

<p data-bbox="143 143 590 179">Institution: Teesside University</p> <p data-bbox="143 212 909 248">Unit of Assessment: 22 Social Work and Social Policy</p> <p data-bbox="143 282 287 318">a. Context</p> <p data-bbox="143 351 1428 790"> Since its inception in 2003, the core mission of the Social Futures Institute (SoFI) has been to deliver theoretically informed, empirically strong, critical social science with a high degree of application to contemporary social problems. Since 2008 we have sought to develop further our approach and practices in respect of impact. In order to achieve impact beyond the academic world, we work with a range of public and third-sector organisations, regionally, nationally and internationally. Examples include Local Authorities, Third Sector Organisations, Charitable Foundations and national and European Police forces. We also have a track record of work with private sector organisations with a commitment to social responsibility such as work on the corporate social responsibility programme of O2/ Telefonica. Our relationships with non-academic audiences vary in nature and extend from close collaborative work, to the uptake of our research findings following publication. The main types of impact from our research include contributions to political debate, influencing social and criminal justice policy development, and changes to the thinking, strategic planning and working practices of non-academic organisations. </p> <p data-bbox="143 824 1436 1093"> Teesside University's <i>Institutional Plan</i> (2012-2015) stresses the importance of research impact and is underpinned by a strong emphasis on 'engendering an ethos of applied research and development' (p.38). The University takes the view that 'any research it engages in has to provide benefit to society' (p.47). This approach is fostered by SoFI and directs much of the work of our researchers. We bid for tenders and target funders who promote the sharing of academic research with non-academic partners and/ or who will enable us to carry out work that is of direct benefit to user groups. As a result of this approach, for example, we have carried out work funded by Joseph Rowntree Foundation, EPSRC and the Prince's Trust, among others. </p> <p data-bbox="143 1126 462 1162">b. Approach to impact</p> <p data-bbox="143 1196 1428 1464"> SoFI has a long tradition of applied social science research, ranging from regional projects conducted for local service providers to large scale studies of international significance, and seeks to produce work of value outside of academia. Over the REF period we have strived to formalise this ethos and distil measurable impact from our research. Our approach to creating impact has been threefold: firstly, we have built and maintained close relationships with key user groups; secondly, we have developed a research agenda around knowledge transfer; and thirdly, we have disseminated findings strategically and widely so as to enable a range of user groups to benefit from the research. Examples are given below. </p> <p data-bbox="143 1498 1444 2069"> Firstly, an important pathway to impact has been through the development of close links with research users. One example here is that researchers have been encouraged to take-up opportunities to serve on the advisory boards of local and national charities and agencies. For example, Crawshaw is a board member of several regional organisations including Healthwatch Middlesbrough, and MacDonald has served on advisory groups concerned with poverty, worklessness and welfare for JRF during the census period (see case study 1). Our close links with research users have allowed us to carry out research in collaboration with organisations that directly benefit from our research. For example, in late 2012 SoFI researchers (in collaboration with academics at Durham and Northumbria and with the Citizens Advice Bureau) were commissioned by the Association of North East Councils (ANEC) to carry out research to investigate the impact of the Government's welfare reforms on the North East. The findings of this research are already having impact, with ANEC establishing procedures to monitor and respond to the effects of one of the biggest changes to social policy in a generation. Another example of our close working practices with non-academic groups is SoFI's strong support for the <i>Institute of Local Governance</i>, a pioneering research and knowledge exchange venture, based at Durham University, that is designed to maximise the benefits of collaboration between the five universities in North East England and the region's local authorities, police forces, fire and rescue services and other public </p>
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sector bodies. MacDonald has represented SoFI on ILG's management committee since its foundation in 2010. Teesside University, via SoFI, has been the most successful NE university in winning competitive tenders issued by ILG and we have worked closely on projects with local authorities to develop answers to pressing social and economic problems they have identified (e.g. assisting in the development of Newcastle Council's Fairness Commission; undertaking research with practitioners across the NE on place-based budgeting of public services; developing a new model for regional youth work services). A further example, at international level, is Antonopoulos's work, over several years, with the *Cross-Border Crime Colloquium*: this brings together criminologists and criminal justice and law enforcement professionals in order to improve policy and practice to tackle organised crime (see case study 2).

Secondly, over the census period SoFI has progressed an **agenda of translational research**. SoFI members have cemented close working relationships with user groups through Knowledge Transfer Partnerships, which have generated research that impacts upon these groups and the communities that they represent. For example, in 2012 researchers, in collaboration with Fabrick Housing Group, won a competitively awarded KTP from the *Technology Strategy Board* to assess the impact of Fabrick's Social Investment strategy. Findings were used by Fabrick in its strategic planning of issues connected to the sustainability and vitality of the neighbourhoods in which they operate, such as the economic, financial and social inclusion of its tenants. A further KTP with Endeavour Housing is currently underway.

Thirdly, in addition to the strategic development of relationships with users and the development of a knowledge transfer agenda, we have actively **promoted our research through a variety of channels in order to disseminate findings to organisations and non-academic user groups**. Established researchers at Teesside are aware, through experience, that research can have serendipitous impacts. Therefore, during the census period, we have ensured that our research is promoted widely and strategically so as to maximise the possibilities for this. One avenue has been via TeesRep, our open access institutional repository. Researchers are mandated to lodge all research outputs in order to maximise access to them. SoFI has a strong relationship with the University Press Office which actively solicits stories from researchers. The Press Office has played an important role in disseminating the findings of social policy research to regional, national and international media outlets and collating evidence trails of this dissemination. Furthermore, researchers present their findings widely in order to reach as broad an audience as possible. For example, with the help of the Press Office, Shildrick and MacDonald's research on 'cultures of worklessness' received extensive news coverage in 2012, one consequence of which was that the research was cited directly in Parliamentary debates about changes to welfare benefits (see case study 1).

The **University has supported SoFI Social Policy researchers** in gaining impact in several ways. Throughout the census period the *Graduate Research School* (GRS) has organised a series of activities and events designed to facilitate greater understanding of the meaning and dynamics of impact, for example hosting a conference on impact in 2011 featuring high profile national speakers from research councils and charities (e.g. AHRC, JRF). GRS has also assisted in collecting evidence to demonstrate unfolding impact over time. The Vice-Chancellor's Executive (VCE) has played a concerted role in promoting the outcomes of Social Policy research e.g. to appropriate government departments and select committees. A designated Policy Officer in the VCE is charged with tracking the use of Teesside's Social Policy research by national government.

University support for impact is complemented by **support from SoFI**. Examples include: the role of a dedicated research officer to support the implementation of our impact strategy (see below), including attending and disseminating findings from national briefings on impact in Social Policy, tracking and collecting evidence of impact; the provision of time in workloads for academics to use to undertake impact-related activities; and funding for such activities, e.g. travel costs incurred when meeting Members of Parliament. This institutional support from the University and from SoFI has helped to progress our impact agenda within Social Policy.

Impact template (REF3a)

c. Strategy and plans

SoFI's overall research strategy is described in REF5. It contains separate strategies for research funding, for publication and, most recently, impact. The latter sets out a framework for a sustained approach to research impact. Our understanding of and approach to impact has evolved during the census period. We have had some success to date and these aims and practices will be the ones we pursue over the next five years.

We have had three **key strategic aims** for research impact: (i) to increase its quality, e.g. in terms of its 'reach' and 'significance'; (ii) to increase the proportion of research projects that generate clear impact; and (iii) to be better able to demonstrate this impact. We do not, however, expect all projects to generate non-academic impact. In order to meet these aims, we have, and will continue to operate with the following principles and practices:

- The demonstration of impact will remain one of the key criterion for SoFI membership and associated time allowances;
- Guidance and training will be provided annually for all SoFI members with a focus on the Institute's expectations for impact generation and methods of best practice;
- Staff, assisted by their mentors, will be encouraged to grow their networks of contacts and to foster relationships with key user groups that could benefit from their research;
- Researchers will be expected to make clear plans for impact in the initial stages of a research project (irrespective of whether this is an explicit requirement of the funding body) and these will be considered in SoFI's 'signing off' procedure for research funding bids;
- Where necessary, resources in the form of time and expenses will be provided by SoFI to support impact activity;
- Research projects will be monitored periodically for early signs of potential impact and researchers, in collaboration with SoFI staff, will document and collect evidence of impact.

d. Relationship to case studies

The two impact case studies presented have each come about because of our general approach to impact (in b above). They each exemplify the way that SoFI has tried to generate impact from research and, in turn, the lessons learned from them have been used to inform our emergent impact strategy. In other words, the case studies are an example of us 'learning through doing' and the iterative development of improved strategies for impact.

Case Study 1 'Influencing thinking and shaping practice about worklessness and poverty' (focusing on the work of MacDonald and Shildrick) builds on long-term research about worklessness, poverty and social exclusion. The case study shows, for instance, how when researchers achieve close engagement over time with practitioners, policy makers and the public on the basis of high quality, relevant research this can influence thinking and practices. The case study also demonstrates the support from the University Press Office in generating wide-spread publicity for the research and the achievements of GRS, the VCE's Policy Officer and SoFI research associates in tracking and evaluating impact of the research.

Case Study 2 'Tackling Illegal Immigration and Organised Crime through the Study of Illegal Markets' centres on the work of Antonopoulos. It demonstrates the effectiveness of our approach to gaining impact at international level on law enforcement practices and the development of national and transnational policies designed to combat the organisation and effects of illegal markets. Antonopoulos deliberately disseminated his research in a manner that would provide the greatest opportunity for impact, i.e. he targeted places of publication and presented his work at meetings which not only benefitted his academic standing, but were readily accessible to a range of practitioners. This allowed key law enforcement officers, policy makers and lobbyists to pick up and make use of the research findings. In order to achieve this, Antonopoulos has made use of SoFI funding to develop networks and cement links with key users.