

Impact case study (REF3b)

| |
|--|
| <p>Institution: Queen’s University Belfast</p> |
| <p>Unit of Assessment: 17 - Geography, Environmental Studies and Archaeology</p> |
| <p>Title of case study: Moving or not moving? Spatial mobility in the Northern Ireland labour market</p> |
| <p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>The impact of the research programme led to advice being provided to inward-investment companies on labour supply; to the re-working of the Northern Ireland Department of Employment and Learning’s [DEL] training provision; to participation on the government’s Task Force charged with re-integrating the unemployed into the labour force and to formulating the Northern Ireland [NI] response to the UK-wide welfare reform agenda. The research covered company recruitment experiences, spatial behaviour and perceptions of young people and benefit claimants, and the views of Job Centre advisors. It found that targeting jobs to deprived areas did not necessarily bring jobs to residents of these areas, that recruitment experiences were dependent on locational context, that some people are in a low mobility trap, and that advisors sometimes find it difficult to assimilate rapidly changing policies.</p> |
| <p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Enhancing the Northern Ireland labour market has been a central policy goal of the Northern Ireland government in order to improve economic prospects and because of concerns about employment equality in a deeply divided society. Primary research was undertaken by QUB geographers between 1994 to 2008 (Shuttleworth L/SL 1993-; McKinsty, RA 1998-2003; Lloyd L/SL, 1999-2012) using individual-level personnel records from a variety of employers across different industrial sectors as part of the DEL-funded Large Scale Recruitment Study. This was supplemented with survey data, census data and qualitative interviews to gain an understanding of various aspects of spatial behaviour in the labour market. Firstly, individual postcode locations of job applicants and employees were mapped and analysed in terms of previous labour market status and other individual demographic characteristics to understand more about the factors that shape access to work and the spatial range over which individuals apply for work. Findings revealed that sectarian factors did not seem to be as important a barrier to gaining employment as other obstacles such as age (Shuttleworth et al 1996; Shuttleworth and Gould 2010).</p> <p>The research also offered insights into the importance of geographic and social context on the problems in engaging prospective workers from deprived areas and from backgrounds of long-term joblessness with employment, plus the difficulties faced by policies that targeted jobs to deprived areas in getting residents of those areas into employment because of the ‘leakage’ of jobs outside these areas. This enabled better understanding of the limits of labour market and social policy as practiced by the NI government and indicated that the majority of people gaining new jobs were not previously jobless.</p> <p>The work also examined the employability of younger people, focussed especially on individual mental maps and the physical and perceptual constraints to job search in Belfast (Green et al 2005). It explored the barriers that restrict job search in cities including the factors that hinder young people in Belfast in particular (eg the sectarian geography of the Belfast urban area). A notable feature of the research was the spatially-restricted perceptual maps of the city held by young people that were conditioned not only by sectarianism but also their spatial location (eg Catholics in the East of the city had similar views in some respects to Protestants from the East). The localism of job search was identified as an issue of particular concern – many young people had very small search areas for jobs and training which meant they were unable to avail themselves of the full range of opportunities. Following on from this, given policy imperatives to reduce the numbers of sickness and incapacity benefit claimants, which is</p> |

disproportionately high in NI compared to the rest of the UK, research was commissioned by DEL on the experiences, perceptions and views of these claimants with particular reference to spatial behaviour and willingness to travel. This involved primary research with advisors in Job Centres and also with claimants themselves (Green and Shuttleworth 2010; Shuttleworth and Green 2011). **This highlighted the relationship between low spatial mobility, low skills and illness that often developed over an occupational career and which made government intentions to promote spatial mobility as part of the 'employability mix' for claimants hard to attain plus the 'initiative fatigue' that limited the effectiveness of advisors.**

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

1. Shuttleworth, I., Shirlow, P., McKinstry, D., (1996), Vacancies, access to employment and the unemployed: two case studies of Belfast and Londonderry, in E McLaughlin and P Quirk (ed), *Policy Aspects of Employment Equality in Northern Ireland*, Standing Advisory Committee on Human Rights, Belfast, 27-50
2. Shuttleworth, I., Power, J., McKinstry, D., (2000), 1991 Travel-to-work patterns in the Belfast Urban Area: A context for urban employment policy, *Applied Geography*, 20, 177-202
3. Green, A., Shuttleworth, I., Lavery, S., (2005), Young people, job search and local labour markets: The example of Belfast, *Urban Studies*, 42, 301-324
4. Green, A., Shuttleworth, I., (2010), Local differences, perceptions and IB claimants: implications for policy delivery, *Policy Studies*, 31, 223-243
5. Shuttleworth, I., Gould, M, (2010), Distance between home and work: A multilevel analysis of individual workers, neighbourhoods, and employment sites in Northern Ireland, *Environment and Planning A*, 42, 1221-1238
6. Shuttleworth, I., Green, A., (2011), Spatial mobility intentions, the labour market and Incapacity Benefit claimants: Evidence from Northern Ireland, *Urban Studies*, 48, 911-927

Research grants associated with the research

| | |
|------|--|
| 1995 | £30,000 from the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights to investigate long term unemployment and the social construction of local labour markets, (with P Shirlow), Co-investigator |
| 1997 | £63,000 from the Training and Employment Agency for the Large-Scale Recruitment Study Phase I, (with P Shirlow), <u>Principal Investigator</u> |
| 2000 | £10,000 from DHFETE for 'Large-Scale Recruitment Study Phase III', (The food processing sector), (with D McKinstry), <u>Principal Investigator</u> |
| 2000 | £18,000 from DFHETE for 'Large-Scale Recruitment Study Phase II' (The Callcentre and Hospitality Sectors), (with D McKinstry), <u>Principal Investigator</u> |
| 2001 | £33,000 from the Department of Employment and Learning (DEL) to investigate 'Area Perceptions, Mobility and Exclusion' in Belfast, (with A Green), <u>Principal Investigator</u> |
| 2002 | £35,000 from (DEL) to investigate 'Recruitment in the Northern Ireland software sector', (with D McKinstry), <u>Principal Investigator</u> |
| 2005 | £62,000 from DEL for project, Incapacity Benefit Claimants: Geography, Households, Decision Making and Welfare Reform, (with A Green and C Lloyd), <u>Principal Investigator</u> |

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The labour market is a key policy area in NI, as in the rest of the UK. The NI labour market was characterised by employment growth from 1990 to 2007 but simultaneously also had high rates of economic inactivity. This raised questions about the distribution of paid employment in NI, access to work for benefit claimants, and the need to ensure equality of labour market opportunity between the two major 'national' communities – Protestant and Catholic. The growth of employment and the attraction of inward investment were therefore significant elements in the NI Executive's 2007-2011 Programme for Government. Additionally, just as in the rest of the UK, welfare reform, and the involvement of benefit claimants in employment, has been a major government objective and brings together an understanding of labour market dynamics with social policy initiatives. The research undertaken by Shuttleworth *et al* addresses these issues and has had the following impact since 2008:

1. DEL received detailed evidence from our research on the geographical operation of labour markets and recruitment. **This informed the advice they then provided to inward-investment companies as well as other employers who have been seeking to increase their work forces in NI (Item 1).** This included an assessment of the spatial and non-spatial barriers to work and their operation in different places. In this case, better understanding of the geographical context of labour markets led to better understanding of labour supply issues – efficiency issues – and also equality issues. Our 2001 analysis of who gets jobs and from where within NI (Item 2) has impacts continuing to the present day, with beneficiaries including the NI public.
2. The Task Group 'Recovering the Unemployed and Inactive into the Economy' (2009-2010, see Item 3). (convened by the NI Advisor on Employment and Skills, and including Shuttleworth) was set up as a result of our research. This contributed to framing the response by the NI Executive to the UK Welfare Reform Agenda and is an example of the effect of research upon public policy. Evidence from Shuttleworth's research contributed to round table debates with civil servants and representatives from the voluntary and business communities. **These included evidence of some individuals being trapped by localised low mobility horizons, the evolution of these limits over a labour market career, and the great distance of some people from employment.** This raised questions about the effectiveness of policy interventions and their targeting, especially in a time of reductions in some areas of public spending. Dilemmas explored included the need to be fair by supporting all claimants in their search for work but with the recognition that scarce resources spent on older people a long way from the labour market might be more efficiently spent on younger people nearer the labour market and with better prospects of gaining a job. This had an impact on decision-making and policy recommendations and in the final report Shuttleworth *et al*'s research was cited 14 times. (See Item 4 2010 Task Group Report on Recovering the Unemployed and Inactive into the Economy). Beneficiaries include policymakers and the public more generally.
3. The research also impacted on the **rolling out of the labour market dimensions of the wider Welfare Reform Agenda in NI including Shuttleworth *et al*'s help in shaping government recommendations about the introduction of Employment Support Allowance (ESA).** This was done by providing information on the nature of the spatial (and non-spatial) barriers to employment faced by Incapacity Benefit Claimants to Job Centre Advisors and proved invaluable, for example in determining the Department's response to implementing the ESA and of the migration of Incapacity Benefit clients to ESA and Job Seekers Allowance (Item 3). Beneficiaries again include policymakers and the public more generally.
4. Recommendations from the research led to changes in the provision of services and advice by DEL to young people, unemployed people, and those seeking training, that would better reflect the spatial structure of the NI labour market (Item 5 and 6). It allowed DEL to adjust its services, for example, directly in the terms of advice and guidance given to clients - and also to give the staff (eg careers officers, employment service staff) an understanding of the environment that their clients are working in. The most concrete example of this is the decision by DEL to produce labour market information on a Workforce Development Forum (WDF) area basis (the WDFs cover the same area as the six Further Education college footprints): this geography was deliberately chosen to give local information - but not too local. There were a number of reasons for this but a key one was to widen the geographical horizon of both advisor and advised

especially in the Jobs and Benefits Office context (Item 1). This is an example of research influencing public policy with policymakers and the general public being beneficiaries.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

1. Letter from Head of Labour Market Research, Department of Employment and Learning (DEL), NI
2. Shuttleworth, I., McKinstry, D., (2001), What can the large-scale recruitment study tell us about 'employability'?, *Labour Market Bulletin*, 15, 56-62
3. The Task Group 'Recovering the Unemployed and Inactive into the Economy' (2009-2010) (<http://www.niaes.co.uk/Advisory-Task-Groups/Recovering-the-Unemployed-and-Inactive-into-the-Ec.aspx>)
4. Recovering the Unemployed and Inactive into the Economy, (2010), Office of the Northern Ireland Adviser on Employment and Skills, Belfast, <http://www.niaes.co.uk/NIAESSite/files/86/866163a1-a1b0-4023-bc8e-4dc6ad99e6a9.pdf>, accessed 26.1.13
5. Shuttleworth, I., Green, A., Lloyd, C., (2008), *Survey Report: Incapacity Benefit Claimants, Geography, Households, Decision Making and Welfare Reform*, DEL, Belfast, ISBN 0-9-545592-9-0
6. Shuttleworth, I., Green, A., (2009), IB Claimants in Northern Ireland: Perspectives from Pathways Personal Advisers, *Labour Market Bulletin*, 22, 239-247