



# **RESEARCH IMPACT ON PRACTICE: CASE STUDY ANALYSIS**

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## Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	v
Introduction.....	v
Case Study Findings .....	v
Determinants of Research Impact on Practice.....	v
Implications for Evaluation of Impacts on Practice/Practitioners.....	vi
Evaluator's Reflections Comparing Practice and Policy Impacts .....	vi
Recommendations for ESRC (and other funders).....	vii
Evaluating Impacts.....	vii
Enhancing Impacts.....	vii
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY .....	1
Purpose and Scope.....	1
Approach and Methods .....	1
CASE STUDIES .....	4
Impact on Mediation Practice, Societal Well-being.....	4
Impact on Health Care .....	11
Impact on Management in Diverse Sectors.....	16
Impact on Fire and Rescue Service/Communities .....	25
ANALYSIS OF CASE STUDIES AND IDENTIFICATION OF LESSONS LEARNED .....	33
Types of Users & Stakeholder Settings .....	33

Types of Impacts .....	33
Interaction among Impacts .....	33
Instrumental Impacts.....	34
Conceptual Impacts.....	34
Capacity-building.....	34
Attitude/Culture Change .....	35
Enduring Connectivity .....	35
Issues.....	36
Lessons Learned from Participants in the Four Case Studies.....	36
Overview .....	36
Key Lessons for Future Researchers .....	37
Key Lessons for Future (Practitioner) Stakeholders .....	37
Key Lessons for Future Funders .....	38
DISCUSSION OF DETERMINANTS OF RESEARCH IMPACT ON PRACTICE .....	38
Roles.....	38
A Key Determinant: The “Human Factor” .....	40
A Contextual Determinant.....	41
A Key Determinant: Mutual Benefit.....	42
Pro-active Approaches to Stages of Engagement.....	43
Determinants acting as Issues or Obstacles .....	44
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	46
Key Features Generating Impacts on Practice and Practitioners.....	46
People and Processes .....	46
Determinants of Research Impact on Practice .....	46

Implications for Evaluation of Impacts on Practice/Practitioners .....	47
Variability in Impacts and KE Processes .....	47
Issues of Time and Scale .....	47
Summary Implications for Evaluation of Impacts on Practice.....	48
Evaluator's Reflections Comparing Practice and Policy Impacts .....	49
Recommendations for ESRC (and other funders) .....	49
Evaluating Impacts.....	49
Enhancing Impacts.....	50
ANNEX A: TEMPLATES.....	51
Case Study Template.....	51
Interview Template.....	51
ANNEX B DISTRIBUTION, TYPES OF IMPACTS .....	52
Types of Impact, Practice Case Studies.....	52
Types of Impact PACCIT Case Studies.....	53

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Introduction

To contribute toward ESRC's expanding work on impact development and evaluation, this project was framed as using a case study method within the arena of practice, in particular:

"The purpose of this study is to develop understanding about research impact on practice by looking at research impact in a broad range of practice settings." Four case study foci were selected with the ESRC Evaluation office, examining influences on practitioners in diverse arenas of social welfare, healthcare, management and business, and civil society:

- Mediating and Policing Community Disputes: Developing New Methods for Role-Play Communication Skills Training
- Self-Help Treatment for Insomnia Symptoms Associated with Chronic Conditions in Older Adults: a Randomized Controlled Trial
- The Dark Side of Management Practices: Routine Non-Conformity, Non-Adoption and Adverse Events.
- 'Bernie', A Social Marketing Project to Reduce the Incidence of Deliberate Grass Fires in Wales, UK

Each case study illuminated types of impacts as well as key roles, processes, and lessons learned offered to future researchers, stakeholders and funders. To understand determinants of impacts on practice, insights gained from these four case studies were complemented by findings relating to additional practice settings from previous impact evaluations for the ESRC: the Teaching and Learning Research Programme, People at the Centre of Computers and Information Technology, and response-mode Psychology awards. Recommendations are offered to the ESRC regarding impact generation and evaluation.

## Case Study Findings

In each Case Study, five types of impacts considered were seen (Instrumental, Conceptual, Capacity-building, Attitude/Cultural Change and Enduring Connectivity). Very often types of impacts were interwoven. One overarching issue raised is the relative scarcity of projects identified even within ESRC as having impacts on practice and practitioners, as distinct from policy. Emerging from these four case studies, a key issue related to generation and evaluation of impacts on practice/practitioners is that of the scope of impacts generated. Pro-active researchers have led to genuine "success stories" but these tend to be finite in scale, relating to quite directly involved stakeholders, not single sweeping UK-wide or practice-wide changes. A possibly related finding is the critical importance to impact generation of engaging individuals working very hard to effect Knowledge Exchange, perhaps especially important when practitioners are new to working with academics.

## Determinants of Research Impact on Practice

Key enabling determinants of research impacts on practice include:

- Roles played -- pro-active Principal Investigators committed to engagement of practitioners, stakeholder “champions” and, at times, “knowledge intermediaries”
- The “human factor” – the personal style of the researcher, including skills at engaging
- Institutional context – if it places value on impact generation with practitioners
- Mutual benefit – impacts are more likely to arise if practitioners see benefit
- Pro-active approaches to engagement -- before, during and following up on research.

Determinants that can pose issues or obstacles include:

- Heterogeneity of practitioners – making it difficult to identify stakeholder champions, and often meaning that practitioners are new to working with researchers.
- Institutional context – if it de-prioritises research caught up with stakeholders, especially if (often localised, often subtle) impacts on practice are not valued
- Time lag – impacts often need time to manifest, may suffer from changes in champions or contexts, and may be difficult to identify.

### **Implications for Evaluation of Impacts on Practice/Practitioners**

Analysis suggests implications for future identification or evaluation of impacts on practitioners/practice. It is important to recognise that multiple types of impact can arise, and should be captured, even or especially if subtle -- and that impacts may well be interdependent. Awareness that two-way Knowledge Exchange or engagement is a dynamic process which occurs at multiple research stages can illuminate pathways toward impacts. Capturing the human side of the unfolding interaction can lend depth to case study narratives and might in turn persuade other practitioners to embark on journeys with researchers. As a method, case studies can capture not only impacts but also roles, routes, processes and lessons learned --- thus contributing to understanding and potentially enhancing future processes. This examination of instances of impacts on practice in a variety of settings does not call for significant changes in the ESRC’s Conceptual Framework for Impact Evaluation; however, it does suggest some foci for closer, in-depth consideration: such as often finite scope and relative recognition. An intriguing possibility would be to engage practitioners not only in research but also in identifying a full range of impacts.

### **Evaluator's Reflections Comparing Practice and Policy Impacts**

Reflection suggests several points to consider in comparing impacts in the realms of policy and practice. Cases of impact on practice seem to underscore especially heavily the importance of a special “human factor” in engaging practitioners in Knowledge Exchange. While this may be due in part to a practical orientation of researchers, it may also be due to a difference in the experience base or mindset of many practitioners compared to many policymakers, with the latter often accustomed to working with multiple researchers and utilising academic understanding as one strand of input. In contrast, individual practitioners may often be surprised to find an academic researcher taking a deep interest in their issues and indeed respecting their practitioner context and knowledge. Issues of scope may arise as differences between impacts on practice and on often national or sector-wide policy impacts. In many cases, a rigorous focus to research on a practice problem may be paired with impacts that are “localised” to directly involved practitioners or a quite specialised practice niche. Although ESRC commendably values direct, small-scale impacts on finite

numbers of practitioners as genuine and important outcomes, these often subtle impacts may in some institutional contexts be appreciated less than “big-picture” policy impacts.

## **Recommendations for ESRC (and other funders)**

### **Evaluating Impacts**

When evaluating impacts on practice, be alert to multiple, and often interwoven, types of impacts; in particular recognise and value subtle impacts.

Encourage universities/reviewers to value research that engages with practitioners and to give due credit when researchers generate impacts on practice, even if such impacts appear to be localised or finite in scale. Help researchers (and universities) to identify such impacts.

Within a portfolio of impact evaluation methods, use case studies as a rich method of identifying multiple impacts on practice and illuminating pathways toward them, telling stories that can be appreciated by researchers, institutions, stakeholders and funders. Help give practitioners a voice in identification –and perhaps even further spread—of impacts.

### **Enhancing Impacts**

Consider deliberately “growing” researcher capacity to generate impacts on practice in particular. For example, provide opportunities for researchers who have been successful in generating impacts on practice to share their learning and approaches with others. Helpful early mechanisms could include: guidance (as in ESRC’s impact materials), mentoring, support of tactical relationship-building activities as part of research funding, or assistance in making connections with Knowledge Intermediaries and/or practitioner champions.

Consider directing follow-on funding mechanisms toward innovative post-project efforts to consolidate impacts on practice --- to embed impacts within collaborators’ organisations and/or encourage deliberate widening of the scope of impact. Capacity-building appears frequently in cases of impact on practice, often in multiple settings beyond the initial collaboration. While it can often be labour-intensive, and thus raises issues of institutional recognition and of support, this mechanism for expanding the scope of “localised” impacts may offer good return on follow-on investment. In some cases, it could make sense to support involved practitioner champions as Knowledge Intermediaries, working with researchers to spread the impact within their broader practitioner networks/associations.

# INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

## Purpose and Scope

ESRC continues to expand its impact evaluation development activity, through which it has captured impacts, refined methodologies and added to understanding of the processes by which impacts occur. Toward this end, this project was framed as using a case study method within the arena of practice, in particular:

“The purpose of this study is to develop understanding about research impact on practice by looking at research impact in a broad range of practice settings (for example, in education, healthcare, social welfare, social work, policing, industry and business, civil society and so on).”

Accordingly this project developed a set of four individual robust case studies which examined influences on practitioners who work in diverse practice arenas (rather than make policy). These broadened outward from previous work, such as the Impact Evaluation of the Teaching and Learning Research Programme’s in-depth exploration of impact on educational practice (and policy, with six case studies in all), as well as previous case study work for ESRC, e.g. by this researcher, as in impact evaluations of response-mode psychology awards and the multi-funder programme PACCIT (People at the Centre of Computers and Information Technology).<sup>1</sup> The work thus enabled integrative analysis across studies to illuminate a relatively new focus for attention: understanding of impact generation and impact evaluation in the realm of practice and practitioners, specifically.

## Approach and Methods

Rigorous analysis of what has happened in the past contributed to the future-orientation of this overall project, based on the premise that useful lessons can be learned for funders and for researchers (and indeed stakeholders), as to generation and evaluation of impacts in the arena(s) of practice. To capture tacit knowledge, participants in the study were engaged in this future-orientation through stimulating reflection and encouraging them to share insights and advice on successful behaviours for the future.

The project was grounded in a conceptual model which considers research impact to be a function of the interaction between the content of the research, the context for its

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<sup>1</sup> Parsons, David J., Burkey, Stefan. 2011. Evaluation of the Teaching and Learning Research Programme (Second Phase). Final Report of the Second Phase Report for the Economic and Social Research Council. <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/impacts-and-findings/impact-assessment/policy-practice-impacts.aspx>

Meagher, L. (2008), *Impact Evaluation of People at the Centre of Communication and Information Technologies (PACCIT)*. Report to ESRC [http://www.esrc.ac.uk/images/PACCIT\\_Impact\\_Evaluation\\_Report\\_tcm8-3821.pdf](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/images/PACCIT_Impact_Evaluation_Report_tcm8-3821.pdf)

Meagher, L.R. & Lyall, C. (2007) *Policy and Practice Impact Case Study of ESRC Grants and Fellowships in Psychology*. Report to ESRC [http://www.esrc.ac.uk/images/Policy\\_and\\_Practice\\_Impact\\_Case\\_Study\\_of\\_ESRC\\_Grants\\_and\\_Fellowships\\_in\\_Psychology\\_Report\\_tcm8-3828.pdf](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/images/Policy_and_Practice_Impact_Case_Study_of_ESRC_Grants_and_Fellowships_in_Psychology_Report_tcm8-3828.pdf)

application and the processes of user engagement. These processes involve multidirectional flows of knowledge, expertise and influence across a web of networks and relationships. Meagher used the ESRC's Conceptual Framework for Impact Evaluation (ESRC 2011)<sup>2</sup> and also drew upon her own flows of knowledge conceptual model (Meagher et al. 2008)<sup>3</sup>. An array of instrumental, conceptual and capacity-building impacts were sought, and also two additional types of process-embodied early impacts found to be important in other studies (Meagher et al., 2008): enduring connectivity between researchers and research users and attitudinal/cultural change regarding knowledge exchange.

A foundational step in this analysis was the choice of case studies. Working with the ESRC Evaluation office, we identified potentially fruitful case study foci with which to examine research impact on practice, in a range of practice settings. Selection was purposive, to address goals of impact identification and particularly learning about impacts on practice. It is noteworthy that the ESRC evaluation manager was able to secure from ESRC programmatic/communications staff only a small number of potentially informative case studies focusing on *practice* (fewer than on policy, though staff ---and thus probably others--- often found it difficult to distinguish policy/practice impacts). Thus, the four case studies developed here were selected from fewer than ten possibilities. Nonetheless, they cover a range of practice settings (such as healthcare, social welfare, management and business, and civil society) and, in the event, have each proven to be rich. A common template (**ANNEX A**) was used to structure presentation of evidence and to facilitate comparative analysis.

For each case study, documents (e.g. end of award reports, websites, ESRC public communication summaries if available, other materials) were examined. (In several cases, Pls offered additional materials not readily available on the ESRC website, such as articles or booklets or even a draft REF impact submission.) Four to five "triangulating" semi-structured interviews were conducted, across Principal Investigator, researcher colleague and stakeholder perspectives. Interviews elicited both information specific to a case study and broader reflection upon lessons learned regarding generation of impacts on practice. Upon writing each case study "story" through integration of perspectives, Meagher has secured validation of accuracy so that these stories can be used confidently by ESRC and by researchers (who welcomed this "product").

In this Report, the four **Case Studies** of this project are provided to illuminate key approaches, roles, knowledge exchange processes, and research impacts and impacts-in-progress on practice. These case studies have led to a brief **Analysis** of their stakeholders, types of impacts, emerging issues and their participants' lessons learned as offered to researchers, stakeholders and funders of the future. Analysis of what will be referred to as "the four case studies of this project", along with insights from selected TLRP and other

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<sup>2</sup> ESRC. 2011 Branching Out: New Directions in Impact Evaluation from the ESRC's Evaluation Committee. Appendix 1 – Conceptual Framework for Impact Evaluation

<sup>3</sup> Meagher, L.R., Lyall, C. & Nutley, S. (2008), *Flows of knowledge, expertise and influence: a method for assessing policy and practice impacts from social science research*. *Research Evaluation* 17: 163-173

case studies of impact on practice, is then summarised as a **Discussion of Determinants of Impacts on Practice**, with what may be generally applicable learning about roles, determinants and approaches to engagement that can enhance generation --and potentially identification-- of impacts into practice. It is hoped that resultant **Conclusions and Recommendations** will prove useful to ESRC as a contribution to its evolving body of guidance on impacts.

## CASE STUDIES

### Impact on Mediation Practice, Societal Well-being

**Case:** Identities in neighbour discourse: Community, conflict and exclusion (with Professor Derek Edwards) RES-148-25-0010 (2005-2008) *and*

Follow-on Knowledge Exchange Scheme Funding (2/2011-2/2012):

Mediating and policing community disputes: Developing new methods for role-play communication skills training

**Principal investigator:**

Professor Elizabeth Stokoe, Department of Social Sciences, University of Loughborough

**Research summary:**

In examining the cause of neighbourhood disputes, the 2005-8 project collected and analysed audio recordings of neighbour mediation service encounters with members of the public, and also police interrogations in neighbour-related crime. Findings illuminated identity concerns and also key problems in miscommunication or other problems during interactions between members of the public and “institutional representatives” such as mediators or police officers. Findings also suggested ways to address such problems, including how best to explain services to prospective mediation clients, how the format of certain questions can influence successful outcomes, and attention to impartiality issues.

Follow-on funding made it possible to extend the research findings into the dissemination of an innovative, theoretically-grounded and evidence-based approach to communications skills training, particularly for neighbour dispute mediators. Rather than being asked to role-play hypothetical, constructed scenarios, participants in these training workshops are presented with genuine, live recordings (anonymised) of interactions as they unfold between the public and mediators; participants role play responses “in real time” as the recordings progress; they also evaluate what actually happened. This is the “conversation analytic role-playing method” (CARM) pioneered by Stokoe, using innovative multi-media technologies to contribute to understanding of mediation and also of communications training. The particular focus has been on intake calls, when mediation services first talk with members of the public who make contact. CARM workshops draw upon conversational analysis research findings as to where such calls tend to go wrong and what the implications are for mediators handling intake calls. Stokoe won a mid-career award from the British Psychology Society, in part for her CARM work.

**Users & stakeholders/settings:**

- Primary stakeholders are mediators (volunteers, managers and staff practitioners) in community/neighbourhood or third sector or private mediation services and national organizations ---and the people they help
- Police services, trainers
- International and UK legal services
- Via other academics: use in other settings, e.g. health, environment, student loans
- Rolling out expected: requests for training from numerous family mediation services and national organizations

**Key types of impact:**

Capacity-building, Conceptual, Instrumental, Enduring Connectivity, Attitude/Culture Change

**Highlighted non-academic impact:**

Capacity-building: Funded for the most part by ESRC's Follow-on grant, in particular, Stokoe has run approximately 70 workshops, primarily for community mediation services, utilising her CARM methodology. A stakeholder observed: "It is an incredibly useful technique—one reason the workshops work so well is that she has a really good command of how to approach the subject material. She showed line by line whether the inflection of the voice was up or down, how many split seconds of silence there were and what that meant, exactly which words (or nonverbal expressions) were used, which words turned people around. The transcripts were visible and audible and she could stop and say 'what do you think will happen next?' We'd have a go, and then could see and hear what happened --- in a format completely new to me."

Stokoe's training appears to be regarded as particularly useful when focused on "intake calls", the critical point at which prospective clients are won or lost. (Said one stakeholder "Our own stakeholders, the people we mediate with, hopefully they benefit in their daily lives by our doing our jobs better. Most have never done it, and find it scary, and to get them on board is a big step and the more successful we are in getting them over the threshold, the better it is.") Stokoe has oriented workshops to what participants view as useful, for example responding to a change in the community or offering a third sector organisation staffed by highly diverse volunteers a workshop oriented toward innuendos and assumptions in light of "isms" such as racism or sexism. In addition to multiple repeat invitations, and recommendations of her from one organisation to another, the value of Stokoe's capacity-building activity has recently been validated by the accreditation of CARM workshops by the College of Mediators, with workshop participants now able to earn CPD points (which they need to accumulate each year to maintain their own accreditation). She has also been confirmed as a board member of the College of Mediators. Stokoe's capacity-building with community mediators is beginning to roll out into family mediation services, for example she has recently received an invitation to advise a new family mediation service (accredited by the Legal Services Commission), starting up in the northeast in December, to be involved in their development, including their intake calls and mediations.

At another level, since mediation trainers tend to rely very heavily on role playing, Stokoe's work has raised a question as to the relative value of that capacity-building approach versus CARM. She has recently had a paper accepted that compares role playing with real data and highlights the problems for the conventional approach.

**Other non-academic impacts:**Conceptual:

Workshop participants have gained appreciation of the role that seemingly simple changes in conversational interactions can play. A stakeholder observed: "It is so useful to look at what happens in intake calls and what subtle ways there are to influence these calls, convert callers into clients ... get them to come on board and see what (mediation can offer that) is different from what they have already done."

By examining “in slow motion” what prospective clients and their own counterparts in mediation services have actually said, participants get new views of themselves and what they do, with stakeholder comments including: “There is a little spark of self-awareness when you attend Liz’s workshops”. “You sit and listen and see the mistakes the mediator is making but you know yourself you’ve done exactly the same.” “It really makes you step back and think about what you’re saying and how you’re saying it, just the whole scenario makes you look at it with fresh eyes.” “We were all quite humbled by it because we all recognised ourselves.”

More generally, a supervisor felt that, for the (“very much enthused”) participants in one of Stokoe’s workshops, “they can see the value of it; it opened their eyes a wee bit to even the way people are underselling the service ... they realise they might be a bit more positive”. Similarly, another stakeholder observed, that their group has started to think about how they could sell mediation more positively, focussing on the things that they can do (e.g., by saying “We can help you write an agreement that is visible for all to see” rather than leading with “this won’t be legally binding”).

Instrumental: Because any instrumental impacts are likely to occur primarily in behaviours of individuals, it is only possible to gather qualitative indicators that these subtle changes are likely to have happened. Stokoe herself has been told by numerous individuals that their practice has changed as a result of her training. Stakeholders interviewed have elaborated on conceptual impacts, reflecting that changes in understanding can change behaviours, so that conceptual and instrumental impacts are closely tied together. (A stakeholder reflected, “All of us have reviewed our choice of words and the way we speak on the phone to our clients as a result of the workshops.”) So, for example, one supervisor has observed that mediators quite frequently mention the workshop, and appear to think twice about what they are saying, their approach and how they present the option of mediation. At another organisation, learning was captured and spread deliberately: the management group discussed quite a few of the points that came out of a workshop and wrote them up in their newsletter. After the national conference organised by Stokoe, as described by a stakeholder participant, the attendees from that organisation “went out to lunch afterwards and picked each others’ brains as to what we got out of it and fed back to all the other mediators. And next time we’ll go and make sure others go so everyone can benefit from this kind of exposure.” One example given by a stakeholder at another organisation was of self-awareness and organisational reflection on “new learning” from Stokoe’s training, which (among other things) led the organisation to help its volunteers look more closely at opportunities to work with “party two” people, those who have been complained about and might be willing to participate in mediation. Practitioners’ appreciation has been indicated in her recent nomination for a PMA National Mediation Award next year, a telling indication of movement toward institutionalisation of her work.

At another level (described more fully under “Enduring Connectivity”, below), one stakeholder interviewee suggests that the UK-wide mediation network Stokoe is helping to develop “feels like a work in progress, continuously happening bit by bit... (toward) Instrumental Impact”. There is a sense that if the annual meeting were to turn into a national organisation, it could

one day represent all mediation services to Government.

Enduring Connectivity: Strong links have been created with mediators across the country, with widening and also repeat invitations from practitioners for training workshops (one to two invitations per week). Most services for which she has provided training stay in touch and some give her additional materials on which to work. Stokoe convened at Loughborough University the first national training workshop for mediators, who currently have no single national organisation providing a forum for them to meet and train with each other. This was seen as opening up opportunities for networking, sharing ideas and best practices, funding opportunities, etc. Beyond this, she has established a 200-person strong online mediation discussion forum with members from the UK, Ireland, US and Scandinavia, Mediators@lboro.ac.uk, to which mediators can submit articles, information and events. A stakeholder commended this role: “She has had a big impact on mediation in UK and Ireland already, not only through workshops but also through putting people together and creating networks.... she has helped to fill a vacuum.”

#### Attitude/Culture Change:

Stokoe's approach meant that she acted effectively as an ambassador for the value of academic research. One stakeholder, for instance, felt that her positive experience with Stokoe made her likely to look differently at an introductory letter from a researcher in the future and perhaps take a chance on working together. Another commented, “Liz has portrayed a totally different image to what some of our volunteers may have had about an academic.... She is very knowledgeable but delivers in a way that everyone understands or feels totally at ease asking about. She has a down to earth, engaging way of working so that everyone feels pulled in...a personal style and a hundred percent what is needed in an organisation like ours (with very diverse volunteers and clients)”. Similarly, another stakeholder cited attitude change regarding academics, saying of Stokoe's workshop training: “(the fact that it is) grounded in reality impresses people and they see the value of it....Her style is certainly not my experience with a typical academic, if you like. (She)... can be quite funny, inclusive, interactive; people can contribute to it so it involves people and is very accessible”.

#### **Routes toward Impacts**

##### **Key roles (e.g. Knowledge Intermediaries)**

The evidence-based training workshops were the key route toward impacts. By being proactive in translating her research into training workshops, Stokoe was in effect a Knowledge Intermediary. She was seen by stakeholders as bringing something distinctive to this role: “I think it is her personal delivery, her personal style ... It very much is that the delivery is very grounded, down to earth and very real, and there is humour with it ,, I think people feel easier and more comfortable in sharing some stuff that may have personal impact for them and bring it out into the room, since they don't feel 'oh my gosh this is a Professor from Loughborough University and therefore I have to jack myself up into a higher level'; they feel really comfortable”. Stokoe was praised for her “unrelenting energy” as she “put herself and her equipment into her car for two years” to go out to stakeholders.

##### **Stages at which stakeholders were engaged**

During her original work, Stokoe contacted multiple services and talked with mediators, listening to their requests to record intake calls as the point where there can be problems (when people first encounter mediation services); in this way some of the development of her early research was framed by practitioner input. What started as a study of neighbourhood relations and disputes, she sees as having “evolved quite a lot in the last four years”, with “a bit of a journey” regarding what was studied, that has “taken (her) to some interesting places”.

Stokoe started working with mediation services in 1997, accumulating data toward the grant proposal awarded for 2005-8, then collecting data. Between 2008-2010, she ran some unfunded workshops, driving to practitioners’ sites. Then from February 2011-February 2012 the Follow-on grant supported her travel to multiple services (which often have limited or no funding themselves for workshops). Those coordinators who invited her to conduct training workshops for their practitioners also helped to play a Knowledge Intermediary role. It made a difference to them that Stokoe reached out pro-actively: “If we hadn’t met Liz we wouldn’t have given her the time of day. But having met her, (we saw she had a) really useful approach of direct relevance to us. That only became clear because she took the trouble to come over and get funding to come to us.”

These practitioners could alert Stokoe to emerging issues, to which Stokoe responded by adapting her workshops. As a stakeholder observed, “she is very flexible; she will work with whatever the issues we as an organisation would feel is an interesting topic for a training workshop by her --- maybe something arising or bubbling away in the community in a mediation case --- the volunteer brings it back to us and we can talk to Liz about it and ask ‘what is the training we can work on that covers this area of concern or newness out there?’”.

Stokoe also attended practitioner conferences to make the effort to reach out where stakeholders were gathered; convened practitioners UK-wide to develop a network and began/hosted an online forum for practitioners.

## **Processes**

Processes leading toward impact included multiple points of engagement with practitioners, described above. There is clearly a two-sidedness to the processes. It mattered to stakeholders that the workshops were grounded in research: “The nature of the workshops is very important; they are very much evidence-based; the evidence gives it quite an impact.” Yet, openness to experiences of practitioners was also valued: “Liz’s approach is very practical, grounded in reality, not just academic theory.” Practitioners saw an inherent complementarity, with one effectively defining Knowledge Exchange: “a full, rounded engagement of what we have to bring, she takes that and gives from the academic side, so (there is) a cycle.” Or, as another stakeholder put it: “We all recognise it has been mutually beneficial. She is deriving her relevance from our existence, and we have benefited, as part of her wider family”.

Benefits may spread beyond each individual encounter. For example, by reaching out to numerous practitioner groups, the PI was able to generate an “aggregate of lots of local impacts, on local services, leaving behind some useful thoughts as she went along visiting different services”. The practitioners can spread impacts, too: “We are spreading through our own events what Liz is bringing through her funding into (her) individual events”. There may also be an opportunity for larger-scale impacts to grow through this sort of engagement, as a thoughtful stakeholder reflected: “The academic world will get access to more realism, more of what’s going on among practitioners – grass roots stuff -- and I think we need each other. The more we’re able to engage and work in the way we have been, the better it will be for all the services out here. The learning will be taken to places we wouldn’t be able to reach. Liz and other academics are able to take forward the learning to policymakers and get the messages across as to what they’ve learned from this.”

### **Factors/Determinants**

Commitment to Knowledge Exchange on the part of the PI was enhanced by being transmitted through a particular style. “The fact that she is an extremely pleasant person is probably 80% of her success.” A key factor from a practitioner perspective was: “the importance of the style of the academic and how engaging they are and how much we feel they are in tune with what is going on out here. She does not deliver a workshop purely from her academic learning and what she wants to teach us”. Ability to bring together practitioners in a new way was seen as due in part to the PI as an academic being a “neutral outside convenor”.

### **Key lessons learned:**

*(a mixture of academic and stakeholder reflections, offered as non-attributable)*

#### **For Researchers**

Pro-actively going out to meet stakeholders can make a real difference.

Knowledge Exchange can require incredible energy.

Success of impact generation can be influenced by the nature of stakeholders; some efforts would not necessarily work for someone researching something esoteric without immediate social relevance.

#### **For Non-academic Partners**

Keep an open mind -- don’t stay set in your ways. Be open to new ideas so that if someone does come along from the academic side of things and says ‘here is something different’, be

prepared to give it a try.

### **For Funders**

Funding for travel was brilliant. The follow-on funding was important. Because of follow-on funding the PI was able to deliver workshops all over and make connection to lots of mediation services and feed back findings and make that bridge between the ivory tower of the university and mediation services all over the country.

The PI has set a very good example of how an academic research project can be linked up to a socially relevant activity out there, and managed to make it an interactive process. This should convince funders to give more money to it. It's got a future. It feeds back to us and our clients, who are often in a very desperate situation.

It is meaningful to capture Enduring Connectivity and Attitude Change as likely to lead toward longer term impacts.

## Impact on Health Care

<b>Case:</b> Self-help treatment for insomnia symptoms associated with chronic conditions in older adults: a randomized controlled trial
RES-339-25-0009 (2006-2011)
<b>Principal investigator and team:</b>
Professor Kevin Morgan, Clinical Sleep Research Unit, School of Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences, Loughborough University
Team: Pamela Gregory, Maureen Tomeny, Beverley Mari David and Claire Gascoigne
<b>Research summary:</b>
<p>This research was a component of the ESRC's large interdisciplinary, multi-institutional effort "Optimising Quality of Sleep Among Older People in the Community and Care Homes: An integrated approach"<sup>4</sup>. This larger effort was itself set within a major 7-year programme, the New Dynamics of Ageing, funded by ESRC, EPSRC, BBSRC, MRC and AHRC.</p> <p>The research centred upon a randomized control trial evaluating effectiveness of a self-help cognitive behavioural intervention for improvement of sleep quality among older adults reporting insomnia symptoms associated with chronic disease. The trial compared a control group, who received simply a single sheet of advice on sleep hygiene measures, with "self-help participants" who received booklets over six consecutive weeks giving structured advice on key components of cognitive behavioural therapy for insomnia (CBTi) and who could also use a telephone helpline staffed by "expert patients"/insomnia sufferers. "Giving people the tools to break the vicious circle", components include: self-monitoring, sleep restriction, stimulus control procedures and cognitive strategies.</p> <p>The research found that self-help sleep management based upon principles of CBTi can be helpful in terms of sleep quality and duration to individuals of any age with insomnia, to individuals suffering with other chronic illnesses and to those especially prone to insomnia. CBTi can thus constitute a genuine alternative to the only other treatment offered by most doctors: sleeping tablets (which can be addictive, with efficacy declining over time). This can constitute a shift in how treatment of insomnia is viewed, important in a country where insomnia is reported more often than other psychological conditions. Trained therapists have been in short supply, making this research timely, as demonstrated by the fact that a "spin-off" from the research has been the rolling out of training to staff such as NHS therapists at regional Health Authorities, so that self-help treatment could begin to be integrated into</p>

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<sup>4</sup> Awardholders included: Professor Sara Arber (PI), Professor Debra Skene and Dr Ingrid Evers of the University of Surrey, Professor Roger Orpwood of the University of Bath, Professor David Armstrong of King's College London and Professor Kevin Morgan of Loughborough University.

insomnia management in primary care.

**Users & stakeholders/settings:**

- Individuals who deliver primary care treatments to older people
- Staff in Improving Access to Psychological Therapy (IAPT) services
- Specialist staff working with patients with chronic disease, e.g. Parkinson's
- Patients

**Key types of impact:**

Capacity-building, Instrumental, Enduring Connectivity, Attitude/Culture Change, Conceptual

**Highlighted non-academic impact:**

Capacity-building: From the researcher perspective: "It was the training issue that started this all. ... Our model has been that the health service doesn't need new services but new skills for the people who already see the patients.... This requires capacity-building among staff who already see people with sleep problems (such as chronic disease patients) .... We need to train the people who already encounter them to give advice." "We offer ourselves as capacity-builders for sleep literacy in the workforce."

Training sessions have been given to therapists locally and elsewhere: Nottinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Berkshire, and Leicestershire and South Yorkshire. In addition, the researchers were contacted by the Parkinsons UK charity in 2009; the research team then trained every Parkinson's disease nurse specialist in Scotland, demonstrating the generic usefulness of their model, booklets and approach.

**Other non-academic impacts:**

Instrumental Impact: While the "gold standard" of a talking therapy is to have a trained individual talking with one or a few patients, pragmatically, the project moved toward self-help. Designed to emulate a "talking therapy" for CBTi, a set of six booklets were developed carefully to be accessible to targets, people over 55 or even over 80 with chronic diseases. These booklets are also provided to various health service providers for their use, along with training. In one trust, for example, some fifty staff have participated in the training package and in developing related practice for patients referred by GPS, supporting patients' self-help. A stakeholder observed, "We see other staff benefitting and feeling more confident in their own practice, and able to deliver a psychological base in their practice".

The research underpinning of the training has led to changes. A stakeholder reflected on the influence of research underpinnings: "The reason we can do this is that we are evidence-driven, everything we do has to have evidence behind it --- so, because this has research behind it, we can do it." Furthermore, due to awareness of this research, local Trust Commissioners have now included sleep and this approach within their specifications. Another trust to which training was taken has now internalised it such that they do the training themselves.

Now another step is being taken, toward computerisation. Working with Professor Niro Siriwardena and colleagues at the University of Lincoln funded by EPSRC, the PI is now working on development of a platform for CBT for insomnia –not just a 'talking pdf', but an 'engaging online social network platform within which is embedded CBT for insomnia'. The idea is that patients will be recommended to this from their practice, join a community, and

will learn about and do CBTi. From the perspective of a clinical researcher, “This wouldn’t have been possible had we not taken what was a talking therapy and bottled it.”

Patients are seen as benefiting, first those in the clinical research and now more, through the evidence-based training package. A stakeholder/knowledge intermediary stated, “To me, the valuable research is the research that actually influences clinical practice and makes a clinical impact at the end.”

Enduring Connectivity: While connections already existed for the sleep unit, as it conducts clinical research, the project reinforced and fostered continuing relationships. The key clinical colleague stays in touch with the researchers and is likely to conduct research with the PI in the future.

Attitude/Culture Change: Awareness of the unit’s research work already existed among the colleagues, but the training seems to have enhanced attitudes toward research among people who deliver services. A stakeholder observed “With training from Loughborough University, with active researchers delivering a really good research base and background of psychology theories underpinning the interventions we use, and all of this delivered in an engaging way, staff have changed their attitudes to research, that it is not just this cold thing that is driving us but someone coming along and talking live about research with a lot of enthusiasm and giving training for them to deliver in clinical practice—they can adopt the importance of a research base in interventions in a different kind of way. So, for my staff there has been an attitude change through training.”

Conceptual Impact: Although the science of CBT generally is quite well-established, there has been at least a local change as described by a stakeholder, in Commissioners and GPs, “who would normally have thought their only option would have been to prescribe, now know they can refer people with sleep problems” to someone with CBTi training to foster self-help approaches, based in research. “So, GPs are beginning to think about insomnia in a different way”. All this feeds into enabling people to accept self-help approaches, whether through materials or social networks.

### **Routes toward Impacts**

#### **Key roles (e.g. Knowledge Intermediaries)**

The PI heads up a Clinical Sleep Research Unit which already has very well-developed lines of communication with service providers so that research is framed within an understanding of issues, resources and workforce potentially available to follow up on research findings. The PI was viewed as “enormously enthusiastic about academic research influencing practice, so there was an open door there”.

A clinical psychologist colleague who manages the local Improving Access to Psychological Therapies provided clinical governance and health service insight, with her Trust supplying

patients for the research. Although now primarily a clinician, she had done research in her past and maintains an interest in research translating into clinical practice; she and the PI have been colleagues for a long time.

### **Stages at which stakeholders were engaged**

The research was designed to simulate how an intervention could work in clinical practice, delivering it in an experimental context as if it were being delivered in reality, so that, should the findings be positive, the work would be immediately ready for rollout into existing service delivery structures. (For instance, at the time, one such structure was a then-new NHS initiative, the Expert Patient Programme, that emphasised tapping into the expertise of patients with chronic diseases.) “Given that what we want is to help people, it behoves us to look at how interventions are being managed currently and work in that context”.

A stakeholder colleague was part of the team, contributing clinical advice on training and supervision, particularly of expert patients supporting others on the telephone, as well as commenting on research and helping the PI prepare summaries.

### **Processes**

The research was framed to solve real problems, and was conducted within a unit already possessing a network of stakeholders. Early in 2008, the researchers ran a training programme for lay advisors; advisors then contributed to the trial. During the trial, in 2009, the PI responded to a request to train NHS therapists in CBTi for insomnia in the Nottinghamshire Healthcare Trust.

The research continued, despite the fact that non-academic stakeholder leaders who had signed letters of agreement were no longer in post and trusts were restructured. Researchers and clinicians worked together. “For me, it is the partnership that makes it happen.”

Dissemination has occurred through the training workshops. Also, since the study the PI has been on television and in newspaper articles, and invited to various workshops, all gradually increasing awareness that people with insomnia can be helped without medication.

There is some gradual ‘cascading’ out of impact, via people who have been trained. However, local impact may or may not translate into wider impacts, a researcher reflected: “There is a difference between influencing practice locally and influencing policy nationally.... We have made some impact in local areas, but that is mainly due to the way funding has devolved to ‘GP clusters’... we are still trying to influence national policy.” As a ‘work in progress’, the PI with other Somnia researchers have put forward a formal representation and are negotiating with NICE, in hopes that NICE will extend its current guidance on sleeping tablet usage to include all treatments for insomnia. This would significantly “amplify

the impact” of research.

### **Factors/Determinants**

Along with interaction between researchers and clinicians, various features, including personalities and academic credibility (such as being seen on television and research being published), were seen as important in generating impacts on practice.

A facilitating factor was a window of opportunity in the practice setting. At the start of the research, there was a major emphasis on improving access to psychological therapy at the primary care end so there was a “perfect launch pad” for psychological management of insomnia management. It was seen as respectable; GPs could refer people. As an informed stakeholder described it, this was “a massive development for public health”; even now £270M is invested into improving access to psychological therapies, so “the timeliness of the research is spot on in just having a platform from which you could launch clinical change in clinical practice”. Despite this, the team has not been successful at getting the training incorporated into the national IAPT training funded by the Department of Health.

### **Key lessons learned:**

*(a mixture of academic and stakeholder reflections, offered as non-attributable)*

#### **For Researchers**

Seek interactions; form the right links with stakeholders; publish; try for timeliness and visibility.

To influence change in practice, work with practitioners; work together with practitioners and patients to design relevant experiments. Work from a small scale up to a larger test –that is better than thinking up what might work and testing it without benefit of practitioner and patient input.

Become adept at developing research protocols which are policy or practice sensitive: recognise problems and address them. In that way you can coalesce exciting intellectual approaches and produce solutions to very real problems.

You can guarantee that the context of your research will look different over the course of your research. If you are working distantly from policy, with blue sky research, you are safer. If you are trying to design policy and practice-relevant research, you are vulnerable. Anticipate that changes will occur – in funders, policy and practice. Don’t be surprised by it. Try to manage cleverly so that key principles will still pertain to whatever the new context will be.

### **For Non-academic Partners**

It is critical for a range of practitioners to be involved in research if research is to be relevant.

Be willing to work with academic partners; it can be hard work. Take the time to build relationships with research teams. As a health provider, you have to have a willingness to actually get involved meaningfully and be willing to work hard with research partners and be willing to work hard to disseminate findings. And take risks if there is good research to push to get that into practice!

There needs to be a kind of culture in the organisation that can accept good (clinically) relevant research and then put it into practice --- an openness and a willingness to embrace research. Not all can do that; many are running hard without time to do something new.

### **For Funders**

There seems to be real resonance now among UK policymakers for ambitious ESRC research in the area of health and social care.

Especially for interdisciplinary researchers, large ambitious cross-Council programmes can be very welcoming, and can facilitate work that is not simply theoretical.

## **Impact on Management in Diverse Sectors**

### **Case:**

The dark side of management practices: routine non-conformity, non-adoption and adverse events. (AIM Fellowship)

RES-331-27-0045 (September 2009-December 2011)

### **Principal investigator:**

Professor David Denyer, Cranfield School of Management, Cranfield University

### **Research summary:**

The Fellow explored factors or conditions that enable or constrain the diffusion, implementation and institutionalization of new management practices in the aftermath of extreme adverse events such as accidents, disasters or crises. Institutionalisation of new practices is often problematic, despite the fact that extreme events can lead to investigations raising systemic issues about management or organisation and often to Board of Inquiry or other recommendations for change in practices (sometimes throughout a sector rather than in just the 'home' organisation where the event occurred). The research took a distinctive management-oriented perspective on extreme events, as a new complement to more traditional approaches of political science, engineering and psychology. Six in-depth cross-sector case studies were developed on seemingly divergent adverse events including for example an accident spillage in a nuclear reprocessing plant, patient death in a hospital and

an explosion and fire on an offshore gas platform. Looking for possible patterns in why change often does *not* occur, the research included: identification of management practices arising in the aftermath of adverse events; examination of how managers and others react and the extent to which practices developed are evidence-informed; establishment of the key managerial and organisational contexts and mechanisms involved in adoption or non-adoption of practices and their assimilation into new processes or norms; and analysis of the practical support required to implement change.

This line of analysis thus led to a foundation for realistic guidance as to how organisations can improve implementation of change and support managers expected to be agents of change, in a variety of sectors or indeed under less extreme conditions. Guidance in change implementation for managers included: the nature and use of recommendations; surfacing and resolution of systemic issues; use of parallel management structures to handle different parts of the organisational agenda at different stages; and leadership mind-sets and behaviours that can help organisations become highly reliant and resilient organisations with safe working cultures.

**Users & stakeholders/settings:**

- Managers in diverse organisational settings, e.g. hospitals, nuclear processing plant, oil platforms
- Management consultants
- HR/Executive development participants

**Key types of impact:**

Instrumental, Conceptual, Capacity-building, Enduring Connectivity, Attitude/Culture Change

**Highlighted non-academic impact:**

Instrumental Impacts

The study's findings contributed to: a patient safety strategy review at a large hospital trust, a re-consideration of incident investigation procedures at a Fire and Rescue Service and a 'high reliability and safe working cultures' programme at an offshore gas storage and distribution organisation. Also, the researcher co-developed with a nuclear reprocessing facility a very successful short course on Safety Leadership for 400+ managers, which has subsequently been rolled out and customised for other sectors. Awareness of the research has grown in a variety of sectors beyond the original collaborators. As one example, the Fellow led a 7-month service improvement and safety leadership strategy programme for senior managers at a high security mental health hospital, which helped the management team respond to a series of untoward incidents and a challenging external report, contributing to changes in strategic leadership and organisational practices.

The Fellow worked with Lane4, a UK-based international management consultancy company, on commercial exploitation of research findings, moving from environments like hospitals or nuclear plants to normal situations in everyday organisations. Using a model developed with the Fellow, the company has generated a new product for clients, along with a portfolio of tools and other support for change management and 'organisational resilience'. "The academic underpinning was really important". The company references Denyer, and the ESRC.

Instrumental and conceptual impacts were interwoven. For example, one stakeholder described an increase in both understanding and team cohesiveness. "There was a very good turnout every session ... We wanted to look at how we managed risk, reduced risk, collectively as an organisation. David and his colleague had the right credentials to let us do it as a group, bring out the knowledge we had and use an evidence base to help us structure how we could do it differently". Some new literature on practical points was produced, getting very simple messages to staff to help them understand actions and values. However, "what was more important for us was the conceptual stuff – how we managed risk collectively as a senior staff and as an organisation –that was more important – getting us collectively to work together and look at things was the biggest thing for me ... We could have done a brochure in a morning, but the process was more important by far. We had to go through the process of thinking about risk and roles and responsibilities...that makes the difference in believing in it and having a collective group ownership."

The Fellow's contributions were recognised recently with his award as HR Most Influential Thinker 2012, due mostly to his "outstanding work on high reliability and safety leadership" and "pioneering, evidence-based management worldwide". The HR Magazine describing the award cited his role as "management practices fellow at The Advanced Institute of Management Research (funded by the Economic and Social Research Council)" and noted that "of all those in our UK Thinkers ranking this year, Denyer appears to have had the most profound practical effect". <http://www.hrmagazine.co.uk/hr/news/1074651/nhs-employers-boss-named-most-influential-practitioner-2012>

#### **Other non-academic impacts:**

##### Conceptual Impact

The research found similarities across sectors, not only in issues around implementation of change after adverse events, but also in the complex of causal factors leading toward them, with similarities in the whole timeline from error initiation to incubation to crisis to handling the crisis to coming up with and then implementing recommendations. Workshop participants and other stakeholders found it illuminating to see case examples from other (very different) sectors that bore surprising relevance to their own situation, enabling a fresh perspective and learning about underlying processes. As the researcher describes this sort of conceptual impact: "It is almost like giving them a new lens.... If you reframe how someone thinks about something, it might not be a direct impact today but in 6 months or 2 years, they might think about something differently, attend to something, notice something, or change the way they behave because of that way of framing. That can be an important impact, especially when a case of life and death as in this area. But it is so difficult to show. It is almost immeasurable.... It might be that you don't have the next accident!" As just one example of learning from common principles, the researcher's subsequent large change programme with a high security mental health hospital provided clinical and managerial staff with a new lens, a new common language, and a 'higher order way' of looking at issues.

A stakeholder noted the utility of a case the researcher provided from another area; "it was a bit of a surprise to hear about a different industry. ... Because of how they structured the workshops, it all made sense and was a tangible example of a real situation where they had worked through it, so it was a very good example and it was interesting to get something

from a completely different 'left field' ... Something less different wouldn't have brought out the understanding. ... They helped us think about risk and manage risk in a different way. We were very good at managing day to day risk and interactions of human behaviour but they gave us a theoretical way of looking at it and communicating it."

Another stakeholder described the spread of a different new conceptual insight into complex causality. "He (Denyer) helped me analyse 14 incidents for 2011, he kept pushing me to go back further and really challenged my thinking, to tell him what were the causes, not just one cause. We came up with the 'wheel of misfortune' (which was captured as a cartoon), as a list of all the different things that had happened within each case ... I've used it in talking with staff. That kind of thinking has been useful." Captured in a new language, this conceptual insight spread, as the stakeholder observed: "when you're at a meeting and those words come back at you, it is really powerful, for instance when others are talking about the wheel of misfortune ... it takes a few months to get through, but all of a sudden people are talking with those words. It is amazing when it comes back to you ... sometimes it takes time for something to achieve momentum but you can certainly feel it". The "wheel of misfortune" cartoon was found useful by individuals in other sectors, as well, as it showed that every event investigation revealed the same set of underlying issues, whereas individuals who were constantly fire-fighting couldn't step back and see that bigger picture, so they were moving onto the next event before they had closed out the last. The cartoon helped them see, in a simple yet vivid way, that they needed to break out of this cycle.

### Capacity-building

The Fellow conducted ten tailored one-day workshops for a total of 160 practitioners – at a large hospital trust, an offshore gas storage and distribution organisation, a nuclear reprocessing facility, and Lane4 client workshop for managers – and two cross-sector end-of-award events at Cranfield School of Management. The Fellow also contributed to three executive education programmes, a nuclear reprocessing facility, NHS Southwest and the Cranfield full and part-time Executive MBA (reaching an additional 705 practitioners). The researcher welcomes invitations he has received to conduct executive development work: "That is where you can have significant impact, if you can work on executive development that is drawing on evidence, with a level of rigor like the ESRC Fellowship, then they can contextualise it and apply it to their own problems." In addition, the Fellow gave several keynote presentations to large groups of practitioners, including a nursing and midwifery conference (over 100 participants), a safeguarding children conference (over 100 participants), the National School for Government (40 participants) and the Welsh Assembly (over 100 heads of service).

### Enduring Connectivity

The researcher stays in touch with contacts when possible, though a challenge of working with adverse events in particular is that individuals often leave posts. He continues to receive invitations to conduct training seminars for senior managers. He still works with the consultancy and the NHS knowledge intermediary hopes to do more research with his team.

## Attitude/Culture Change

Stakeholders valued the combination of theory and evidence base, grounded in a variety of sectors, as being helpful in their own situations.

## **Routes toward Impacts**

### **Key roles**

The Fellow conducted research in a way which encouraged practitioners to reflect on difficult situations, thus gathering their insights, and later disseminated findings in what was widely perceived to be an engaging, accessible and helpful style.

Stakeholders in various settings acted as “Knowledge Intermediaries”, helping the researcher to frame questions, understand issues, access data/insights and disseminate findings for use. For example, one stakeholder held their own management fellowship with the NIHR SDO, working with the PI, and acting as a “translator between research and what was going on in the hospital, picking up on what was relevant and how we could use it”. One activity was to spread the learning more widely, with training and also work products such as turning thousand-word research summaries into “one-minute” postcards with just a few bullets for managers. “I wouldn’t have been able to do it without access to (Denyer’s) papers --- then, how do we translate it, get it out and use it—it has to be drilled down and down and down... so the audience is wider.” Another Knowledge Intermediary, the consulting company Lane4, views the research input as a competitive differentiator and acts as a conduit so that findings have indirect impacts through the company’s own capacity-building for clients; for example, one client organisation overhauled its 360 degree process regarding leadership behaviours. The consulting company itself has changed the way it plans for the future.

### **Stages at which stakeholders were engaged**

A variety of stakeholders (e.g. managers, front-line employees, policymakers) were involved in all stages of the research as knowledge co-producers: contributing ideas/intellectual content; acting as first evaluators of project outputs; acting as brokers into field work and test sites for the work; and serving as advisors for dissemination and exploitation in practice.

### **Processes**

Even before the Fellowship, Denyer ran an open “discovery day” to help set the agenda, asking stakeholders if the area would be topical and what questions should be asked. Some attendees became involved in the later research.

During the Fellowship research, Denyer worked closely with stakeholders involved in the set of case studies being developed, capturing their knowledge and questions throughout. “Impact in these organisations was not a simple process of research followed by

dissemination and adoption, but a highly collaborative endeavour.”

Sharing evidence-informed guidance, the Fellow developed and conducted targeted workshops, as well as contributing to executive education, giving presentations at practitioner conferences and publishing in practitioner publications reaching managers.

### **Factors/Determinants**

The mindset of the individual researcher and the ethos of his institution made a difference: “All of my work has tried to have a dual role of high quality research and having some kind of practical relevance. I think it’s a ‘both’. I left academia ... and worked for a consultancy company for a short time till that company seconded me to Cranfield to set up a research project. It was an ideal role --- the university’s mission is knowledge into action--- I found a home.”

The style of the researcher’s approach was much appreciated. A stakeholder observed: “They had the credentials of an academic but were very practical and gave good demonstrations. We did things on airplanes and the Iraq war; they were able to give good examples and not talk in an abstract way. Some academics can make a very complicated thing very simple – they did. They were very good at communicating and helping you communicate. Not ‘look at us aren’t we clever’, (but) more that they were interested in how does this apply to you, your area. ... they were nice to work with, giving you some of the tools that would help you do the job but letting you choose the tools, the right ones that work for you. How they did it was most impressive. ... They believed in what they did, you could sense that. Their manner – they were very personable and nice to work with. They kept their role as separate; they didn’t try to become part of group but came across as very understanding, adult, mature and really knew their subject ... they were very professional, personable, respectful of everyone else’s experience. You felt comfortable after the first session saying what you know and don’t know. ... There is some meaning and feeling behind it when they talk to you ... they really do want to help you, it’s not just that they get paid to do a job.”

### **Key lessons learned:**

*(a mixture of academic and stakeholder reflections, offered as non-attributable)*

#### **For Researchers**

Engage throughout; dialogue is critical. Acknowledge that what practitioners say is important – that we can learn as much from them as they from us. “The absolutely essential first step is that you have to address a question of interest to managers or practitioners. You have to involve them all the way through in reformulating a problem, helping to ground knowledge, developing methodologies, reporting on findings. ... There is nothing worse than academics thinking they know everything there is to know...and not saying ‘actually, there is a lot of knowledge in practice’. In many areas, practice is ahead of academics in understanding a topic.... Therefore go in with what is known in academic knowledge and try to synthesize with practical knowledge on that topic.”

Build networks and personal relationships. “It is amazing how at the end of the day, it comes down to interpersonal tools and networks. To me, it is the mindset --- saying ‘I really want to hear what the practitioner has to say, hear how they are framing problems’ so that it is really a two-way dialogue. It is a key mindset to go in, first to listen and observe what is going on in practice, then take that back and try to explain using academic theory not the other way round. It is very much the mindset not the process.”

“I don’t view impact and engagement as something that happens after the research work has done—for me that is dissemination. The idea that someone will pick up work that I have done, read it and implement it is probably very slim. ... The so-called ‘relevance gap’ in the impact of management research on management practice... so much of that comes from the dissemination mindset. It’s just not the right way round.”

Do start with a mindset that says impact is important. If you don’t believe it is important, then it is unlikely to be successful. It is not dissemination, but impact has to be a key element; it is not an afterthought.

Really, really, really understand the context of an organisation, what goes on internally, how it is structured, set up culturally .... to help messages go out.

Research needs to be communicated to the right audience in the right way. ... You have to be aware of where your audience members are, their knowledge base, what they are interested in. You’ve got to know the area you’re discussing -- And you have to be genuinely interested! ... Keep it simple and relate to the area. Some people may be very intelligent but they won’t have the time to sit theorizing over something for hours, so it is important to get it down to simple.” Stories (like case studies) bring principles to life.

Practice-related research has to be quick; you can’t spend too long navel-gazing...things change so rapidly, you have to check that the question is still valid. At the same time, stakeholders need to remember that research takes time, with thinking, analysis and evaluation.

Generate products (such as briefing papers) as you go along, keep the research in people’s minds and keep conduits for researchers open; this can help you be sure you are on the right path in your research. Use different forms of media to get your message across. Use different ways of demonstrating research to keep the lay person included and involved – they’re the people you want your research to get to. Always have in mind ‘What’s in it for

them?'

There is often someone in every organisation who has been dealing for some time with the issue you want to research. Finding that person is like unlocking a door – they are usually informed and motivated, but frustrated because they haven't solved the problem or haven't been able to convince others that it is a problem. These are the people who come up with great ideas but also help to make the research project happen.

### **For Non-academic Partners**

Be open-minded and be willing to see where something goes. Suspend some of your beliefs, work through things and you might find a better way of working.

Researchers coming in and giving you a poke, asking why you do something in a certain way --- it is good to have that challenge.

Do more partnering at the front end..... (see) how you can drive or be involved in the research agenda from the outset. Getting together in the generation of the research question at the front end will always be a good thing. Be clear on the brief upfront.

Consider the nature of the academics; do they truly wish to make a difference and have their research be impactful?

Match the style – find the right person to work with, find the right researcher too fit in with your culture.

### **For Funders**

It is possible to generate impacts of other sorts that are different to direct instrumental use ... a lot of reframing attitudes ... and there is not a clear process for doing that. It is much easier when it is a much more tangible product (as from a medical or engineering department) that has a very clear product lifecycle to it. There is a messiness to impactful research – that makes it difficult to know how can you measure that, how useful it was to (for example) reframe people's thinking.

Show that funders value the tacit knowledge, reframing or changing attitudes and the way that people view problems – in particular the way that many different impacts will be achieved rather than just direct instrumental impacts.

Throw a pebble in the lake and it goes out in ripples --- that is a way to think about impacts of research.

If ESRC wants impact, get a firm commitment from people to be involved prior to the research; be clear about roles and expectations of what people are trying to achieve, not just lip service.

Fund stakeholders who can act as Knowledge Intermediaries, even for just a day a week and for a small amount of money, showing commitment to the process and helping researchers reach people.

An interdisciplinary view really helps with practical problems (but makes it really difficult to position within academic communities).

## Impact on Fire and Rescue Service/Communities

**Case:** “Bernie’, A Social Marketing Project to Reduce the Incidence of Deliberate Grass Fires in Wales, UK”

RES - 568-28-5001 (2008-2010)

**Principal investigator and team:**

Dr Sue Peattie, Professor Ken Peattie, BRASS, Cardiff University

**Research summary:**

Based at the ESRC Centre for Business Relationships, Accountability, Sustainability and Society (BRASS) at Cardiff University, this project took an innovative approach by applying social marketing research to a behaviour-based problem in (non-health) public service delivery: the problem of deliberate grassfire setting in some South Wales Valleys (bearing an annual cost of £7M). The techniques of social marketing are similar to techniques used by marketers in the world of commerce, but oriented toward achieving social goals, creating persuasive interventions that will motivate individuals to change and engage in behaviours that society would deem desirable. The project pioneered rigorous application of the National Social Marketing Centre’s “Total Planning Process”, with a report written in accessible language at each of five phases, from Scoping (October 2009) to Summary Follow-up (September 2010). Formative stakeholder research was conducted, and research findings were used to design and evaluate solutions. This project was unusual in that it afforded an opportunity to study change over time (whereas social marketing is often ‘one-shot’), with stakeholders reflecting on the process.

The research uncovered who was setting fires, and why. Findings included: fire-setting had become accepted locally as a cultural norm across generations; fire-setters were mostly young males motivated by boredom/thrill-seeking/experimentation; locally the problem was under-estimated while fire service resources were over-estimated; youngsters were not engaged with the problem or development of solutions.

As both an intervention and the focus of research, the project was delivered through a partnership which included BRASS and the South Wales Fire and Rescue Service (SWFRS). BRASS academics were involved in the formative research, project management, training of Fire Service staff, development and implementation of the intervention, and evaluation at various stages. The key intervention was piloted in 2010 as the “Bernie” campaign, fronted by the brand of Bernie the Sheep, developed by the young people, which consisted of various positive alternative activities co-designed with young people, such as ‘be a fire fighter for a day’ as well as better enforcement.

The project received an ‘Excellence Award’ from the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) in 2011, with the Judging Panel commenting that it “sets a new standard in behaviour change campaigns”.

**Users & stakeholders/settings:**

- Fire and Rescue Service (in the first instance, South Wales)
- Other local organisations e.g. police, and communities

**Key types of impact:**

Instrumental, Conceptual, Attitude/Culture Change, Capacity-building, Enduring Connectivity

**Highlighted non-academic impact:**Instrumental Impacts

Piloting the Bernie project led to a 46 per cent reduction in deliberate grassfires (compared to a control) in the South Wales valleys, during the Easter period, 2010. Even after the intervention, the reduction in fire incidents continued. Following this local proof of concept in bringing about behavioural change (and related cost savings), the Welsh Government funded the project for 2010/11 and then 2012/13. During 2011 the Bernie campaign was extended to an additional three unitary authorities, with additional stakeholder partners. Engaged stakeholders have ambitions to take Bernie Wales-wide. Attitudes or norms regarding fire-setting were changed in the community; the relationship between SWFRS and the wider community appeared to change to a 'friendlier' one with greater involvement and visibility in the community; and a greater level of community cohesion occurred. Indeed police records showed that during the Bernie intervention, all anti-social behaviour (such as theft) declined. A stakeholder described this as a welcome surprise: "The huge fringe benefit that we didn't realise would come was reduction in criminal damage and anti-social behaviour." Thus research contributed in unexpected ways to cost-effective delivery of public services. (Unpredicted contributions pose interesting questions for evaluation of not only social marketing interventions, but also impacts more generally.) Internal management within the Fire Service changed; "the whole way I manage the department really has fallen out of the Bernie project ... it certainly influenced and really focused the way we operate and do business", for example changing delivery to match times and places where target audiences will be. At least one manager is exploring use of social marketing to address issues with other organisations such as the Local Authority: "this is in the early stages but stemmed really from the academic research and the focus that was provided by the scoping and the involvement of Sue."

**Other non-academic impacts:**Conceptual Impact

At least two conceptual changes occurred due to the research. Fire Service staff became less "resigned" to fire-setting behaviour, thinking instead that something could be done to change the behaviour, as stakeholders described. With "an historic problem of deliberately set grass fires—we kind of accepted and geared ourselves up to respond to the problem rather than deal with the problem. ... we had never walked out and spoken to people we were trying to influence. Instead we were thinking of ideas that had resonance with us, but not the target group." "Sue's scoping study—(said) 'you need to go out and speak to these people, find out why is setting grass fires acceptable'— and it revealed some very interesting things" (such as fire-setting being done by other children besides just 'problem' children) ... "So, we identified a problem we didn't know we had...so, then, 'what do we do about it?'"

Fire Service mindsets have changed as to the potential effectiveness of approaches based on understanding why people behave the way they do: "The research led us to ask different questions I hadn't really considered." "Since then we engage and ask who what where when why how." This movement toward interrogation of a situation to learn about the underlying 'why', is spreading; the practitioners now want to engage more with landowners and farmers over their burning activities. A stakeholder believes "It will take longer but will give sustainable results. It will have an evidence base rather than being a professionally-led opinion". Social marketing is an approach based on going to talk to people rather than

jumping to conclusions. A stakeholder noted an aligned change with their consideration of what will work with particular target groups. “There was very much a conceptual impact -- we found that the culture of the Fire and Rescue Service is very “can do”; we are very task orientated so we will deal with what is in front of us. What was particularly useful as we went through this process was to provide some academic rigor to stop us lurching toward a solution very quickly.” “It changed our focus to engage, --- and then decide.” Social marketing itself is seen as useful by stakeholders. “We get other people to care about our problem –the social marketing bit—telling your message in ways that will resonate with other groups, what they care about”. “We don’t necessarily follow the whole social marketing tool ... but that process and approach is changed from what it was before”.

Deliberate planning has been influenced. As a stakeholder describes it: “The most important impact for us was focus. With the Fire Service, we get the job done; we try to run before we can walk and the majority of time we get results. Working with Sue as an academic, on occasion we had to be patient and I think Sue had to be patient as well. What Sue brought to the management table was ‘look guys you have to do this first...this will be how you can demonstrate results and have impact’..... it gave us a lot of focus, so we really thought and planned throughout the project... A practice which we’ve adopted since in all our areas we work with (beyond Bernie)”.

#### Attitude/Culture Change

Fire Service stakeholder attitudes have become more positive toward research-driven work and academics, though it took work on the researcher’s part to get buy-in. “I would never have considered academic research to make an impact on relationships to fire. It wasn’t on my radar. We fell on it because our chief came back from a conference and liked this concept.” Not only the original champions but also sceptical or apprehensive managers became advocates by the end of the project: “When I came into this, I didn’t think research was relevant at all; I just thought ‘I have a problem!’” But it took a while to appreciate the value of research. “It was quite challenging to work with someone from an academic background rather than a practical one.” Even though dealing with the academic process had its difficulties, “we had to put a little bit of faith in it and now it has given us tangible benefits”.

#### Capacity-building

The PI trained Fire Service personnel in social marketing and they trained community youth workers (employed by the Fire Service) in social marketing principles and interviewing skills, so they could get valuable information from youngsters. In a more general sense, capacity was built within departments in that, as described by a stakeholder, “staff in the department understand what they have to do, that they have to provide a business case ... not like before, when we went ahead without understanding reasons necessarily. So even practitioners, youth workers, firefighters and so on are starting to construct delivery plans for next year, so each function is now looking at who what where why when how where they want to be, who they want to influence—so that they focus resources for best results.”

#### Enduring Connectivity

The Fire Service now carries on the work, but the PI was fully involved in the 2010 intervention and in 2011 helped with the evaluation, and will do some follow-on interviews, and dissemination. At least one stakeholder may be involved with a paper by the PI for a

world social marketing event.

## **Routes toward Impacts**

### **Key roles**

The PI worked closely with the stakeholders, and guided the stakeholder project manager, holding to the principles of social marketing research while engaging input.

Key figures in the SWFRS committed to the social marketing research process, ensuring that research-based interventions were trialled.

### **Stages at which stakeholders were engaged**

Following a presentation by the Director of BRASS (Ken Peattie) at a Fire and Rescue Service practitioner conference (to which he was invited by Alexander Consultants who had heard him talk about social marketing in another meeting), a senior figure in the Fire and Rescue Service initiated a meeting, which led to discussion with the PI (Sue Peattie) that in turn narrowed down the project focus to fire-setting. (As a researcher noted, “It was going along and putting forward something fairly engaging, and showing the promise of research, that led to the project.”)

Researchers were seen as genuinely seeking and utilising stakeholder input. One stakeholder describes it this way: “The first time in my experience where research was really drawn up with the input as though they were on the front lines. Every step of the way, youth workers were part of the plan, as were young people, community groups. Everyone had a say. ... with the Bernie project—‘this is our problem, how are we going to deal with it, who are the best people to talk with’, it really started from the bottom up not top down; this was not a typical way of working for us but it (led to) reduction in fires, more community development and youth engagement”. A Project Stakeholder Group included representatives of the Fire Service, Police, Local Government, Forestry Commission and other local stakeholder groups. At the suggestion of the PI, the project also had a Youth Advisory Panel.

SWFRS were key to the implementation of the intervention, and also collaborated with researchers on the evaluation of each stage in the process. The SWFRS has now institutionalised Bernie within its own activities.

### **Processes**

“The key route to impact was the nature of the project, that it was run as an action research project and as a partnership” with the Fire Service stakeholders, a researcher firmly believes. As action research, the project had potential as a practical intervention from the stakeholder’s point of view, and something to study, with an opportunity to publish, from the researchers’ perspective. Stakeholders benefited from cost-benefit analysis, intervention

data, follow-up interviews, community questionnaire and follow-up analysis.

In some sense, the joint effort was a leap of faith for stakeholders, and perhaps for the researcher, who had dealt primarily with social marketing theory. As one stakeholder observed, “I had to keep telling myself ‘you committed to academic rigor and to something of interest to larger communities --- this will always prove you have gone through a process and it worked. You have to have faith in it.’” Longer timeframes posed by the research were problematic. “It was really painful, especially when ... it has gone on for a long time, you put resources into it and people are saying ‘what is happening?’ and you haven’t gotten anything yet. It was an all-in bet, putting a huge amount of faith ... and could have all gone wrong..... (but) it worked, and gave us the results we wanted. Stopping part way would have been a waste. From an academic point of view, there was nothing to lose since (it was) through an academic process... and an academic could get a paper or proposal. I needed something that was beyond paper, something tangible. That was hard - I had to accept it. I’m glad I did to be honest but it took a bit of nerve.” Feeling that “this had never been solved in 50 years, therefore it is going to take a new way of thinking”, the stakeholder leader stuck to his guns, even though he “faced huge amounts of criticism for it”. ... “We are in year 4 now; only recently are people saying that this seems to have worked; the statistics show (support for) the strategy. Three years ago it was difficult.”

The project entailed a joint approach. As a stakeholder observed, “we learned there was strength in both arguments” (reaching different individuals with a combination of “the academic rigor of someone with a PhD and a very rational mind and a clear evidence/business case” with “emotive arguments” by the Fire Service). “I could focus on the areas of my strength and my team’s strength and know that Sue would back up with academic rigor and knowledge. ... not a ‘knowledge transfer’... (but) a complete package”. “It was a positive process ---quite enjoyable and fun, (although) on occasions difficult.” Another stakeholder made a similar comment as to issues in the process: “The relationship was strained at times and we had to be patient -- ‘tell me in plain English, Sue’ --- and she had to be patient, was probably frustrated too—we wanted to run and she had to hold us back. Looking back—that was a blessing. I’m very glad we did it.”

The project evolved with findings and stakeholder input, along with continuing evaluation. So, for example, the Bernie campaign was developed with local youngsters. Bernie the cartoon sheep was developed as the identity of the project (through a logo/branding competition among young people) and indeed later ‘hosted’ a website and a Facebook page as well as Bernie posters/materials, the slogan “Grass is green Fire is Mean” was chosen from youngsters’ entries and ‘hot pink’ hoodies were distributed to young people participating in activities and signing a pledge against fire-setting.

### **Factors/Determinants**

The researchers put real effort into collaborative working. “We were very conscious about not making the whole business too academic for the Fire Service; we are used to dealing with

things in a practical manner so we were always very careful to present things in an applied manner and use language that would make sense to the Fire Service. ... the jump to making something practically useful to the user is not as easy as academics often think. We worked hard to make that happen.”

Stakeholders were appreciative: “What was most helpful from Sue—because they were evaluating as we went along, all the information collated was shared with the team so there was always an opportunity to agree or disagree with certain points and have that conversation. ‘We’ve taken on board what you’ve said, this is what we have come up with, what do you think now?’. When you work that way, people are more inclined to want to participate and engage and be part of the research because they have been made to feel a part of it. ...Sue was quite open. I knew I could have spoken to her at any point if I wanted to discuss anything. An open door policy really, for anyone. ... Sue was friendly ...and the way it was put together (mattered) as well. A nice read ...Anyone could pick up the paper, the final evaluation paper each year, and read it quite easily. It was quite friendly in that way.”

**Key lessons learned:**

*(a mixture of academic and stakeholder reflections, offered as non-attributable)*

**For Researchers**

Good research opportunities don't necessarily come from well-planned strategies --- sometimes they come from activities like networking. ... You never know what will come from speaking at meetings, for example. If you're interested in engagement, it is important to go along to where practitioners are and be willing to talk about the value of your research in their terms. There is no substitute for putting yourself out there where you are obvious and understandable and approachable where stakeholders are concerned.

Be open!

Don't complicate things, keep things as simple as you can. It is all down to communication, on both parts.

Really get yourselves into the community.

Be patient with practitioners because they will be impatient!

**For Non-academic Partners**

Be open to academics being able to add value. At the same time, it is important for

academics to value you, to say 'you are the experts on your context, but we have expertise in this particular approach which could be applied to your context'.

Involvement of academic research can prove invaluable. It will certainly focus and provide a strong foundation from which to build and will also provide academic rigor, which is always a benefit, including evaluation on outcomes and impacts. Embrace it. It may work or it may not, but you won't know until you take the step.

You have to enter into it with a genuine commitment that it is a partnership. You might lose your nerve; you have to accept that there will be differences in approach even though the desired outcome is the same, and that's okay -- but it won't be easy. Differences of opinion will hone your argument and cover all the bases.

Break down preconceptions and barriers. Once you understand the process, and break down the barriers of terminology, there is a lot of positive that can come from the relationship. And it gives you credibility. .... If you have academic rigor behind evidence, a lot of credibility comes with that.

What does keep you on track is hard-nosed project management, that satisfies both camps. You can agree on timelines, milestones, achievements, key success criteria, objectives— they can form a common language as a nice foundation and discipline.

There can be a question of who leads at what phase. Early on, research leads, then, recognise that once the research is done, that is when practitioners need to come to the fore.

Be patient with academics because they will take time!

### **For Funders**

(As in this Review) capture examples of research impacts on practice, as practitioners respond to stories of practice examples where research played a role.

It can be a sort of social marketing exercise in itself, to widen stakeholder perceptions of academics.

To the extent possible, help academics respond quickly to things, as practitioners work in different timescales that are often weeks and months, unlike academics working in years and cycles of competition for funding. (For example, strands of quick response could be included within a centre, which can facilitate engagement with stakeholders).

Recognition of impact by ESRC and the REF is a boost for people who prefer to see impacts from their work, to use their knowledge to make a difference.

It might be good to help match up researchers and stakeholders.

# ANALYSIS OF CASE STUDIES AND IDENTIFICATION OF LESSONS LEARNED

## Types of Users & Stakeholder Settings

The four case studies in this project covered a range of stakeholders and settings:

- Mediators (volunteers, managers and staff practitioners) in community/neighbourhood or third sector or private mediation services and national organizations ---and the people they help
  - Police services, trainers
  - International and UK legal services
  - Via other academics: use in other settings, e.g. health, environment, student loans
  - Rolling out expected: requests for training from numerous family mediation services and national organizations
- 
- Individuals who deliver primary care treatments to older people
  - Staff in Improving Access to Psychological Therapy (IAPT) services
  - Specialist staff working with patients with chronic disease, e.g. Parkinson's Patients
- 
- Managers in diverse organisational settings, e.g. hospitals, nuclear processing plant, oil platforms
  - Management consultants
  - HR/Executive development participants
- 
- Fire and Rescue Service (in the first instance, South Wales)
  - Other local organisations e.g. police, and communities

## Types of Impacts

### Interaction among Impacts

In each of the four Case Studies in this project, multiple types of Impacts are seen, indeed all five types considered. (This accords well with, for example, the PACCIT study, which saw all five types of impacts in three of its five case studies, four in one and three in the least populated type-Instrumental. **ANNEX B**) This is not simply a case of 'stacking up' disparate types of impacts; instead, very often types of impacts are interwoven. Most evidently, Conceptual Impacts and Capacity-building may be inextricable; in addition, for example, Instrumental Impacts may rest upon Capacity-building and/or be the manifestation of Conceptual Impacts. A sense of connectivity and a related positive attitude, or trust, between researchers and stakeholders, appears to contribute a contextual background allowing these more obvious impacts to grow. Although in reality, impacts are often interconnected, one or two highlights of each type of impact will be captured briefly below, for each case study.

## **Instrumental Impacts**

Encouragingly, even what sometimes seems to be the most elusive type of impact – instrumental impact – can be seen, sometimes subtly, in these four case studies. These impacts occur primarily within individuals or particular organisations; they are not sweeping UK-wide changes.

- The Adverse Events work led to changes in management and organisation in several different settings (e.g. a large hospital trust, a Fire and Rescue Service, an offshore gas storage and distribution organisation, a high security mental health hospital). In addition, a type of ‘commercial exploitation’ has occurred via the PI’s collaboration with a management consultancy. The PI was named HR Most Influential Thinker 2012.
- The BERNIE project has led to changed behaviours in the SWFS and indeed within the larger community (e.g. decreased fire-setting). The project received an ‘Excellence Award’ from the Chartered Institute of Public Relations in 2011.
- In the INSOMNIA case, instrumental impact is seen in the production of self-help materials (which may soon be transformed into web materials) which are being used; Instrumental impact is closely interwoven with Capacity-building in this case, as practitioners are aided in the ease with which they can recommend use of the materials.
- In the Mediation Practice case, Instrumental impacts are seen in scattered across individual practitioners and services, appearing in multiple cases of individual “testimony” as to changes in behaviour. Repeat invitations and the ‘institutionalisation’ of the PI’s approach evident in her recent nomination by practitioners for a PMA National Mediation Award, lend weight to identification of instrumental impact, as does the growth of a network, stimulated by the PI. Instrumental impacts are directly tied into Capacity-building and related enlightenment or Conceptual impact.

## **Conceptual Impacts**

Different ways of thinking, of seeing the world and relevant issues, have been stimulated by the work of these four cases.

- Particularly through sharing experiences across sectors, the Adverse Events work led to a “new lens”, a change in appreciation of causal factors leading to adverse events and possible modes of organisational change for later implementation. The PI has won a significant UK-wide award as an “influential thinker” affecting practice.
- The BERNIE project helped Fire Service staff to see deliberate grass fire-setting as a phenomenon which could be pro-actively addressed; another change in view was perception of the utility of taking a variant of a social marketing approach to understand target audiences prior to implementing a plan.
- The INSOMNIA work offered an unexpected self-help alternative to pharmaceutical prescription for those trying to help individuals with insomnia.
- The Mediation Practice work enabled practitioners to see themselves in a fresh light.

## **Capacity-building**

Capacity-building has been key in these four case studies, and certainly overlaps with Conceptual Impacts, and often even with Instrumental Impacts.

- The Adverse Events PI has run numerous workshops, some bespoke for a particular management team/organisation and some deliberately mixing organisations; in addition, through collaboration with the consultancy, multiple clients have been reached as well.
- In addition to guiding project managers, the BERNIE PI trained personnel in social marketing as an approach since internalised in organisational behaviour, while also thus contributing toward the training which led Fire Service Youth Workers to engage youngsters in the intervention process.
- The INSOMNIA work was driven by a model of increasing skills among those who see patients with sleep problems; training was offered to therapists in several different locations and to all Parkinsons' disease nurse specialists in Scotland.
- The Mediation Practice PI used Follow-on funding and extensive personal time and effort to provide workshops at numerous sites; these workshops utilised her new CARM technique in capacity-building.

### **Attitude/Culture Change**

Stakeholders came to view academics/academic research as more useful than they had previously thought.

- Stakeholders in the Adverse Events case appreciated the fact that input they were getting from the researcher was grounded in evidence, from across different sectors.
- The BERNIE stakeholders stuck with the sometimes difficult process of aligning their pragmatic approach with the PI's research approach; by the end, they were appreciative of the quality of evidence and learning on which they could proceed with their actions.
- Practitioner staff receiving training from the INSOMNIA researchers often appeared to be surprised by the enthusiasm and approachability of the researchers, thus changing their attitudes.
- The Mediation Practice researcher appeared to have acted as an ambassador for research, with an engaging and approachable style much appreciated by practitioners.

### **Enduring Connectivity**

In each case, willingness to "stay connected" is evident, although of course funding, stakeholder job responsibilities and other various changes could intervene.

- The Adverse Events PI has invited key stakeholders to present at workshops, and stays in touch when possible. The consultancy continues to build on his work and the NHS knowledge intermediary hopes to collaborate with his group on a new research project.
- The BERNIE PI has conducted post-project evaluations, and may co-author with at least one practitioner.
- The INSOMNIA research fostered continuing relationships; the clinical colleague is likely to continue collaborating with the PI.
- Practitioners continue to invite the Mediation Practice PI to conduct training workshops and they very much welcome the 200-person strong online mediation discussion forum which she initiated.

## Issues

One overarching issue raised by this project is the relative scarcity of (identified) projects having impacts on practice and practitioners, even as nominated within ESRC as candidates for this work. This could be due to various reasons, or likely a combination, perhaps including: difficulty of engaging and/or making an impact on practitioners; perceived value of making an impact on practitioners; institutional support/lack thereof, individual academic's skillset/lack thereof; localisation of impact –and/or difficulty in spotting or capturing such impacts or indeed in distinguishing them from policy impacts. While the four case studies conducted here were selected purposively, and are thus quite deliberately not a representative sample, their review raises several points for consideration in this regard, as discussed below under Determinants and also in Conclusions and Recommendations.

Emerging from analysis of these four case studies, a key issue related to impacts on practice/practitioners is that of the *scope* of impacts generated. In each of this project's four case studies, extensive effort was made by the researcher to reach, engage, collaborate with and encourage embedding of change by focused groups of practitioners. Personal relationships were built with significant interaction and deployment of personal relationship-building skills. Those individuals receiving workshops, or acting as the focus of action research, did in fact become caught up in the process of using evidence as a basis for change. These are genuine "success stories". Some of the PIs have received national recognition for their work with practitioners and some have conducted workshops or worked with organisations in multiple sites in the UK. (Denyer, for example, benefited individual groups with insights from working with organisations in different sectors. Stokoe worked at multiple sites, is diversifying into other sorts of mediation and legal services and through other academics has had her approach utilised in different settings.) However, none of the case study foci have led to single sweeping UK-wide or practice-wide changes. Impacts are deep, but finite in scale, primarily localised to stakeholders quite directly involved with the project. There might at times be an ironically inverse relationship between depth of interaction with practitioners and breadth of impact (e.g. seeing few impacts spreading across an entire arena of practice, perhaps as a new guiding "policy" for that practice). It would appear that impact generation with at least some practitioners might differ from interactions with policymakers operating naturally at a "big-picture" level.

This could have implications for the sort of impact narratives that are created, or indeed for methods used to identify, "track" or credit such impacts, particularly when they may be dependent on relatively few individuals (who might well change posts or responsibilities). As discussed below, there may also be opportunities for funders to support activity deliberately raising the breadth of impact.

## Lessons Learned from Participants in the Four Case Studies

### Overview

Researcher and practitioner participants in the four case studies contributed a rich resource of tacit knowledge, in the form of lessons learned to inform future attempts to generate impacts from research on practice/practitioners. While these are captured within each case study so that their logic is embedded in context, several common emphases are clear, and

are summarised below. These emphases resonate quite directly with those which arose from lessons learned that were captured from individuals in the Psychology and the PACCIT case studies, and documented in those reports.

### **Key Lessons for Future Researchers**

Reach out pro-actively. Build links, relationships, networks.

Develop a personal style that, while true to you and your academic integrity, sends sincere messages of approachability and commitment to exchange.

Start to engage as early as possible; then continue to engage, communicate, and offer contributions throughout to enhance chances of later impact.

Be open regarding stakeholder ideas/perspectives and opportunistic regarding foci for study; anticipate and manage changes in practitioner context

Respect practitioner knowledge (and convey that respect). Make the effort to understand the practice context.

Expect to expend time and energy.

### **Key Lessons for Future (Practitioner) Stakeholders**

At the start, be open to the concept that research can add value, rigor, insights, credibility. Later, be open to new ideas that may emerge from the research.

Be willing to become meaningfully involved, from initial framing of questions onward, so that subsequent research will be relevant to your area of practice.

Take the time to build good relationships with researchers/research teams. (Find a researcher who is genuinely committed to knowledge exchange.) Come to agreement on key objectives, so that both researchers and practitioners benefit.

Expect to work hard, even to take risks, particularly when pushing to get research findings embedded into practice.

### **Key Lessons for Future Funders**

Follow-on funding can make a real difference in connecting findings to practitioners more broadly. Help researchers respond quickly to practitioner needs, to the extent possible.

Large, interdisciplinary cross-Council programmes can help to facilitate work that goes beyond theoretical.

Consider funding stakeholders who act as Knowledge Intermediaries. And/or, encourage researchers to secure early commitments as to roles people will play.

Recognise that many pathways to impact will be “messy” and will spread outward over time, making them difficult to measure. Show that you value not only instrumental impacts and straightforward capacity-building, but also more subtle conceptual impacts, such as incorporating research findings in ways that re-frame attitudes, or provide a new lens for viewing practices or problems,

“Enduring Connectivity” can be a hallmark of impacts or impacts-in-progress, often accompanied by an “Attitude Change” toward viewing researchers as relevant.

Share examples of research impacts on practice, in “stories” where possible, not only to help researchers envision what they might do, but also to widen stakeholders’ perceptions of how research can play helpful roles.

## **DISCUSSION OF DETERMINANTS OF RESEARCH IMPACT ON PRACTICE**

### **Roles**

Ongoing processes of knowledge exchange, toward impacts, will benefit from a mix of roles: a genuinely committed researcher(s); one or more engaged practitioner stakeholders acting as champions within their sphere; and, possibly, additional knowledge intermediaries. Many times, the heart of the impact-generating process will be a direct relationship between a researcher and a practitioner.

Pro-active Principal Investigators play a critical role in generating impacts. In the four case studies of this project, for instance, commitment to genuine engagement of practitioner stakeholders came through unambiguously as fundamental to the researcher's approach. Similar commitment appears in other impacts on practice, very often coupled with a sort of researcher 'entrepreneurialism'. This occurred in the psychology case studies, with, for example, a PI in language and development developing a rare longitudinal database while engaging and 'giving back to' therapists, parents and teachers. As another example, a PI of a PACCIT project acted literally as an 'entrepreneur' by spinning out a company, Decision Technology, from a project on "the cognitive science of financial E-Advice".

Also key to each of this project's four case studies was the role of engaged stakeholder "champion", or champions. In some instances, the stakeholder started out as sceptical, but willing to try out interaction with the researcher. In the social marketing action research, for example, stakeholders participated all the way through, with a growing recognition of the utility of the research. Provision of avenues for two-way dialogue with additional stakeholders was a critical role played by one or more stakeholders in each of the four cases. Stakeholder champions played a key role in other case studies, as well.

"Knowledge Intermediary" is a critical role that can take many different forms. In the four case studies of this project, Knowledge Exchange depended very much on sets of one-to-one relationships with the researcher. Frequently, an engaged stakeholder also acted directly as a "Knowledge Intermediary", ensuring that practitioner input was provided to the researcher and the researcher was able to tailor questions and/or training appropriately for practitioners. For example, individual organisational leaders signed up their people for training workshops. In two cases, a clinical colleague provided entry into the healthcare arena, also acting in a real sense as a team member; one of them held an NIHR fellowship that facilitated a knowledge exchange role complementary to that of the PI.

Different practitioner contexts may make a difference to the role of knowledge intermediaries. Professional knowledge intermediaries (such as independent individuals) and/or organisational knowledge intermediaries (such as professional societies) appeared less evident in the four practice case studies of this project than in some other impact reviews ---such as that of PACCIT research, when for example an organisational intermediary for the baking industry worked closely with a PI testing innovative representational design of systems as applied to commercial bakers' scheduling --- or psychology response-mode research, when for example organisations like the Social Care Institute for Excellence and the Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education became involved in dissemination of learning about gaze aversion, or when research on risk in the lifecourse was incorporated by knowledge brokers such as the International Longevity Centre and by the YWCA into its work aimed at young mothers. In the realm of teaching/education, the TLRP evaluation noted multiple knowledge intermediary organisations, including professional or knowledge transfer bodies, subject associations, regulatory/standards bodies.

It should be noted, however, that even within the four case studies of this project, sometimes efforts were made to reach out to intermediary organisations that could help to broaden impact, as in the case of Morgan and colleagues responding to training requests by the Scottish Parkinson's charity or encouraging UK-wide NICE to extend its guidance to

include CBTi for insomnia. Stokoe has actually “gone the extra mile” by initiating a forum/network of mediation service practitioners that could grow to increase its knowledge intermediary role. An interesting possibility for exploration would be effectiveness in identifying/ engaging/utilising different types of Knowledge Intermediaries, perhaps particularly comparing the realms of practice and policymaking; there could be implications for broadening the scope of strong but localised impacts.

### **A Key Determinant: The “Human Factor”**

The “human factor” matters. The “style” of the researcher has emerged as a particularly important enabler in the four practice case studies of this project. While of course the ability of a researcher to engage stakeholders is important in any impact generation, focus on practitioners has elicited a distinctive emphasis on personal style of the researcher. Researchers who convey openness, a genuine commitment to knowledge exchange and a genuine respect for practitioners’ knowledge, are more likely to elicit questions, data and insight than those who favour less porous boundaries between academia and the outside world. An interesting speculation would be that perhaps personal skills at engagement are even more important in impact-generating processes with practitioners than with policymakers. In contrast to practitioners, policymakers may be more accustomed to utilising academic expertise (as one strand of input among others); there may exist more “open doors” that can be found into the policy world by earnest academics. In addition, policymakers may turn to multiple academics for input. Perhaps particularly because many practitioners have not encountered researchers before, and may well only deal with one individual academic, personal characteristics such as openness and friendliness matter, along with clarity of communication. Practitioners commended attributes such as:

Enthusiasm

Giving everyone a say

Communicating well, making things simple

Believing in what they were doing

An ‘engaging way’

Being:

pleasant, personable, friendly, nice to work with, funny, respectful, open, inclusive, interactive, down to earth, grounded in reality

This message as to personal style has come through much more strongly even than in previous case studies of impacts on practice. It should be remembered, however, that earlier case studies took place several years ago, when it was relatively new for lessons learned even to include (as they did) that there should be two-way dialogue with users (compared to previous linear models of knowledge transfer as end-of-pipe dissemination). Also, the four case studies of this project were developed to a greater length, perhaps allowing for capture of this sort of qualitative insight. Future consideration of enabling

impacts would do well to bear the “human factor” in mind, however intangible or subjective it may appear.

Although the spotlight has fallen on drive and charisma of the leading researcher, which may be innate attributes (although they may unfold over time with experience), there are still implications for skills that could be acquired, such as: clarity of communication, learning how to listen and participate in two-way dialogues, offering accessible examples when meeting with stakeholders; individuals can also learn lessons from others about effective Knowledge Exchange processes such as trust-building. There are also implications for team-building, such as inclusion of at least one key member with a notably “engaging” personal style.

## **A Contextual Determinant**

A determinant that can work with or against the grain of an individual researcher’s personal “style” is his or her institutional context. Considering the institutional affiliations of the PIs of the four case studies developed in this project, it is interesting to note that only one of the PIs (Stokoe) is housed “simply” within a mainstream department -Social Sciences, at Loughborough (where she has the somewhat non-traditional title of ‘Professor of Social Interaction’). Another PI (Morgan), also from Loughborough University, is based in a Clinical Sleep Research Unit, within the School of Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences, one PI (Denyer) is in a Business School, at Cranfield University, which is very much oriented toward application, and the fourth PI (Peattie) is affiliated with the deliberately outward-facing ESRC BRASS Centre, at Cardiff University. Denyer commented specifically on the good fit he experienced with his institution’s mission of ‘knowledge into action’.

In another project (evaluation of non-academic impacts of psychology research), for example, we explored the role of institutional context by developing a case study of a Psychology Department that seemed to make a particularly conducive home for Knowledge Exchange and processes of impact generation. (This orientation can be captured in the tagline used by the then-head of the department: “from synapse to society”.) The fact that the latter half of the PACCIT programme was co-sponsored by what was the Department of Trade and Industry appears to have lent weight or encouragement to projects attempting to work with industry (such as work with a small company as well as schools in developing games-authoring software for educational use).

However, encouraging contexts may not be the rule. For example, the TLRP impact evaluation reflected upon the “perverse incentives” of (then) the RAE and institutional prioritisations, which acted against researchers devoting time and energy to impact generation, speaking to the need for improvements in how impacts are captured. Current REF and related institutional constraints might even de-value subtle impacts, such as those related to practice, in particular, perhaps. It is possible that many researchers find themselves in contexts less enthusiastic about knowledge exchange with practitioners – it might even be possible that “practice” is somehow deemed less “intellectual” and/or less significant than “policy”, or as leading only to small-scale impacts, by some institutions --- which might afford researchers decreased levels of support or credit, accordingly. While ESRC, informed about such matters, duly recognises the importance of genuine impacts even if finite in scale and/or directed to “work-a-day” practitioners, others may not and/or

academics may *perceive* that these sorts of impacts will not be weighted as positively by academic reviewers appointed to sit in judgement upon them.

### **A Key Determinant: Mutual Benefit**

While it may verge on being a self-evident truism, it is worth emphasising here that impacts arise from benefits as perceived by practitioner stakeholders. They do not arise because an academic uncovers something intellectually interesting or publishable in an academic journal, although these achievements are understood by stakeholders to be important to the researcher. Practitioners need to perceive a benefit, perhaps because the research addresses a knowledge gap, suggests an innovative solution to a vexing problem and/or offers the credibility of an evidence base for changes to be undertaken. For example, as a result of psychology research, case studies showed speech therapists, teachers and charities being helped by a study on language and development to recognise heterogeneity of language impairments and possible links to other conditions; trainee teachers, police interviewers and social workers being aided by psychology research on gaze aversion; and police interview protocols being informed by research on detection of lies. In each of the four case studies of this project, practitioners felt that they and their organisations had benefited, in a quite down-to-earth way, whether through training, guidance, new ways of managing their organisations or implementing change, and/or new options for bringing about desired outcomes. While the four principal investigators clearly understood and acted upon the importance of identifying and addressing stakeholder needs, several practitioner interviews illuminated a growth in insight among stakeholders as to the need for complementarity of benefits in a strong relationship between stakeholders and researchers.

The more practitioners trust that the research is grounded in their reality, the more likely they are to perceive it as beneficial and take up findings. In turn, the more accurately grounded the research, the more likely it is to be of excellent quality even in an academic sense, to the benefit of the researcher. Consistent with the very clear findings on this point from the four case studies of this project, the TLRP impact evaluation saw stakeholders as valuing engagement of “the front line” in research as an important enabler, and suggested that projects embedding collaborations with practitioners (e.g. in collaborative research or testing of research findings/materials) were most likely to show impact on practice, with likelihood of impact on practice also likely to be increased by projects forming links with practitioners who could then in turn disseminate “good practice”.

Again, the question of scope may play a role in understanding reciprocal benefit. In at least some practitioner cases, intensive collaboration between researchers and practitioners takes place at a local level, within a very small group, where benefit is readily perceived.

A determinant sometimes influencing mutual benefit is that of the appearance of “windows of opportunity”, when a practitioner or his/her professional context is willing to explore new alternatives. The PACCIT programme overall was timely, for example, in its exploration of how computers and information technology could be useful; at least three of those case studies involved small business stakeholders moving into what was then an emerging market. The TLRP impact evaluation noted the challenges posed for research impact (and longevity thereof) by the dynamically changing policy contexts for teaching and learning.

## Pro-active Approaches to Stages of Engagement

Attention to engagement at each stage of research (initial question-framing/pre-project, during the project, follow-up and/or dissemination after the project) facilitates the generation of impacts. Interaction is important. Case study evidence in the TLRP evaluation, for instance, placed an emphasis on activities such as liaison or dissemination events over publication as enablers of impacts.

Interestingly, in the four practice case studies of this project, pro-active engagement was actually evident even *before* the official start of research. Stokoe wrote to numerous mediation services in hopes of working with them, and then accumulated data even before writing a grant proposal. Before his fellowship, Denyer held a “discovery day” so that stakeholders could help set the research agenda. The Director of BRASS presented at two practitioner-oriented conferences, which generated interest in a senior Fire Service official, leading to the BERNIE project. Morgan already possessed a network of relationships through his clinical research unit.

Principal Investigators successful in generating impact tended to work closely with stakeholders *from the start of their projects*, thus influencing the course of the upcoming research. In one case (INSOMNIA), for example, the research project was deliberately designed, working with a stakeholder colleague, to simulate an intervention so that rolling it out into delivery would be straightforward. The Adverse Event work developed case studies drawing out insights in-depth from a variety of stakeholders, and working with them to further development of their own organisations. BERNIE was a case of action research, conducted so that “everyone had a say”. Stokoe listened carefully to what mediators had to say as to when the critical inflection point was (“intake calls”), framing her early research accordingly.

Commitment to engagement lasting throughout the lifetime of a project, signalled by continuing pro-active behaviour, is a common sight in research that successfully generates impacts on practice. Certainly, in all of the four cases in this project, PIs continued to interact with key stakeholders even subsequent to the projects. This interaction goes beyond classic “dissemination”. The TLRP impact study noted high awareness of the TLRP and its outputs among practitioners/settings which had actually been involved, with a suggestion that some of this was due to an ethos emphasising “a partnership of shared recognition of expertise”.

Even though genuine engagement during research is key to enhancing impact, accessible, strategic dissemination at or after the end of a research project is important, as well. Dissemination to practitioners can take a variety of forms. Three of the four case studies in this project, for example, involve capacity-building workshops/short course/training sessions which pass along findings to practitioners. Among the psychology case studies, a teaching college educator invited the PI working on gaze aversion behaviour in children to provide seminars for trainee teachers and the research will continue to inform her own training of subsequent generations of teachers. As another example of “spread”, the games authoring software developed through a PACCIT project was used by the Institute of Education in its Masters programmes. Many times a Principal Investigator (sometimes co-authoring with stakeholders) will publish accessible articles in practitioner publications, or give

presentations at practitioner conferences/events; sometimes findings are distilled into guidelines, manuals or protocols. The TLRP evaluation, for example, noted the challenging need for outputs to reach quite different audiences, with case studies uncovering multiple products subsequently utilised to varying degrees by practitioners (e.g. teachers, schools); an interesting point raised was that of branding, such that products might be given a practitioner-affiliated identity, making TLRP impacts harder to track but possibly signifying a deep embedding. Media coverage can also enhance perceived credibility of research findings among stakeholders.

### **Determinants acting as Issues or Obstacles**

One issue confronting impact generation lies in the sheer heterogeneity of practitioners, differing as they do by individual, group/organisation and sub-sector. Earnest but inexperienced researchers may find it difficult to identify stakeholder champions with whom to engage in a sustained process of Knowledge Exchange. Similarly, practitioners may be completely new to the idea of working with researchers, and may find an academic approach so contrary to their own that engagement seems to carry more risk than potential for reward. Even would-be advocates may struggle to get organisational approval.

A serious institutional issue for academics lies in what is conventionally a de-prioritisation of research that is closely bound up with stakeholders; a departmental or university context can thus act as an obstacle to researchers making the sort of extensive, sustained effort necessary to engage stakeholders that could enhance the likelihood of impacts.

Impacts of social/economic research on practice are often likely to be less “tangible” than impacts of many technology breakthroughs, for example, so sensitivity to nuance is required in recognising them. (Despite some changes in perceived value of impacts that have occurred since the earliest case studies, the current REF approach to impacts in still seems likely to minimise subtle impacts.) Although this particular project was not designed to make any quantifiable comparisons between policy and practice impacts, it is possible that academic institutions might place less value on research that contributes “only” to what might be a narrow subset of practitioners, rather than research that could claim contribution to sweeping, widespread policy change that might be perceived by some as more important or intellectually compelling. The issue of scope can thus come into play. If— for purposes of productive relationship-building and for rigorous intellectual focus—a researcher works with a small set of practitioners, certain vulnerabilities can arise. When solidly grounded research findings are relevant to a small group of practitioner collaborators, there may be practical differences in spreading the word, let alone the impact, more broadly across the full extent of that practitioner niche. Furthermore, during the research, stakeholder organisations can change and/or “churn” among post-holders can mean that good contacts will be lost.

A related determinant which often constitutes an obstacle is the fact that many (although not all) impacts need time to manifest themselves. Follow-on funding can help researchers consolidate their impacts, for instance allowing the PI Stokoe to give numerous workshops to a variety of Mediation Services, and one of the TLRP case studies secured follow-on funding for three efforts such that TLRP findings were drawn upon. Appropriately timed

evaluation efforts are necessary to help identify those impacts which appear “belatedly” and for which researchers might not otherwise receive credit.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Key Features Generating Impacts on Practice and Practitioners**

#### **People and Processes**

Impact-generating processes hinge on genuine interaction. Committed researchers make the effort to reach and engage with practitioner stakeholders while in return, practitioner champions “take the plunge” such that they and their colleagues engage with researchers. It may be that, in comparison to many policymakers accustomed to using academic evidence, this is more of a leap of faith for some practitioners who may not previously have encountered researchers first hand. As with knowledge exchange generally, processes involved in achieving genuine interaction with practitioners take time, and multiple points of engagement. Ideally, researchers will begin to reach out to stakeholder practitioners, for instance seeking input into the framing of research questions, even before research projects begin. Impact is likely to be enhanced when this engagement and relationship-building continue as a “highly collaborative” process throughout (and after) a project, with ongoing input from practitioners and a reciprocal growth in appreciation on their part of how research can inform practice. This was seen clearly in the four case studies of this project, and in Psychology and PACCIT case studies.

Bringing together different perspectives, skill-sets and approaches takes sustained effort. Stakeholders in the Bernie project, for instance, spoke candidly of challenges on the journey toward an endpoint of which they and the researcher became very proud. Stakeholders can come to value the rigor of research and the advantage of acting on an evidence base, accordingly --- especially when the process of research includes a sound grounding in, and respect for, the reality of what the practitioners themselves know and experience. Stakeholders who perceive a benefit may themselves help to grow the impact of research, through dissemination to their colleagues and/or expanded involvement of researchers in capacity-building or other activity, as in the spread of impact through numerous invitations for capacity-building events to at least three of the four PIs in this project’s case studies.

#### **Determinants of Research Impact on Practice**

Key enabling determinants of research impacts on practice include:

- Roles played -- pro-active Principal Investigators committed to engagement of practitioners, stakeholder “champions” and, at times, “knowledge intermediaries
- The “human factor” – the personal style of the researcher, including skills at engaging
- Institutional context – if it places value on impact generation with practitioners
- Mutual benefit – impacts are more likely to arise if practitioners see benefit
- Pro-active approaches to engagement -- before, during and following up on research.

Determinants that can pose issues or obstacles include:

- Heterogeneity of practitioners – making it difficult to identify stakeholder champions, and often meaning that practitioners are new to working with researchers.

- Institutional context – if it de-prioritises research caught up with stakeholders, especially if (often localised, often subtle) impacts on practice are not valued
- Time lag – impacts often need time to manifest, may suffer from changes in champions or contexts, and may be difficult to identify

## **Implications for Evaluation of Impacts on Practice/Practitioners**

### **Variability in Impacts and KE Processes**

Analysis of this project's case studies, informed by previous case studies of impacts on practice in the TLRP evaluation and elsewhere, suggests implications for future identification or evaluation of impacts on practitioners/practice. First, it is important to recognise that multiple types of impact can arise, and should be captured, even or especially if they are subtle. It is helpful to identify impacts by category (such as the conventional Instrumental, Conceptual and Capacity-building Impacts and also the two process-embodied impacts/indicators we recommend: Enduring Connectivity and Attitude/Culture Change). It is important to appreciate that impacts may well be interwoven or interdependent; the picture is "messy" rather than neat or linear. Instrumental Impacts for instance might arise through Conceptual Impacts spread by Capacity-building, with follow-on implementation facilitated by Enduring Connectivity and a change to a positive Attitude toward the utility of research.

Awareness that two-way Knowledge Exchange is a dynamic process which occurs at multiple research stages can illuminate pathways toward impacts. A researcher's personal attributes and behaviours may prove especially important when these pathways involve practitioners. What might be a close collaborative relationship between a researcher and at least one key practitioner 'champion' can provide a useful focus for examination of such pathways. Capturing the human side of unfolding interactions can lend depth to case study narratives and might persuade other practitioners to embark on journeys with researchers.

### **Issues of Time and Scale**

Case studies can capture not only impacts but also roles, routes, processes and lessons learned --- thus contributing to understanding and potentially enhancing future processes generating impacts on practice. However, while rich case studies can provide insights unobtainable through document analysis or self-assessment surveys of PIs, even so they can only capture impacts up to a certain point in time; as we, the authors of the TLRP impact evaluation and others have noted, further efforts may be required to track subsequently unfolding impacts, as many occur over a long period of time. The TLRP authors even suggest the possibility that influence on policy may be more rapid than embedding changes in practice, with related implications for impact assessment.

Particularly given the sorts of impacts in the four case studies of this project and also case studies in the PACCIT and Psychology evaluations, it seems possible that for practice more frequently than for policy, despite at least the same amount of researcher effort, impacts may be finite in scale or "localised" --geographically or in terms of reaching only practitioners in a quite focused niche or just those practitioners engaged in direct Knowledge Exchange with the researcher. Thus scope can prove to be an issue for impact

evaluation. If impacts are very localised, they may or may not be identified, and they may or may not be fully valued. An intriguing possibility would be to engage practitioners not only in research but also in identifying a full range of impacts. Certainly many practitioners seemed to enjoy reflecting on processes of impact-generation, when interviewed for case study development. This could help to ensure that very real impacts (even if small-scale or “localised”) are captured and recognised, even celebrated in ways that alert other practitioners to the possible benefits of knowledge exchange.

### **Summary Implications for Evaluation of Impacts on Practice**

In summary, this examination of instances impacts on practices in a variety of settings neither negates nor mandates significant changes in the overall structure of ESRC’s Conceptual Framework for Impact Evaluation (Appendix I, [Branching Out](#)), or in our own flows of knowledge diagram (Meagher et al. 2008). However, it does suggest some value in taking closer, in-depth looks at some of their components, as well as some features that are difficult to capture diagrammatically:

- While external Knowledge Intermediaries have been shown to be important in other reviews (including our own), the “line” connecting researchers and research users in practice might, in effect, be made shorter or bolder to indicate what is often a very direct, one-to-one relationship between a researcher and a key practitioner champion, with both acting as “internal” Knowledge Intermediaries (seen in this project’s case studies).
- For at least some cases of practice impact, the researcher’s own work, and any work s/he funnelled into the collaboration, might be virtually the only research input (unlike, perhaps, some policymaking cases in which different research impacts might be weighed together), thus minimizing the “other research” input.
- Practitioner knowledge, however, should be highlighted in some way, perhaps as a named subset of “Other information” contributing to impacts.
- A focus on practice also underscores the importance of understanding context, at the level of a researcher’s university which might or might not view return on practice as worth the labour-intensive effort of the research, or at the level of a practitioner’s organisation, which might or might not be receptive to recommended change in their practices, however evidence-based.
- Again, we would recommend including in a framework process-embodied impacts such as Enduring Connectivity and Attitude/Culture Change both as important in their own right and as indicators (we would suggest) of an enhanced likelihood that other perhaps more tangible impacts might occur over time.
- Something which is not portrayed readily in a framework or diagram is the importance of the “human factor”, perhaps particularly when researchers work with practitioners unused to collaborating with academics.
- Another factor that is difficult to portray is the dimension of time, as impacts manifest gradually over time, so that evaluations capture a “snapshot”.
- Finally, perhaps particularly important in the case of impacts on practice, the scope of impacts may mean that very genuine, documentable instances of economic and social benefit may be finite in scale, or “niche” in nature; conceptual frameworks need to incorporate a range of scopes.

## **Evaluator's Reflections Comparing Practice and Policy Impacts**

Reflection on the learning from this analysis suggests several key points to consider, or indeed explore further, in comparing impacts –and impact generation—between the realms of policy and of practice. Without in any way downplaying the outstanding manner in which many researchers engage policymakers, a close look at cases of impact on practice seem to underscore even more heavily the importance of a special “human factor”, with which a committed, engaging individual goes the extra mile to elicit from practitioners a willingness to participate in Knowledge Exchange relationships from (or before) the start of the research. This may be due in part to a practical orientation of researchers who gain satisfaction from facilitating down-to-earth changes. It may also be due to a difference in the experience base or mindset of many practitioners compared to many policymakers, with the latter group often assuming that (some distillation of) academic understanding may be useful as a strand of input into policymaking and thus, perhaps, having dealt with more than one academic and/or Knowledge Intermediary as portals into the world of research. In contrast, individual practitioners may often be surprised to find an academic researcher taking a deep interest in their issues and indeed respecting their practitioner context and knowledge. Personal style and extensive effort may thus be needed to overcome this lack of familiarity, build close relationships and generate an attitude change by developing awareness of how Knowledge Exchange could lead to benefits.

In many cases, a rigorous focus to research on a practice problem may be paired with impacts that are “localised” to directly involved practitioners, whether in terms of relationship-building with one group or in terms of a quite specialised practice niche. Thus issues of scope may arise as differences between impacts on practice and on often national or sector-wide policy impacts. Of course, these realms can overlap, as with policies that guide, govern or regulate practices. ESRC commendably values direct, small-scale impacts on finite numbers of practitioners as genuine and important outcomes of research and Knowledge Exchange. However, these may be relatively subtle and in some institutional contexts might be appreciated less than “big-picture” policy impacts. Should there be an interest in widening the scope of impact on a realm of practice, as well as embedding impacts over time, several follow-on routes could be considered for support.

## **Recommendations for ESRC (and other funders)**

### **Evaluating Impacts**

When evaluating impacts on practice, be alert to multiple, and often interwoven, types of impacts; in particular recognise and value subtle impacts.

Encourage universities/reviewers to value research that engages with practitioners and to give due credit when researchers generate impacts on practice, even if such impacts appear to be localised or finite in scale. Help researchers (and universities) to identify such impacts.

Within a portfolio of impact evaluation methods, use case studies as a rich method of identifying multiple impacts on practice and illuminating pathways toward them, telling stories that can be appreciated by researchers, institutions, stakeholders and funders. Help give practitioners a voice in identification –and perhaps even further spread—of impacts.

## **Enhancing Impacts**

Consider deliberately “growing” researcher capacity to generate impacts on practice in particular. For example, provide opportunities for researchers who have been successful in generating impacts on practice to share their learning and approaches with others. Helpful early mechanisms could include: guidance (as in ESRC’s impact materials), mentoring, support of tactical relationship-building activities as part of research funding, or assistance in making connections with Knowledge Intermediaries and/or practitioner champions.

Consider directing follow-on funding mechanisms toward innovative post-project efforts to consolidate impacts on practice --- to embed impacts within collaborators’ organisations and/or encourage deliberate widening of the scope of impact. Capacity-building appears frequently in cases of impact on practice, often in multiple settings beyond the initial collaboration. While it can often be labour-intensive, and thus raises issues of institutional recognition and of support, this mechanism for expanding the scope of “localised” impacts may offer good return on follow-on investment. In some cases, it could make sense to support involved practitioner champions as Knowledge Intermediaries, working with researchers to spread the impact within their broader practitioner networks/associations.

## ANNEX A: TEMPLATES

### Case Study Template

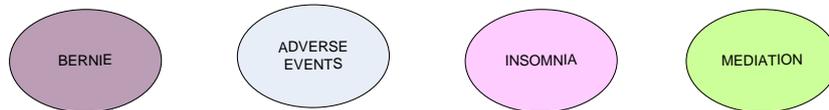
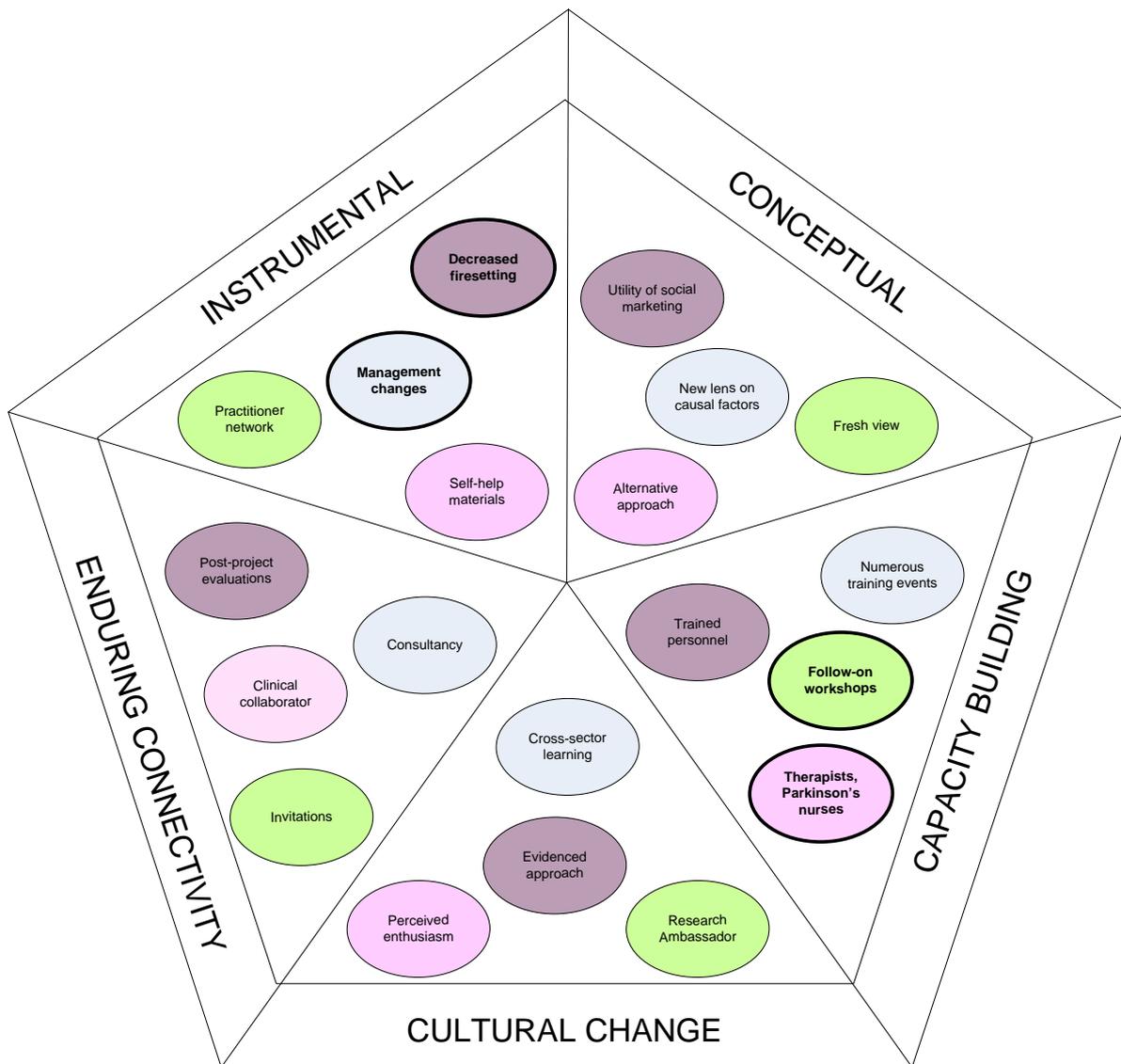
Case:
Principal investigator and team:
Research summary:
Users & stakeholders/settings:
Key types of impact:
Highlighted non-academic impact:
Other non-academic impacts:
Routes toward Impacts
Key roles (e.g. Knowledge Intermediaries)
Stages at which stakeholders were engaged
Processes
Factors/Determinants
Key lessons learned:
For Researchers
For Non-academic Partners
For Funders

### Interview Template

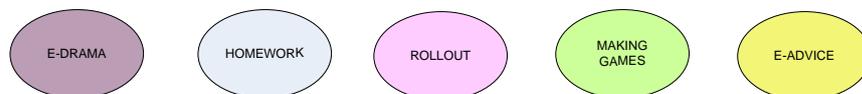
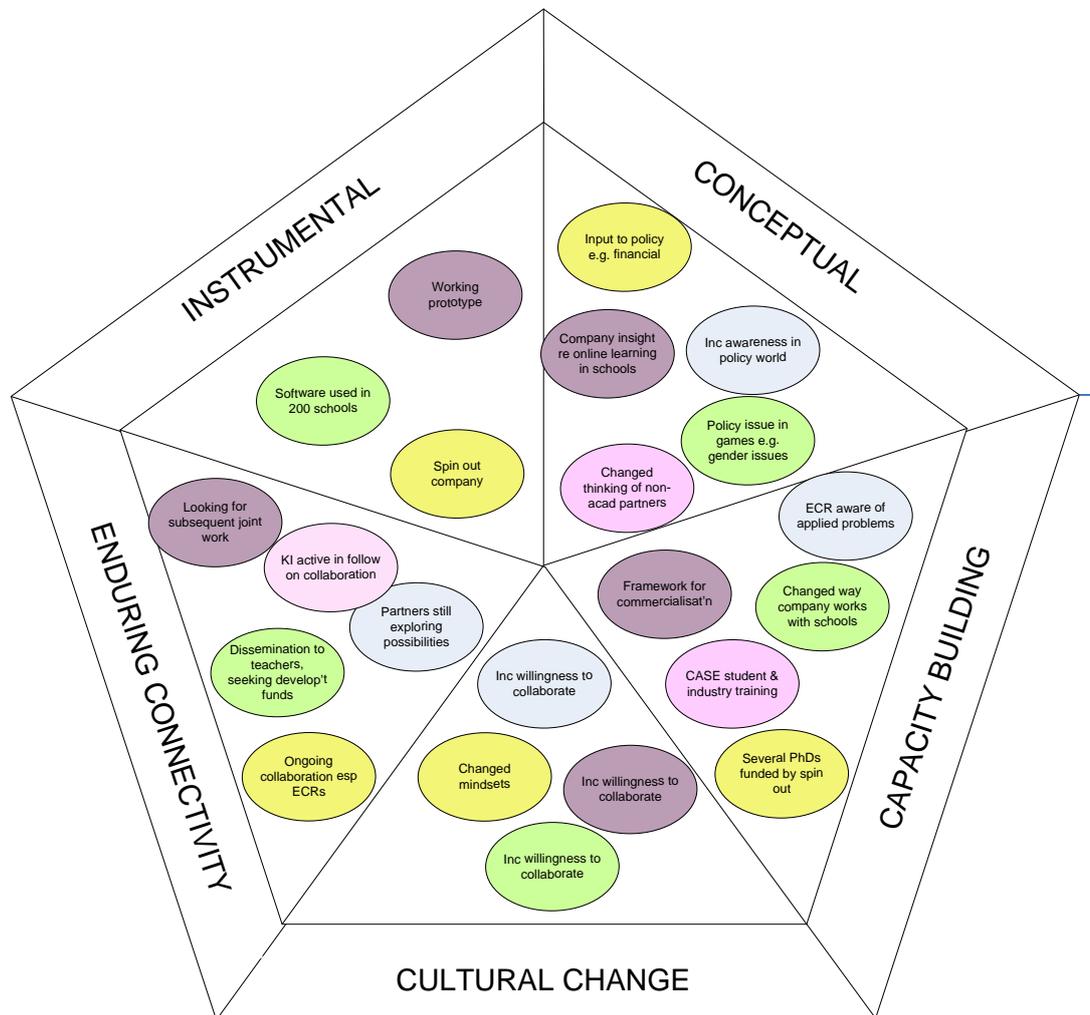
- **Role/nature of involvement in the project/initiative?**
- **Participants/Users/Stakeholders?**
- **Highlighted outcomes/impacts? (particularly on practitioners and perhaps practice-related policymaking?) (Stage achieved?)**
- **Type of impact?**  
(Instrumental, Conceptual, Capacity-building, Enduring Connectivity, Attitude/Culture Change)
- **Routes toward Impacts? Key mechanisms/processes? Key roles? Stages at which stakeholders were involved? Factors/Determinants of research impact on practice?**
- **Lessons learned.... For Others leading/participating in practice-related research?**
- **Lessons Learned/Messages to ESRC regarding generating (and capturing) impacts on practice?**

# ANNEX B DISTRIBUTION, TYPES OF IMPACTS

## Types of Impact, Practice Case Studies



## Types of Impact PACCIT Case Studies



ECR = Early career researcher