The “Scared Straight” programme in the United States is another popular and politically attractive programme, in which high school students are shown life in prison in order to scare them out of a life of crime.**5** Systematic reviews of the programme have shown adverse outcomes for the subjects. We have been alarmed to learn that a variant of this programme has been introduced into the United Kingdom, and we have asked the Home Office to discourage it from our schools (JM, personal communication).

Unanswered questions remain about many aspects of public policy, particularly in criminal justice and community safety—the effectiveness of closed circuit television (CCTV), street lighting, and police on the beat, and of boot camps versus adventure camps. Many of these could be answered best through properly constructed randomised controlled trials.

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EPPI Centre reviews will aim to disseminate systematic reviews in education

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EDITOR—Davies and Boruch draw the attention of *BMJ* readers to the Campbell Collaboration (http://campbell.gse.upenn.edu/).**1** These readers will be well aware of the importance of systematic reviews in health,**2** particularly the reviews from the Cochrane Collaboration (http://www.cochrane.org/).

Systematic reviews are less well accepted or even known about outside medicine, even though some of the early meta-analytic work was in education.**3** The Campbell Collaboration and several initiatives based on the provision and dissemination of research evidence in social and public policy (www.esrc.ac.uk/EBPesrcUKcentre.htm) suggest, however, that this situation is changing.

In education, the Department for Education and Employment (now Department of Education and Skills) established the Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Coordinating Centre (EPPI Centre) in 2000 at the Social Science Research Unit in the Institute of Education, London. The unit has a long

history of systematic reviewing in social interventions[4] and health and health promotion[5] and is joint coordinator for the Cochrane health promotion and public health field.

The aim of the EPPI Centre (http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/) is to facilitate the production and dissemination of systematic reviews of research evidence to inform policy and practice in education. EPPI Centre reviews, like Campbell reviews, will consider research addressing a broad set of research questions including, for example, “what works?” and “what is the process?”

Influenced by the pioneering work at the Cochrane Collaboration, these reviews are being based around the establishment of education review groups, which include not just academic researchers but also policymakers, practitioners, and other actual and potential users of the research evidence. The groups are supported to take forward a programme of reviews in specific areas of education. There are currently groups in assessment and learning research, English teaching, gender and education, inclusive education, school leadership, and post-compulsory education, and a further four will probably be registered later. The reviews and the data underpinning them will be placed on the web for free access.

Members of the EPPI Centre collaborate with fellow reviewers in parallel organisations such as the Cochrane and Campbell Collaborations. Different disciplines have much to learn from each other, and we hope that this shared spirit of openness and collaboration will lead to better informed decisions for policy and practice.

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