

Institution: Durham University
Unit of Assessment: Social Work and Social Policy (UoA 22)
<p>a. Context</p> <p>Durham has been conducting applied social research since the 1970s to guide, challenge and transform policy processes, decision making, organisational and professional practice. We strive to create, co-produce and exchange knowledge that promotes social justice and individual wellbeing and contributes to reducing social inequalities linked to social class, gender, 'race', ethnicity, sexuality, poverty, age, health and disability. Our main types of impact are on improving policy and practice across a range of social problems, particularly in the areas of: ethics and professional practice; criminal justice and deviance; families, welfare and poverty; gender, violence and sexual abuse, and health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Our research users are broad, and include: voluntary/community sector organisations (e.g. Adoption UK, Rape Crisis, Human Trafficking Foundation, National Trust); private sector organisations (e.g. independent social welfare organisations and security companies); local, regional and national government (e.g. Department of Health, Ministry of Justice, Equalities Office); and international bodies (e.g. the United Nations, World Health Organisation and International Council on Social Welfare). Many of our research users are amongst the 1360 non-academic users of the School for Applied Social Sciences (SASS), our four research centres (public policy and health, sex, gender and sexualities, social justice and community action, and violence and abuse), and the Wolfson Research Institute for Health and Wellbeing (WRI).</p> <p>b. Approach to impact</p> <p>Underpinning our approach is a recognition of the importance of developing and nurturing relationships with this broad range of research users, going beyond any single research project. Many staff and postgraduate researchers have policy or practice backgrounds, having worked, for example, as police officers, social workers, community development workers, and youth justice workers. Most are involved voluntarily as trustees and advisors in local, national and international organisations linked to their research fields. This 'deep' engagement with the field helps us to formulate research questions rooted in organisational needs, putting us in an ideal position to ask relevant questions and have our research findings heard and used to create change. These close working relationships form the building blocks of our partnership based approach to research impact.</p> <p>Close partnership working with research users and beneficiaries: We develop relationships with organisations, groups and individuals likely to use our research findings – involving them in research design, process and dissemination. All academics are engaged in work with non-academic organisations – it is the norm not the exception. We have different models of partnership working, including participatory research where users and beneficiaries are also co-producers of knowledge, and the involvement of users and beneficiaries on steering or advisory groups and in consultation and dissemination events. For example, 'Fulfilling Lives, Fulfilling Research' examined leisure activities for people with learning disabilities in partnership with Community Links and Gateshead People. Academics worked with service users in designing and undertaking research, resulting in changes implemented through Gateshead Learning Disability Partnership Board. In addition, an action-research partnership with Teesside-based community organisation Thrive and Church Action on Poverty resulted in changed lending practices of three UK private sector loan companies, benefiting an estimated 325,000 customers in the UK.</p> <p>We have played a leadership role in developing new partnerships, for example following a project on 'race', crime and justice by Craig and O'Neill, a network of over 100 criminal justice agencies, academics, researchers and community organisations was formed to take forward the research recommendations. Innovative methods of partnership building include the four 'speed dating' events ran by the Centre for Social Justice and Community Action (CSJCA), which enabled representatives from community groups and organisations to meet academic staff and postgraduate researchers from across the University, with a view to finding out more about each other and exploring possibilities for collaborative research.</p> <p>Targeted dissemination to non-academics as a pathway to impact: On completing a research</p>

project, we consider how dissemination is best targeted to non-academics. We include links to full text articles on our staff webpages where possible, and where appropriate publish in an open access format, for example through our Durham Research Online repository. Funding is available for research briefing papers distributed in hard copy as well as online and 12 have been published since 2008. We frequently host practitioner-focussed events to showcase research. For example, the Durham Centre for Research into Violence and Abuse (CRiVA) hosts a free, annual North East Conference on Sexual Violence to bring together academics, policy makers and practitioners (2013 will be its 7th year).

We use a variety of media for pathways to impact, for example Greener's academic blog on health policy, welfare reform and the financial crisis was getting up to 4,000 hits per week when debates about the NHS Bill were at their peak in 2012. We have also used social media, podcasts and exhibitions to showcase our work, depending on the audiences we are trying to reach. Following the conclusion of a project on disaster recovery responses, Dominelli prepared a toolkit for future responses which has been used, for example, to support responses in to the Uttarkhand floods in Northern India and was translated into Chinese to support responses to the Lushan Earthquake by the China Earthquake Administration.

Support and leadership across the sector for the promotion of community-university research: As well as 'doing it ourselves', we have also developed good practice and played a leadership role in encouraging and supporting other academics internationally to work in partnerships. Banks played an important leadership role in promoting community-university research partnerships through the North East Beacon for Public Engagement (2008-12) as theme leader for social justice. The first UK guide to ethics in community-based participatory research was developed by a group of community partners and academics led by the CSJCA. Following dissemination including an EasyRead version, along with case materials, films and podcasts, it is now being used by a variety of third sector organisations, as well as the AHRC in its Connected Communities funding calls, and the Wellcome Trust.

Two key conferences led by CSJCA have developed work in this area: Community-University Collaborations: Exploring Models, Sharing Good Practice in 2010 which brought together community and university representatives to showcase and share examples of good practice and to inform and foster new ones; and Tackling ethical challenges in community-based participatory research in 2013 which considered the use and abuse of power, co-authorship of publications, ownership of findings and institutional ethical reviews processes.

Embedding impact maximisation and monitoring into research management and processes: At University level, research impact is integral to recruitment, probation, appraisal and promotion processes, and is embedded within the academic staff training programme. New positions have been created: Dean of Knowledge Exchange and Impact; Impact Coordinator (located in the Research Office, to assist in the development and recording of Impact-generating activities); and three Impact Officers. Other professional support departments have also realigned their priorities to contribute to maximising impact. To strengthen leadership and provide coordination for Social Policy and Social Work, there is a Deputy Director for Research in SASS with responsibility for impact. Bi-monthly impact drop-in days are held where staff receive one-to-one support on a range of impact plans and activities. This is a two-way process, with staff needs and ideas feeding into our impact strategy and plans.

Staff have access to ring-fenced financial resources for impact maximisation: the University has an Impact Seedcorn Fund of £250,000 per annum, the Wolfson Research Institute for Health and Wellbeing allocates funds to maximise research impact, and the School of Applied Social Sciences also has a research impact fund. In line with the University strategy, we are developing methods of tracking and evidencing impact. This will help ensure that the Deputy Director of Research and research mentors can monitor impact maximisation. Research impact has been embedded into research submission and grant completion procedures.

c. Strategy and plans

The Durham University research strategy 2010-2020 aims to embed impact as a key component of academic activity across the institution, and has the following objective: *'To deliver research in every discipline that addresses questions and issues with the potential to ... enhance or change society for the better.'* The vision of Durham Social Policy and Social Work is further to embed impact in our research culture and to identify, support and maximise research impact from inception. Our 2014-2020 plans are to:

- Continue to develop long-standing research partnerships with research users and beneficiaries through increased involvement in our research centres (we will ask each centre/institute to set annual targets for non-academic membership as a proportion of overall members and monitored this through research committee), a register of non-academics interested in our research centre areas, and the establishment of research ‘open days’ (mirroring student open days) and ‘research surgeries’ where organisations that are designing their own impact monitoring or evaluation can get research design advice and academic support.
- Ensure impact plans are embedded in the design of research projects from the outset via peer review of applications, the continuation of impact drop in days, mentoring, and the sharing of impact plans. This will be encouraged through personal research plans and monitored through annual staff reviews and research committee.
- Train research mentors in 2014 on embedding research impact so that they are fully equipped to support their mentees and encourage the sharing of good practice through the collation of information and tools on Durham University Online (intranet).
- Continue to encourage and fund widespread publication and dissemination assisted by: a close working relationship with the University media relations office, the building of new relationships with a small number of recommended non-academic outlets, twitter accounts, open access magazines.
- Continue to innovate in the area of research impact amongst Durham staff through further research ‘speed dating’ events, workshops, research away days, and other staff development opportunities. Continue to share this knowledge through external conferences and events.
- Identify projects with high impact potential and invest in them via seedcorn funding and the impact fund. Decisions regarding financial support will be made for small amounts by the impact leads and larger support packages by research office.
- Increase non-academic and postgraduate student involvement in research design, process and dissemination through supporting and promoting participatory action research (PAR) and other collaborative approaches through developing existing training and events on PAR.
- Prioritise support early career researchers to develop partnerships with non-academic organisations, for example positions on committees, boards, and in advisory roles.

d. Relationship to case studies

Each of our three case studies is located within the work of a research centre or institute, demonstrating the role they play a key role in fostering close relationships with research users. This close partnership working approach, drawing upon and working alongside, the non-academic members underpins the impact in each of our case studies. They each exemplify our approach to impact, particularly close partnership working as ongoing and as the ‘norm’ and the establishing of ‘deep’ engagement in the field. For example, Hunter’s positions as Board member of the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), special advisor to the House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee on its inquiry into local authorities and health, and member of the WHO Europe Public Health Expert Reference Group, enabled and encouraged the impacts described in ‘strengthening public health capacities and services’. In turn, this has fed into our strategy and plans to prioritise support to early career researchers to develop relevant partnerships. Designing in impact from the start, such as Bambra’s commissioned research described in ‘reducing health inequalities’, demonstrates our longstanding reputation and commitment to applied research, to developing centres and institutes with this focus, and of building networks accordingly (one of the objectives of the WRI, of which Bambra is Executive Director, is to create opportunities for dialogue and new collaborations, internally and externally to the university).

Being able to then build upon this ‘deep’ engagement, membership and leadership of networks, and voluntary positions within organisations enabled Hackett to share the findings of his research described within ‘improving policy, professional practice and services in relation to young people who have sexually abused’. As well as keynotes at practitioner-led conferences, Hackett accessed School resources (as described in section b) to disseminate in a targeted way around 2,500 hard copies of his research briefing through the National Organisation for the Treatment of Abusers (NOTA) mailing list and conference and the British Association for the Study and Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (BASPCAN). This has fed into our plans to continue and expand the research briefing series and other forms of targeted dissemination.