Institution: Coventry University

Unit of Assessment: 4

a. Context

Impact on policy and public/practitioner attitudes internationally is evidenced by the two longest established groups in the Unit. **Child Development and Education** researchers have: challenged media accounts worldwide of the alleged detrimental impact of texting (case study 4.1); informed the development of the UK national reading test for 6-year-olds; impacted teacher assessment; and resulted in the development of teaching resources. The **Violence and Interpersonal Aggression** group has: combated interpersonal violence (IPV) by developing programmes which led to changes in policy and provision in England and Wales; delivered an intervention that has changed adolescents' attitudes towards dating violence (case study 4.2); and, impacted the assessment of risk in sexual offenders across Scotland.

Beneficiaries: Parents; children; youth services; trainee teachers; primary and secondary school teachers; college teachers; youth and school librarians; the Reading Agency; National Literacy Trust; community safety organisations; Government agencies; Department for Education; Ministry of Justice; the National Offender Management Service (NOMS); offenders; regional, national and European policy leaders; probation trusts; Risk Management Authority Scotland (RMA Scotland); police services, crown prosecution service, criminal justice social workers; victims of crime.

Types of Impact

Practitioners and Services: Wood's texting research has been used to support the use of text speak in educational contexts in Scotland, and is incorporated by teachers into their teaching of the GCSE English curriculum in England. **Vousden**'s work on which letter-sound correspondences are optimal for teaching phonics was used to inform the development of the national screening test for six-year-olds (**Vousden** was a consultant for the Department for Education to evaluate draft materials). **Holliman** and **Wood**'s prosody research was integrated into the training of Reading Recovery Teacher Leaders in 2011; and they are now required to note children's reading prosody in the assessment that is used to track the progress of children in the Reading Recovery Programme worldwide. A speech rhythm-based reading intervention funded by the Leverhulme Trust has resulted in the creation and dissemination of teaching materials for 200 West Midlands primary school children to date. **Wood**'s collaboration with the Reading Agency to develop an evidence-based version of their Chatterbooks programme for use with underachieving secondary school children has impacted up to 600 children in its first year.

Training materials and an online teacher support package were developed for an EU Daphne III funded 'serious game' on dating violence in adolescents. International dissemination events held in 2012/13 had a combined audience of 600 delegates including social workers, community safety organisations, psychologists, educationalists and EU policy makers. In 2013 the game was integrated into the cross-curriculum IT platform used by all schools in Belgium.

Public Policy and Services: Wood's research has informed policy discussions on the use of technology in English tuition and is being used by the National Literacy Trust to promote debate around the assessment of English skills within the Department for Education (see case study 4.1). **Bowen**'s research resulted in changes in England and Wales to Ministry of Justice programmes (prison and probation) for offenders convicted of violence in intimate relationships (case study 4.2). **Sleath's** research into victims of domestic violence who retract statements was used in staff development by Nottinghamshire Police Service. **Brown** and **Bowen's** research led to them designing and delivering training on the risk assessment, risk management and agencies' responsibility for the *Order of Life Long Restriction* applied to serious violent and sexually violent offenders in Scotland. The training, which was rolled out across Scotland, was delivered to a range of professionals managing such offenders including police and criminal justice social workers.

Society, Culture and Creativity: Wood's research has been disseminated internationally to lay audiences and has challenged popular portrayals of text messaging as undermining conventional literacy abilities. It has been disseminated to the general public through international media coverage, a Department of Education review of research evidence on the teaching of writing, and a BBC4 documentary (see **case study 4.1**). **Bowen's** research has increased knowledge about adolescent dating violence in Europe and impacted attitudes on dating violence. (**case study 4.2**).

b. Approach to impact We have adopted three main strategies to achieve impact:

1. Proactive development of relationships with target users to elicit opportunities for collaborative research activity aimed at addressing user needs and outstanding areas of challenge.

a. Open channels of communication with specific communities through the development of mutually beneficial activities: For example, in 2009 the Unit set up the *Coventry Children's Bookclub* as a mechanism for promoting children reading for pleasure, whilst at the same time enabling direct communication with local children, parents and schools about research. Around 450 local children belonged to the bookclub and received newsletters, and researchers visited schools to run outreach sessions. Funded by University and Unit monies, its activities increased the visibility of the Unit to schools and staff in the Local Authority. This led to contact with the Reading Agency (through the Schools Library Service), which resulted in consultancy and the Chatterbooks reading group evaluation project funded by the Education Endowment Foundation Fund.

b. Identify policy makers and associated organisations, and liaise directly with them to discuss how research findings could impact on decisions made nationally and locally that change how services are delivered and/or practice developed: This is exemplified by: **Bowen** who liaised with Wiltshire Probation Trust, Dorset Probation Trust, Coventry County Council, National Offender Management Service (NOMS), NSPCC, and the Ministry of Justice to discuss the implications of her research; **Holliman** with the Reading Recovery organisation; **Brown** and **Sleath** with regional Police Services; and **Wood** with the Department for Education. Access to relevant policy makers and organisations is supported by University public relations contacts.

c. Engage users in the design of projects that address their needs: Bowen contacted NOMS and identified that desistance from interpersonal violence was an area of interest for them, which led to the development of a research project facilitated by NOMS. Similarly, contact with Wiltshire Probation Trust led to Trust-facilitated research on engagement in offender programmes. **Wood** developed projects collaboratively with the Reading Agency to enable it to evaluate and enhance its Chatterbooks groups and **Holliman** evaluated the effectiveness of the Reading Recovery programme in the UK. The University has supported the development of these relationships through Applied Research Fellowships and Academy for Industry schemes. The latter enabled **Wood** to work collaboratively with Thriftwood School (for children with complex needs) to jointly develop a school-wide programme for raising attainment in literacy based on Unit research.

2. The dissemination-led approach begins by developing a body of peer-reviewed publications that provide the authority to consult. Practitioner-orientated and media-based dissemination of key research findings are used to generate user debate about research findings. In turn this generates requests for consultancy from practitioners and policy makers, and Unit staff then work with users apply the research to their own work. For example:

a. The public relations campaign: Wood's research has been covered by international media outlets as well as national radio and television, and **Bowen**'s research has been discussed on local and national radio. These activities add to coverage of research on project websites. As a result of media-based dissemination of her texting work, **Wood** was seconded into Becta where she was commissioned to write a review of technologies that can raise achievement in English. In 2012 she featured in a BBC4 documentary on child development and led a seminar on technology and literacy at the Department for Education. Her work has also been used as a case study by the British Academy, to attract and secure funding from sponsors. **Bowen**'s profile was raised such that she was asked to work with Wiltshire Probation Service. The University's press office is central to preparing press releases and liaising with journalists with regards to opportunities for coverage.

b. Public events: The work of the Unit is regularly promoted to non-academic audiences through events organised and promoted by the events team at the University. For example, an 'Understanding Children's Literacy' event was held in 2012, which showcased the latest research from the Unit to parents and teachers. This event also included speakers from the Reading Agency and the Youth Librarians Group, both of whom promoted the research in the context of their work. These events are in addition to public dissemination events that are staged as completion of specific funded programmes, such as Daphne III.

c. Publish research findings at user-oriented conferences and in journals and books aimed at general audiences: Plester and **Wood**'s paper on texting and literacy in school-age children was published in the practitioner journal *Literacy*. Summary articles of this work have been published in magazines such as *TeachPrimary,* and *e-Learning Update*. Unit staff have strong relationships with the practitioner organisations linked to these journals, which allows them to

identify research topics that address contemporary practice. The authoring of books is also important in raising public awareness; e.g. **Bowen**'s domestic violence book resulted in its discussion on *Woman's Hour* (Radio 4).

3. Bid for initiative-based research projects that have 'built in' impact, which are intervention-based and situated in user contexts so that outcomes have immediate direct impact on users. This also provides a longer term legacy through Continuing Professional Development and resource development for users. For example, **Bowen's** tender to conduct a literature review for the Ministry of Justice led to the re-design of the national domestic violence programmes. **Wood**'s project with the Reading Agency has resulted in the production of materials and lesson plans for the Reading Agency to disseminate to schools and library services nationwide in 2013 and beyond.

c. Strategy and plans

Enhancing Impact Strategy: Staff development workshops on how to design research projects with built-in impact, legacy and impact tracking will be delivered in 2014. A Senior Research Assistant (Impact) has been appointed who will be responsible for translating research into specific user materials. She will organise user-orientated events, liaise with and locate new users of the Unit's research, and monitor and document the nature and extent of the impact arising from the Unit's research. Business Development Officers, the University events team and external marketing consultants will develop and run impact events, monitored by the Unit's Director.

Impact Monitoring: The University received £15,000 JISC funding to extend its Research Information Management System to pilot 'ERIC', a rigorous methodology, and tools for defining, collecting, evaluating and recording impact. Originally piloted in UoA3, the ERIC methodology and system will be rolled out to this Unit during the next census period.

Impact-Oriented Publication: The Unit has recently launched the open access journal 'Applied Psychological Research' (http://tinyurl.com/k3nb2m3), which is organised around the research groups of the Unit*,* and is edited by **Bowen** and **Goodman**. All academic papers published must include a section on the implications and applications of research findings, and the journal will also publish *impact papers* from practitioners who outline how they have developed or implemented policies or programmes based on research. This will enable authors to encourage and track the application of research to applied contexts relevant to the Unit's activities. This will help Unit staff to identify additional ways in which research in these areas can be applied.

Practitioners as Researchers: Direct engagement of users in the design of research and the collection of data increases the opportunity for research outcomes to be applied by users. Therefore, in addition to 'traditional' research assistants who typically have limited wider experience, the Unit will also appoint researchers with direct experience of the applied setting in which the research is located (e.g. the secondment of teacher-researchers in school-based studies). Staff will also engage with the Faculty's public involvement group *Research Support Volunteers Programme,* who receive training in research methods and governance, so increasing public uptake of scientific training.

Extending Reach and Significance: The Unit will continue to develop its international stakeholder network through collaborative projects and user-orientated dissemination events held outside the UK. For example, **Bowen**'s Daphne III funded work has facilitated the development of stakeholder partnerships with educators in Sweden and Belgium who are implementing her work. The Unit has secured £80,000 from a new partnership with the Ministry of Defence to develop an app for service personnel in Afghanistan to identify and respond to the threat of insider attacks. The recent appointment of **Abell** has enabled a research partnership with the ALERT conservation charity, through which community attitude change and resilience work will be developed alongside other conservation psychology project work in the UK and Sub-Saharan Africa.

d. Relationship to case studies
The *Changing Attitudes to Children's Text Messaging and Literacy* case study (**4.1**) **exemplifies the dissemination-based approach to impact**, showing that high quality research in an area of concern to educators has resulted in high levels of international media interest and the incorporation of results into third party intervention materials. The *Combating Interpersonal Violence* case study (**4.2**) demonstrates how **proactive contacting of key organisations**' staff with associated responses to consultancy tenders led to the establishment of links, and demonstrates how a dissemination-led approach resulted in collaborative projects with users.