

Research Performance and Economic Impact Report 2010/11



ESRC RESEARCH PERFORMANCE AND ECONOMIC IMPACT REPORT 2010/11

Introduction

This report provides evidence of the essential contribution of the social sciences in developing and supporting the international competitiveness of the UK and the wellbeing of citizens in the UK and beyond. The concept of 'impact' in the social sciences applies to all sectors: public, private and third. It includes economic and societal impact in the sense of direct and often quantifiable economic benefits; wider social impacts that will benefit society more generally such as effects on the environment, public health or quality of life; and impacts on government policy, civil society and professional practice.

As this report demonstrates, the ESRC makes a significant impact across the full range of its funded activities. Our flexible and innovative approach to knowledge exchange means that we are able to support the generation of impact across the research lifecycle and at all career stages. Our ongoing commitment to supporting world class research and a unique data infrastructure provides a powerful evidence base to address a wealth of issues for policy and practice; in this reporting year, we supported over 300 new grant-holders and research Fellows, and 56,000 datasets held by our Economic and Social Data Service were delivered to academic and non-academic users. Our methodological approach to evaluating the impact of our funding has been independently validated as being at the leading edge and our ongoing work in this area continues to provide strong evidence of the value and influence of social science beyond academia. The creation, assessment and communication of impact is not a separate part of our strategy – it is absolutely integral to all our activities.

Highlights

- The reported evidence of the continued success of ESRC-supported research making significant impact on business and policy, with multiple case studies providing robust examples of impact from ESRC funding.
- The continuing success and further development of ESRC's highly-regarded 'people exchange' activities, with flexible opportunities available across the research career lifecycle which support the bi-directional movement of people between research and policy or practice.

- The basis of ESRC's economic impact is its world-class research programme; the report demonstrates this exceptional quality through the positive outcome of the international review of UK Psychology, and the 21% year-on-year growth in reported refereed publications.
- The ESRC's innovative work in impact evaluation methodology continues to develop our understanding of critical factors for impact generation, and this year our work was validated as being at the leading edge by independent experts.

The report has been completed in line with the template provided by BIS for the reporting year 2010/11, and includes data on particular aspects of ESRC performance alongside a selection of illustrative examples of impact and impact-generating activities from ESRC-funded research, training and knowledge exchange. Highlights are presented under the suggested headings, although this in many cases is an artificial distinction, as all ESRC-supported researchers are encouraged to deploy a range of complementary approaches to maximise the potential impact of their funding. Where available, quantitative data is reported on an annual basis for the period 2007/08 to 2010/11.

METRIC ¹	UNITS	YEAR				NOTES
		2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	
Common Metrics - Inputs						
Total Funds Available	£ mil	156	206	210	214	
Budget Allocation	£ mil	135	178	179	188	
Leverage	£ mil	21	28	31	26	
of which Private	£ mil	1	2	1	2	Includes Third Sector/Philanthropic organisations
of which from other Research Councils	£ mil	17	17	22	16	
of which from other source	£ mil	3	9	8	8	Largest component - Government Departments
of which Private	%	1%	1%	0%	1%	
of which Other Research Councils	%	11%	8%	10%	7%	
of which Other	%	2%	4%	4%	4%	
Total Expenditure	£ mil	156	206	210	214	
of which responsive grants schemes ²	£ mil	42	45	47	45	
of which Postgraduate Awards	£ mil	56	60	58	56	
of which Other components	£ mil	58	101	105	113	Largest component - Strategic Research
of which responsive grants schemes	%	27%	22%	22%	21%	
of which Postgraduate Awards	%	36%	29%	28%	26%	
of which Other components	%	37%	49%	50%	53%	
Optional Metric - Inputs						
Value of Support for Cross-Council Programmes ³	£ mil	NR	25	32	36	

¹ Figures for 2010/11 are as presented in the ESRC Annual Accounts www.esrc.ac.uk/publications/annual-report/

² Figures quoted here for Research Grant expenditure are based on a percentage of total income. This differs from the figure used in the 2011-15 Delivery Plan, which was based on BIS Programme funding only (excluding BIS admin funding and external income), and was a forecast figure at the time of Delivery Plan publication.

³ Highlighted here is the ESRC's contribution to cross-Council research; evidence of the integral role of social science in these interdisciplinary endeavours.

IMPACT THROUGH KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

The ESRC's portfolio of knowledge exchange (KE) mechanisms facilitates partnership in all its forms. Funded opportunities are available for a wide range of activities, from collaborative training and research, to people and ideas exchange and, increasingly, the commercialisation and development of social science outputs.

During 2010/11, the ESRC's knowledge exchange opportunities were reviewed and simplified, with the result that a more flexible scheme is now in operation, offering funding throughout the lifecycle of research to maximise the impact of social science.

In addition to the KE spend reported below, grant-holders are expected to embed appropriate user engagement and knowledge exchange mechanisms within applications to the Council through Pathways to Impact. Funding for these activities is accounted for

as part of the grant expenditure, rather than as part of the reported KE expenditure.

Impact through Networks

Evidence from ESRC's work to identify the determinants of impact has shown that having established relationships and networks with user communities is a vital factor in impact generation. As exemplified below, a strong network of users can result in multiple impacts from a single researcher's work.

Charting the chain of command

Professor Theo Farrell, an ESRC/AHRC Fellow funded under the ESRC-led RCUK Global Uncertainties Programme researching 21st Century organisation, innovation and security, has built a network of contacts within relevant user organisations, including the Army, Ministry of Defence

(MOD) and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). The advice that Professor Farrell has provided to his network has resulted in considerable impact on policy.

Professor Farrell was commissioned by the Commander of Land Warfare, Major General Andrew Kennett, to undertake an assessment of the British Army's performance in Operation Moshtarak, a 2010 offensive to clear the Taliban from central Helmand Province in southern Afghanistan.

The resulting classified report was briefed to Army chiefs, and has informed doctrine development and pre-deployment training.

A further invitation from the ISAF Joint Command (IJC) resulted in the first annual assessment of the IJC, which led to the implementation of changes in information management within ISAF to improve command efficiency, and identified a key risk on the civilian side of the campaign prompting ISAF to instruct a larger study. Professor Farrell received the ISAF Joint Command 'Award for Excellence' from LG Rodriguez for his work.

Finally, Professor Farrell has been invited to write the British Army's classified history of the Helmand campaign. He will be given complete access to the classified MOD archive on the campaign and conduct extensive interviewing of military personnel from the successive brigade tours. The output will be a 200 page history to be produced by January 2012. This history will be a key resource for British units as they prepare for future deployment to Afghanistan, and will form the foundation for the British Army's institutional memory on the campaign.

Impact through Innovation Activities

We have a number of mechanisms in place to encourage innovation in both research and knowledge exchange, including co-funding¹ the collaborative UK Innovation Research Initiative (UK~IRC), which undertakes cutting edge research and knowledge exchange activities on how innovation can make businesses more competitive, improve public service delivery, and help the UK to meet the social, environmental and economic challenges it faces. Whilst the below example has not yet resulted in demonstrable impact, it illustrates the important role that the UK~IRC plays in bringing together key users and academics to inform policy and practice.

¹With BIS, NESTA and TSB

Innovating for growth

The UK~IRC has been able to draw on its wide network of national and international leaders in innovation research both to inform its policy dialogue and to take an active part in meeting and events designed to meet specific requests in relation to policy development. The ability of the UK~IRC to make links between its own research base and the wider innovation community is represented by an event hosted at the request of the Rt. Hon David Willetts, MP, Minister for Universities and Science, to provide evidence-based advice on innovation and growth and options for policy development. This event was designed to maximise the potential for discussion and included representatives from the regional development agencies, the corporate and small business sectors, intermediate research organisations, as well as academic researchers.

Impact through Collaborative Activities

Working in collaboration with users at the outset and throughout the research process significantly enhances the likelihood of impact. ESRC funds a range of collaborative opportunities, such as our collaborative Ventures scheme for co-funding research with potential policy and practice beneficiaries. However, as the examples below demonstrate, our major investments are also strongly encouraged to develop their own collaborative partnerships to maximise impact as part of their ongoing research activities.

Social marketing stops firestarting

Dr Sue Peattie, from the ESRC Centre for Business Relationships, Accountability, Sustainability and Society (BRASS), worked with the South Wales Fire & Rescue on a social marketing project developing a behavioural intervention – 'Project Bernie' – to deter rural fire-setting, which is a significant problem in some communities in the South Wales Valleys. The project, which won an 'Excellence Award' from the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR), represented both an innovative application of social marketing, and a global first in rigorously applying the National Social Marketing Centre's 'Total Planning Process'. An intervention was devised and tested during spring 2010, with BRASS involved throughout the formative research, project management, Fire Service staff training and evaluation. The project led to a reduction in fires during the 6 week intervention period (compared to a 'control' community) of 46%; three times the original target. Follow up research showed improvements in working practices within

SWFRS, improved community cohesion and a significant shift in social norms about fires. Police data showed that reported incidence of all anti-social behaviour reduced in the community during the Bernie intervention, and that fire incidents continued to be reduced afterwards.

Data needn't be taxing

Researchers from the Business, Taxation and Welfare Large Grant at the University of Oxford have worked closely with HMRC to undertake a pilot study which is a precursor to HMRC creating a new Datalab that will make confidential tax return data available to UK researchers.

Following extensive consultation between the Centre and HMRC officials, HMRC made available a dataset containing comprehensive information from corporation tax returns for over 1 million companies. The dataset is anonymised, and under the terms of the pilot study, could only be accessed in HMRC offices. The pilot project was successfully concluded with the publication of a CBT report on the distribution of corporation tax payments in February 2011. The success of the pilot was demonstrated by HMRC agreeing to roll out the Datalab to other researchers from April 2011.

Impact through Commercialisation/Exploitation

This is a challenging area for social science because of the absence in most cases of recognisable markets for social science outputs. However, where opportunities do present themselves, ESRC-funded researchers have been able to report strong successes, particularly those arising from interdisciplinary research, such as the example below.

Dentistry in 3D

The hapTEL project, funded under the ESRC/EPSRC Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) Programme, has created a 3D virtual dental workstation which is being used by students at King's College London's Dental Institute, enhancing learning as well as reducing expenditure on plastic teeth.

HapTEL's expertise has enabled a £250 haptic system to perform to an equivalent level as a system some 20 times the cost. There has been substantial industry interest in commercialising aspects of hapTEL's work, both in the HE dental and wider simulation contexts. TEL offered a hands-on demo of the workstation to c. 40,000 attendees at the British Educational Training and Technology (BETT) Show 2011 in London where

the Programme's stand was chosen as one of the top 20 exhibits by Business and Industry Today. The project was a runner-up in NHS London's Simulation STeLI awards in Dec 2010, won one of four Medical Futures awards in July 2011, beating off competition from several hundred medical innovators, and team member Dr Suberj Banerji received the Annual Award of Achievement (Education) from the India International Foundation.

The ESRC/EPSRC Advanced Institute of Management (AIM) is currently undertaking an innovative pilot to explore the potential for further commercial exploitation of findings from AIM Fellows' research, and the outcomes of this pilot will be reported in next year's RPEI.

Impact through Interactions with Policymakers

This is an area in which ESRC has been able to demonstrate significant success in recent years, with much ESRC-funded research and other activity having actual and potential policy impact. However, our work to date to identify policy impact confirms that research can only ever be one of a number of influences on policy, and it is therefore very difficult to isolate the specific impact of one piece of research or a single researcher; the illustrations below should be viewed in that context. Nevertheless, regular and ongoing interaction with policymakers is vital for successful impact on policy. ESRC investments perform strongly in this area – an analysis of 43 of our managed investments shows that in 2010/11, major research grants each held an average of five events targeted at a policy audience, secured on average ten additional grants from public sector organisations and provided substantial advice to policy makers on an average of more than ten occasions.

Tracking wellbeing

The work of Lord Richard Layard at the ESRC Centre for Economic Performance this year received attention at the very top with Prime Minister Cameron's announcement in November 2010 recognising that GDP was an incomplete way of measuring a country's progress and that plans to introduce a wellbeing index in addition to tracking economic growth were to be introduced from next year.

Lord Layard has become an advisor to the ONS on ways of instituting this. His work on the impact of mental illness, wellbeing, employment and the benefits system has also borne fruit and a campaign

he coordinated with MIND and the Royal Colleges (Psychiatry, GPs, and Paediatricians) succeeded in getting a commitment to ensuring access to psychological therapies in all major political parties' manifestos. Following the Comprehensive Spending review in October 2010, the Department of Health retained a commitment to full funding of Improving Access to Psychological Therapy services which Lord Layard had argued for in previous years.

Methods for measurement

The ADMIN node of the National Centre for Research Methods has been very successful in translating its complex methodological and substantive findings for use by policymakers.

In early 2010, Secretary of State for Education Michael Gove (then Opposition spokesman) discussed with the ADMIN team the methodological problems of measuring school effectiveness with the data presented in school league tables; work on 'value added' illustrated methodological problems with effectiveness measures, and these inherent methodological challenges have been acknowledged by Gove.

ADMIN research findings on school effectiveness, school engagement and well-being have also been fed directly into the (then) Department for Children, Schools and Families via policy workshops with DCSF officials. The node has also been holding meetings with the ONS team investigating the potential of data linkage, led by Jane Naylor, to share expertise and knowledge. The feedback from the Office for National Statistics is that these have been extremely valuable for them.

METRIC	UNITS	YEAR				NOTES
Common Metrics – Outputs		2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	
Knowledge Transfer and Exchange						
KE Spend	£mil	4	3.9	4.4	4.8	
KE Programmes – Funding in 2010/11 available for the following schemes: Placement Fellowships, Knowledge Transfer Partnerships, Knowledge Exchange Opportunities, Follow-on Fund						
Optional Metric						
Strategic Partners (concordat partners) ¹	No.	23	28	34	27	

¹ ESRC maintains a number of strategic (concordat) partnerships with a range of research beneficiaries, including government departments, NDPBs, devolved administrations and other key organisations such as the British Library. In addition to the formal relationships reported here, ESRC also has a number of less formal strategic partnerships with organisations such as the CBI. The small reduction in the number of concordat partners reported here is a result of various factors: an increased focus on key strategic partners; some departments no longer exist or have been merged; and some strategic relationships are now led by RCUK on a cross-Council basis.

IMPACT THROUGH SKILLED PEOPLE

The supply of highly skilled people is critical in sustaining the long-term health and development of a world class social science research base as well as a competitive, knowledge based UK economy. By taking the strategic lead in driving up the quality of postgraduate training the ESRC has had a major impact on the development of the social science skills base within the UK. We continue to be the single largest funder of social science postgraduate training within the UK, with an investment of over £47 million per year supporting almost 3,000 students. Our newly commissioned national network of Doctoral Training Centres will ensure we continue to deliver postgraduate training of the highest standards, whilst allowing DTCs greater flexibility to develop their own partnerships and use their ESRC quota to fund collaborative activities and other opportunities to enable students to develop transferable skills.

Under this heading, we also report on our people exchange activities. People transfer is widely recognised as one of the most effective means of knowledge exchange and as an important driver of economic and social impact. The ESRC employs a range of highly-regarded flexible and innovative approaches to promote and support the bi-directional movement of people between the business and public sectors, including introducing a 2010 pilot to encourage greater engagement between social science students and organisations from the business and third sector.

Impact through Postgraduate Research Training

ESRC PhD students have the opportunity to extend their award with a three-month placement in a non-academic host organisation within the public, private or third sector. Students work on specific projects

involved with public or organisational policy. During the year 40 student internship awards were made and of those internships funded, 77 per cent took place with the public sector, 15 per cent with the third sector and eight per cent with the business sector.

Risky business

ESRC INNOGEN PhD student Heather Lowrie's internship research on the insurance industry contributed to the conceptualisation and development of a new interdisciplinary framework for knowledge and governance of emerging risks at Lloyd's of London - a world leading specialist insurance market with whom Heather completed a three-month internship. Following on from her successful internship, Heather has secured industry funding for a follow-on collaborative project with Lloyd's and several market participants to promote organisational adaptation to a changing economy

Impact through Postdoctoral Research Training

A strong portfolio of research is a critical factor in achieving impact. The example below demonstrates this, building on and developing multiple ESRC-funded projects into a spin-off company which is now having an impact across the world.

Getting creative with Ketso

Following on from research under an ESRC-funded CASE studentship and ESRC Postdoctoral fellowship, in 2010 Dr Joanne Tippett launched Ketso as a spin-off social enterprise from the University of Manchester. Ketso is a hands-on kit for creative groupwork. It offers a 'workshop in a bag' with the tools needed to facilitate engaging meetings, including a simple-to-follow user guide, best-practice workshop

principles and highly visual training aides. Due to its hands-on and visual nature, it enables input from a wide range of people, including people with different languages and levels of experience. Since its launch, Ketso has been used on every continent apart from Antarctica, and whilst the majority of the customers have been from the UK, it has been used in Peru, Bangladesh, Rwanda, Southern Africa, Australia, USA, the Netherlands, Finland, Malta, Germany and Portugal, and the Ketso team has run workshops for over 2,000 people in over 85 events. There is now a set of training videos and sample workshop plans on line (www.ketso.com) to complement the case studies and User Guide, enabling more people to apply the ideas developed in Dr Tippet's research.

Ketso has been used to engage stakeholders in Manchester in developing adaptation plans for climate change, biodiversity and tree strategies, and the launch of the Green City Network and in a range of student projects with local communities and was short listed for the UK Sustainable Development Commission's 'Breakthrough Ideas for the 21st Century' and commended for the best plan from the social sciences, arts and humanities in the 2008 Research Council UK's Business Plan competition.

Impact through Sector Skills Provision

ESRC-funded research has a significant impact on practice as well as on policy, both in terms of providing evidence to support changes and developments in practice and through capacity-building activities to improve skills and knowledge across a range of different sectors.

As part of our impact evaluation programme in 2011/12, we are focusing specifically on practice impact, assessing case studies across a range of sectors to improve our understanding of whether the underlying determinants of practice impact differ from those for policy impact. Findings from this work will be reported in next year's RPEI.

Changing role of vets

In 2009 the Director of the Rural Economy and Land Use Programme, Professor Philip Lowe, chaired the Vets and Vet Services Working Group for the government and the veterinary profession, and subsequently published the influential report 'Unlocking potential: A report on veterinary expertise in food animal production', which examines the changing role of rural vets. The report drew on research and evidence from within the RELU programme and has had a major

impact on veterinary policy and the organisation of the veterinary profession, including in 2010 the establishment of the Veterinary Development Council, and a review of the purpose and function of veterinary specialisation by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons.

An innovation in highland healthcare

A Knowledge Transfer Partnership between NHS Highlands and the University of the Highlands and Islands which explored the most effective ways for communities in rural Scotland to get involved in planning their future health services has resulted in a new engagement process, suitable for remote rural communities, that is likely to have a significant long term impact on the health and wellbeing of the residents of the Scottish Highlands through a better understanding of how remote communities would like their services to be delivered. The project looked at the challenges of providing services in remote and rural areas – including staff recruitment, and travelling times and costs for patients, families, carers and health professionals and involved events such as community workshops, forums and roadshows in communities to help people and service-providers liaise over local needs and future provision. The completed two-year project has received one of two awards for the best Scottish partnership project in the Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) Scotland Awards, beating off competition from around 120 KTP projects in Scotland.

Staff at the Highlands NHS Trust have been trained to directly transfer the learning from the project into practice and the results of the project are now informing the government, NHS and others on effective ways to liaise with people living in remote parts of the country. Project findings have also attracted international interest from academics and governments, with a 'toolkit' of best practice ideas being trialled in Australia. The associated training events have had a very positive response from other health boards, highlighting the success of the toolkit in developing engagement with rural communities.

Impact through People Exchange

Placements are an important way to bring social science research and expertise to bear on key issues of public policy or business strategy and for academics to build up their knowledge of policy and practice contexts, and to broaden their skills. The ESRC's Placement Fellowship Scheme supports the placements of academic social scientists with

organisations in government, civil society and business to work on specific projects where their academic expertise can add value. The scheme is highly regarded by sponsoring organisations such as the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills which has supported a number of placements. As well as the department benefiting from the range of skills Fellows bring, the Fellows themselves have developed new skills in new contexts and their findings have fed into policy.

Sharing best practice in behaviour

Dr Rachel McCloy, University of Reading, was seconded for 11 months on an ESRC Placement Fellowship to HM Treasury with the objective of making current state-of-the-art research in behavioural economics and behaviour change readily available to a broad audience in government and to provide those working in Government with a toolkit of behavioural economics and behaviour change techniques that could be readily employed in designing and implementing policy. The project involved working alongside the Government Economic Service Team and the Government Social Research Unit to review existing provision in this area across government, working with other Government Departments to address their on-going needs and building networks across government to improve shared practice and raise the profile of the behavioural sciences in policy development.

The project has led to an increase in shared practice across Government and better links between analytical teams in different departments and across analytical disciplines (particularly economists and social researchers). Dr McCloy supported a range of projects, including training in behavioural science for the Government communications profession and policy teams within HMRC, as well as briefing for ministers on behavioural economics at HMT and BIS, and supporting the application of behavioural science to policy making at DWP.

METRIC	UNITS	YEAR				NOTES
		2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	
Common Metrics – Inputs						
<i>Human Capital</i>						
Principal Investigators ¹	No.	NR	NR	272	215	
Research Leaders in Sponsored Institutes	No.	NA	NA	NA	NA	ESRC does not fund institutes
Research Fellowships ²	No.	NR	NR	138	91	
Common Metrics - Outputs						
<i>Human Capital</i>						
Number of PhD Students Supported	No.	743	686	719	730	
Number of Masters Students Supported	No.	NA	NA	NA	NA	ESRC does not fund standalone Masters
Number of Other Students Supported ³	No.	NR	NR	NR	6	
Finishing Rates ⁴	%	84%	85%	85%	83%	
Student funding/training schemes – funding in 2010/11 available for the following schemes: quota, competition and CASE/collaborative studentships, postdoctoral fellowships, mid-career fellowships, Researcher Development Initiative.						
Common Metrics - Outcomes						
<i>Human Capital</i>						
Destinations of leavers:						
Of which University	%	51%	63%	62%	73%	Further study and HE employment
Of which Wider Public Sector	%	NR	NR	15%	8%	Includes schools
Of which Third Sector	%	NR	NR	NR	3%	Voluntary/Unpaid work
Of which Private Sector	%	NR	NR	10%	8%	
Of which Unknown or Other	%	NR	NR	13%	4%	
Of which Unemployed	%	NR	NR	NR	4%	
Placements in user organisations ⁵	No.	40	65	168	76	
Optional Metrics						
Users placed in HEIs/ESRC	No.	62	52	32	64	
Research Investments ⁶						
Researchers trained in media/PE skills ⁷	No.	246	154	313	114	NB: PhD students trained

¹ Data includes all PIs on all grants commencing activity in the period April 2010-March 2011 funded under the following schemes: Small and Standard Grants, Programme Grants, First Grants, Ventures, Networks, Centres (first and subsequent phases). Where a PI was awarded multiple grants within this period, only one has been counted.

² Data includes all Fellowship grants commencing activity in the period April 2010-March 2011 funded under the following schemes: Professorial Fellowships, Research Fellowships, Mid-Career Fellowships, Research Career Fellowships, Postdoctoral Fellowships, DFID research Fellowships. Data excludes Placement Fellowships (reported separately) and Research Fellows funded as part of other Research Grants.

³ New metric for 2010/11. This figure relates to a strategic initiative to build research capacity in Demography.

⁴ Figure is based on 5-year submission rate. ESRC collects data on 5 and 6 year submission rate. The 6-year rate for 2010/11 was 88%

⁵ Reported here are both placements organised and part funded by ESRC through its placement scheme, and also placements organised by the Council's major investments. The fall in these placements is due in part to some major investments which had previously supported a number of placements coming to an end of their ESRC funding, as well as the reduction in available co-funding from government departments in 2010/11.

⁶ Reported here are both placements organised and part funded by ESRC through its placement scheme, and also placements organised by the Council's major investments. The increase in reverse placements reflects a significant push in 2010/11 to encourage investments to pursue these placement opportunities. The majority of placements reported are under a month in duration. In addition, 111 users attended courses in social survey training organised by the National Centre for Research Methods in the reporting year.

⁷ The drop in numbers reflects restrictions on external communications activity in 2010/11. The focus in the reporting year was on training doctoral students.

SUSTAINING WORLD CLASS RESEARCH TO ENABLE IMPACT DELIVERY

Providing a high quality social science knowledge and evidence base is fundamental to addressing a range of economic and social issues within the UK and globally. Scientific excellence is a core value throughout the ESRC, and is a prerequisite for effective knowledge transfer. Evidence from the Council's evaluations demonstrates the consistently high quality of ESRC research, with 96% of all projects graded as 'good' or 'outstanding', whilst international benchmarking work confirms the high quality of UK social science disciplines. That quality is recognised at the highest levels, as exemplified for the 2010 Nobel Prize for Economics awarded to a Fellow of one of ESRC's major research Centres.

Psychological impact

The 2010/11 International Benchmarking Review of UK Psychology, undertaken by an international panel of experts concluded that "overall, the quality of UK psychology research is very high, bettered only by psychology research from the USA. In a substantial number of areas, UK psychology research is unsurpassed anywhere in the world. The Panel's view is corroborated both by the outcome of the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise and bibliometric analysis."

In particular, the review found that "UK Psychology's citation impact places it annually first, second or third amongst the nations of the world over the period 2000-2009 (first in 2009). Averaged across the whole period, the UK ranks first in the world."

Award-winning economics

The 2010 Nobel Prize for Economics was awarded jointly to Christopher Pissarides, Peter Diamond and Dale Mortensen. The three laureates were honoured for their work on how unemployment, job vacancies and wages are affected by regulation and policy; they had developed a theoretical framework to examine how buyers and sellers look for each other in a marketplace and how the time and resources needed for this search can create friction resulting in some buyers or sellers failing to achieve their goals. Christopher Pissarides is Professor of Economics at LSE and a fellow of the ESRC's Centre for Economic Performance (CEP) where he is an associate of the Macro-economics Programme.

To maximise the impact of our research it is vital that we equip social scientists with leading edge research methods and the very highest quality datasets. Through major strategic investment by the ESRC the

UK now has a world class data infrastructure and an international reputation for developing some of the most groundbreaking methodological tools and techniques. A world-class research infrastructure is critical to the national research and policy needs. This enabling infrastructure, coupled with skills and leading-edge methods, opens up fresh understanding of extensive data to address a range of policy-related issues and provides powerful tools for charting social and economic change. The ESRC's datasets are also highly valued by users for the insight they can provide into key policy issues: "It's not possible to design labour market policies without access to longitudinal data, showing how people change states between different jobs or unemployment over a year." (Hugh Stickland, Department for Work and Pensions, ESRC/ONS Longitudinal Studies Seminar 19/7/2011)

Evidence to increase understanding

The Independent Review on Poverty and Life Chances chaired by Frank Field, which reported in December 2010, made much use of findings from the Millennium Cohort Study to understand the links between poverty, child development, parenting and service provision. The independent impact evaluation MCS, commissioned by the ESRC found that use of the MCS was a major part of the evidence gathering, and the Independent Review commissioned additional analysis of MCS data in order to support its conclusions. In particular, the MCS was used by the review team to verify that the proposed indicators regarding positive and authoritative parenting, the home learning environment and other home and family related factors measured at age 3 are indeed predictive of children's readiness for school.

The ESRC also plays an important leadership role for the social sciences internationally, with some of our major investments demonstrating impact beyond the UK's borders, and ESRC schemes supporting collaboration with overseas partners to bring together the best UK social science research with the best worldwide. A major highlight this year was the announcement of projects supported under the innovative Open Research Area, a new way of funding international research with our European partners.

Colombian childhoods

Work by the Institute of Fiscal Studies on early life development and interventions to promote the accumulation of human capital had a significant

international impact in 2010/11. A project on early childhood development in developing countries has engaged with Colombian policymakers to discuss their strategy in this field and to design an intervention, which involves interactive weekly home visits to mothers of young children, using specially developed materials designed to promote childhood development. By using local 'home visitors', supported by mentors, the intervention is explicitly designed to be scalable at the national level in a cost-effective way and can be delivered within the network of an existing government programme. These discussions led to a high-level event attended by the President of Colombia, high-level government officials and civil servants from Colombia and other Latin American countries.

ORA's new era

The Open Research Area (ORA) has established itself as ESRC's flagship international investment, firmly resolving long-standing challenges related to 'double jeopardy' in supporting international collaborative research in relation to some of UK social science's most significant international partners in France, Germany and the Netherlands.

For the 2010 ORA call the ESRC will be supporting £4.49 million (80% FEC) worth of research, leveraging an additional £5.4 million invested by other the partners on projects with UK involvement and supporting 12 UK research teams to collaborate with 22 European ones. In one project funded under the scheme, researchers from the UK and France will study why markets are constantly in a state of uncertainty and flux, with the aim of developing new methods of forecasting where extreme scenarios are not treated as glitches, but as essential functions of economic processes. Before the recent global financial crisis the common practice was to assume that the economy was developing in a stable manner where extreme events were uncommon and regarded as rare shocks. The researchers aim to ensure these drastic events receive attention in future economic predictions.

METRIC	UNITS	YEAR				NOTES
		2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	
Common Metrics – Outputs						
Knowledge Generation						
Number of Grants reporting publications ¹	No.	NR	NR	NR	1952	
Refereed Publications ²	No.	733	1066	1772	2144	
Non Refereed Publications	No.	5810	4856	4088	3452	
Co-authorship of refereed publications - International ³	No.	NR	NR	NR	NA	
Co-authorship of refereed publications - Industry ⁴	No.	NR	NR	NR	NA	As above
Optional Metrics - Outcomes						
Research Quality (Evaluation Grade – projects rated Outstanding or Good) ⁵	%	97	97	97	96	
Level of usage of ESRC Research Resources ⁶ :						
Active registered users	No.	47635	46304	41783	23099	
Datasets delivered	No.	47934	48580	50941	56777	

¹ New metric for 2010/11

² The ESRC's Research Catalogue records all publications produced during the award period, and captures post-award publications on a voluntary submission basis. The numbers of non-refereed publications notified in (calendar year) 2010 are reported here. Non-Refereed publications have fallen as the number of refereed publications has increased.

³ New metric for 2010/11. ESRC does not currently collect data on co-authored publications. However, the new Research Outcomes system, to be introduced in late 2011 should enable us to report against this metric from the 2011/12 RPEI onwards.

⁴ See note 1.

⁵ Due to the introduction of ESRC's new final reporting system in 2009/10, which delays project evaluation until 12 months after grant completion, the number of grants assessed in 2010/11 was approximately a third lower than previous years. Expert analysis has shown that current bibliometric data are not a sufficiently robust measure of the impact of most social science disciplines. For this reason the Council is reporting evaluation grades for the work it funds. These grades reflect the results of independent peer review of end of award reports.

⁶ We report here on the number of users registering to access the datasets available from the ESRC's principal data facility, the Economic and Social Data Service (ESDS), and the number of unique datasets delivered to users. The significant drop in registered users is due to change from Athens to Shibboleth user registration system in 2010. Previously users were registered for three years, but are now registered for a year. Figures obtained from ESDS in Sept 2011 show that the number of registered users has already grown to 32,000. There has been a continuing growth in the number of datasets delivered, due in part to closer monitoring of grant holders through the End of Award process, and the introduction of sanctions for failure to offer datasets to ESDS.

METHODOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

The ESRC's Evaluation Committee has developed a programme of qualitative and quantitative approaches to assessing policy and practice impacts. The evidence from the Evaluation Committee's programme of work continues to demonstrate the ESRC's major contribution to economic and social well-being. In recent years, the Evaluation Committee has:

- Conducted case studies in a range of research settings using different methods
- Identified clear examples of important impacts on policy and practice
- Identified and analysed the key drivers of impact, and made significant progress in understanding how impact is achieved
- Developed an evaluation model and conceptual framework for future assessments
- Made significant progress in developing methods of quantifying certain aspects of the influence of social science research.

Work in 2010/11 focused on developing the Committee's work in three new areas:

- An experimental study to assess conceptual impact, focused on the area of child poverty policy

The evaluation found evidence of significant research impact in the area of Child Poverty Policy, largely associated with a small group of key researchers. Analysis of policy documentation revealed a small number of research citations and through their consultations the evaluators found that formal and less formal interactions between academics and government researchers were key mechanisms through which research findings are taken into account in policy development. The role of lobby groups and think tanks in particular were stressed as important in both 'translating' research findings into viable policy proposals and in creating mechanisms through which research findings influence policy development. However, as anticipated, 'conceptual

impact' was hard to identify and isolate. Only a few examples of conceptual impact were specifically identified, although the evaluation uncovered many examples of ways in which Social Science research had impacted in the area of UK child poverty research.

- An evaluation of the impact of the ESRC's investment in resources, focussed on the Millennium Cohort Study

The evaluation found a broad level of interest in and use of the MCS data from academic researchers, government departments and policy and research organisations and think tanks. The MCS is valued for its depth, detail and breadth of topics covered, but especially because its longitudinal nature enables the tracking of changes over time. The MCS is a relatively new birth cohort study whose value (and potential impact upon policy) is likely to be greater over time, as the number of survey sweeps increases.

There is evidence of the MCS having instrumental, conceptual and capacity building impacts, for example:

- The previous Labour government enhanced Sure Start Children's Centres in the most disadvantaged parts of England and funded more outreach workers and training as a result of research that utilised MCS data showing the benefits to young people
- MCS has been mentioned explicitly in a number of policy and related documents, at Select Committee hearings and in MP's speeches in relation to early years, child poverty and family issues.
- MCS data is being used to feed into a number of policy areas across the devolved nations.

MCS has provided a resource that has contributed significantly to the evidence generation process, although the evaluation acknowledged the inherent challenges for this process: alongside the well known complexities associated with the routes through which research influences policy, the influence of MCS depends additionally on the ability of other researchers to exploit its findings and the size and complexity of the dataset means it is essential to ensure that researchers and other users are equipped with the required quantitative skills to undertake longitudinal analysis to ensure that the impact of the MCS can be maximised.

- An assessment of capacity building impact through the transfer of people and skills across the researcher/user interface, in conjunction with the Welsh Government

The study found that social scientists with postgraduate research qualifications play an important role within the WG and that their presence helps to ensure that the quantity and quality of evidence feeding into the policy-making process is higher than it otherwise would have been. However, it is the research skills, rather than subject specific knowledge of social scientists working for WG that have the greatest impact on the activities of the institution. Methodological expertise is particularly important for social scientists working in analytical roles, helping to ensure robust quality assurance of externally-conducted research and the commissioning of new research to high quality standards. These skills are widely seen as valuable assets within the organisation, especially when they are combined with generic competencies such as communication and consultancy-type skills.

Social scientists external to WG play an important role in providing the research underpinnings for strategy and policy development, but their involvement is greater in some disciplinary areas than in others. Respondents also noted the potential for inconsistencies between the objectives and culture of academic researchers and those of policy-makers. Membership of advisory or expert groups is an important mechanism for influence, and informal links also play a strong role, backed up by semi-formal mechanisms such as seminars and workshops. Senior managers all recognised the benefits of drawing on academic research. It is also clear that the presence of qualified social scientists within WG helps to ensure that the work of external academics is 'translated' to ensure maximum policy impact.

The report highlighted a number of examples that demonstrate the influence of social scientists on the policy process:

- The 2010 Child Poverty Strategy was influenced by internal and external social scientists working together effectively with each other and with policy colleagues.
- Work on a programme of Public Service Improvement is being supported by internal and external researchers
- The Economic Renewal Programme was informed through links with a wide range of economic researchers within and beyond Wales, including members of the Economic Research Advisory Panel
- The Older Peoples Strategy benefitted from the setting up of a research sub-group which advised on

the commissioning of external research, and from a number of secondments from other Welsh HEIs.

However, research is only one factor that feeds in to the policy making process. Other considerations often have an important influence, for example the manifesto commitments of the coalition government in Wales, the input of special advisors and pressures from the media and lobby groups. The relative speed of the policy and research processes was noted by many as a key factor constraining the influence of social scientists.

The Evaluation Committee is conscious of the complexities involved in documenting the broad and often diffuse impact of social science. To this end it has taken a multi-dimensional approach, gathering evidence from a range of perspectives to build a convincing picture of the importance of social science in a number of policy domains. The Committee's approach was recently endorsed at an Impact Evaluation Event, held by the ESRC in December 2010, and attended by a range of those engaged with impact evaluation including leading academics, consultants and representatives from across the Research Councils and government. Discussions at this workshop validated the ESRC's approach as being at the leading edge methodologically, recognising the appropriate balance of ongoing work which continues to uncover evidence of impact and reinforces our understanding of the key determinants of impact, alongside innovative and experimental studies which explore new avenues.

The Committee now proposes to consolidate this approach by continuing to work across the ESRC's portfolio of investments, in order to develop a more nuanced understanding of the different routes through which social science can have influence.

Evaluations underway in 2011/12 will address some of the ongoing challenges in understanding the impact of social science. Of particular note are studies to further develop our work on the complex task of valuing social science, and a new study looking at the impact of skilled people, in conjunction with GESR. The former will be addressed through an innovative study looking at the economic impact of the ESRC-funded Economic and Social Data Service. The ESRC makes a major capital investment in, and leads the development of the national social science research infrastructure that provides data for social scientists, policymakers and practitioners, helping to shape and inform government policy and business decisions and

to answer some of the most pressing questions facing our economy and society. This exploratory evaluation study of the ESDS has recently commenced, using a range of economic valuation techniques to develop robust estimates of the economic impact of such infrastructure investments and present the results of the economic assessment within the context of a broader qualitative analysis of ESDS impact. The 'skilled people' study will consolidate the evidence base which emerged from our study with the Welsh Government, assessing the ways in which the knowledge and skills of social science postgraduates have an impact on policy making within government, and is supported by GESR.

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