

Institution: University of Dundee
Unit of Assessment: 22 Social Work and Social Policy
<p>a. Context</p> <p>Research within the social work unit of assessment achieves impact in several different areas. The ultimate aim of research within the unit is to improve the lives of service users and carers. The aim of improving lives runs across a range of research about different vulnerable and at risk-groups. For example, we have had a long history of research and scholarship in the areas of child care and protection (Barron, Jackson), physical and learning disabilities (Harris, Hogg, Kelly, Simpson), criminal justice (Fenton, McCulloch) and carers (Harris, Hogg, Kelly). The ultimate beneficiaries of such research are the service users and carers themselves – people who require social care or health care services, and those who support them. The main audiences for the research, however, are generally front line professionals, practitioners and policy makers, who can implement or utilise the research, thereby improving the lives of service users and carers. Other research aims to change professional education, policy, or practices to improve knowledge and skills of the workforce, thereby impacting service in the longer term for users and carers.</p> <p>Three examples will help illustrate how our research influences professionals, thereby improving the lives of service users and carers. A focus of research has involved people with profound and multiple disabilities and the numerous barriers they and their families encounter in their daily lives. Our research documented barriers in accessing health care, social care, recreational and leisure activities and other resources required for normal family life (Hogg, Young). This included lack of access to bathroom facilities for adults with severe disabilities. Lack of access to such a basic facility meant that many families remained housebound and unable to engage with everyday activities. Research from the unit was used to develop standards to make “accessible” toilets truly accessible for all. These standards, called Changing Places, were incorporated into British Standards BS8300:2009, which architects now use when they are designing new public buildings. While the end service users (people with profound and multiple learning disabilities and their carers) are unlikely to have read the research, it is nonetheless having an important impact on their lives as truly accessible toilets are being built across the UK.</p> <p>Another example of the impact between our research and beneficiaries relates to our long history of child care protection research. This research was used to inform the development of <i>Key Capabilities for Child Care and Protection</i> which was written by staff members of the social work team (Bruce) and published in 2006 by the Scottish Social Services Council. All social work students in Scotland are now required to evidence their knowledge, values and skills regarding child care and protection. Like the earlier example, the end users (at risk children and their families) will not be aware of the research, but the research has influenced the practice of all social workers educated in Scotland since 2006.</p> <p>One final example involves research in the Palestinian occupied territories involving group based approaches to trauma recovery for children. This programme of research led by staff within this UoA (Barron, Kelly) has informed the development of interventions that are being rolled out across the Gaza and the West Bank and to date have been delivered to over 6,000 children in these war torn cities. The dissemination audience for the reports and publications are the professionals and policy makers. However, the aim is to influence a change in practice so that the ultimate beneficiaries are vulnerable children.</p> <p>These examples, though not exhaustive, highlight the context in which research within the social work discipline operates. We aim to engage, utilise and inform policy makers and professional practitioners so that they may more effectively and justly serve vulnerable people in Scotland and beyond.</p>
<p>b. Approach to impact</p> <p>Though there is a clear difference between dissemination and impact, impact is dependent upon</p>

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good and targeted dissemination beyond traditional academic dissemination outlets. As such, social work has developed an approach to impact that targets three different audiences: the academic and research world, stakeholders (e.g. funders, government officials and civil servants, local authority planners) and frontline practitioners and/or service users. The approach requires researchers to do more than publish outputs in academic and research journals. It requires producing accessible reports for funders, politicians, civil servants and charities and engaging in on-going dialogue and relationship-building with stakeholders. Finally, the approach requires researchers to produce information which is easily accessible to frontline practitioners and service users, and to engage with practitioners/service users to implement or make use of research findings.

The research in the area of access for disabled people (described above) provides a good example of the approach to impact. Using the findings, staff members from social work worked in partnership with organisations across the UK to engage with policy makers and professional bodies. Relationships with policy makers that have been fostered over many years were called upon to increase the visibility of the findings within government and the agencies that set building standards. Materials based on the research were developed for professionals and service users which they could use in their campaigning efforts. As previously noted, these efforts led to a change in legislation and the Changing Places. The trauma recovery work provides another example of the multi-level approach to impact (**Barron** and colleagues, 2009, 2010, 2012). Here the research began with a small scale study done in partnership with a NGO in the Palestinian Authority. In addition to the standard academic outputs, reports were developed for the local practitioners, local officials and other international Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). Such efforts facilitated up-scaling and further developing the initial small study. The principal investigator worked in partnership with local professionals to access and develop politically sensitive support from the Palestinian Authority. This support allowed further resource development for the indigenous population. With each successful wave of research, resources were developed and assistance was provided to implement the findings in practice. Implementation of findings raised additional research questions which restarted the research, implementation, further development cycle. The findings were shared with other NGOs and links were made to other war torn areas to further implementation in other parts of the world.

The unit has used the Press Office, Revealing Research team, and University website to disseminate findings and engage with the public and stakeholders. In addition, conferences and workshops have also been run within the University and participants invited specifically to develop partnerships and further the work of the research.

The School and University support the work of developing impact through various means. First, the workload model builds professional engagement activities into the expected activities of academic staff. This enables researchers to have time to engage with stakeholders. In addition, budgets are available to support travel costs associated with such activities. In the case of the work in Palestine, advice, information and insurance were provided through the University, given the volatile nature of the region.

c. Strategy and plans

We aim to extend the impact of our research through increased public engagement, knowledge exchange activities, participation in local, national and international steering groups, committees and governmental/non-governmental bodies related to our areas of research. Though such activities are currently occurring, our plan is to more systematically engage in the strategic activities for all research carried out within the unit.

- Public engagement activities – Our public engagement activities will involve regular stakeholder conferences whereby researchers will showcase research activities to stakeholders in Scotland (e.g. Local authority partners, NHS partners, practice educators, Scottish Social Services Council, Association for Directors of Social Work, civil servants from Scottish Government, Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services). For example, a conference with local authorities, practitioners and Scottish Government is being planned in 2013/14 to discuss recent research carried out by University staff on

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strengthening families in Dundee. The research and conference will be used to inform a strategic review of services for the local authority and improve the services that participated in the research.

- Social Media - We plan to strengthen the use of social media to extend the reach of engagement activities. Social Work has recently established a social media presence and a robust social media strategy will be implemented and fully operational in 2014.
- Knowledge Exchange Activities – Local and international knowledge exchange activities which are being planned include a successful Scottish Universities Insight Institute (SUII) bid that brings together our experts in child protection and serious case reviews, forensic science experts in other parts of the University, and national/international experts in the fields of child protection, policing, law and design. Discussions are underway with potential knowledge exchange partners in Australia, Canada, United States, Germany, Norway and Sweden. Social work will engage in at least one major knowledge exchange activity per year, such as the two current funded knowledge exchange initiatives (SUII; ESRC Learning Disabilities).
- Engaging with Public Bodies – Researchers within the unit are expected to engage in public and professional engagement activities. This includes an expectation to become involved with public bodies relevant to our areas of research. Locally, several members sit on steering groups for the local authority (e.g., Child Protection Committee, Fostering Committee, Carers Strategy Implementation Group, Adult Protection Committee). Nationally, several members have been or are involved with governmental steering/working groups, NGOs and Quangos (e.g. Scottish Government Steering Group and Implementation Group for Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007, Scottish Government Bursary Working Group; Scottish Government *Same as You* Implementation Group; Scottish Consortium on Learning Disabilities). These activities allow staff members to advise and influence policy makers and use current research to inform policy debates and developments. These activities also help ensure that research is relevant to key stakeholders.

All current and future research within the social work unit will have three outputs. The first outputs will be the traditional academic scholarly outputs (e.g. academic journals, government reports). The second set of outputs will be for frontline practitioners. These will take the form of short articles in *Community Care* or other widely read practitioner magazines. In addition, social media will be used to engage practitioners (e.g. podcasts, blogs, Twitter, Facebook). In addition, we will develop resources for service users, carers and the general public. We currently have expertise in all three approaches but are moving towards an integrated and consistent approach in dissemination activities aimed at increasing impact beyond academia.

d. Relationship to case studies

The two case studies exemplify parts of the strategy described above. For example, the impact described in the case study concerning the *evidence based model for child trauma recovery in war torn contexts* was developed through building on knowledge exchange activities (e.g., trauma series at the University led to further implementation of the model with secured accommodation units in Scotland), engagement with NGOs (International Centre for Child Trauma Prevention and Recovery, Centre for Applied Research in Education – Nablus/Jerusalem) and through the use of social media (podcasts).

The impact described in the case study concerning *Protecting and supporting vulnerable adults in Scotland* developed through involvement in Scottish Government working groups as well as engagement in local authority committees (Adult Protection Committee).