providers.

The UK Government is also seeking to open up new funding streams for social activity. The Big Society Bank is being established to support financial intermediaries to pump prime a new generation of social entrepreneurs, with an emphasis on social activity that generates a return on investment. The Big Society Bank will also seek to unlock charitable assets for use by social sector organisations, again predicated on an economic return on the investment.

The Big Society should also be visible in the Government's Community Based Budgets initiative, although the focus on the 'most expensive families' in communities is antithetical to the preventative drive first

promised by the initiative and will do less than hoped to re-direct public expenditure in high risk communities.

Prevention and early intervention will have to become the watch words for public policy on antisocial behaviour. In common with their colleagues in other economically developed nations, many politicians, particularly those from the right of the political spectrum, are coming to the realisation that imprisoning more people for longer periods of time is not good value for money.

Innovation is required to prevent the risks that lead to youth crime and other antisocial behaviour, most of which have been well known since pioneering work by David Farrington, Michael Rutter, Rico Catalano and David Hawkins from the 1960s onwards.

The tardiness with which the public sector has invested in programmes proven to reduce these risks stands as a major obstacle to the prevention goal. Whether greater community engagement in the task of deciding local priorities and interventions can overcome this obstacle will be a focus of discussion in the events organised around this Issue Brief.

