

<b>Institution: University of Surrey</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: UOA 18 Economics and Econometrics</b>
<b>Title of case study:</b> <b>Changes in Intergenerational Mobility: Research informing policy and public debate</b>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>The association between incomes across generations is known as ‘intergenerational mobility’. Knowledge of this is important for understanding the extent of inequality within society and can measure equality of opportunity. Improving such mobility has been central to current (and previous) Government policy.</p> <p>Research carried out at Surrey, along with the Centre for Economic Performance (CEP), has contributed significantly to policy and public debate on the extent and drivers of intergenerational mobility in Britain. It has featured in UK Government and OECD outputs; and contributed directly to Government policy on intergenerational mobility.</p> <p>Related policies directly influenced by the research include Family Nurse Partnerships (costing £17.5m), free nursery provision for disadvantaged 2-year olds (costing £760m by 2014-15) and the funding of a new 2012 cohort study (£33.5m). The research has also attracted considerable national media attention.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Research at Surrey (particularly by Blanden) since 2005 has been carried out with the Centre for Economic Performance (CEP), where Blanden is a visiting Research Associate. She has been at the “core of the team producing a number of extremely important papers” (see [C1] in the area, undertaking a majority of the empirical research, raising research income and organising a major conference attended by policy makers and media.</p> <p>Having established that intergenerational mobility was lower in 1970 than 1958, the research progressed to consider the mechanisms that led to changes in this mobility. In work presented in a special session of the Royal Economics Society 2006, paper (1) used a decomposition approach to highlight the mechanisms that generated changes in intergenerational mobility. The key mechanism discovered was the increasingly unequal access to higher education in the UK, in part reinforced by a strengthening relationship between parental income and better non-cognitive skills amongst children. Stated differently, in the second cohort higher income families were more likely to have children with good non-cognitive skills who then went on to university.</p> <p>In work published in 2012 (paper (2)), but initially produced as a background paper for the Sutton Trust-Carnegie Foundation Transatlantic Summit on intergenerational mobility, the research provided the first systematic international comparison of intergenerational mobility using a variety of measures, income, education and social class. This work revealed that the UK compares poorly with other OECD nations, although it also stressed the difficulty of forming simple league tables here.</p> <p>As is natural for influential findings, the results that intergenerational mobility previously declined in Britain, and the mechanism for this, have been subject to scrutiny. Results on the trend in intergenerational mobility based on social class are not always consistent with those based on income (and described above). A further paper in this series (paper (3)) explores why this is the case. There are two important elements in this paper. First, it is demonstrated that the result</p>

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above is robust, and not a consequence of measurement error. Second, it is demonstrated that results based on income differ because of large and persistent intergenerational inequalities in incomes among families of the same social class. This debate has been conducted with eminent sociologists Goldthorpe and Erikson.

In order to update our knowledge about how intergenerational mobility has evolved more recently we can observe how gaps in early outcomes and educational achievements have evolved for more recent cohorts and use these to predict future patterns of mobility. This approach has been taken in work published in 2008 (paper (4)) and in a current project (paper (5)) which examines the implications of education policy for mobility and shows the extent to which looking at average measures of educational achievement (as often happens in policy debate) may be misleading.

**3. References to the research** (indicative maximum of six references)

1. Blanden, Gregg & Macmillan (2007), 'Accounting for Intergenerational Persistence: Noncognitive Skills, Ability and Education', *Economic Journal* Conference Volume, March 2007, C43-C60.
2. Blanden (2011), 'Cross-national rankings of intergenerational mobility: a comparison of approaches from economics and sociology', *Journal of Economic Surveys*, Volume 27 (1), pp. 38-73. (Note that this paper is sometimes referred to as 'How much can we learn from international comparisons of intergenerational mobility?')
3. Blanden, Gregg & Macmillan (2013), 'Intergenerational persistence in income and social class: The impact of within-group inequality', *Journal of Royal Statistical Society Series A*, Volume 176(2), pp. 541-563.
4. Blanden & Machin (2008), 'Up and Down the Generational Income Ladder in Britain: Past Changes and Future Prospects', *National Institute Economic Review*, July 2008, pp. 101-116. (Note that this paper is sometimes referred to as 'Recent changes in intergenerational mobility'.)
5. Blanden & Macmillan (2013), 'Education and intergenerational mobility: Help or hindrance?', forthcoming as Centre for the Analysis of Social Exclusion, LSE, Working Paper.

**4. Details of the impact** (indicative maximum 750 words)

The research described above has produced several kinds of impact:

- (a) impact on policy debate within Government
- (b) impact on specific policies
- (c) impact on other policy stakeholders
- (d) impact on national media debate

**(a) Impact on policy debate within Government**

Blanden has provided reviews of her work and policy advice to a number of organisations. As [C2] reports, in January 2008 she was invited to 10 Downing Street to explain her findings at a meeting including Prime Minister Gordon Brown and Ed Miliband (Cabinet Office Minister); [C1] notes that this input "helped to fashion the [2009] White Paper". In the same year she gave evidence based on the above research to the Children and Families Select Committee and the Liberal Democrat Social Mobility Commission. Blanden advised meetings about the Cabinet Office Discussion Paper 'Getting On, Getting Ahead' [C4]. In 2011, she advised officials at the Cabinet Office on the Government's Social Mobility Strategy and was a member of Alan Milburn's advisory group in his capacity as Independent Reviewer on Social Mobility. In 2013, she used paper (5) to advise officials from the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission about the content of their annual

report – see [C3].

**(b) Impact on specific policies**

The last two Governments have prioritised improving intergenerational mobility, as confirmed in the 2009 Social Mobility White Paper and the 2011 Social Mobility Strategy. It can be clearly demonstrated that Surrey research influenced this: [C3] describes the work as “very influential in getting mobility onto the Government’s policy agenda” and “is drawn on heavily in the Government’s social mobility strategy”. It features eight times in the 2008 Cabinet Office Discussion Paper which preceded the White Paper (see [C4]) and papers (1) and (3) are “heavily referenced” according to [C2] in the recent Social Mobility Strategy [C5]. As a particular example, the chapter on ‘Foundation Years’ recognises the findings that socioeconomic differences in child development appear early (paper (1)) and that poor non-cognitive skills diminish mobility (paper (2)).

In turn, the Strategy uses these findings to justify two other “specific instances of [this] research influencing Government policy since 2008” (quoted from [C2] – see also [C1]): (i) an expansion of Family Nurse Partnerships, which increases the number of families benefiting from 6000 to 13000 by 2015 (costing £17.5m) and (ii) an increase in the number of 2-year olds benefiting from free nursery places to about 20% of the cohort by 2015 (ultimately costing £760m). In addition, the importance of the findings on mobility drawn from the 1958, 1970 and 2000 cohorts has led to Government funding of £33.5m for a new birth cohort study (from 2012), offering wide benefits for social science and policy (see paragraphs 6.17 and 6.18 of [C5]).

**(c) Impact on policy debate within other policy stakeholders**

Surrey’s work has also influenced groups outside of Government. It warranted six references in the National Equalities Panel report (see [C6]) and received international attention in the OECD’s ‘Growing Unequal’ (see [C7]). Blanden has spoken about the work to the Bridge Group, Into University and Universities UK. Two particularly strong examples of the research generating impact beyond Government are two conferences held in Summer 2008. The first was the Sutton Trust-Carnegie Foundation Transatlantic Summit where Blanden presented the opening paper on international comparisons of mobility (now paper (3)); this conference was designed to promote policy debate and a broad spectrum of US and UK policy makers attended; [C1] describes the importance of the conference, and notes that “[this] work in particular helped to set the future research priorities for the [Sutton] Trust”. The second conference, held at LSE in Summer 2008, was organised by Blanden and Kirstine Hansen (Institute of Education). This included a policy round table involving Lynn Featherstone (then Minister for Equalities), David Willetts (Minister for Universities and Science), Polly Toynbee (The Guardian) and Lee Elliott Major (the Sutton Trust). The attendees ranged across academia, Government, think tanks and policy bodies and Toynbee explicitly referred to results in papers (1)–(4) in a subsequent article [C8].

**(d) Impact on media debate**

The research in Section 2 has attracted extensive and continuing media attention; [C2] places it “at the heart of the lively media debate” on intergenerational mobility, and the research’s “frequent mentions in the press have raised public awareness ... and served to develop the debate in Government”. As a result, CEP has recorded more than 10 media reports which explicitly mentioned this research in both 2010 and 2011. In addition, Blanden was interviewed on BBC Radio Five Live (2010) and BBC Radio 4’s World at One (2013), and was consulted about the preparation of the BBC documentary in (2011) [C9]. The controversy between the work of economists and sociologists (paper (4)) has also attracted media attention – see [C8].

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact** (indicative maximum of 10 references)

Sources selected in line with REF Guidelines:

**“Independent documentary evidence of links between research and claimed impacts.”**

- [C1] Director of Development and Policy at the Sutton Trust. (provided statement)
- [C2] Director of IPPR and former Head of the Number 10 Downing Street Policy Unit. (provided statement)
- [C3] Head of Policy (Children) at the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission. (provided statement)

**“Citation in a public discussion, consultation document ... Evidence of citation in policy ...”**

- [C4] ‘Getting On, Getting Ahead’ Cabinet Office Discussion Paper November 2008. Work referenced on pages 26, 29, 32, 35, 66, 70, 75 and 77.
- [C5] ‘Opening Doors, Breaking Barriers: A Strategy for Social Mobility’ Cabinet Office April 2011. Work referenced on pages 5, 16, 17, 20, 26 and 30.
- [C6] ‘An Anatomy of Economic Inequality in the UK: Report of the National Equalities Panel’ January 2010. Work referenced on pages 326, 327, 328, 334 and 335.
- [C7] ‘Growing Unequal: Income Distribution and Poverty in OECD Countries’ OECD 2008. Work referenced on page 208 and numerous other references in footnotes.

**“Citation by journalists, broadcasters ... Public debate in the media.”**

- [C8] Journalists: Polly Toynbee in *The Guardian* 5<sup>th</sup> July 2008 ‘The education boom has proved a curse for the poor’; Paul Johnson in *Prospect Magazine* ‘Going down’ Spring 2011; Tom Clark in *The Guardian* 10<sup>th</sup> March 2010 ‘Is social mobility dead?’; David Goodhart in *Prospect Magazine* ‘More mobile than we think’ Winter 2008.
- [C9] Broadcasters: ‘Who gets the best jobs?’ BBC TV, March 2013; BBC Radio Five Live interview 2010; BBC World at One interview 16<sup>th</sup> November 2013.