

**Impact template (REF3a)**

<b>Institution:</b>	University of Northumbria at Newcastle
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b>	22 – Social Work and Social Policy
<b>a. Context</b>	
<p>Research in Social Work and Social Policy at Northumbria is strongly embedded within a long-term strategic approach to impact and reflects the four key areas of enquiry within the UoA's main research specialisms: Public Policy; Social Inclusion and Social Justice; International Development; and Criminology. The main types of impact found within the UoA relate to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shaping the approaches of UK and international actors to citizen engagement in international development.</li> <li>• Re-shaping resource allocation and service delivery in public organisations at local, regional and national levels</li> <li>• Creating new, flexible, multi-level approaches to sub-national governance</li> <li>• Increasing the responsiveness of policy and professional practice to the needs and perspectives of vulnerable groups.</li> </ul> <p>During the REF period, research in this UoA has generated impacts benefiting a diverse range of governmental and non-governmental organisations, voluntary and charitable bodies, policy-makers and practitioners, service users and hard to reach groups at international, national and sub-national levels.</p>	
<b>b. Approach to impact</b>	
<p>Our approach to impact has three key ingredients. Firstly, the impact of our research has been underpinned by the development of mutually-supportive and sustainable collaborations between academic and non-academic research users across the full range of the UoA's research. The fruits of this long-term investment and engagement can be seen in the following exemplars of our research partnerships:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Close links with international non-governmental organisations:</i> We have strong links with Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) which is exemplified in a jointly-funded PhD studentship on 'International Volunteering, Diaspora and Development'. We are also working in partnership with an NGO that supports women's anti-mining activism in Latin America (LAMMP: The Latin American Mining Monitoring Programme) and leading on the design of a monitoring and evaluation strategy for a major international initiative developed by the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD).</li> <li>• <i>Formal links with national and regional voluntary organisations:</i> Our relationship with the Institute of Volunteering Research (IVR) includes both a PGR studentship and the joint delivery of an ESRC Public Policy Seminar Series on Volunteering and Activism in 2011-12. We also have strong links with Age UK (through an ESRC Case Studentship) and with the Cyrenians Charity, including joint work on homelessness and young people and on reducing the isolation of sex workers.</li> <li>• <i>Long-term relationships with central government departments, sub-regional and local organisations:</i> Our research on sub-national governance, public services and policy outcomes at the local level has been underpinned by our close collaboration with Central Government departments (such as the Department of Communities and Local Government); and in our membership of, and role within, the Institute for Local Governance (ILG) for the North East, which sees staff working with representatives of all 12 councils in the region to develop applied research programmes.</li> <li>• <i>Partnerships with criminal justice agencies:</i> These include a formal Memorandum of Understanding between UoA staff and the Newcastle Youth Offending Team, a lead role</li> </ul>	

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within the Prison Offender Research in Social Care Partnership (PORSCH) and a partnership with the Prison Service to support the use of creative art in prisoner rehabilitation.

Secondly, our engagement with non-academic research users recognises that these relationships should be broadly conceived, flexible and cover different pathways to impact. This includes: the initiation and development of strategic relationships to generate impact; generating impact through the successful delivery of contract or commissioned research; and research output driven impact, where pathways to impact are developed, and impact achieved, from original or curiosity-driven research. A central element of our pathways to impact is the focus on a co-production of research model, which engages policy makers and practitioners through the lifetime of the research, encompassing identifying and framing the key questions that need to be addressed, the methods utilised to generate data and in the dissemination of the research findings. This approach ensures that impact occurs in a timely fashion; links directly to the issues facing policy makers and practitioners; and harnesses a wide array of opportunities outside of academia for public engagement and dissemination.

Thirdly, the UoA has supported staff in enabling impact to be achieved from their research by:

- *Designing a flexible infrastructure that supports and fosters impact at different levels:* at the University level, impact officers provided strategic support for impact including staff training and access to funding to support case study development, such as the University-wide Public Engagement and Impact Fund. At the Unit-level, an impact 'champion' and impact researcher have been central to our approach to impact through their direct involvement in the development of our impact strategy, in allocation of financial and workload support, mentoring for individual staff and in peer-review of proposals in relation to impact.
- *Providing training to support impact:* training sessions have been delivered on the impact agenda at both the University and UoA levels. A key aim is to encourage and support all research active staff (including ECRs) to develop impact narratives. The impact researcher in this UOA has also worked with ECRs to produce impact-focused videos, newsletters and briefing papers to showcase their research and to attract new collaborators. For PGR students, training is also provided to develop skills that could either be applied to the delivery of impact in future research, or - outside of academia - in professional practice.

**c. Strategy and plans**

The UoA has progressively embedded impact as a core part of our research strategy and activity prior to REF 2014 and will continue to do so. Impact was introduced to the University-wide research planning process from 2011, with standardised workload hours for impact-related activities introduced in the same year. This process has been complemented by the introduction (after 2010) of public engagement and impact as desirable criteria in the person specifications of new appointments. As part of our strategy to broaden and deepen engagement in the UoA, staff are also supported to develop collaborative research projects that prioritise impact, while recent and planned research council (and other) bidding also builds strongly on our approach to impact.

In addition to supporting impact more generally, we recognise that a 'one size fits all' model of support was not appropriate and that flexibility is the key. For example, impact can have its roots in original curiosity-driven research which is supported by diverse funding sources, including research councils. In such cases, no additional funding is needed and often impact activities are undertaken within the agreed workload allowances for research. In other cases, where the researcher has undertaken a research report commissioned by an external agency for example, additional support is required from the University's impact fund to facilitate dissemination and to establish effective pathways to impact.

For future research, the UoA will promote and highlight the importance of impact across all our main research themes. Discussion of impact is now built in to the review of all research funding applications before they are approved for submission, even where this is not a requirement of the

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funder and informs a much stronger relationship between research, innovation and enterprise, and the impact agenda. The impact of our research in the future will be supported through knowledge sharing between researchers in the UoA, supported by targeted workload planning, resourcing of on-going dissemination and the development of further impact pathways from our work. The UoA has also identified (and allocated support to) a number of emerging areas where there are real opportunities to promote the impact of original research in the UoA. This includes: work with the Prison Service on the mental health of offenders; with national bodies, such as the Arts Alliance, on creativity and art in offender rehabilitation; and collaborative work with the LGA and the Churches' Regional Commission on local authorities and their faith communities.

**d. Relationship to case studies**

The impact case studies (ICSs) selected are founded upon our collaborative relationships with a range of international, national and sub-national organisations. Such partnerships are at the heart of our approach to impact and contribute to the *significance* of the changes to organisational and professional practices and policies resulting from our research. These have been extensively disseminated through a range of partners' networks to ensure that the *reach* of research impacts extend far beyond the users directly involved in the research. They also reflect our focus on tailoring the pathway to impact so as to maximise the utility of the findings in each particular case. Thus:

- In the *International Development* case study, active and sustained engagement with the international NGO sector has enabled the author's research to evolve from having an initial and direct impact on project design (through dissemination of an academic research output), to forming a research partnership - with the INGO that used the work - to designing the monitoring and evaluation of the project that was impacted upon and shaping wider sectoral debates and policy from the findings of that process.
- In the *Sub-National Governance* case study, the author's extensive involvement in commissioned research on sub-national governance and his strategic involvement in policy development in a number of regional and national policy networks, led to an impact pathway that focused primarily on designing more flexible governance networks and approaches to collaborative-working. The reaction to, and impact of, the author's present research builds on an extensive track-record of relationship-development and active involvement in partnerships over 25 years.
- In the case study on *Sex Workers*, the author has translated her research into an ongoing dialogue with policy makers and practitioners, in particular through her involvement in the UK Network of Sex Work Projects, as an active member from 2005, as a joint academic representative on the Board from 2011 and in local strategic bodies. She has also built collaborations with an existing local partner (The Cyrenians) and linked her work to other colleagues in the UoA working in related fields.
- In the *Homelessness* case study, a clear synergy has been produced by the inter-relationship of an effective strategic partnership and the delivery of commissioned research on housing needs, driven by shared values of social justice. The strategic partnership with The Cyrenians has been enriched by the involvement of further UoA researchers in partnerships with the same organisation.

Within the UoA, the process of selecting ICSs involved assessing the eligibility of research outputs, evidence of impact and the anticipated success of the pathways to impact identified. However, this process did not guarantee inclusion as an ICS. The purpose of this approach was to initiate appropriate support for a number of areas that had potential as ICSs. Once the case studies were prioritised (following a University-wide peer review process) meetings were then held with the ICS's author, the UoA's Impact Champion and the Impact Researcher to discuss the progress being made, to bring new perspectives to the case study and to further enhance impact.