

## Impact template (REF3a)

<b>Institution:</b> University of Sheffield
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 25 - Education
<p><b>a. Context</b></p> <p>Our educational research addresses a broad social justice agenda in which user engagement and impact are reflected in the design, conduct, review and future development of programmes and projects. The effectiveness of our Impact strategy and support mechanisms has been recognised by the ESRC with the award of a Celebrating Impact Prize to Nutbrown (May 2013). Collaboration to promote impact and develop reach is undertaken with a wide range of user communities: education and education-related policymakers; educational psychologists; teachers and education managers; childcare and welfare services; parents; museums and heritage culture organisations; media and cultural industries, disability organisations; and other Third Sector organisations.</p> <p>Significant impacts range from informing policy design and professional development through to changes in the understanding, planning and management of educational and community services, leading to benefits in individual, family and organisational learning and the quality of life. These are local, regional, national and international in scope, with influences on policy and practice within and beyond the UK.</p>
<p><b>b. Approach to impact</b></p> <p>The School's strategic approach to establishing and enhancing the impact of research has resulted in the ESRC award for research with outstanding impact in society (Nutbrown). The School has a long tradition of socially engaged research aimed at understanding inequalities in education and how they might be reduced, especially in respect of educationally disadvantaged and marginalised groups. Our approach to impact is to create conditions for research that can serve as resources for informing policy and practice and enhancing education in the home, school, college, university, community and the workplace. We achieve this in three main ways.</p> <p><b>1. Active research relationships with key constituencies</b></p> <p>Relationships with external organisations and communities are embedded within our research and provide pathways for impact. Since 2008, more than half of all externally-funded projects were sponsored by user organisations such as: Booktrust, National Association of Teachers of Travellers, Training and Development Agency for Schools, Higher Education Funding Council for England, Joint Information Systems Committee, Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, and local government authorities. For example: Parry's research on college-based higher education develops work with the sector bodies in higher and further education, supported by follow-on funding from HEFCE. Impact has been realised through a good practice guide and a programme to enhance expertise of college managers and governors. The reach and significance of Nutbrown's work on early literacy, recognised by the ESRC Impact prize in 2013 involved collaboration with the National Children's Bureau, to support the training of staff in children's centres and primary schools to raise early achievement in literacy. These and other projects exemplify the successful strategy of engagement with a variety of collaborating user-groups (from well established and new research relationships) to create strong impact. In addition to influencing their own work, partners transfer, translate and cascade the research through their networks. For instance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pahl's AHRC-funded studies on collaborative ethnography build on relationships with Rotherham MBC including schools, museums and galleries. Co-produced research has created materials based on diverse heritages to be used for family learning in museums.</li> <li>• Marsh's work on moving image education and literacy attainment arose from collaborations with the British Film Institute and the United Kingdom Literacy Association, with a booklet from the research published by UKLA and distributed to practitioners nationwide (Schools in Lincoln and Leeds used these in curriculum development). The Bodleian Library is a partner on British Academy funded research on the Opie collection (with over 22,500 hits on the project website since launch) and party to new funding applications linked to the collection.</li> <li>• Levy's Booktrust research guided the development of the "Bookbuzz" programme, now</li> </ul>

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implemented in over 1,300 secondary schools with the aim of encouraging reading for pleasure, independent choice and whole school reading cultures.

- Winter, with teachers in a local secondary school, has provided a theoretical underpinning for them to develop and implement a new Curriculum Unit in Geography.

**2. Taking research into public and policy arenas**

Research users are involved in the design, planning, conduct and dissemination of research as well as engagement with larger publics and wider debates. Goodley's ESRC research has methodological impact, involving young people as active and informed participants in research processes rather than passive recipients of 'disability dealings' by professional practitioners. As part of the Research Excellence and Education Forum local teachers have worked collaboratively with colleagues from Sheffield City Council, Sheffield Hallam University and the University of Sheffield to promote knowledge exchange. This resulted in a series of action research projects involving local teachers leading school improvement effecting change in children's motivation, learning outcomes and engagement with technology. The same partners hosted the North of England Education Conference in 2013, attended by teachers, policy makers, politicians, academics and research students. Other research from the School was showcased at this event, demonstrating user engagement, co-production and theory-policy-practice relationships.

Impact has also been achieved independently of user bodies or where the findings achieved a level and type of impact that was not anticipated. Sikes' study of false accusation in relation to sexual misconduct in schools commanded much attention in the media and has been taken up by various 'innocence' organisations, such as the national organisation for Falsely Accused Carers and Teachers (FACT). Submissions to Select Committee and Parliamentary inquiries followed, with subsequent influence on how cases should be investigated and on procedures to be followed by disciplinary panels.

Empirical and theoretical research in the School, including research-led teaching, has contributed to public understanding of the changing contexts and broader controversies in education. For instance, Wood's research on play and pedagogy has influenced early childhood curriculum guidance in Ireland and Australia. Public debate has been stimulated by the ESRC Festival of Social Science (e.g. in the 2011 Festival school children from the region took part in discussions about educational research) and through policy review such as the Nutbrown Review of Early Education and Childcare Qualifications undertaken for the Department for Education in 2012.

**3. Formal mechanisms to secure and promote impact**

Our approach to building impact awareness and intelligence has been informed by University, Faculty and School mechanisms and activities. Within the School, impact activity is promoted and coordinated by an Impact Champion (Parry), who is also Chair of the School's Research Advisory Group (RAG), established in 2009 as an expert forum for exchange, debate and advice on impact, including the development of the School's impact strategy. The RAG enables staff to interact with national, regional and local leaders who represent the key constituencies for their work opening new avenues into local, regional, national and government bodies and organisations leading to agenda-setting research, evaluation and intervention. Specifically, the RAG has led to invitations to take our research into national policy and practitioner forums. We are now a regular point of contact for specialist expertise and consultancy in early years, literacy, and tertiary education.

The external membership of the RAG comprises: current or former senior representatives of government departments (Department for Education; Department for Business, Innovation and Skills); funding councils (Learning and Skills Council; Higher Education Funding Council for England); quality and curriculum agencies (Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation; Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency); representative bodies (Association of Colleges); professional organisations (British Association for Early Childhood; National Institute of Adult Continuing Education); and national centres for development (Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services; Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education) plus a head of a secondary school and a principal of a further education college.

The impact strategy is monitored and managed by the School's Research Committee and

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modelled by the Professoriate. Knowledge exchange and impact is a standing item at monthly meetings to which research centres report, including the use of internal funds to support impact development. RAG also oversees an annual audit of engagement and impact activity. Individual members of staff are required to address the impact of current and proposed research in the University's annual staff review and development (SRDS) process. Study leave plans must include impact activities and outcomes. The Research Exchange in the Social Sciences (RESS) has responsibility for co-production of research and public engagement across the Faculty (Pahl is Deputy Director). RESS has received £1.5 million in Higher Education Innovation Funding (HEIF) over the past 5 years. School staff development events draw on the impact-related experiences and expertise of School and Faculty colleagues and staff from Research and Innovation Services (R&IS) to build concepts and measures of impact in order to track and enhance reach and significance.

Institutional resources have been used to support partnerships and follow-on grant applications. For instance, HEIF enabled Pahl to foster research links with The Hepworth Wakefield (£20,000), Marsh (£10,000) to work with the Opie collection, and Parry (£10,000) to develop work with further education institutions. The School's impact strategy is informed by international best practice. Following a study visit to the Knowledge Mobilization team in Canada, Pahl led an impact workshop attended by 40 colleagues.

**c. Strategy and plans**

Research impact is central to the strategy and mission of the School: *'We value research that develops theory, practice, society and individuals' lives and work – locally, regionally, nationally and internationally'* (Strategic Plan 2009-15). An explicit impact strategy has increased the influence of our research to reflect these values.

Our strategy for embedding impact in research culture and practice is multi-layered. Thus we have appointed a Business Development Manager for Research to support staff in writing bids, working with partners and integrating impact into research proposals. Workshops led by RESS and R&IS, focus on topics such as co-production and co-ordinating impact. We successfully bid for funding from the University's Social Science Transformation Fund to support transdisciplinary research and collaborations with user communities (Goodley, Wood and Ecclestone's Social Sciences Transformational Research Award *Transforming Disability, Lives, Culture and Childhood: Local, Global and Transdisciplinary Responses*) and will introduce a Doctoral Training Centre module on impact. All research staff have a mentor whose role includes support for writing and approving funding applications, and the School uses internal funding to support large grant applications, such as to RCUK and Horizon 2020.

The School continues to refine its understanding of how impact can be achieved and monitored. In light of shifting funding priorities, we are extending our alliances with core partners, including local councils and industrial organisations such as the Master Cutlers. Strategic professorial appointments have been made in recent years to extend and deepen our relationships with research beneficiaries in disability studies (Goodley), assessment (Ecclestone) and early childhood education (Wood). The Business Development Manager for School Partnerships will extend our collaborations with schools as sites for research.

**d. Relationship to case studies**

The case studies reflect the School's investment in collaboration, management and planning for impact. *Raising Early Achievement in Literacy* and *Higher Education in College Systems* represent programmes of cumulative and collaborative research that extend back to the 1990s. Funded by user organisations, research councils and the university for their core and follow-on stages, the reach of the research has been international and national (through engagement with professional communities) as well as local, institutional and individual (through the translation of findings into support materials and working practices). Both case studies demonstrate the benefits of ensuring that partners are informed and involved in generating and sustaining impact across a variety of fronts.