“Selective influence”– a staff perspective

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Surprising findings

- Volume of vague recommendations
  - 5% of bold text passages – not clear whether or not a recommendation is being made
  - 2% of recommendations – not clear who the recommendation is aimed at
  - 4% of recommendations – not clear what action is being requested
  - 14% of all recommendations are “immeasurable”
  - Flipside to consensual decision-making?
Surprising findings

“No obvious relationship” between newspaper coverage and whether or not a recommendation is accepted or implemented
- 45% of implemented recommendations had received no coverage, compared with 38% that had received some coverage
- Ministers “more likely to react negatively or defensively” to committee reports
- But: “how else will committees generate fear?”
- Implications for our influencing strategies?
Impact of simply conducting an inquiry:
  ◦ “The much bigger influence is the fear of having to appear in front of them”
  ◦ “In a way reports are just a formality”
  ◦ “If you were really cynical you wouldn’t do reports, just announce inquiries”
  ◦ Evidence of policy announcements during the course of an inquiry
Expected findings

- Difficulty in judging whether or not recommendations have been accepted and/or implemented
  - Poor quality of Government responses
  - 2% of recommendations received no response
  - 24% of recommendations classed as “neither accepted nor rejected”
  - Letting them get away with it – only 3% of committee publications were a direct follow-up to Government responses (outlier – PASC 16%)
Expected findings

- Recommendations are more likely to be successful if they are either:
  a) endorsing/embellishing existing policy
     ◦ 68% of recommendations requesting small or no change were accepted (61% implemented)
     ◦ 17% of recommendations requesting large change were accepted (21% implemented)
  b) pursuing niche areas
     ◦ “Setting hares racing”
Possible further research

- Implementation rates over time
- Committees are producing larger numbers of reports and recommendations
  - 1997–2001 152 reports
  - 2001–2005 131 reports
  - 2005–2010 222 reports
- Is there any relationship between quantity of output and level of influence?
Possible further research

- *Relationship between influence and who recommendations are aimed at*
- Only 26% of recommendations are *not* aimed at central government
- What does increased localism mean for the work of select committees?