

**Institution:** York St John University

**Unit of Assessment:** 4 (Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience)

**a. Context**

The Psychology team has been developing a vibrant research community that has evolved over the past ten years, recognising the importance of knowledge from the discipline to inform interventions and influence people's behaviours. Being located in a university with a strong civic identity and a track record of engaging extensively with communities of research users in the city and across the region, we recognise the need for our research to be focussed, of modest scale and applied to identified needs. Importantly for the purposes of impact, the institution's key objectives for research for 2012-15 give an undertaking to 'engage with and influence users of research, locally, nationally, and internationally' and thereby make explicit the university's commitment to research that has real-world utility.

The Faculty of Health and Life Sciences (HLS), within which the submitting UoA is located, is well connected regionally, and has a particular commitment to communicating with practitioners in health and psychology-related initiatives. The UoA 4 case studies illustrate our integral mission to support the translation of research into practice for people and organisations beyond academia, and specifically in the realms of health, social care and education. The approach to impact reflects institutional values of a creative, critical and reflective community, committed to extending the external contribution we make nationally and internationally through our research.

With a small, but gradually expanding team of academics in this UoA, we recognise the value of recruiting and developing early career researchers. The three core members of the team, who previously submitted to RAE2008, continue to hone research approaches and their applications, and partner newer researchers to broaden our work. We have cultivated a research culture and commitment to dissemination through publications, presentations and workshops. This includes a growing programme of CPD provision for practitioners (for which a UoA 4 colleague has been short-listed in the 2013 Times Higher *Outstanding Employer Engagement Initiative*), in order to extend the reach of our research. A number of newsletter articles, edited books and research reports have been aimed at a wider non-academic readership, in order to influence research users.

We are committed to expanding the local evidence-based programmes developed in Yorkshire to becoming national and international initiatives. The areas of research expertise in this Unit of Assessment include: (i) the Unit for Child and Youth Studies (UCYS); (ii) the Community and Critical Social Psychology group; (iii) the Cognitive Research Group; and (iv) a group developing research-based learning and teaching resources.

**b. Approach to impact**

UoA 4's approach to impact at York St John University is to:

- *Be informed by up-to-date knowledge of key concerns, policy drivers and contextual challenges:* Our networking and community links enable us to be aware of, and to respond to contemporary issues faced by research users in our region;
- *Establish networks and relationships with research users:* In many of our research projects, users are involved from the beginning, informing the investigations; and are integral to the development of the projects, and to considering and applying the results. A number of our research students and staff undertake participatory research;
- *Develop collaborative partnerships with more research-intensive universities:* In order to enhance the impact of UoA 4 research we have encouraged research collaborations with colleagues at the Universities of York (Hamilton), Leeds and KwaZulu Natal (Akhurst), Manchester, Nottingham, Hull, Swansea and Liverpool John Moores (Butcher), Queen's University, Belfast and Winchester (Gibson), and Brunel University (Noret);
- *Promote knowledge exchange:* In this UoA, plans are made from the inception of projects to disseminate research results, in an interactive way, beyond the university sector, to influence practice. The case studies show how research has played a role in the development of dialogue between researchers and practitioners (including schools and in healthcare),

illustrating the contribution of the UoA's research to societal issues;

- *Track impact:* Since 2008, the HLS Faculty has invested in 1.5 FTE research administrators to support the implementation of strategies, dissemination of research ideas and the tracking of the usage and utility of our research. Two further staff members have been employed to market and facilitate the delivery of CPD workshops for practitioners, so that our research expertise can be translated into practice;
- *Promote civic engagement:* This underpins our impact and includes extensive networking with the users of research.

In addition to the case studies, other examples of impact in this UoA are regional, national and international roles taken on in developing research-informed practice, for example:

1. HLS Faculty members work at a strategic level with the City of York Council to promote anti-bullying initiatives in the region (evidenced by the work of the UCYS and Noret's case study).
2. The development of a Workforce Innovations mentoring scheme for practitioners working with Long term Neurological Conditions in the National Health Service (NHS) in the North-East of England, supported and evaluated through participatory action research by Akhurst.
3. Research on citizenship, conducted by Gibson, Hamilton and Noret, has been disseminated to user groups through contributions to the BPS-funded 'New Social Psychology of Citizenship' seminar series, 2012-13, which promotes interaction with user groups including local Councils, and social policy and third sector organizations. This contributes to public debates.
4. Hamilton presented her research on Specific Language Impairment at the international conference of the British Dyslexia Association (BDA), 2011, attended by hundreds of academics, practitioners working with people with dyslexia, and dyslexic individuals. Hamilton was invited to discuss the therapeutic implications of her work at the North-Eastern branch Speech and Language Therapists' special interest group in SLI, 2013. She will contribute to a symposium on the longitudinal findings of the Wellcome Language and Reading Project in the BDA conference, 2013, alongside researchers from the Universities of Oxford, York and UCL.
5. Strong links have been established between staff members and the Higher Education Academy, with a number of pedagogic research projects being funded from that source (for example, Gibson and Noret have undertaken these and the Akhurst case study illustrates this).
6. Butcher's research has led to collaborations with staff at the University of Bournemouth to develop a training programme currently offered to Prosopagnosics (those with the condition of 'face blindness'), using what has been discovered about facial motion to provide better treatment for people with the condition, as the current training program uses static face stimuli.
7. Gibson's recent Nuffield Foundation-funded research, involving rhetorical analysis of the Milgram obedience study transcripts, led to invited contributions to an international event in Canada marking the 50th anniversary of Milgram's first published paper; with Gibson's work reported and quoted in the Boston Globe (USA) by Shea (29 September, 2013). He has also taken part in two Open University podcasts about his work on the obedience experiments.
8. Akhurst, in her role as chair of the BPS Community Psychology Section has led on internet discussions (on the BPS website) collating community practitioners' responses to the 2011 London riots; internationally, she is on a European Federation of Psychological Associations' Community Psychology taskforce, to consider the ways in which evidence and practice from the field might assist communities in Europe to cope in these times of economic austerity.
9. Butcher has conducted collaborative work with Computer Scientists seeking to develop Computer Face Recognition for future technologies (mobile phone and in-car recognition); she is conducting research that informs our understanding of eye witness identifications;
10. Gibson will discuss his research at an international multi-disciplinary conference, *Doing Citizenship in Multi-Cultural and Multi-Faith Societies*, Kingston University, December 2013.
11. Akhurst's work was highlighted in a full page report in *The Psychologist* (July, 2013, circulation circa 49 000 psychologists), featuring the online card sort tool that she researched and refined, extensively used by undergraduate students to develop their employability skills.
12. As part of her role in the Unit for Child & Youth Studies, Hamilton is using the findings of her PhD to inform the development of a suite of in-service day training packages for schools focusing on working with children with a range of developmental disorders, such as dyslexia and specific language impairment and also for adults with learning difficulties in York.

### c. Strategy and plans

The strategy is two-pronged: to support and develop staff members' research dissemination; and to network with and engage with research users through our CPD provision. The first part of the strategy includes the following plans to support and enable staff:

- Allocation of staff time to take advantage of community and external stakeholder opportunities;
- Adjusted work planning to deliver targeted outputs and impact;
- Funding for presentations at national and international conferences at which practitioners and users of research will be represented;
- Funding and research administration support for research units to engage externally
- Research assistant support for staff projects, to promote outreach and evaluation.

Research students play a vital role in extending staff research and translating impact to practitioners. At postgraduate level the rationale of 'practitioners as researchers' is a common aim of provision, and this is reflected in MSc's in Psychology focusing on Child and Adolescent Development, and Community and Critical Social Psychology.

The second part of the strategy relates to the development and provision of a substantial programme of CPD. Researchers network actively with leaders in Health, Social Care, Local Government and Education to develop a programme that is responsive to identified needs. The CPD team is headed by a colleague from the Psychology team, and workshops applying knowledge from Psychology to workplaces constitute a strong thread in the provision. Evaluations and feedback are collected after every workshop, to inform further work and collect information that illustrates the translation of CPD into practice and workforce development.

In the REF time period, the HLS Faculty has supported two conferences, arranged by UoA 4 academics, to disseminate work in their fields more broadly:

1. Gibson organised a Peace Studies conference, 'Repertoires of Violence: Multidisciplinary Analyses of the Representation of Peace and Conflict', 1-2 July, 2009, which attracted many international delegates;
2. Akhurst convened the European Community Psychology Association's 8<sup>th</sup> congress at YSJU 15-16 September 2011, entitled *Community Psychology: Critical Issues*. This was held in conjunction with the first conference of the BPS Community Psychology Section. It attracted over 200 participants from more than 20 countries in Europe and from as far afield as Brazil and South Africa. Many practitioners who work in community organisations beyond academia in the UK commented on the material presented at the conference being helpful in informing their local practice.

Staff and PhD students' research seminars are organised by the Unit for Child and Youth Studies for a wide audience of practitioners in the City of York and the region. These regular seminars promote wide dissemination of research, influencing policy development and intervention work in schools.

### d. Relationship to case studies

The research submitted in the case studies is congruent with the University's core values to contribute to enhancing well-being and competences through our research. The impact of work in Psychology has been enhanced through support for the partnership of the Unit for Child and Youth studies and the City of York Council. This is a proactive strategy to ensure that this area of research is sustainable and enables a long term engagement with practitioners. The case studies demonstrate the relevance of the research to professionals in Education, Health and Social Care; contributing to their development and service delivery. The case studies showcase the work of two academics, supported at various times by research assistants, over the past eight years. One is an example of work central to the Unit for Child and Youth Studies, illustrating an evidence-based approach to developing anti-bullying interventions. The second is an example of research into practitioners' learning and supervision, with an emphasis on skill development. YSJU's role as a learning organisation, underpinned by research, is evidenced in both case studies, which have had widespread effects. Careful collection of data, and knowledge exchange with the users of the research, have led to responses from our contacts that provide evidence of the impact of the work.