

Institution: Loughborough University

Unit of Assessment: C22 Social Work and Social Policy

a. Context

The Department of Social Sciences has been a recognised centre of excellence for social policy research for more than thirty years. Its outstanding reputation in this field is built upon the work of The Centre for Research into Social Policy (CRSP) established in 1983, the Centre for Child and Family Research (CCFR) from 2002, the Young Carers Research Group (YCRG) from 1993, and other academic staff on the Department's Criminology and Social Policy programme.

In 2005, the University was awarded the Queen's Anniversary Prize for Higher and Further Education in recognition of the Department's outstanding contribution to social policy. Ruth Lister, Professor of Social Policy, was awarded the CBE in 1999 and elected as one of the founding Academicians of the Academy of Social Sciences the same year. In 2010, she was appointed to the House of Lords (as Baroness Lister of Burtsett) in recognition of her work on social justice and citizenship. In 2012, Professor Harriet Ward, director of CCFR, was made a CBE and awarded a EUSARF (European Scientific Association for Residential and Family Care) Lifetime Achievement Award. This award was given in recognition of Professor Ward's international contribution to improving outcomes of services for children in need.

We report two narrative case studies, but these do not represent the sum total of the impact that the unit has had on the work of a variety of institutions outside of academia. Across the entirety of staff activity related to this submission, the main non-academic beneficiaries and stakeholders have included: a wide range of government bodies and public agencies, commercial enterprises charities and other non-governmental organisations representing vulnerable groups.

The reach and significance of this research activity is realised most specifically in its impact upon *policy making and the development of public services* at both national and international levels. In addition to the examples of this provided in our two impact narratives, other work within the unit has had impact of considerable reach and significance. For example, Professor Jo Aldridge's innovative research work with 'young carers' (young people who provide informal social care, whether through choice or necessity) has been used by health and social care practitioners across the UK, Australia, US and Canada. Her recent work with the National Young Carers Coalition has recently resulted (October 2013) in a change in legislation - The Children and Families Act now mandates that when a child is identified as a young carer, the needs of everyone in their family be considered.

The kinds of research noted above as well as their impact on policy and public services, have also had an impact upon *public discourse* – highlighting the needs and dilemmas of particular disadvantaged social groups and seeking to change the climate of public and political debate.

b. Approach to impact

Research impact is a strategic priority for this unit and is supported by Loughborough University (LU) structures at all levels. In 2007, Loughborough University established a new Pro-Vice Chancellor role covering 'Enterprise activity'. It is important to emphasise that LU adopts a broad and inclusive definition of 'enterprise' that connects directly with the impact agenda, defining it as 'academic engagement with business, public and voluntary organisations to create social, cultural and economic impact through knowledge exchange'. Further restructuring in 2011 included a new role in each School of Associate Dean (Enterprise), sitting alongside an Associate Dean (Research) and Associate Dean (Teaching). University committees exist to encourage and support both research and enterprise, and each academic school is represented respectively by Associate Deans for Research and for Enterprise.

The unit has utilised institutional facilities, expertise and resources to develop its pathways to impact in a variety of ways. During the REF assessment period, the University was awarded an EPSRC Knowledge Transfer Account (KTA) of £3M and an EPSRC Impact Acceleration Account

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of £2M. In 2012, these funds supported several initiatives in the unit (see section d. below). The unit also makes regular and routine use of the Enterprise Office for contractual and legal advice and communicating research outcomes and expertise to existing and potential research users. We also have organised professional training and consultancies through Loughborough University Enterprises Limited (LUEL), which provides a flexible response to research users as 'clients'.

The working practices and support structures of the wider department have also encouraged the pursuit of impact. These include:

- (a) Acknowledging impact-related activities formally within academic workload models.
- (b) Providing financial and academic support to ensure the long-term sustainability of the two independently funded research centres (CRSP and CCFR) through judicious deployment of funding accrued through full economic costing of research grants, the training of junior research staff and the development of long term research career strategies incorporated in the school business plan.
- (c) Providing strategic internal funds within the unit to develop research and impact in specific areas (see section d. below for examples)
- (d) Providing financial support to colleagues to attend national and international conferences and meetings to promote research and its outcomes, discuss possible new ventures with user communities and develop networks that facilitate impact. For example, departmental funding was provided to Professor Aldridge to develop her innovative photo-participation methods which were central to a major ESRC funded study and revealed the effectiveness of visual methods when used among vulnerable children.
- (e) Hosting conferences and short courses that are solely or significantly orientated to user groups
- (f) Engaging with institutional support for public relations and marketing opportunities to celebrate and publicise outcomes.
- (g) Peer-assessment of 'pathways to impact' plans at initial stages of research projects to ensure they are creative and realistic.

c. Strategy and plans

Strengthening pathways to impact is a major priority for this unit over the next five years. Our strategy for developing impact for research is eight-fold:

- (a) Ensuring that colleagues are given appropriate resources to develop impact-related activities, both in terms of time (including enterprise activities in work load allocations) and financial support (e.g., travel grants; subsidizing other impact-related work).
- (b) Providing professional incentives for impact activity by including it as a key pathway to achieving academic promotion.
- (c) Continuing to ensure long-term sustainability of high quality, high impact research undertaken by the independent research centres through further developing policies for staff training and career progression and through judicious deployment of full economic costing
- (d) Sharing good practice with the unit and across the wider school and university. (e.g., running annual half-day School-wide enterprise surgeries to showcase best practice, especially those triple-line projects that are stakeholder-led, enhance research excellence, and deliver intended benefits.
- (e) Strengthening the training and mentoring of probationers in documenting evidence of impacts from their research, and to help them to draw on this inventory of case studies in teaching and supervisory practice.
- (f) Developing other mechanisms for monitoring and rewarding impact activity (such as in annual performance reviews).
- (g) Ensuring wherever possible that research and impact form an integrated part of a single on-going programme, in which the funder supports dissemination, analysis and development of research funding as well as the primary research. CRSP's work on Minimum Income Standards as an on-going programme means that each wave of research is informed by the requirements of stakeholders and the outcome of analysis, so the relationship between research and impact is genuinely a two-way process. For example, the research has been used to assess housing affordability, and the model that this project uses for assessing housing costs has been influenced by the perspective of housing experts and stakeholders in discussion with the research team. A

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similar strategy is evident with CCFR's work with the 'Cost Calculator for Children's Services' an award-winning purpose-designed software programme that currently calculates the costs of social care processes and placements for looked after children. This software has been developed over a period of six years, has been developed in partnership with local authorities and is based on a 'bottom up' approach that aggregates costs accrued by children with different profiles of need over specific time periods.

d. Relationship to case studies

Both impact case studies reported in REF3b demonstrate how our approach to impact has been borne fruit since 2008. The research centres from which they originate have benefitted from financial structures in which LU permits them access to QR return for submitted staff and return on moneys accrued through full economic costing of research grants. The directorship of CCFR has also been paid for through central funding since 2004.

In 2009, the university provided £5k to host a two day international conference to celebrate CRSP's 25th anniversary. Titled 'Beyond Social Inclusion: Towards a More Equal Society?', it brought together policy makers, practitioners and academics to examine the implications of inequalities for individuals, communities, nation states and international relations, and showcased the work outlined in the first impact narrative (**Minimum Income Standard [MIS]**). The second impact narrative (**Outcomes for Children in Need**) has also been supported by the wider institution through direct funding of specific activities and permitting use of research overheads. The latter has supported extensive dissemination of research findings by providing seed funding for developing an international network on transitions to adulthood from care (INTRAC), organising an international conference in 2008, attended by over 200 policymakers, practitioners and academics from 22 countries, and facilitating the attendance of research staff at other conferences in our biennial programme and workshops in Western Europe, Canada and Australia. The case study has also received specific support from the University Enterprise Office in developing the research classification into a practice tool for assessing risks of future harm. The Cost Calculator for Children's Services received the Loughborough University's Knowledge Transfer Award for Enterprise and was also highly commended in the Consultancy Enterprise Award category; the university has supported its development through facilitating the construction of two knowledge transfer partnerships with local authorities, and developing licences for customising it for use in Scotland, Oregon, California and future work in the USA. It has also received £20,000 EPG funding to develop it into a free download and £3000 funding from the EPSRC KTA/ITA accounts to work with the Fostering Network to develop it further to support foster care.