

**Institution: UNIVERSITY OF KENT**

**Unit of Assessment: UOA 22 SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL POLICY**

**a. Context**

The School of Social Policy, Sociology and Social Research (SSPSSR) is one of the largest UK research units in the field of social policy. Built on a tradition of critically-engaged inter-disciplinary research, it impacts on some of the most important fields in contemporary social policy, such as increasing demands on social care, pressures on health services, rising crime rates, unemployment, an ageing population, welfare reform and the role of the third sector in an age of austerity. The beneficiaries include practitioners and policy-makers in government, NGOs, charities and the wider public. These groups not only provide significant audiences for our research but, in many cases, inspire, support and, on occasion, directly commission it.

Research impact has been maximised through the creation of applied research centres that have developed close relationships with users and beneficiaries. In particular, three long-established Centres - The **Personal Social Services Research Unit (PSSRU)**, the **Centre for Health Service Studies (CHSS)**, and the **Tizard Centre** - have extensive experience of working with government and charitable bodies, undertaking research, analysing data, responding to queries, and providing consultancy:

- **PSSRU** contributes a rigorous analytic approach, underpinned by quantitative methods, to debates on care provision, informing policy development in England and elsewhere, particularly by working with the Department of Health and local authorities. It is a centre of expertise in outcomes, costing and funding: its Unit Costs of Health and Social Care 2012 report was downloaded in full or part over 9000 times in its first year of publication; and its ASCOT outcome tool is used by all English local authorities in their annual surveys of adult social care.
- **CHSS** has a particular remit to inform policy and practice through research for NHS Trusts. In 2008 CHSS established the South East Trials Unit headed by **Coulton** to provide clinical trial capability. As well as exploring the relationship between commissioning, Primary Care Trusts and patient experience, since 2008 CHSS has completed a broad range of applied research including EU-funded research on older people's care at home; studies of palliative care for Pilgrims Hospices; National Institute of Health Research (NIHR) funded research on postural educational programmes; and evaluations of the Kent County Council programme for adolescent risk behaviour reduction.
- The **Tizard Centre** focuses on improving the lives of those with intellectual disabilities (IDD), and is the largest academic group in the UK in this field. Tizard researchers are recruited on the basis of their practical experience in community care as well as their academic credentials, with the Centre assisting service agencies, local authorities and care providers in both research and consultancy modes. In 2013, the Centre was awarded the Queen's Anniversary Prize for Higher Education on the basis of 30 years of improving the life of those with IDD.

Beyond these customer-facing Centres, SSPSSR research develops new understandings of social well-being which inform both public and policy-makers' values. Particular attention is given to bridging the divide between theoretical and applied research, with increasing support given to impact-related activities (e.g. sabbaticals for staff seconded to work in government departments, encouragement to publish in professional and 'grey' literature, and significant attention given to public engagement). Impact is evidenced through repeated invitations to tender for consultancy; staff service on advisory groups; citation of research by policy-makers; and extensive press coverage changing public attitudes. Funders have acknowledged the wide impact of our research: for example, **Burgess'** drink-spiking research was singled out by the British Academy in their 2010 report on *The Public Value of the Humanities and Social Sciences* as an example of 'how rigorous, evidence-based research projects can inform social policy'; while **Hubbard's** work with O'Neill on asylum seeker integration was used by the AHRC as an exemplar of impact on their webpages.

**b. Approach to impact**

Our approach to impact involves the cultivation of relationships with a broad range of non-academic users through mechanisms including the following:

**Producing commissioned research for non-academic beneficiaries:**

SSPSSR is committed to completing research for non-academic partners whenever it is appropriate to do so. For example, the three applied research centres cultivate relationships with user groups through commissioning (e.g. REF3b Case Study 3), as well as through policy-oriented working papers series. This results in sustained records of attracting research funding. For example, in 2010 the Department of Health established a £5m Quality and Outcomes of Person-centred Care policy research unit, led by the PSSRU, while the Economics of Health and Social Care Policy Research Unit (2010-2015) is a collaboration between PSSRU and the Centre for Health Economics, University of York (with £1.18m funding to Kent). In 2009, CHSS was contracted by the Department of Health to run one of ten NIHR Research Design Services, and, with the Universities of Surrey and Brighton, was awarded over £5m to provide research services to NHS Kent, Sussex and Surrey (renewed in 2013 for a further five years). In the same year, PSSRU and Tizard became partners in the School for Social Care Research (NIHR), awarded £3m over five years.

**Developing highly collaborative long-term relationship with beneficiaries:**

Commissioning relies on the cultivation of close relationships with policy-makers. The Director of CHSS, Stephen **Peckham**, is Director of the Department of Health Policy Research Unit in Commissioning which evaluates commissioning procedures; while **Forder**, Director of PSSRU, served on the *Wanless Review of Social Care*, and advised Ministers Ivan Lewis MP and Phil Hope MP. **Netten** (PSSRU) is on the Measurement of Quality of Care Working Group for the National End of Life Care Strategy; **Beecham** (PSSRU) was a member of the South East Coast NIHR Research for Patient Benefit Funding Committee; **Beadle-Brown** (Tizard) is on the Advisory Board of the Open Society Mental Health Initiative; **McGill** (Tizard) is a Member of the Department of Health Steering Group on physical interventions for those with intellectual disabilities; and **Murphy** (Tizard) is on the Department of Health subcommittee on Learning Disabilities & Offending, and is Chair of the NICE Guideline Development Group on Challenging Behaviour and Intellectual Disabilities. Beyond the Centres, there is widespread evidence of relationships being forged with policy-makers: for example, SSPSSR acquired preferred bidder status for Department of Work and Pension tenders, with the work of **Vickerstaff** on extending working life being one outcome. Our six research clusters have organised seminar series and stakeholder events involving dialogue with policy-maker audiences: for example, workshops convened by the **Crime, Culture and Control Cluster** with the Youth Justice Board, Kent County Council and Kent Police.

**Using our research to influence professional practice:**

The delivery of professional training allows research to inform practice: this is the key approach taken by the newly-established (2011) **Centre for Child Protection**, founded by **Shemmings** to provide Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to those working to safeguard children (e.g. social workers, police, lawyers and probation officers). In 2013, the Centre was shortlisted in the Times Higher Education Awards for use of ICT, with its online materials described as setting standards in CPD. CHSS has provided ethics training workshops for the National Institute for Biological Standards and Control since 2003, while Tizard training DVDs have been widely taken up by organisations providing support to those with intellectual and developmental disabilities (see REF 3b Case Study 6). Another example is **Calnan's** NIHR-funded work on patient dignity that has informed practice across the healthcare sector: one outcome was the distribution of an evidence-based training DVD (*Dignity: A Tale of Two Wards*) to every NHS Trust in the UK.

**Involvement of research users and beneficiaries in research design:**

Whilst SSPSSR research takes a variety of different forms, a significant strand of our activity is best characterised as action research with community groups (e.g. **Strangleman's** work with

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Dover Arts Development, including his contribution to the prize-winning film *Watermark* documenting the closure of the Dover paper mill; **Garbin's** involvement in *The Golden Temple* film on the Olympics' legacy for Hackney; and **Lyon's** research alongside young people in Blue Town, Isle of Sheppey, funded by HEFCE's South Eastern Coastal Communities programme). Much of this work is marked by active collaboration with research subjects who are thus co-producers and stakeholders in the research. Other notable examples of community-oriented work include **Mitton's** research on the integration of African populations in the UK and **Song's** on mixed race categorisation (which directly informed the construction of the 2011 UK Census of Population).

**Staff participation in advocacy and lobbying activities:**

The research expertise of SSPSSR researchers results in invitations to think tank discussions and governmental advisory groups. A notable example is **Taylor-Gooby's** presentations to the Review Meeting on Social Security with the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, 2010, a roundtable discussion with the Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, 2009, and participation in the Blackett Review of High Impact risks, which provide evidence of influence in critical policy debates at the highest level. Further examples include **Stevens** acting as expert witness on the European Select Committee on Drug Policy, 2011-12; **Chatwin** serving as secretary to a House of Lords inquiry into European drug policy; **Hubbard** and **Matthews** advising the All Party Parliamentary Group on Prostitution, 2013, and **Ray** contributing to the UK's statement on racial violence for the EU Monitoring Centre on Racism. As outlined in REF3b Case Study 1, **Breeze** has advised the All Party Parliamentary Committee on Civil Society and Philanthropy, 2011; **Milne** was an expert witness on the Low Inquiry, 2011-12, and **Burgess** served as academic advisor to the Risk, Regulation Advisory Council, Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, 2008-10. Active involvement in advocacy work is also encouraged: **Kendall** is on the Steering Group of the Voluntary Sector Studies network; **Hubbard** advises the UK Network of Sex Work Projects, and **Rootes** works alongside environmental protest groups.

**Effective dissemination and publication plans:**

The University of Kent press office ensures a strong SSPSSR media presence, with over 150 broadcast appearances on, among others, *Panorama* (Mansell, **Murphy**), *Newsnight* (**Lee**), *The One Show* (**Strangleman**), *Channel Four news* (**Faircloth**), *ITV Meridian Tonight* (**Stevens**), *BBC South East Today* (**Furedi**), *The Politics Show* (**Breeze**, **Stevens**) and on *Radio Four* (*Thinking Allowed* appearances by **Strangleman**, **Lyon**, **Roberts**, **Song**, **Darton** and **Taylor-Gooby**; *Women's Hour* by **Furedi** and **Vickerstaff**; *The World Tonight* by **Burgess**), the BBC World Service (**Hubbard**), Radio Two (**Lee**), and in print media as diverse as *The Economist*, *New York Times*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Daily Mail* and *The Guardian* (including multiple 'Comment is Free' articles by **Breeze**, **Baumberg**, **Stevens**). **Zhang** writes a weekly column for the overseas edition of the Chinese *People's Daily*. Kent's Press Office logged 3,140 instances of press media coverage for SSPSSR 2008-13: staff are also increasingly active in use of social media to disseminate research (e.g. **Baumberg** co-founded the [Inequalities](#) blog which has over 2,000 Twitter followers).

**c. Strategy and plans**

Our current impact strategy builds on three decades of embedding our research in specific policy contexts and cultivating relationships with a broad range of non-academic users. Over the next REF period, SSPSSR plans to build upon the approaches to impact outlined above, responding to new opportunities in line with the University of Kent's Institutional Strategic Plan 2013-16 and Public Engagement (Research) Strategy 2012-15:

- Recognising that research and expertise are complexly interlinked, members of staff will be encouraged and supported to provide guidance and expertise to organisations, commissions and advisory panels, and given workload credit for doing so. Past examples have included **Stevens'** secondment to The Cabinet Office, funded via the ESRC and supported by the School, and **Mitton's** period at the DWP advising on social security fraud.
- There will be further development of the research centres and clusters which play a central role

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in building and maintaining relationships with stakeholders. The establishment of two new applied research Centres in this REF cycle (the Centre for Philanthropy and the Centre for Parenting Studies) underlines our commitment to these emerging policy fields, with each Centre anticipating new appointments whose work will generate impact in the next REF cycle.

- There will be enhancement of the School's website and online resources to improve research dissemination. A full-time marketing manager was appointed in 2012 to disseminate research through the School website and other social media (e.g. @MedwaySSPSSR on Twitter).
- A Research Impact Manager will be appointed in 2014 to provide additional capacity for liaison with the core funders for whom impact is a priority.
- There will be further development of the capacity of the applied research Centres to provide quantitative analysis of the type demanded by stakeholders, with the appointment of a new Lecturer in Health Economics (2013) and a Professor of Primary and Community Care (2014, funded by Health Education England) signalling the intention to expand in this important area.

Such efforts will be supported by the University's Innovation and Enterprise department, which exploits research outputs for commercialisation, consultancy and training. The University offers a number of schemes to support this including: Time Out for Reach Out, Innovation Fund, Ideas Factory pump priming, and a Patent & Commercialisation Fund.

#### d. Relationship to case studies

Given the wide range of research which generates impact, we have selected our case studies to provide instances where researchers have worked alongside beneficiaries to maximise impact:

- SSPSSR CS1: *Million pound donors* – research by **Breeze** and the emerging Centre of Philanthropy – an initiative pump-primed by SSPSSR – has already had influence on policies concerning charitable donation, showing that effective working with think tanks, charities and media can maximise impact. This case study indicates the importance of effective research dissemination, particularly the use of new social media (e.g. Breeze has 2,300 Twitter followers).
- SSPSSR CS2: *Improving outcomes of social care services: the impact of ASCOT* – commissioned research (by the Department of Health), Netten et al's work on the measurement of Social Care Outcomes has generated a tool widely applied in the UK, and demonstrates the importance of commissioning as a route to impact.
- SSPSSR CS3: *Paying for social care* – research by **Forder** et al, which was commissioned by the Kings Fund and Department of Health, and built upon PSSRU's established reputation for quantitative analysis, has informed governmental policy at the highest level. This commissioned work shows the benefit of close working with policy-makers.
- SSPSSR CS4: *Improving illicit drug policy* – drawing on **Stevens'** experience of secondment to the Cabinet Office, this research is informing evidence-based policy in this contentious area by providing unique evidence of policy effectiveness. This case also indicates the support in the School for staff who are involved in lobbying and advocacy.
- SSPSSR CS5: *Behaving Badly?* – research by **Murphy, McGill** et al in the Tizard Centre shows that applied research by this Centre has shaped professional practice among those working with those with IDD through close partnership with relevant organisations, with the Centre having also trained hundreds of practitioners through its unique postgraduate programmes on intellectual disability and challenging behaviour.
- SSPSSR CS6: *Empowering People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities* – research by **Beadle Brown** et al has transformed attitudes to, and policies concerning, those with IDD, encouraging empowerment through collaboration with key agencies. This and Case Study 5 indicate the value of including service users in the research process.

In sum, SSPSSR is an inter-disciplinary School whose research can demonstrate impact on governmental policy-making; professional services and the enhancement of quality of life for socially marginalised populations in the UK and elsewhere. These case studies provide evidence that our strategies for maximising and securing impact are effective and sustainable.