

Institution: University of Bradford

Unit of Assessment: C22 Social Work and Social Policy

a. Context

The unit's approach to impact has been framed historically by the applied nature of the institutional and subject area in which it is set. The University developed the Centre for Applied Social Research (CASR) to further its mission of *Making Knowledge Work*, by consolidating and generating excellence in research that impacts beyond the academic community. Our priority is to generate and stimulate critical debate that targets current social and policy issues, and our central focus on diversity is underpinned by our location in one of the most ethnically diverse cities in the UK. These concerns are central to both of our research groups; *Diversity and Identity* (DI) and *Social Work, Families and Inclusion* (SWFI). Our main non-academic user groups are national and local governments; national and local institutions such as prisons; practitioner groups such as social workers; users of social work and care services; global, national, and local communities, especially BME communities; and the general public who we seek to reach through various forms of media to change public debate.

b. Approach to impact

Prior to the emergence of the impact agenda, the University developed a *Research and Knowledge Transfer Strategy 2009-2014* which has governed our activity in this REF period. This demands that Bradford aims not only 'to be a research-active University supporting high quality research, its application and dissemination' but also 'to make knowledge work through the effective knowledge transfer between the University and public, private, voluntary and community sectors.' Impact is now central to research planning through the management of CASR in terms of the support and mentoring given in the various developmental stages of research proposals, during which staff actively build impact into any research funding they apply for. Furthermore, CASR facilitates impact through regular public seminars in which members present their research not only to fellow academics, but also to practitioners in the field, service users and members of the community. Thus CASR uses the research expertise within it, and the links built up over a number of years with various user groups, to stimulate new and sector focussed research. For example, in our ethnicity research, relationships have been built up with the local authority and with BME communities, and in the social work team there are links to practice settings from the relationship developed with local agencies, both for the purposes of research but also for student placements.

The DI group has had extensive and enduring impact exemplified in the work of Samad on communities of Pakistani origin living in the UK. Samad's published research led to the invitation to write a report (with Professor John Eade) for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Home Office on forced marriages in the UK. As Matthew Gould, the then Deputy Head of Consular Division in the FCO, has said, 'The report [by Samad and Eade] informed policy thinking on the issue, and was part of the process that led to the creation of the joint FCO/Home Office Forced Marriage Unit'. This Unit remains a key part of the national response to forced marriages, with an important role in raising awareness of the issue among communities and giving support for victims of forced marriage, along with training and guidance for professionals dealing with the problem (<https://www.gov.uk/forced-marriage>). Collaborations with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) have led to Bradford research being a beacon for understanding the lives of ethnic minorities in contemporary inner cities, in particular the lives of young Asian men. Innovation in this area has been the cross-over of research data to works of narrative and fiction which capture and inspire the public imagination. Alam has published a series of edited books and novels inspired by, and drawn from, the stories and narratives told by research participants. *The Invisible Village* (2011) is based on research carried out during a JRF funded project on social cohesion and counter-terrorism policies in five large metropolitan authorities in Northern England. The book uses edited narratives gathered from ethnic minority research participants about everyday life in Northern cities like Bradford, but includes no academic commentary. Similarly, the novel *Red Laal* (2012) is inspired by some of these same stories, and both books have been published by a non-academic publisher (Route Books) and sold to a mainly non-academic audience. This is a strategy for disseminating

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research findings to the general public who may not connect with academic forms of writing. It also furthers Alam's interest in the similarities between the research process for ethnographic academic research and that done by authors in preparation for writing fiction.

Bradford has a strong and enduring legacy of academic work in the field of critical social policy, and recently this has been applied to work on the changing nature of family and personal relationships. For example, Duncan's ESRC-funded research has focused on the growing number of couples who are in an intimate relationship but who choose to live apart for a variety of reasons. The report *Living Apart Together: A Multi-Method Analysis* was published in April 2013, and is a provocation to social policies that privileges certain types of relationships. The findings of the research challenge the notion that intimate relationships exist only in the traditional form of couples living together, showing that couples living apart can form sustainable relationships. The report attracted a wide range of media attention, from reports in the national press such as the Saturday Telegraph Magazine (20/04/13), the Mail (21/04/13), The Times (23/04/13), the Daily Express (23/04/13), to international coverage (Time magazine web, 23/04/13) and regional reports (Bradford Telegraph and Argus, 23/04/13). The research also featured in the Radio 4 programme 'Thinking Allowed' (24/02/10) and on Netmums (23/04/13). Coverage like this aims to change public perception of the nature of contemporary intimate relationships by using and publicising research findings.

Further examples of the value of our research beyond HE can be seen in the SWFI group's work on diversity. An exemplar can be found in Furness and Gilligan's research, which has tackled the issue of how religion and religious differences are handled by social workers. The outcome of the research was the development of a framework for practitioners to use in their work with service users (the Furness/Gilligan framework). After a conference and a seminar organised around the themes of their book (*Religion, Belief and Social Work*, Polity Press 2010) and the delivery of the framework, a practicing social worker, said in email correspondence that "I always felt that religious belief was relevant to my [social work] practice in Safeguarding, but they articulated this powerfully and meaningfully for others, i.e. for a professional audience... It helped to crystallise my understanding and sharpen my practice and openness with regard to other religions". The book and framework is also used in the training of social work practitioners, and one trainer has said that in his teaching "I focus on the framework that is recommended in that book. This has proved a good way to help social work students engage with the realities and practicalities of considering matters of religion in their work... More widely I would say that Philip Gilligan and Sheila Furness have been instrumental in bringing discussion of religion and spirituality to the foreground in social work education". Additionally, the SWFI's research has been directed towards solutions regarding issues of race and ethnicity in assessing the institutional care of elders (Furness) and child protection practices for children in ethnic minority families (Gilligan). The group's research has led to a significant impact on practice and policy governing the lives of children within the care system of England and Ireland. For example, Holt's report (June 2013) for Liverpool city council, based on research into child care proceedings in two other local authorities, has shown that the involvement of a Family Court Advisor in child care pre-proceedings makes the whole process more speedy and just for both children and their families, recommending this change to practice in all cases in future. The influence of the group's impact can be demonstrated by McAuley's April 2013 report for the Irish government that includes the first analysis of key findings from child abuse enquiries in Ireland. Within the report are significant recommendations about the policy and practice of childcare and child well-being.

c. Strategy and plans

The School of Social and International Studies (SSIS), in which CASR is located, has developed an impact policy that provides for the award of School research funds for impact activities. This has already been implemented within the unit of assessment and we anticipate that this will be a driver towards research with more focussed outcomes. In addition, the School has provided funding to support REF case study units in undertaking reviews of their impact activity, and we believe that the use of funds in this manner can further develop the significance of impact related to future case studies. Although this will have some limited benefits in the current REF period, it is envisaged that the most significant benefits will be realised post-REF.

The School has supported staff in enabling impact to be achieved from their research in a number of ways: it has implemented the School impact policy which includes a requirement for impact

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activity to be incorporated into annual performance appraisals, research monitoring meetings, performance recognition awards, and the award of sabbaticals. This provides an opportunity for individual staff to reflect on their impact activity and to highlight areas of activity that might require support. The workload model operated in the School includes an allocation for knowledge transfer activities where these are appropriately funded.

SSIS also has a nominated lead person on impact to help and advise units of assessment and their research directors. At the level of the Social Work and Social Policy unit of assessment, we can use the research support funds allocated to us annually in order to fund events, travel expenses, the production of materials, or any other activity that can clearly enhance the impact of research. CASR will also use its public seminar series as a platform for debate with the intention of generating impact with key beneficiaries and stakeholders and to engage the public with the outcomes of research. Recently we have organised public seminars on religion and belief in social work, rethinking agency with regard to personal relationships in which one person has dementia, and diversity and equality within prisons- these topics have been chosen to illustrate those areas in which we seek new partners and focussed research opportunities. Typically the seminars have attracted people from regional social work agencies and faith based groups, workers from regional NHS and care organisations, and those who work in the prison service and criminal justice system. Research participants also attend these seminars, as do a diverse range of actual and potential stakeholders. We will develop networks that will provide opportunities for other potential stakeholders to participate in these events.

Part of our strategy for the future involves setting aside a specific amount of the Research Support Funds each year dedicated to activities to enhance impact, enabling administrative support for impact, and enhancing access to our impact activities via a redesigned website with dedicated sections for impact. This support will extend to all areas of research that show a potential to yield impact in the future, but will help to identify those which are greatest reach and significance. Two areas that currently show promise in terms of further extending impact are the work on diversity in prisons, which is an early stage impact case study in this REF but has the potential for even greater impact in the future: and research on Social Work, Religion and Belief, which, as can be seen from section (b) here, is already beginning to show impact in influencing social work practitioners and educators in terms of their practice and teaching, an impact that will grow in the future as this research is more widely disseminated and further developed.

d. Relationship to case studies

Both case studies submitted here exemplify how research in this unit of assessment is oriented to a critical assessment of policy and the way it works in practice, as well as to the unit's specialism in diversity. The case studies were selected because they demonstrate the international, national, and local reach and significance of impact work within the unit, and they also show research impact on a variety of users, including governments, government departments and organisations, and individuals with a diverse range of social identities. The case study on applying ethnicity research to reducing inequality in Western Australia shows the international reach and significance of Bradford research on race and ethnicity, and the reach and significance of the impacts on individuals and groups disadvantaged on the grounds of race, ethnicity, language, disability, and gender. Similarly, the case study on responding to diversity in prisons shows the unit's impact in working with national and local government organisations, professionals, and service users to address disadvantage on the grounds of race, religion, sexuality, and gender, and their intersectionality. These case studies typify Bradford's research in social work and social policy. They extend our legacy of critical social science research and crucially position us at the heart of impact generating networks which will continue to provoke policy, shape practice, and impact on the lived experience of users and stakeholders in the future.