

<p><b>Institution:</b> University of Sheffield</p>
<p><b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 22 - Social Work and Social Policy</p>
<p><b>a. Context</b></p> <p>The Department of Sociological Studies has a long-standing commitment to undertaking interdisciplinary, problem focused research that has direct relevance to policy-makers, public and private sector organisations, NGOs and charities. This is informed by our civic engagement activities, our participation as trustees and partnership board members and by our involvement with governmental and non-governmental organisations, charities and industry. User engagement is key to our approach to maximising impact. We actively seek collaboration with a wide range of non-academic user groups and beneficiaries including: regional, national and international NGOs; charitable organisations; government departments; commercial organisations; the media; and the general public, especially vulnerable groups. The award of the ESRC's first Impact Champion of the Year to Walker, in 2013, is evidence of the power of our impact strategy.</p> <p>Across all of our 4 research strands - <i>Ageing across the life course</i>, <i>International and comparative social policy</i>, <i>Theory culture and identity</i> and <i>Science and society</i> we have helped change practice and influence policy directions. Our research findings, conceptual frameworks and theoretical perspectives have also informed approaches to product and service development and helped raise public awareness of contemporary social issues through: conference presentations; public lectures; dissemination events; practitioner workshops; TV and radio appearances; newspaper articles; the production of films, exhibitions, DVDs, and websites; and through our regular participation in the ESRC Festival of Social Science.</p>
<p><b>b. Approach to impact</b></p> <p>That impact is embedded fully in our research strategy is acknowledged by the ESRC prize that was awarded to Walker. Our approach to it is two-fold. Besides disseminating the findings of our research through academic and more popular publications, seminars and workshops we have specifically: (1) worked to both strengthen long-standing relationships with key research users and partners and to develop new links and collaborations; and (2) increased the reach of our research findings by making them available to a greater and more diverse range of stakeholders and audiences, nationally and internationally, through developing new and innovative dissemination approaches.</p> <p><i>Developing collaborations with key research users:</i></p> <p>Our research has actively helped to inform new policy directions through staff acting as consultants and professional advisors to governments, NGOs, charities and business. Our research on ageing across the life course has led to some major changes in both policy and practice. Our three case studies clearly demonstrate the local, national and international reach of this impact. Among other examples, Churchill undertook evaluations of family intervention and recovery projects for Manchester City Council in 2008, identifying necessary changes to their practice, and Gregory's research on domestic abuse and homicide underpinned her role as an expert witness for Leicester County Council in 2012 and her appointment as Chair of VIDA (formerly the Sheffield Domestic Abuse Forum), a Sheffield based voluntary sector organisation. Sen was lead researcher in the first independent study of the Graded Care Profile (2008-11, £7K), a tool for assessing child neglect, which has started to be used by practitioners throughout the UK. Our research in the field of international and comparative social policy has also influenced the work of NGOs, charities and governments. In 2012, as a direct result of his comparative research on corporate welfare, Farnsworth was asked by OXFAM to carry out an audit of corporate welfare in the UK. Oxfam is using this report to initiate a campaign to encourage corporations to engage more positively with the state (for example, via corporation tax). As a result of her research with the Muslim community, Britton acted as a professional advisor for the UK government's PREVENT strategy, which was developed by the Joint Terrorist Analysis Centre, to help prevent people becoming terrorists or supporting violent extremism. Deacon's global social policy research informed a series of policy briefings drawn up for the South African government about the effects of migration on the labour market. It also informed his professional advisory role as a committee member of ICSW (International Council on Social Welfare), an international NGO that works directly with people in poverty or distress. Walker's development of the concept of social quality, and its later adoption in</p>

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international, national and local contexts, led to advisory roles with the EU and underpinned his appointment as Chair of the Sheffield Fairness Commission in 2012. This public body examined the causes and impact of inequalities in the city and made recommendations for addressing them. These are currently being implemented by the City Council and Executive Board in a 10 year programme. The impact of our research in the field of science and society has similarly been enhanced through collaborative research practices: Wessels is working with local businesses, practitioners and government to overcome barriers for mainstreaming assisted living technology and she also has advisory roles with the EU and in Australia and Asia; Boxall's research work as an advisor and consultant for CHANGE is helping this NGO to campaign for policy reform aimed at achieving equal rights for learning disabled people; Horwarth is working with officials in New South Wales and South Africa to introduce new child protection assessment systems; and Gibson's research on oral health and the mouth led to a consultancy with GlaxoSmithKline which enabled them to develop a bio-psychosocial approach to measuring the impact of dental disease.

*Increasing the reach of our research*

The Department ensures that the research findings of each of its research groups has maximum impact through developing a wide and innovative range of dissemination strategies and activities that have reached out to governments, NGOs, the business community and the general public. Research In Practice, established in 1996 and funded by the Dartington Trust and housed in the Department, built capacity for evidence-informed practice in children's services by disseminating research to a practitioner audience. We have built on this experience to produce briefings about our research. Accessibly written and downloadable from the web, these provide global access to key information about specific research projects. Making use of visual and digital media, Sen created a podcast of his findings about child protection systems in Scotland for use by practitioners and local government officers to help them improve their practice. Warren created an art exhibition of the findings from her ESRC funded research on gender and ageing - Look At Me! Exhibition - to reach out to the general public. This has been exhibited at locations in Sheffield, York, London and Derby and is now on permanent display at Age UK HQ (London) and at the Swansea Centre for Innovative Ageing. Robinson created a public art exhibition based on her research findings about shoes, identity and transition as part of the Festival of Mind in 2011 and, together with Hockey, created a film showcasing the findings from this ESRC funded project that was screened at The Showroom cinema. This film will be entered into national and international film competitions. Walker and Warren worked with Age UK and the National Union of Journalists to create a Charter Against Ageism and Sexism in the Media.

During their research into understanding public attitudes towards synthetic biology, Molyneux-Hodgson and Martin established a blog about collaborations between social and natural sciences that remains open for comment. Molyneux-Hodgson created a series of short films for the web on a range of environmental issues as a result of her interdisciplinary research on water resources. To disseminate the findings of her research into child participation in Nigeria, Twum-Danso Imoh produced a DVD for distribution to: the staff of the UK charity Stepping Stones, their partners in Nigeria and to the United Nations Universal Period Review. In addition, she created a cartoon poster that highlighted the challenges facing children in the Niger Delta, based on data provided by children themselves. Many other staff have used interviews on local, national and European TV and radio to make their research findings available to the general public.

The Department has also increased the reach of its research through extensive face-to-face engagement with research users. For example, based on their theoretical ideas about the future of the welfare state, Irving and Farnsworth hosted practical workshops with civic leaders from the Sheffield Executive Board to promote awareness of the measures they could take to ameliorate the impact of austerity. During the ESRC Festival of Social Science, they also held a workshop for school children about how to cope with austerity. Molyneux-Hodgson hosted a workshop in Sheffield with representatives from local industry to engage them with science/society/engineering issues in relation to the environment. Based on research findings, Robinson also held workshops that raised police and social workers' awareness of issues in relation to masculinity, while Warren challenged intergenerational stereotypes of ageing in workshops for school children.

*Institutional mechanisms for achieving impact.*

The University's mission is 'to create, discover, share and apply knowledge through teaching and research in ways that make a difference' and in 2010-11 it renewed its Innovation, Impact and

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Knowledge Exchange (IKE) strategy. This helps staff foster the impact of their research in a variety of ways. For example, via £1.5m of the University's Higher Education Innovation Fund the Research Exchange for the Social Sciences (RESS) acts as a Knowledge Exchange Gateway. Members of staff have used this facility to help identify and recruit target audiences for their knowledge exchange workshops and to devise impact pathways for research grant bids. RESS is also represented on the partnership board of the Centre for the Study of Childhood and Youth (CSCY) and helps disseminate its research findings. The Faculty's Rapid Response Fund, set up to provide small amounts of money to pump prime KT activities, awarded matched funding to James for her evaluation study of children's responses to the green roof on their school that she carried out for Lindum Turf. The University also helps academic staff to increase the impact of their research by encouraging them to undertake up to 35 days of consultancy each year. Twum-Danso Imoh, Horwath, Gibson, Churchill, Boxall, Farnsworth, Foster, Sen, Walker and James have all taken on consultancies of this kind and in addition to the impact on users, many of these have led to further research. Staff have also accessed external funding to assist with KT work. Robinson, Sen, James, Molyneux-Hodgson and Walker have, for example, all received funding for events in the ESRC Festival of Social Science and Molyneux-Hodgson was PI on an ESRC User Engagement Award. Specialist media training and IT support for the development of web pages, blogs and pod casts provided by the University have underpinned the innovative visual and digital dissemination strategies described above.

### **c. Strategy and plans**

One of the Department's strategic objectives will continue to be maximising the impact of its research on a wide variety of research users and the long-term effectiveness of our commitment to impact is illustrated through the examples in section b above. We will build on this success by continuing to draw on our home-grown talent: Research In Practice and Walker's unequalled experience in directing two major research council programmes. The ESRC prize money, for example, will be devoted to impact capacity building among early career researchers and extending the international reach of our research. The post of academic Impact Officer, inaugurated in 2012, will continue to support staff to maximise the impact of their research by, for example, reviewing draft impact pathways for research bids, encouraging innovative approaches to impact and enabling best practice to be shared via training workshops. The Departmental Research Support Officer's role has been extended to include identifying funding opportunities for KE activities via close liaison with the University Research and Innovation Services. Future plans will further enhance this approach by: encouraging staff to make still greater use of the services provided by RESS; holding regular media training events for staff; creating an advisory board for the Department to cement local, regional and national links with key stakeholders and research users; creating a departmental forum for impact peer review to share best practice about innovative dissemination mechanisms and impact activities; developing further our collective knowledge of those research methodologies that enable greater service user involvement and collaborative research partnerships; and, in 2014, showcasing the impact of our research to the general public throughout the year via events celebrating the Department's 65th anniversary.

### **d. Relationship to case studies**

Our case studies reflect well the Department's commitment to impact. Walker's case study on ageing demonstrates how a policy driven research agenda can lead to on-going and significant research collaborations with users. For example, as Chair of the Implementation Board for Sheffield's Ageing Strategy and as lead author of the FUTURAGE road map - the most extensive consultation ever mounted on ageing research in Europe - Walker now acts as a professional adviser on ageing to policy makers, both nationally and internationally. In recognition of the importance of this work, he was, as noted above, awarded the first ESRC Impact Champion of the Year award in 2013. Horwath's development of an assessment tool to tackle child-maltreatment has similarly led to strong collaborations with research users, helping UK safeguarding children boards to judge what works in the effective management of multidisciplinary child-welfare practice. Meanwhile, James' case study of children and hospital space shows how creative, focused dissemination activities led to a research consultancy, a knowledge exchange project and further research in collaboration with research users. That each case study has had impact beyond the UK exemplifies our strong commitment to extending the reach and significance of our research.