

Institution: University of Bedfordshire
Unit of Assessment: 22 - Social Work and Social Policy
<p>a. Context:</p> <p>Work at the Institute of Applied Social Research (IASR) is designed to change the terms of public and professional debate (for example, about child sexual exploitation, substance abuse and interventions in social work). Our approach is to engage in early dialogue, identifying the need for research, undertaking it in collaboration with agencies and practitioners, and embedding the research process and findings in policy and practice. We promote the voices of marginalised groups through participatory action research, developing innovative methods of working with marginalised groups. For example, our work on child sexual exploitation (CSE), based on participation by children and young people, played a major role in reframing CSE as a child protection issue, rather than as juvenile prostitution, thus changing national policy and engaging a range of agencies and practitioners in safeguarding exploited children. Our research is used by international and national governments and organisations, and by UK local authority and independent social services. IASR work thus demonstrates the power of participatory action research engaging in social change to impact on the wellbeing of those in trouble and in need.</p>
<p>b. Approach to impact:</p> <p>IASR achieves impact by building and sustaining long term relationships with stakeholders in order to <i>improve policy, change practice and develop the evidence base.</i></p> <p><i>Improving policy</i> Our ethos of early and sustained dialogue promotes joint ownership of issues to which research can make a contribution, facilitating policy and practice change. This includes dialogue with marginalised groups, whose views give direction to the research. For example, IASR appointed staff to engage children in identifying and disseminating research, resulting, for example, in influencing mass media outputs such as an East Enders story line on CSE. Similarly, IASR developed the 'What Works For Us' Youth Group in partnership with Barnardo's and ECPAT (End Child Prostitution and Trafficking), to engage sexually exploited children in research. In 2009, Pearce and Barnardo's established the Sexual Exploitation Research Forum in which practitioners and researchers collaborate to develop research. Using this approach, IASR research influences national and international government policy-making. For example, Forrester's work on engagement and the effectiveness of child care services led the Welsh Government to develop Integrated Family Support Services (under the <i>Children and Families Measure 2010</i>, part 3) and extensive training for workers in Motivational Interviewing (MI). The independent advisor to government, Martin Narey, used this work in his 2011 report to the English government <i>A Blueprint for the Nation's Lost Children</i>. Melrose's and Pearce's research informed DCSF guidance and action plans on CSE (<i>Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation</i>, 2009. <i>Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation</i>, DfE 2011). Kohli's work with children subject to migration control has been central in reformulating UK implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (see icsinspector.independent.gov.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2012/12/IAGCI.Children.COIS_Final.pdf).</p> <p>Throughout 2013, Kohli acted as specialist adviser to the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, and his recent research on guardianship was the key source in the parliamentary debate on the Scottish system (Scottish Parliament, June 2011). The case study on substance use details similar influence by Galvani.</p> <p>IASR staff also apply this approach at the international level, with Institute funding support to participate in European and global networks. For example, Pearce joined the Eurochild policy steering group to promote new approaches to CSE, and chairs the expert reference group on participation. In 2009, Melrose worked with the Belgian Federal Science Policy Office Evaluation on Research with 'Hard to Reach' young people and Pearce acted as rapporteur with the Council of Europe on stopping sexual violence against children. Brown worked with the New South Wales Legislative Council's Standing Committee on Law and Justice, influencing the review of same sex adoption (Adoption by Same-sex Couples, Report 39, 2009). Since 2013, Hynes and Allnock have acted as consultants to UNICEF on Strategies for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation, Sexual Abuse and Sexual Violence in Development and Emergency Contexts. In the 2012 meetings of the Nordic Network for Research on Refugee Children (NordRC), Kohli promoted research on child migrants.</p>

Changing practice IASR research impacts on professional practice by providing research based tools. For example, Pitts developed measures of the prevalence and seriousness of youth gang crime and recommendations for an effective multi-agency intervention, adopted by four of the most gang-affected inner London boroughs. Brown's British Association of Adoption and Fostering 2011 guidance on foster carer reviews has been distributed as best practice to every UK local authority and to all independent fostering providers. Melrose' and Pearce's team produced a self assessment and data monitoring tool for all UK local safeguarding children's boards. Pearce's work with young people to develop booklets and films on CSE has refined the ethics of participatory methods with vulnerable groups. Her recent 'social model of consent' has advanced the understanding of children's 'consent' to sexual activity. Galvani is chair of the BASW Special Interest Group on Alcohol and Drug use, and has produced guidance that has been circulated to more than 20,000 workers in the UK.

Developing the evidence base IASR research demonstrates sustained impact on the evidence base for practice and social policy. For example, Melrose's 2002 work *Labour Pains* and Pearce's work 'Someone taking a part of you' promoted awareness of ethical and safety issues for practitioners engaging with exploited children, and is cited internationally by managers and trainers working in sensitive fields and/or with 'hard to reach' populations. Preston-Shoot's 2005 involvement of service users in systematic reviews was noted by the Social Care Institute for Excellence (Research Resource 02) as ground-breaking best practice. Brown's publications on social work and sexuality remain among the most cited texts in their fields. The Subject Centre for Social Work and Social Policy (SWAP) selected our work on alcohol and drug misuse as a highlight (Ten Years of SWAP, 2010), and cited Preston-Shoot's work on social work law as critical to qualifying programmes. Kohli's work with unaccompanied young people remains a key guide for practitioners, reaching and influencing an international audience, including the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). Galvani's research with national charities Adfam and AVA led to a national strategic group on substance use, domestic abuse and families and further practice development with parents abused by their children.

The impact on the evidence base is extensive. Preston-Shoot's research on adult safeguarding was disseminated through over thirty events, including for Local Safeguarding Adults Boards, and underpins Board policies on safeguarding and reviews of their effectiveness. In addition, Preston-Shoot uses his research as an independent chair of local safeguarding Boards for children and adults. The case study on substance use demonstrates impact at the national level by establishing a national strategic group and by producing education and training materials that have reached over 20,000 social workers. Similarly, Forrester's work on improving training and education in quantitative research (co-PI on two and PI on a further two ESRC Research Development Programmes in 2009-13) reaches 13 universities, influencing the education of over 700 qualifying students (supported by the university investment in staff at the Goldberg Centre).

IASR impact is durable as a result of ongoing relationships with stakeholders. For example, the impact of Pitts' work has been underpinned by his role as consultant to the Centre for Social Justice, Youth Gangs working group and as adviser to seven agencies on their gang strategies. Similarly, Bateman is policy adviser to the Association of Directors of Children's Services on youth justice, UK Rapporteur on the English youth justice system to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and works with several House of Commons Committees. Brown's ministerial appointment to the DH Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Advisory group in 2008 and to the DfE national steering group on foster care in 2007 brings similar opportunities to achieve lasting impact. In CSE, Pearce was invited to create the Child Sexual Exploitation Funder's Alliance (CSEFA), working with over 23 trusts and charitable funders to promote coherent funding for CSE services, and resulting in 16 new services to support exploited children. Similarly, Melrose and Pitts helped to found the London Gangs Forum to inform multi-agency policy and practice.

Lastly, Institute resources support impact. IASR provides training in dissemination, writing for policy audiences and in communication, presentation skills and support for international travel. Institute research is available at an early stage both through the University repository and an Institute publication series. IASR staff regularly present their research through 'Making Research Count', based within the IASR, and a consultancy arm, ETC (Evaluation, Training and Consultancy) provides short courses and seminars for policy and practitioner audiences. The Institute has a standing series of seminars to report early results and a programme of international

visiting scholars to ensure that research has a global reach and significance.

c. Strategy and plans:

IASR strategy to maximise impact is to engage with new and existing partners and to address both the policy and practice communities. Within the Goldberg Centre, for example, Forrester's work on MI and the restructuring of children's services informs DfE policy on 'systemic units', and at the same time we have agreed with a number of SSDs to undertake joint projects evaluating the impact of these policies. As the academic partner for Frontline, the Goldberg Centre will use its programme of research on MI to inform the education and training for child care social workers, and to develop research on the implementation of MI. The appointment of Fisher will allow the Goldberg Centre to expand its research on adult social care, including work on dementia, on alcohol use and visual impairment. The International Centre will focus on promoting knowledge of CSE and ethically sound child participation in preventing CSE at local, national and international levels. Three projects currently in development will provide a focus for future research: a European network promoting child participation to stop sexual violence funded by the Oak Foundation; a 'knowledge exchange forum' between Northern Ireland and England, funded by the Public Health Agency; and investment by CSEFA to evaluate its strategy of promoting CSE as a safeguarding issue in 16 services across the UK. The strategy includes investing in four further posts (appointed in 2013) to work with young people as peer researchers and to develop an international social work and social development educational programme. Future work in the Vauxhall Centre will increasingly reflect the convergence of the safeguarding and youth justice agendas and the need to focus upon the development of effective multiagency and joint commissioning responses to austerity. Future action research will focus on the development of effective multi-agency policy and practice within this reconfigured field. In order to support these developments, the University has recognised IASR as a priority area for investment (for example, through the appointment of Brown and Fisher). IASR's participatory work with marginalised groups also complements the University's commitment to widening participation. The IASR will continue to engage with the changing political and economic pressures on policy and practice through our long-standing partnerships with research commissioners and users.

d. Relationship to case studies:

We have selected a case study on substance misuse from the Tilda Goldberg Centre for Social Work and Social Care and one on CSE from the International Centre: Researching child sexual exploitation, violence and trafficking. These case studies reflect our approach of reframing public debate, involving marginalised groups, and developing sustained dialogue with the field to improve policy, practice and the evidence base. They demonstrate an intense applied focus, in which researchers reach out to stakeholders (rather than expecting stakeholders to seek out the university), and which exemplifies the innovation, significance and reach of our work.