

Institution: University of York
Unit of Assessment: 23, Sociology
<p>a. Context</p> <p>Sociology at York remains uncompromisingly committed to the goal set out in our RAE 2008 submission to 'undertake methodologically diverse research that, whilst retaining its critical credentials, is always policy-relevant'. We ask challenging questions and investigate aspects of social, cultural and political life that are useful for policy makers, service providers and users, and the wider public. The bulk of our research, supported by funders such as the ESRC, AHRC, European Commission, the NIHR, UK and non-UK government departments, and charitable organisations, has had impact embedded within it, and as a result we have established strong links with the beneficiaries of our research.</p> <p>Who are our users and how do they benefit from our research?</p> <p>(1) Policy makers both UK and international government departments, charities and professional organisations, who draft, shape and influence policy have benefited from our research. For example, our research on issues such as; regenerative medicine, bio-banking, health screening, chronic disorders of consciousness, and sexuality and human rights has influenced policy debates and developments in these areas.</p> <p>(2) Professionals and other frontline service workers and users based in cultural industries, health and welfare services, the criminal justice and state benefits system have benefited from our work. For example, service providers have altered their practice due to bespoke training in communication and interaction skills, and guidance has been issued to those delivering services in public and charitable organisations as a result of our evidence based research.</p> <p>(3) Media and the wider public have benefited from our research particularly in health and social welfare sectors. Our work has contributed to public understanding of debates in science, health and technologies, and sexuality and human rights. Using a wide range of media technologies we have ensured that our research has contributed to debates in the public sphere and raised awareness of social and moral issues.</p>
<p>b. Approach to impact</p> <p>A culture of impact</p> <p>Our tradition of undertaking critical and yet policy relevant research means that impact is embedded into the culture of our work in three main ways: by <i>influencing</i> the development of policy debate and practice; by <i>shaping</i> the behaviour of practitioners to enhance service provision, which in turn may impact upon service users; and through <i>training</i> to enhance skills for delivering frontline services. The Departmental Research Committee (DRC) and its Impact Sub-Committee (ISC) oversee these activities and ensure that impact is systematically monitored and captured. We have achieved this in the following ways.</p> <p>(1) Identifying and sustaining relationships and networks with non-academic beneficiaries at all stages of our research from project conception to dissemination. Non-academic stakeholders are actively involved in, and have formalised relationships with, our research centres, they also support research studentships and participate in conferences. Representatives of service providers and users sit on the project advisory groups of most of our externally funded research, for example, members of the Sickle Cell Society served on our NIHR RfPB (Research for Patient Benefit) project on fathers and sickle cell. We use external funds to extend our networking activity for example, through collaboration in four ESRC seminar series on topics relevant to our research users, such as '<i>The role of diagnosis in health and wellbeing: a social science perspective on the social, economic and political costs and consequences of diagnosis</i>' and through our coordination of a European Cooperation in Science and Technology (EU COST) project. Our beneficiaries recognise our expertise and regularly seek our advice and training. Examples of how we have interacted with our primary beneficiary audiences are outlined below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy makers. Through conducting commissioned research, we have built relationships with policy makers, and informed policy development. For example, Hanquinet's research commissioned by the Observatory of Cultural Policy of the Wallonian Brussels Federation (2011) informed the development of policy in Belgium designed to enhance access to museums.

Additionally, we have been invited to contribute to policy debate, for example, Brown was asked to give evidence to the *All Party Parliamentary Group on Cord Blood and Stem Cell Transplantation* (2009-2011) and Webster was recruited as the only sociologist on to the *UK Stem Cell Bank Steering Committee* (2009-2013). Johnson, as a result of his expertise on sexuality, gender and the law was invited to be the expert advisor on 'hate crime' for *Lord Stevens' Independent Commission on the Future of Policing* in 2012, and provided written recommendations.

- **Professionals and other frontline service workers and service users.** Toerien and Drew's study of JobCentre Plus (detailed in an impact case study) resulted in communication training for advisers based on recorded interactions with benefits claimants. Training was also delivered by Kitzinger to the helpline staff of *Birth Crisis Network* which led to changes in the way they communicate with callers. Professionals have benefited from knowledge exchange outputs rooted in our work, for example, Atkin was a contributing author to the UK's *Standards of Care of Adults with Sickle Cell Disorders* (Department of Health) and co-author of guidance on how to manage sickle cell disease in the classroom (Department for Education). Nettleton's co-authored *The Everyday Lives of Recovering Heroin Users* (2012) is listed as a key training resource by the *Substance Misuse, Skills Consortium* <http://www.skillsconsortium.org.uk/>. Informed by her research on disorders of consciousness Kitzinger delivered a CPD session for members of the John Hopkins Hospice Institute in New York, on 'the window of opportunity for death' after severe brain injury (2011). This research also informed the development of the Oxford Centre for Enablement 'best interests' pro forma, a leaflet produced by the charity *Headway*, and a booklet adopted as an official electronic supplement for the Royal College of Physicians guidelines. ESRC funding supported Kitzinger's presentation on Advance Decisions at the *Before I Die* Festival in Cardiff (June 2013) combined with a 'Clinic' for the public on writing their Advance Decisions.

- **Media and the wider public.** Public engagement is an important strand of our activity. The department disseminates research using a range of media to impact on public debate and understanding. Colleagues have regularly appeared on the BBC Radio 4's flagship social science programme *'Thinking Allowed'* while others advised and/or appeared on TV programmes such as *'The One Show'*, and Melvyn Bragg's BBC2 series *'Class and Culture.'* We have been invited to comment on current issues, for example, Johnson has been interviewed by high-readership newspapers around the world in countries such as Armenia and Brazil, and invited to take part in radio discussions by world-wide broadcasters such as Radio China International on sexuality and marriage. Staff are encouraged to communicate directly with the public, and several maintain blogs such as Johnson's 'ECHR (European Court of Human Rights) Sexual Orientation Blog', which has over 3,000 visitors a month from countries worldwide, and Beer's blog 'Thinking Culture', which attracts 3,000-4,000 visitors a month from over 70 countries. The Centre for Women's Studies (CWS) works with local LGBT groups who together host an annual York Lesbian Arts Festival, a community based event that attracts an international audience of over 2,000.

(2) Continuing professional development provided by the Department and the University equips staff with the skills to maximize impact. Training sessions include: drafting pathways for impact, identifying stakeholders and beneficiaries, engaging users, and producing targeted summaries. Impact is discussed during annual performance reviews, and as part of the mentoring of ECRs. We regularly secure resources for PGRs to enhance their adeptness for achieving impact such as ESRC funding for internships, for example, Carter spent 3 months at ACAS (2009), and Hobbes, 3 months at the *Parliamentary Office for Science and Technology* (2009). Throughout doctoral training we encourage students to undertake impactful work for example Chappell (PGR) carried out an econometric analysis for *'The Royal Commonwealth Society'*, which was subsequently cited by the Foreign Office when debating the relative values of inter and intra commonwealth trade.

(3) Resourcing is available through the ring fencing of Departmental funds to underwrite knowledge exchange and impact activity, and through match funding from external sources. For example, training Jobcentre Plus advisers as a result of Drew and Toerien's research was funded by the DWP, and we provided additional resource to enhance the programme. We secure external funding to resource impact activity in areas where users have limited resources. For example, we secured an ESRC Knowledge Exchange grant to develop a 'Healthtalkonline' module on family experiences of having relatives with prolonged disorders of consciousness. Our research development officer updates staff to ensure they make use of resources available within the

Impact template (REF3a)

University, for example, from the Research and Innovation Office, the Outreach team, and the Communications Team.

(4) Capturing our impact is achieved through a systematic approach to monitoring and collating evidence of change which is overseen by the DRC and ISC with support from the research development officer who regularly reviews impact work in order to identify how we might best extend our activities. We support reporting of impact into Pure, our Research Information System. In future, details of impacts recorded in Pure will be available via the York Research Database (<https://pure.york.ac.uk/portal/en/>).

c. Strategy and plans

Over the next 5 years we will enhance the environment in our department to enable everyone in relevant areas to conduct knowledge exchange and impact activities through these mechanisms:

(1) Staff will be required and supported to incorporate and embed an impact strategy into the design of their research projects. Where appropriate, they will include non-academic beneficiaries as members of project advisory groups and when seeking external funds will cost for activities that can inform and change policy and practice. We will extend the range of non-academic beneficiaries who are members of our research centres.

(2) Staff will be offered training to develop skills in, for example, identifying stakeholders and beneficiaries, drafting policy briefings and working directly with local, national and international user groups. Training on impact will be supported by the departmental research budget and the Impact Sub-committee (ISC) will continue to ensure staff make use of customized training on impact offered by the University and external agencies. We will also lead on training sessions for PGRs and ECRs from Sociology departments across the White Rose DTC. Staff will be encouraged to develop relationships with external partners by applying for collaborative (jointly-supervised) PhDs through the ESRC White Rose DTC and the AHRC White Rose Doctoral Training Partnership..

(3) We will audit the impact of our research and related activities and use this to learn from our successes and mistakes and share good practice to enhance our impact-related activities. The ISC will for example, collate ‘pathways to impact’ documents produced by researchers when applying for research grants, and will periodically request information about how impact plans have been met. Leaders of research centres will also be required to submit an annual summary of all impact activity. We will implement a research impact framework to help researchers systematically identify specific and verifiable impacts related to their work.

(4) The DRC will continue to ring-fence funds for impact, which will be allocated by the ISC to support staff where they are able to demonstrate that their activities will make a difference to beneficiaries, and they will be required to report on the outcomes.

(5) We will maintain our external profile through press releases, blogs, up-to-date information on the Departmental website and other forms of advertising that encourage engagement between researchers and non-academic audiences.

d. Relationship to case studies

Our approach to impact outlined in section b has underpinned our case studies. For example, Webster and Atkin’s work demonstrates the value of sustaining relationships over time in order to build the trust of non-academic beneficiaries. Drew and Toerien’s work exemplifies the value of resourcing impact activity; although funded primarily by the DWP the Department provided additional funds to enhance the quality of the training. As examples of good practice, our case studies have provided a basis for our impact strategy which comprises a systematic approach to training, formalising relationships, resourcing and auditing impact activity. This will ensure that we achieve our primary aim of conducting research that makes a demonstrable contribution to society and the economy with a particular focus on social, health and cultural wellbeing.