

**ESRC Festival of Social Science 2013:
An investigation into the outcomes and
impact of the Festival from the perspective
of organisers**

**A report for the ESRC
April 2015**

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Summary

The purpose of this small research study was to explore and document the outcomes and impact of the ESRC's Festival of Social Science 2013, from the perspective of event organisers. Retrospective data was collected from organisers of 2013 Festival events via an online survey and a series of telephone interviews.

The online survey was distributed directly by the ESRC, to 155 organiser contacts, via an emailed web-link and was available for four weeks, from 15 September to 10 October 2014. After two reminders, a total of 59 completed survey responses were received, giving a response rate of 38%. Follow-up telephone interviews with a small sample of organisers provided more in-depth qualitative data, facilitating a deeper understanding of the nature of the specific impacts resulting from Festival events.

The research documented a wide range of outcomes and impacts for organisers and others as a result of their involvement in the 2013 Festival.

Findings from the online survey

Findings from the online survey indicated there were quantifiable learning and benefits in the following areas

- **Impact on relationships with external contributors or attendees** – Just over half the organisers surveyed said that their events had helped to create new relationships, or to strengthen existing relationships with external contributors and attendees.
- **Impact on organisers' relationships within their own organisations** – Eighty-five per cent of organisers said that the event had helped to raise the profile of their research internally. Around half of organisers also felt the event had helped to raise their own personal profile and 39% said it had brought about new connections with other staff within their own organisation. A few organisers noted other outcomes in this area including increased inter-disciplinary working and more networking across social science departments.
- **Impact on the development of engagement skills** – Two thirds of organisers felt that their 2013 Festival event had provided a supportive environment in which to develop and practise skills in organising engagement events. Specifically, many organisers described how their events had provided a space to try out a new resource and/or a new way of communicating with non-academic audiences. Many organisers explained that they had used the information gained from, or developed for, the 2013 Festival event to inform the content and delivery of other engagement events. Very few organisers had used the event as a platform for increased media coverage of a social science issue or topic, or had made resources relating to the event available online after the 2013 Festival. Similarly to last year's findings, a number of organisers highlighted the role that the Festival played in providing a supportive

environment for early-career researchers, or post-graduate research students, to develop engagement skills.

- **Impact on research and teaching** – A large number of organisers (80%) said that their 2013 Festival events had provided an insight into the impact of their research on a non-academic audience. Around half also felt that the event had been a good opportunity to explore the relationship between research and practice. One third of organisers agreed that their events had generated new research questions or ideas for further research, whilst 20% said that events had helped to generate new research funding applications. Some organisers had used the event as a forum for collecting new, primary data from participants, or for trialling new or existing research and teaching materials. A few organisers had referred to the event as part of an impact case study for the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (n=10) or as part of a funding application (n=2).
- **Contribution of the ESRC Festival to the field of social science engagement** - Two-thirds of organisers responding to the online survey described their 2013 Festival event as an important part of their on-going social science engagement strategy and 42% explained that as such, they applied to take part in the ESRC Festival every year. Thirty per cent of organisers reported having taken part in other science or social science festivals or events in the past two years. These findings highlight the essential contribution the ESRC Festival is continuing to make, year on year, to the field of social science engagement.

Findings from the telephone interviews

Data from the telephone interviews were analysed with reference to an existing conceptual framework¹ for understanding the potential impacts of social science research². The following types of impact from the four Festival events included as case studies were noted:

- **Connectivity impacts** – the events helped to build and develop new and established relationships with wider research, practice and policy communities.
- **Capacity-building impacts** – the events provided opportunities for researchers and practitioners to work together to share and develop skills and knowledge.
- **Attitudinal impacts** – discussion with organisers highlighted examples of positive changes in attitude towards research and academic researchers from practitioners, policy makers, children and the wider public.

¹ ESRC (2011) Branching out: new directions in impact evaluation from the ESRC's evaluation committee. Swindon: ESRC

² Meagher, L. (2013) Research impact on practice: case study analysis. Swindon: ESRC.

- **Conceptual impacts** – the events contributed towards a broader understanding of specific topics and methodologies, and helped to inform and re-frame debates and directions in thinking.
- **Instrumental impacts** – the events helped to guide further discussions and decision making about the social science topic and in some cases led to further engagement work. There was also some evidence that the events had influenced the practice and altered behaviour of some of those who had taken part, as organisers or attendees, although further investigation is needed to confirm the extent and nature of these instrumental impacts.

How might the ESRC continue to assess the outcomes and impact of events funded by the Festival of Social Science?

This research used two methods of data collection to explore and document the outcomes and impact of the ESRC's Festival of Social Science 2013. Firstly, the 2012 online survey tool was updated and amended for use with 2013 Festival organisers. Similarly to last year, the survey delivered a range of mostly quantitative findings relating to key areas of outcome and impact for organisers. Secondly, telephone interviews with a small sample of organisers made it possible to map, in more detail, the nature of impacts achieved and the processes and mechanisms through which they were generated.

For the future, it would be useful to consider more synthesis of the data collected by survey and by interview, particularly in terms of harmonised research tools and more clearly linked analysis and reporting. It would also be worth considering how best to obtain data about the outcomes and impact of events from the perspective of attendees. It is important to highlight that the small sample size overall means the results are likely to be indicative of data trends, rather than conclusive. Nonetheless, the combination of these methods continues to offer a low-cost and effective means for providing a range of qualitative and quantitative insights into the outcomes and impact of engagement work as exemplified by ESRC Festival events.

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1. Context for the research

The ESRC Festival of Social Science takes place across the UK every November. The purpose of the Festival is to promote and increase awareness of social sciences and the ESRC's research by encouraging researchers to hold events aimed at non-academic audiences. Event organisers can apply for up to £2,000 sponsorship for their event.

In 2013, 184 events were held across 40 different UK towns and cities, attracting around 18,000 people to the Festival. The aims of the 2013 Festival were:

- To encourage, support and create the opportunity for social science researchers to engage with a non-academic audience
- To promote and increase awareness of the social sciences and ESRC's funded research
- To promote and increase awareness of the contributions the social sciences make to the wellbeing and the economy of the UK society
- To enable the public to engage with social science research
- To engage with teachers and young people to raise their awareness of the social sciences.

The ESRC conducts its own annual evaluation of the Festival to measure its success against these aims and to highlight any improvements needed. Data collected include: post-event questionnaires from attendees and organisers, statistics on web traffic, social media tweets, media coverage and other direct qualitative feedback. The 2013 Festival evaluation report³ presented key findings relating to the delivery process, event type and location, attendee numbers and profile, objectives for organising an event, motivations for attending an event, impact of the event on attendees' knowledge, awareness and interest of/in social science research and their expected use of event-related-information.

In 2012, the ESRC commissioned an external review⁴ of the outcomes and successes of previous Festivals (2006-2010) and lessons learned from perspectives of event organisers and attendees. The review recommended that the ESRC should build on the current evidence base by setting up additional arrangements to collect data relating to the benefits of events funded by the Festival. Consequently, in 2013, the ESRC commissioned a small research study to explore and document the outcomes and impact of the Festival 2012, from the perspective of organisers⁵. An online survey tool was developed which delivered a range of mostly quantitative findings relating to key areas of outcome and impact for organisers. These included a wide variety of learning and benefits in the following areas:

³ ESRC (2013) ESRC Festival of Social Science: 2013 Evaluation. Swindon: ESRC.

http://www.esrc.ac.uk/_images/Evaluation-of-Festival-of-Social-Science-2013_tcm8-31723.pdf

⁴ Wilkinson, C. (2012) The ESRC Festival of Social Science: Learning and Success. Swindon: ESRC.

http://www.esrc.ac.uk/_images/Festival%20of%20Social%20Science_Learning%20and%20success_tcm8-24004.pdf

⁵ Townsley, R. (2013) ESRC Festival of Social Science 2012: An investigation into the outcomes and impact of the Festival from the perspective of organisers. Swindon: ESRC.

http://www.esrc.ac.uk/_images/Festival_2012_%20Evaluation_of_Impact_and_Outcomes_tcm8-31254.pdf

- Relationships with external contributors or attendees
- Organisers' relationships within their own organisations
- Development of engagement skills
- Impact on research and teaching
- Contribution of the ESRC Festival to the field of social science engagement.

A second study of impact and outcomes of the ESRC Festival was commissioned in 2014, as an adjunct to the existing 2013 Festival evaluation report. The study collected data via an online survey tool (see Appendix A) and a series of telephone interviews with event organisers (see Appendix B).

The online survey was distributed directly by the ESRC to 155 organiser contacts, via an emailed web-link and was available for four weeks, from 15 September to 10 October 2014. After two reminders, a total of 59 completed survey responses were received, giving a response rate of 38%⁶. Each survey respondent was asked to indicate their willingness to take part in an interview to explore the impact of their Festival event in more detail and 37 organisers responded positively to this question. An initial purposive sample of seven events was drawn up, representing different academic disciplines, engagement formats, geographical locations and types of target attendees. Working with the ESRC Festival team and their colleagues in the Evaluation team, we identified four events from this sample which represented a range of engagement settings from which it appeared that a range of academic and non-academic outcomes and impacts were derived.

Telephone interviews were then conducted with the organisers of the four focal events during January 2015. The purpose of the interviews was to capture details of the outcomes and impact of each of the chosen events, by paying attention to the processes and contexts that led to the impact, as well as the actual details of the impact/outcome itself. Topics covered during interviews included:

- Context and content for the event
- Key roles and relationships – who was involved? what form did the interaction between organisers and attendees take?
- Post-event outcomes – what happened next? immediate actions, contacts and use of information
- Impacts – where did it all lead? what difference did the event make in terms of conceptual, instrumental, capacity-building, attitudinal/cultural, or connective impacts⁷
- Impact pathways – how was impact achieved? processes, factors, determinants
- Key lessons learned.

This report presents findings from both the survey and the telephone interviews, and reflects on how an on-going evaluation framework might continue to document, describe

⁶ Unless stated otherwise, individual percentages have been rounded up or down to the nearest whole number. In some cases this means that percentages will sum to more or less than 100.

⁷ Meagher, L. (2013) Research impact on practice: case study analysis. Swindon: ESRC.

and understand the outcomes and impact of events funded by the ESRC's Festival of Social Science. It is important to highlight that the small sample size overall means the results are likely to be indicative of data trends, rather than conclusive. Nonetheless, the findings provide a range of qualitative and quantitative insights into the outcomes and impact of engagement work, thus building on the initial understanding developed through the data collected about the 2012 Festival, and providing the basis for further developing our understanding of data themes and trends relating to future ESRC Festivals.

2. Findings from the online survey

This section presents findings from the online survey of event organisers. A total of 59 fully completed responses were submitted via the online survey tool, indicative of a 38% response rate. The presentation of data and discussion of findings reflects the questions asked in the survey (see Appendix A).

2.1. Profile of organisers responding to the survey

We asked respondents to indicate the nature of their link with the ESRC, either as an ESRC-funded grant holder or postgraduate student, a member of staff at an ESRC-funded investment, a member of staff from a non-ESRC funded organisation, or another link.

The main survey respondents were university staff (n=55), with staff from two private sector and two voluntary sector organisations submitting survey responses. Thirty-four per cent of organisers were representing a non-ESRC funded organisation, 29% were ESRC-funded grant holders or postgraduate students, 22% were members of staff at ESRC-funded investments, whilst 15% described their link in another way.

For 56% of organisers responding to the survey, the 2013 Festival event was the first time they had taken part in an ESRC Festival of Social Science. Thirty-nine per cent of respondents had prior experience of organising ESRC Festival events: just under half of these had organised one previous event, eleven had organised two to four previous events, whilst just two had organised five or more Festival events prior to 2013. Thirty-two per cent were taking part in the 2014 Festival.

2.2. Support to run 2013 Festival events

For the 2013 Festival, organisers could apply for up to £2,000 in sponsorship from the ESRC for their event. However, the ESRC recognises that actual costs may be higher and that support 'in-kind', for example in the form of staff time and expertise, is essential to running a successful Festival event. We asked organisers to tell us whether they had received cash or in-kind support from (a) their own organisations, and (b) other, external contributors or outside organisations. We also asked them to tell us more about their experiences of support from the ESRC.

Support from own organisations

Eighty per cent of respondents reported that they had received cash or in-kind support from their own organisations. This shows a significant increase, since 2012, when 68% had received additional support from their own organisations.

Of those 47 who had received support, the majority (74%) cited 'staff time' as the key form of support offered. In addition, printing, stationery, publicity, advertising, audio-visual and

other technical input were cited by around half (55%) of these respondents as ways in which their own organisations had supported the 2013 Festival. Free venue hire (47%) and refreshments (45%) were also provided by just under half of the respondents' organisations, and three universities had offered a cash sum towards the costs of organising the events.

Support from external contributors or outside organisations

Similarly to last year, 34% (33% in 2012) of respondents said they had received support from external contributors or outside organisations. For these 20 respondents, the most frequently cited forms of in-kind support were staff time, including providing volunteers to help at the event and free venue hire or access to space. Additional forms of external support included providing refreshments or free catering, organising printing, stationery, publicity or advertising, and audio-visual or other technical input during the event. Two organisers had received significant, additional cash sums from two external contributors (one for £750, the other for £4,863) to support the costs of their 2013 Festival events.

Support from the ESRC

The ESRC provides a range of communications advice and support for organisers of Festival events. Some of this is available as online resources, whilst other advice and support is provided directly to organisers by phone or email. We asked organisers to say which forms of advice or support they had used (from a list of 11 types) to help them run their 2013 Festival event, and to indicate how helpful this advice/support had been for them. The results are presented in Figure 1.

The three key areas where organisers were most likely to seek ESRC advice and support were:

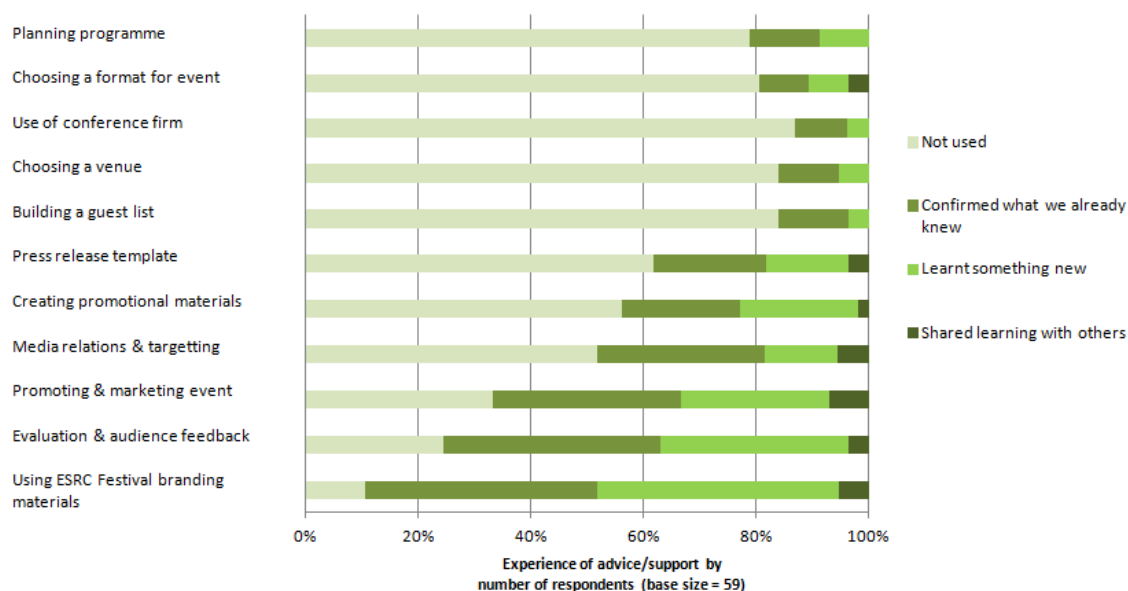
- Using ESRC and Festival identity and branding materials (85%; 90% in 2012)
- Evaluating their events and seeking feedback from audience members (73%; 83% in 2012)
- Promoting and marketing their events (64%; 60% in 2012).

Most organisers felt that the advice/support they had received from the ESRC confirmed what they already knew. However in 25-40% of cases (a slight increase on last year), organisers said that ESRC support had enabled them to learn something new or improve their current practice. A small number also indicated that they had shared their learning and/or good practice in this area with others.

Like last year, support and advice from the external communications company was the least used service: just seven organisers (12%) of the 59 responding to the online survey said they had used it, and of these, five felt the advice/support confirmed what they already knew. These findings are consistent with the ESRC's own evaluation of the 2013 Festival, which showed that just 18% of organisers who returned post-event questionnaires had drawn on

support from the external communications company⁸. As a result of this feedback, the ESRC took the decision not to offer this service to event organisers in 2014.

Figure 1: Organisers' experience of communications advice/support available from the ESRC



Despite their low uptake of most of the other forms of advice and support on offer from the ESRC, many organisers reported they had learnt something new, and in several cases this learning had been shared with others. We asked a separate question at the end of the survey to gauge organisers' interest in sharing their learning and good practice around engagement (e.g. via networking events or online fora): the majority (70%) said they would be interested to do so, either now or in the future. This is a slight decrease on last year, where 90% responded positively to this question. However the continued high proportion of those who are keen to share their learning around engagement highlights a potential area for further development; possibly something in which the ESRC might want to take a lead in the future.

Many organisers offered additional comments, in other sections of the survey, about their overall experience of support from the ESRC. These comments were overwhelmingly positive, and are set out below:

"Thank you for your on-going support."

"I fully support this initiative, and am extremely grateful to the ESRC for enabling it. I am saddened that for personal reasons I wasn't able to apply to hold an event this year [2014], but I'm already excited about doing so again next year."

⁸ ESRC (2013) ESRC Festival of Social Science: 2013 Evaluation. Swindon: ESRC.
http://www.esrc.ac.uk/_images/Evaluation-of-Festival-of-Social-Science-2013_tcm8-31723.pdf

“It is an excellent vehicle to undertake events on small amounts of money.”
“The Festival of Social Science offers us a great opportunity to link with the public, academics and institutions which work in [our area]. Without this umbrella of support we'd find it very difficult to do such a good job.”

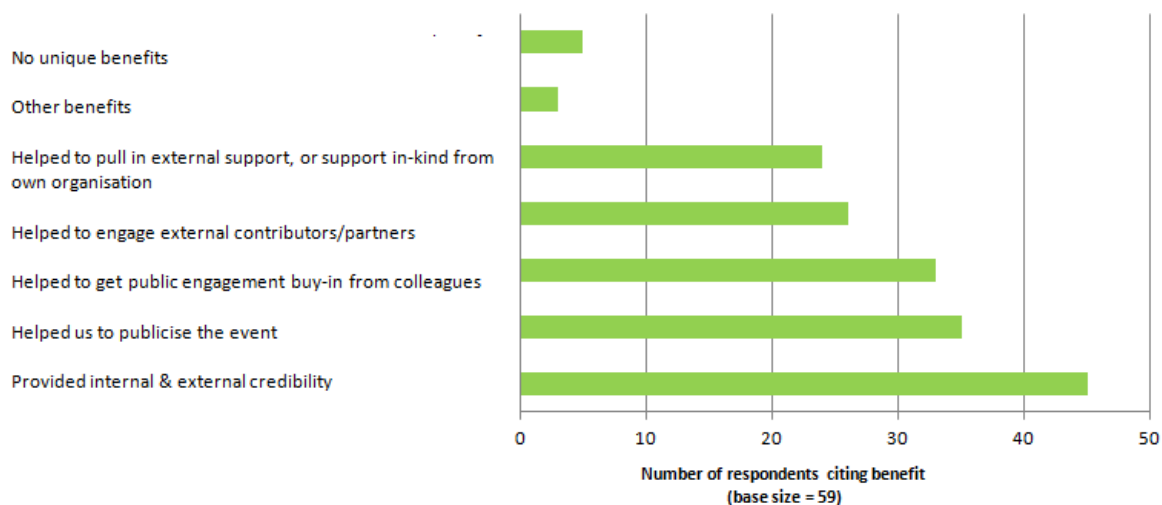
“Many thanks for the opportunity it afforded.”

“It has been a privilege to be part of the Festival since its conception and we are very proud to have been involved in it over the years.”

Benefits of being part of an ESRC-branded event

We asked organisers if there were any specific benefits associated with organising an ESRC-branded event as part of the 2013 Festival of Social Science. Only five people said there were none. For almost all organisers, running an event that was part of a wider ESRC initiative had a range of significant benefits, as illustrated by Figure 2.

Figure 2: Benefits of being part of an ESRC-branded event



Seventy-six per cent (90% in 2012) of organisers felt that the ESRC brand provided internal and external credibility and a further 59% (75% in 2012) agreed that the ESRC logo helped them to publicise their event. As one person put it:

“The ESRC brand gained a lot of respect for the event.”

Others indicated that the ESRC branding of their event was an important factor in getting buy-in from colleagues (56%), engaging external contributors and/or partners (44%) and pulling in external support or support-in kind from their own organisations (41%). The comment below sums up how one organiser used the ESRC brand as a way to support the credibility of his Institute’s multidisciplinary work with academic colleagues across a range of disciplines:

“Our Institute operates in a culture which is more focused on laboratory based medical and life sciences. Having the backing of the ESRC helps provide credibility to our work which is more grounded in the social aspects of health, well-being and participation. We work between the academic disciplines and as a multidisciplinary institute, draw from many of them. This can mean we are invisible to many academics at times. The ESRC Festival of Social Science helps give us some credibility in our engagement projects.”

Data from the case study interviews indicated that the ESRC brand was mainly recognised by academics. Non-academics and those working for other organisations were much less aware of the ESRC as an entity and thus the branding and logo were less likely to influence whether or not they attended events. As one of the case study respondents explained:

“The majority of people who came on the day – it [the ESRC brand] didn’t matter to them. It helped add profile within the University.”

2.3. Primary objectives for running a 2013 Festival event and the extent to which these were achieved

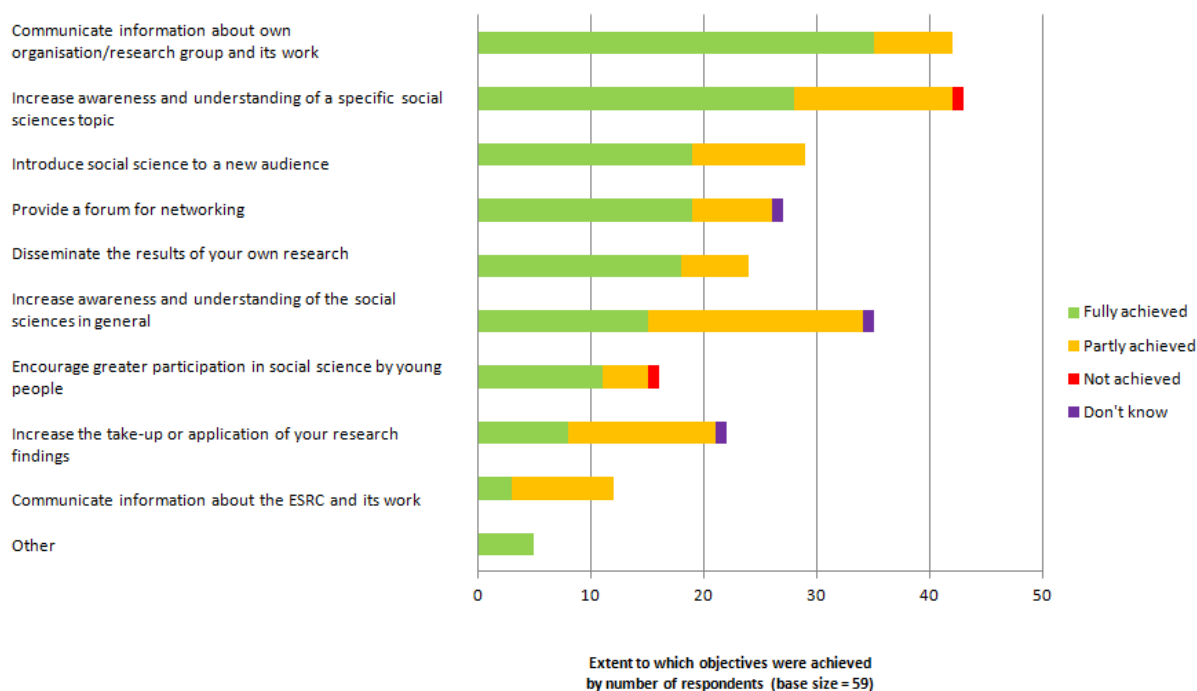
We asked organisers to indicate the primary objectives of their 2013 Festival events with reference to a list of nine options (plus ‘other’). They were also asked to state whether these objectives had been fully achieved, partly achieved or not achieved, or if unsure, to choose ‘don’t know’.

In responding to this part of the survey, a few organisers referred to feedback received from attendees either during, or after their events. It was interesting to note that some organisers appeared to have taken specific steps to collect data about the impact and outcomes of their events directly from attendees.

“The interactive workshop provided an opportunity for Third Sector participants to learn a new method for innovative problem solving over a day. This allowed an extended period to talk about the background of the work and examples of studies that illustrated key research principles and findings. Participants worked in groups to apply the model to their real world problems during the workshop. I sent a follow-up email to them a few weeks later and gathered evidence on how a few individuals had applied the learning in the workplace.”

Figure 3 presents the full findings relating to this area of the survey. Overall, 57 of the 59 organisers who responded to the survey felt that they had fully or partly achieved the objectives they had set for their 2013 Festival events. Only two people indicated that an objective had not been achieved and two did not know.

Figure 3: Primary objectives of 2013 Festival events and the extent to which objectives were achieved



The following sub-sections discuss each primary objective and the extent to which these had been achieved. For many organisers, a combination of objectives was met by their events as the following comment illustrates:

“Our event had several purposes, including communicating information about an online forum for debate/discussion of religion and public policy for researchers, practitioners, policy makers and community groups. We also disseminated our own ESRC/AHRC funded research at this event. We used the event to network with interested groups, and we continue to work with many of the participants in this event.”

Increasing awareness and understanding of a social science topic

Figure 3 above shows that nearly three-quarters (73%) of organisers had hoped that their events would increase awareness and understanding of a specific social science subject or topic. The ESRC’s own evaluation of the 2013 Festival⁹ also found that this objective was the most popular for event organisers.

Responses from organisers to our survey showed that in all but one case, this objective had been fully achieved or partly achieved.

⁹ ESRC (2013) ESRC Festival of Social Science: 2013 Evaluation. Swindon: ESRC.
http://www.esrc.ac.uk/_images/Evaluation-of-Festival-of-Social-Science-2013_tcm8-31723.pdf

“Good feedback from the general audience that attended the two debates suggested increased understanding and awareness of the social sciences. A group of sixth form students were involved in making a short film of the event, which included them filming and participating in debates and in interviewing speakers, providing a deep level of engagement with the subject matter. Thus the event delivered participation by young people and introduced them to social science.”

A few survey responses showed a very thoughtful and informed approach to considering whether this objective had been achieved and to the contribution their events had made to the development of debate and thinking in their area of interest.

“The focus of this event was to introduce new ways of conceptualising challenging behaviour and to reflect on how research contributes to new understandings. I have selected 'partly achieved' as much more time would be required over a number of years to develop understanding and completely change practice.”

Communicating information about the organisation or research groups and its work

Seventy-one per cent of organisers used their events to communicate information about their own organisation or research group and its work, and in all cases this objective was fully achieved or partly achieved. This objective was also the second most popular in the ESRC’s own evaluation of the 2013 Festival.

“This event was for the general public to look at wide range of research that was pertinent to National Parks and their relationship to people, so consequently we were just the facilitators for researchers and interested parties to interface with the public.”

Networking and reaching new audiences

Organisers were also keen for their events both to provide a forum for networking (46%) and to introduce social science to new audiences (51%). Several organisers provided additional information to highlight how their events had sought to reach new audiences and the extent to which this had been achieved.

“Our event did manage to engage with a non-academic audience. We had about 20 members of the public, not including staff or students, attend our event. We would have preferred more, but we were unfortunate that bad weather coincided with the event.”

“I think it is a good opportunity where a small amount of funding enables academics to reach audiences and collaborators that they normally would not normally engage with. In my case, I have developed an innovation training model based on research and the ESRC Festival funding allowed me to put an event on for free for Third Sector organisations, a group that I had not previously worked with.”

Last year, a few organisers noted that in order to reach diverse audiences, it was important to hold their events in local or community-based settings, rather than on a university campus. This point was made again this year, with several respondents also adding that they had found it helpful to have more than one event in order to engage with a broader range of attendees than previously.

“This was taking research out to a very poor community. It was a lively day and we had a lot of participatory stalls.”

“The events were well attended. Due to the different events which included both talks and creative activities it attracted a diverse audience.”

Disseminating results of research and increasing application of research findings

Forty-one per cent of organisers used their Festival events to disseminate the results of their research (40% in 2012) and 37% also felt that their Festival events had provided a means by which to increase the take-up or application of research findings (27% in 2012). This is a higher proportion than those who cited these objectives last year and may be evidence of increasing levels of expertise in engagement activities.

“Communicating our academic work to a non-academic audience in a way that was relevant really helped us to focus on how we present the messages of our studies. It has prompted us to think about our other research work and how we engage people in application / discussion of our findings and ideas. Really, academic papers are... the start of a longer process of dissemination and engagement.”

“Drawing on our research, we explained how social science can help us understand the world we're a part of and how it can help us see things differently - the results of the exercises undertaken by students demonstrated these features (as did their comments explaining how they engaged with the tasks).”

Encouraging greater participation in social science by young people

Around a quarter of events (27%; 23% in 2012) aimed specifically to encourage greater participation in social science by young people. This year, event organisers offered significant details regarding the scope and impact of their work with children and young people, and their enthusiasm in working with this group is captured in some of the comments below:

“[The event was a] wonderful opportunity to bring social science to a new audience of primary school children and their parents. It also showcased the ability of even quite young children (10 years old) to engage in the research process which in turn impressed the policy makers in the audience.”

“We introduced young people to types of research and ways of understanding their world which were new to them and we got them to participate in a few ideas during the sessions. Therefore we increased their awareness and understanding of social science in the areas we were considering and we introduced this type of research to a new audience. From the feedback this encouraged many of them to feel empowered to participate both as subjects and researchers; we cannot claim that they were all so empowered so it was not fully achieved. We only introduced them to a very small part of our own research - only one of the ways in which we interacted with them was about our own work.”

“Six children were involved as co-researchers in developing a new Children's Rights Questionnaire. The questionnaire was piloted in a [national] survey, and the six children presented the findings to an audience of their peers, parents, teachers, academics and policy makers. This ensured the findings of the survey were disseminated, the six children were introduced to questionnaire design, data analysis and dissemination and the audience of children in the school were made aware of the work of researchers within the social sciences; all objectives were fully achieved.”

Communicating information about the ESRC and its work

There were fewest examples of events which aimed to communicate information about the ESRC and its work (20%; 23% in 2012), although a small number of people referred to the ESRC's publicity materials as helpful in this respect.

“The flyers for 2013 were really well designed and were eye catching and admired by our event partners.”

2.4. Other outcomes of running a 2013 Festival event

Organisers were asked to indicate whether there were any other significant outcomes of running a 2013 Festival event in terms of:

- Relationships with external contributors or attendees
- Relationships within their own organisations
- Development of engagement skills
- Impact on research and teaching.

Results from the online survey showed that around half felt their events had both strengthened existing relationships and helped to create new relationships with external contributors or attendees. Many organisers also indicated that relationships within their own organisations had increased and strengthened through work for the 2013 Festival event. Two thirds of organisers said that their events had provided a supportive environment for developing engagement skills and many agreed that the events had made a significant impact on research and teaching activities in a variety of ways. These results will now be explored in more detail in the sub-sections that follow.

Relationships with external contributors or attendees

We asked organisers if their 2013 Festival events had helped to create new relationships with either external contributors and/or attendees. Fifty-four per cent of organisers indicated that new relationships had been forged with external contributors and another 66% felt new links had been created with attendees. One organiser explained that one attendee had gone onto set up a mental health service user group in response to the event, so creating further opportunities for new relationships with potential attendees for future events.

In addition, organisers reported that their involvement in the event had helped to strengthen existing relationships with external contributors (63%) and with attendees (51%). The quote below is evidence of how one 2013 Festival event helped to both strengthen an existing relationship with an external contributor and to create new relationships with possible future collaborators.

“We built a relationship with a contact at a site of the city’s FE College - this year (2014) we will return to this site, but we have also been contacted by teachers from different sites of the College who want us to run sessions for their students (outside the Festival of Social Science so we’ll fund them through another route) based on the positive reviews we got at the first site.”

A further 8% explained that there were other outcomes in terms of relationships with external contributors or attendees which included follow-on events and publications, invitations to speak at other conferences or meetings, joint applications for further grant funding and continued research partnerships between organisers and external contacts:

“The seminar provided a forum for further discussion and collaboration on legal services in rural areas, and enabled us to reach out to the local legal community. As a result further events have been organised, and some of the papers presented will be published in late 2014.”

“I was invited to deliver plenary presentation and a workshop at leading charity conference in the area in which we work.”

“[External contributing organisation] was in a stronger position to subsequently secure Arts Council funding to continue to develop and perform the play. This is in partnership with [two universities] who were the originators of the research on which the play was developed.”

“The event informed a EU representation in the UK funded project looking at how UK youth connect with the EU. Both studies then led onto the EU application currently under evaluation investigating how EU youth connect with EU institutions and values.”

“The school [external contributor] subsequently became involved in other research and hosted a second event examining survey findings on internet bullying.”

Relationships within their own organisations

In terms of relationships within their own organisations, 85% of organisers said that the event had helped to raise the profile of their research internally.

“Although time consuming, this was a very valuable event. It has encouraged considerable support for this area of research within the University, generated a great deal of media coverage, and has informed subsequent research project activity. We are now seeking to develop the play into a film. The feedback from participants was very encouraging - one person with dementia stated emphatically that 'everyone single person with dementia in Scotland needs to see this play'. We will endeavour to achieve this!!”

Just over half of the organisers responding to the survey also felt that the 2013 Festival event had helped to raise their own personal profile:

“It was a very good opportunity to develop professionally and to take on a new challenge. It did engage young people with the University, contemporary issues and high-profile social science research.”

A further 39% added that the event had helped to bring about new connections with other staff within their own organisation.

“I think more people within the Institute will be interested in taking part in public engagement following this event”.

A few respondents noted other outcomes in this area including increased inter-disciplinary working and more networking across social science departments.

Development of engagement skills

Sixty-three per cent of organisers felt that their 2013 Festival event had provided a supportive environment in which to develop and practise skills in organising engagement events.

“The event provided an opportunity for social scientists from three universities to engage in debate and conversation with a general audience. Both in the chaired debates and in being interviewed by young people they gained first-hand experience of public engagement, in particular in communicating their ideas to a non-specialist audience.”

Although this is a less significant proportion than last year (88% in 2012), responses to the online survey continue to provide evidence of the impact that the Festival is having on the development of engagement skills, particularly amongst junior researchers and university-based academics. Additionally, this finding may also be reflective of improved engagement skills overall amongst organisers.

The role of the Festival in supporting organisers to develop skills in this area was further evidenced by the half to two-thirds who indicated that:

- Their 2013 event was a space to try out a new approach or technique to communicating social science research (63%; 63% in 2012)
- They used information gained from, or developed for, the 2013 Festival event to inform the content and delivery of other engagement events (61%; 62% in 2012)
- The event was an opportunity to develop new resources to make their research accessible to non-academic audiences (56%; 62% in 2012)

Similarly to last year, a number of organisers also made reference to the role that the Festival played in providing a supportive environment for early-career researchers, or post-graduate research students, to develop engagement skills:

“Junior researchers designed activities for young people to communicate about their work and social sciences.”

“We had a number of volunteers who had never done this kind of engagement before. They found the event challenging and informative.”

“Doctoral researchers participated in a cross social science public event; this was a really good career development opportunity.”

Fewer organisers than last year reported using the event as a platform for increased media coverage (including social media) of a social science issue or topic (24%; 33% in 2012). Similarly, a limited number of organisers (37%; 35% in 2012) had made resources relating to the event available online after the Festival. Last year, we suggested that if the ESRC wishes the Festival to have broader impact, organisers and/or their institutions may benefit from more encouragement to engage with social media and other mainstream media outlets, and to create post-event online resources. The survey findings indicate that this recommendation is still valid and it will be interesting to see if there is any significant change in impact in this area as a result of engagement in the 2014 Festival.

Impact on research and teaching

We asked organisers about the extent to which 2013 Festival events had an impact on their research and teaching activities. A large number of respondents indicated that events had provided an insight into the impact of their research on a non-academic audience (80%; 60% in 2012). A further 54% of organisers felt that their 2013 events had provided a chance to explore the relationship between research and practice (70% in 2012).

Like last year, a large proportion of organisers felt that their 2013 Festival events had been the catalyst for the creation of new knowledge and ideas. For example, 39% (55% in 2012) felt that their events had generated new research questions or ideas, or, had provided the conditions for generating new research funding applications (22%; 25% in 2012).

“Excellent event which attracted industry and academia discussions about collaborations and as a result a PhD was partly funded by industry.”

“Some of the conceptual thinking behind the structure of the event informed a successful bid to ESRC secondary data analysis programme, focussing on the cycles of presentation, interpretation and representation of 'data'.”

A few organisers (13%; 20% in 2012) said that the events had provided opportunities to collect new, primary data from participants in relation to a specific research question or topic. More organisers than last year (25%; 10% in 2012) said that the events had also provided a platform for piloting a research tool or technique.

A significant number of organisers had again used the Festival as an opportunity to trial existing research and teaching materials, or to develop new ones. For example, 30% of respondents (35% in 2012) said they had used the event to obtain feedback on outputs aimed at non-academic audiences, and 34% had used information gained from, or developed for, the 2013 Festival event to inform teaching and other work with students (35% in 2012).

“We provided the teaching staff at a local FE College with teaching packs and guidance (teaching notes) so that if they wanted to repeat the session without us there then they could do so confidently.”

In 2012, just four organisers said their event had been part of an impact case study for the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF 2014)¹⁰; this number had grown to 10 for those involved in the 2013 Festival. Two organisers also said that they had referred to their 2013 Festival events in funding applications, as evidence of their engagement expertise and of the potential impact of their work on diverse audiences:

“We used the event as evidence of our expertise, in funding applications to RCUK entities and other organisation; also [we highlighted] the role our events played in leading Aberdeen to be a regional partner for Festival of Social Science 2014.”

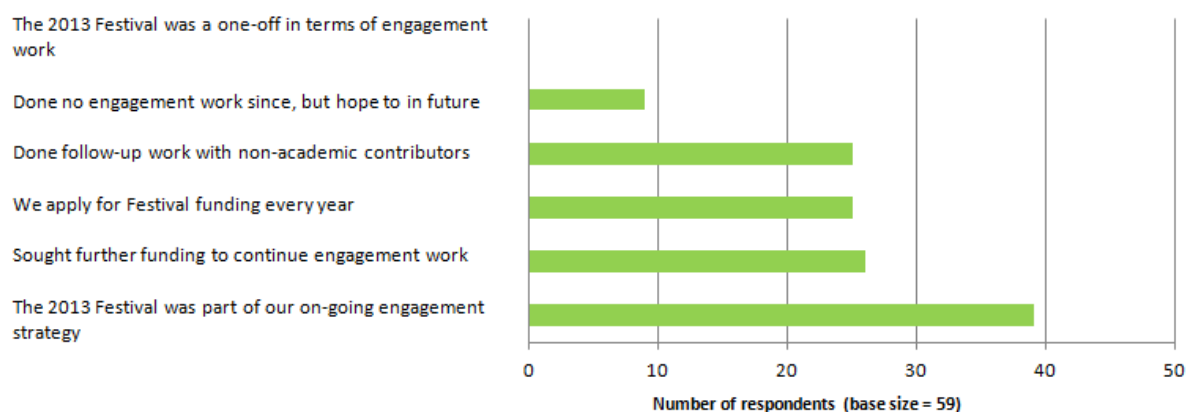
2.5. The contribution of the 2013 Festival to the field of social science engagement

We asked respondents to indicate the extent to which their 2013 Festival event was part of their broader engagement work. In the same way as last year, we wanted to find out more about how the ESRC Festival is contributing to the field of social science engagement. We provided organisers with a list of ways to describe the current relationship between their

¹⁰ <http://www.ref.ac.uk/>

2013 event and their current engagement strategy, ranging from the event being a ‘one-off’ to it being an ‘important part’ of their on-going engagement strategy. Their responses to this question are presented in Figure 4.

Figure 4: The extent to which 2013 Festival events were part of respondents’ broader social science engagement work



In the same way as last year, Figure 4 shows that not one organiser described their 2013 Festival event as a one-off and that all were intending to do more social science engagement work, in some form. Fifteen per cent of organisers (20% in 2012) had not done any more social science engagement work since the 2013 Festival, but envisaged doing so in the future. Nearly half of all respondents (44%) had sought further funding to develop or continue engagement activities, a significant increase on the 35% of last year’s organisers who had done so. Similar to last year, 42% (45% in 2012) reported that they had conducted follow-up work with non-academic partners and contributors since the event.

Like last year, two-thirds (66%; 65% in 2012) of the organisers responding to the online survey described their 2013 Festival event as part of their on-going social science engagement strategy. And for 42% of all respondents (50% in 2012), not only was the ESRC Festival of Social Science an important part of their on-going engagement strategy, it was also something in which they applied to take part every year, although not all of these respondents had been successful in their applications for 2014 Festival funding.

“It was a fantastic event for our organisation and we had excellent feedback from local third sector organisations. We are disappointed to be unsuccessful for 2014 funding for the Festival.”

We also asked organisers to tell us if they had taken part in any other science or social science festivals or events in the past two years. Thirty per cent had done so, a slight increase on last year (25% in 2012) which highlights the important contribution the ESRC Festival is continuing to make, year on year, to the field of social science engagement.

There continues to be strong interest from organisers in sharing learning and good practice around engagement. When asked if they would be interested in taking part in networking events or online forums, 70% of organisers responded positively (90% did so in 2012). Given there is an appetite for increased networking, supporting the sharing of learning around engagement activity may be an area in which the ESRC could take a lead.

3. Findings from the telephone interviews: impact case studies

This section reports the findings from the telephone interviews with the four Festival events selected as impact case studies. We are grateful to each of the following organisations for giving permission for information about their 2013 Festival events to be presented in this report:

1. Peak District National Park Authority – ‘Science in the Park’
2. Queens University Belfast – ‘The Big Breakfast’
3. University of Edinburgh – ‘From Dementia to Theatre’
4. University of Sheffield – ‘A CLEAR IDEA of Innovation: how to be practically creative at work’.

Data about each event was collected via the online survey and additional telephone interviews with organisers. Specifically, event organisers were encouraged to consider the outcomes and impacts of the engagement work they had undertaken through their Festival 2013 events. Impacts are the broader or longer-term effects of outcomes resulting from an event, initiative or intervention. Building on the work of Nutley et al (2007)¹¹, the ESRC has developed a framework for conceptualising the impact of research-related activities and outputs¹². More recently, the ESRC has commissioned further work to investigate the impact of research on practice (Meagher, 2013)¹³ resulting in an expanded framework of the possible impacts of social science research, categorised as follows:

- Connectivity impacts – establishing and maintaining relationships with other members of the research, practice and policy communities
- Capacity-building impacts – transfer of people and skills across the researcher/user interface through technical and personal skills development
- Attitudinal impacts – in terms of practitioners’ attitudes to research and to academic researchers
- Conceptual impacts – contributing to understanding, informing/re-framing debates and directions in thinking
- Instrumental impacts – influencing the development of policy, practice or service provision, shaping legislation, altering behaviour.

The framework outlined above considers research impact to be a function of the interaction between the content of the research, the context for its application and the processes of user engagement (Meagher, 2013). This conceptual model underpins our analysis of the four case studies presented here and we have considered the range of impacts derived from each of the four events in terms of whether these are connective, capacity-building, attitudinal, conceptual or instrumental.

¹¹ Nutley, S., Walter, I., Davis, H. (2007) Using evidence. how research can inform public services. Bristol: Policy Press.

¹² ESRC (2011) Branching out: new directions in impact evaluation from the ESRC’s evaluation committee. Swindon: ESRC

¹³ Meagher, L. (2013) Research impact on practice: case study analysis. Swindon: ESRC.

3.1. Impact case study 1: Science in the Park

Overview and format of the event

Science in the Park was a hands-on science event for children and the general public, taking the form of an exhibition at two community-based locations on two consecutive Saturdays in November 2013. The event has run annually since 2007 and was repeated in 2014. The aim of the 2013 event was to introduce the public to some of the scientific research currently centred on the Peak District National Park. The event organiser, Chris Robinson, invited university-based and other local researchers and scientists to contribute to the event by offering interactive exhibits, such as simple science experiments, in order to illustrate the social implications of their research in the National Park. Seven universities were involved, with researchers taking part from both science and social science disciplines. Although the event was coordinated by the National Park's Learning and Discovery team, its main purpose was to showcase the science and social science research being conducted by other organisations. As such, it was a practitioner-led event, engaging with the research community and the general public.

Outcomes and impact

Key outcomes of Science in the Park included:

- Introducing science and social science research to a new audience
- Encouraging participation in social science by children and young people
- Providing a forum for networking
- Communicating information about the Peak District National Park and its research and wider work.

There was also evidence of some significant connectivity, capacity building and conceptual impacts as a result of the event and its outcomes.

In terms of **connectivity**, Chris Robinson highlighted several ways in which the event has helped to establish and maintain relationships with researchers and practitioners. Firstly, he explained that setting up the event involved making direct contact with researchers working in the National Park. There is no list or register of these, so Chris has adopted a 'snowballing' strategy: every year he sets aside time to build on his existing network of known contacts to ensure any new researchers are included in the invitation to contribute to Science in the Park. He explained that although this strategy appears to be effective, he has not found it an easy task:

"For me it is very difficult to find out who is doing work in the National Park within the universities. Every year I have to research from scratch to find out who is doing work. I contact people I know already and sometimes they pass me onto other

people doing new work. We have similar people who come year on year but also new people and the way I get hold of them can be very random.”

The event has thus provided an annual focus for maintaining existing relationships and for developing new ones with external contributors. Chris Robinson added that this has led to further engagement and connectivity on other events where researcher input is needed.

“Some people have been coming two or three years running and we now engage them on other events too, so there is knowledge spread going on.”

Interestingly, the event itself had also fostered connectivity between some of the researchers attending as contributors.

“There are good networking opportunities for us, but also for the researchers who come along to talk about their work. I’d invited two different groups: some scientists from Manchester University and some researchers from the Moors for the Future project. They ended up being side by side and they soon realised that the things they were presenting all linked together so they re-organised their tables so they could tell the whole story between them.”

In terms of **capacity-building impacts**, Chris Robinson explained that his role in the transfer of engagement skills had been as follows:

“It was an exhibition style event. All the contributors were supposed to have hands-on exhibits for children to do and I briefed them about this and told them what equipment we had they could use and how else we could support them. Some of the researchers had to think strongly about what they could do and what they could show to people: how to demonstrate what they were doing and generate a discussion and a conversation. There were some nice models made by people and the opportunity to use some of the equipment and ask questions about it – the connection was good.”

He also explained how the connections made with researchers had helped to build capacity of National Park staff in terms of expanded knowledge and new ideas for communicating scientific ideas to the public.

“There has been some spin-off from things we learnt from the academics. There was someone there who puts microchips on hairy ants – this is a great thing to tell children about – so it expanded our knowledge. Also there are things we’ve learnt that we have taken into the wider events programme. With the school outreach work it has brought in an element of rigour and opened our minds a bit. Some of the conversations I had with the scientists helped me refine the methods I use for these events.”

It was also clear that there had been some important **conceptual impacts** as a result of engagement work for and during the event. For example, one contributor had worked together with a children’s author to develop a story-telling approach to communicating

messages about climate change, thus contributing to re-framing understanding of this area of science for children and young people.

“He [the contributor] has done lots of work on climate change and how it’s linked with developing landscapes. He wanted to communicate not just the science of it but also the story telling that goes alongside the science. Him and a children’s author have already written a book and they told the stories at the event.”

3.2. Impact case study 2: The Big Breakfast

Overview and format of the event

The Big Breakfast event was a presentation by a group of 10 year old children about their involvement as co-researchers on the Kids’ Life and Times survey. Kids’ Life and Times is an annual online survey of 10 and 11 year olds in Northern Ireland to give children a voice on issues that affect their lives. In 2013, children from St Ita’s Primary School developed two new modules of questions (measures) on children’s rights and nutrition, in conjunction with staff from the Centre for Children’s Rights in the School of Education at Queen’s University Belfast. The event organiser, Katrina Lloyd, secured ESRC Festival funding to enable the children to talk about their involvement and the survey results to an audience of children, teachers, parents, academics and policy makers. The Big Breakfast event started with breakfast for participants and a performance from the school choir. The children then presented findings from the survey, talked about their involvement as researchers, and invited questions from the audience.

“The Festival application was an opportunity for the children to be involved not only in helping us develop the measures, but also to disseminate the information to their peers and the wider community.”

Outcomes and impact

Key outcomes of the Big Breakfast included:

- Introducing science and social science research to a new audience
- Encouraging participation in social science by children and young people
- Disseminating the results of research.

In addition, a number of important attitudinal, conceptual and instrumental impacts were noted as a direct result of the event and its outcomes. There were four types of **attitudinal impact** noted. Firstly, feedback from parents who attended the event highlighted that their attitudes towards allowing their children to take part in future research were very positive.

“It helped to enable parents to come to the event and hear their children present the findings– having them there really added to it – they give consent for children to take part in research and the survey so it’s really important to engage with them.”

Secondly, teachers at the school reported similarly positive attitudes towards children taking part in research as a result of the school's engagement in both the survey and the event. The head-teacher was quoted as saying that she would encourage other schools to take part in academic research. In addition, St Ita's subsequently became involved in another research project and went on to host a second event about research findings on internet bullying.

Thirdly, there were also attitudinal impacts for the policy makers who attended the event. The Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) of the Northern Ireland Executive funds some of the questions in the Kids' Life and Times survey and their officials were invited to the presentation. After the event, one of the policy makers sent an email congratulating the organisers, school and the children on the quality of the presentation and expressing surprise that the children had been able to contribute so effectively and confidently. The OFMDFM has since involved other primary school aged children in events to disseminate research findings relating to their lives.

Fourthly, it was also noted that there might be potential attitudinal impacts on the children themselves in terms of their orientation towards other research projects and in terms of a future career in research.

"We hope this will encourage take-up as respondents at age 16 for our other survey and also encourage them to think about a career as researchers."

In terms of **conceptual impacts**, Katrina Lloyd highlighted that the school's involvement in the event had contributed towards a broader understanding about how children can be involved in quantitative research.

"For me as a quantitative researcher it's had a real impact – that these 10 year old children could contribute so much –not just part of a focus group or filling in the questionnaire – but on this occasion they deigned the measures. They really understood the importance of reliability and were able to talk about it to their teachers, peers and parents."

She explained that her university department runs a master's programme on children's rights and they now use the Festival event (and the co-research work more broadly) as an example as part of their teaching units. It has also featured in conference presentations, thus further extending the reach of the conceptual impact of the work.

"We've given presentations to conferences – everyone has been very positive about the message that this is something that can be done – particularly for quantitative researchers it shows that involving children meaningfully can work."

When making new research funding applications, the department also uses the event as evidence for how children can be involved in research and as an example of an effective end of project dissemination opportunity.

“Without a doubt we will be doing this again and involving children and their parents. Being able to use this event as evidence has been tremendous.”

The event has also had some **instrumental impacts**, specifically relating to research practice. Firstly, the co-research and the Festival event have been used as a source of reference to guide discussion and decision making relating to the ethics of involving children in research by one of the University’s research ethics committees. Secondly, the success of the work with St Ita’s Primary School has led to further engagement with children to develop questions on children’s right to play. Katrina Lloyd reported that the reliability of these new measures is very strong and that further dissemination events are planned.

3.3. Impact case study 3: From Dementia to Theatre

Overview and format of the event

From Dementia to Theatre explored the process and outcome of transforming a social science research project into a professional theatre performance. The event organiser, Charlotte Clarke, had previously completed a research project where people with dementia and their family members were interviewed about their experiences of managing risk and building resilience. In partnership with Skimstone Arts (a theatre and multidisciplinary arts company), the themes from this project (concerning identify, sense of place and roles within community and society) were presented as a fictionalised performance. This play - Jack and Jill and the Red Postbox - had already premiered in March 2013 at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. The purpose of the 2013 ESRC Festival event was to perform the play again, with time for feedback and re-interpretation from audience members. People were asked to share their experiences of making sense of the play by using post-it notes to record their own interpretation of the themes and issues. In this way, the cycle of presentation, interpretation and representation between the research participants and researchers led into further interpretation and representation by Skimstone Arts, and interpretation and representation by those who participated in the ESRC Festival 2013 event. Volunteers from Alzheimer Scotland were available to talk to carers and people with dementia before and after the performance.

Outcomes and impact

Key outcomes of the event included:

- Increased awareness and understanding of dementia and its impact, in terms of changes in identity, sense of place and roles within community and society
- Opportunities for take-up or application of findings from the original research project, including how to present health and social care issues through arts.

The Festival event and its outcomes led to some significant connectivity, capacity-building and conceptual impacts that were highlighted through an interview with the event organiser.

In terms of **connectivity impacts**, the event had helped to build and develop existing and new relationships with the wider research and practice communities. The event organiser and her team already had well-established working relationships with Skimstone Arts, and also with an academic at Northumbria University, in partnership with whom the research underpinning the performance had originated. Charlotte Clarke explained that the focus of the event had helped to maintain this three-way partnership and that contact between the three organisations was very much ongoing. An example of continued partnership included an invitation to Skimstone Arts to perform the play at the 2015 British Society of Gerontology conference in Newcastle. In addition, Skimstone Arts are continuing to tour with the play, throughout Scotland and England, performing it in public theatre venues and to organisations wishing to develop their understanding of dementia. Charlotte Clarke continues to have an active involvement in this process, which involves attending performances, regular email contact and meetings with Skimstone Arts. The connection with Alzheimer Scotland has also been maintained and developed since the Festival event:

“Alzheimer Scotland helped to support the ESRC event and performances at Edinburgh fringe festival by being available to talk to carers and people with dementia before or after the performance. They sent one or two volunteers to every performance. We always make sure we have the Alzheimer Scotland or Alzheimer’s Society helpline number on every flyer and programme associated with the events.”

The event was used by the ESRC as a case study press release and this attracted attention to the work amongst several online carers’ organisations and charities. Charlotte Clarke tracked some of the online posts and discussions in reaction to the issues raised by the text of the press release. One comment, from a carer¹⁴, has been very significant in the on-going development of the work, as Charlotte explained below:

“[The press release] was picked up by a lot of online carer organisations and we were able to track people’s responses to the press release a little bit. Certainly there was a posting on the Alzheimer Society’s forum for carers which was very powerful and which I have used subsequently in presentations on dementia and also in some funding applications. So it was all very beneficial, not only to ourselves but to Skimstone Arts and I hope to participants and those able to access the press release.”

Since the ESRC Festival event, not only have Skimstone Arts continued to perform the play, but they have continued to develop and reinterpret it too. This has involved a successful bid to the Arts Council, in partnership with the Universities of Edinburgh and Northumbria. As such, this shows evidence of both **connectivity** and **capacity-building impacts**, where researchers and practitioners are working together to share and develop skills and knowledge.

¹⁴ “My mum whilst she still had some mental capacity said: ‘So what if I go out and get lost, someone will help me get home. If I walk in front of a bus so be it, let nature take its course’. We put mum’s physical safety in front of her freedom. She’s now in a care home. We felt we had no choice. ☹”

The very purpose of the event, From Dementia to Theatre, was to have a **conceptual impact** in terms of encouraging the audience to re-interpret and re-frame debates and directions in thinking around dementia. This has continued and further conceptual impacts are emerging from the ongoing work of the three partners. Firstly, funding from the University of Edinburgh is currently supporting the development of a live film of the play. This will subsequently be available as a DVD and online film, to be distributed to organisations expressing a need for education on understanding dementia, so extending the reach of the work to new audiences.

Secondly, a successful bid was made to the ESRC's secondary data analysis programme, in order to build on the methodology trialled in the Festival event. As explained above, this methodology involved a cycle of presentation, interpretation and re-presentation of data through performance and feedback. Existing qualitative data, from an evaluation of the English National Dementia Strategy led by Charlotte Clarke (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/peer-support-networks-and-dementia-advisers-evaluation>), will be re-analysed, re-interpreted and re-presented, with reference to some of the conceptual thinking behind the structure of the Festival event.

"We built a new project around the concept of the re-interpretation and re-presentation cycle. We have a huge dataset and we are going to mine the data a little more using two theoretical models. Then we will move to another phase where we will work with groups of people with dementia across England and Scotland and we will present to them what our data analysis is showing and then through a series of workshops we will ask them to interpret that data and present back to us what it means to them. We will create digital stories about how they have interpreted the data and we will then present these back to a wider audience."

Thirdly, the event organiser highlighted that publicity about the Festival event helped to raise the profile of the School of Health and Social Science (of which she is Head). The University of Edinburgh ran a lead story of its website for several weeks focussing on the role of arts-based communication and the arts-based work that staff within the School are doing. The outcome was increased communication and exchange of ideas between academic staff across the University doing arts-based work in health and social care. This led to further conceptual impacts in terms of new approaches to working with people with dementia and other health fields.

"There are other people in the School who also use arts to communicate health work and research messages. The University picked this up and ran a lead story on the Uni website for several weeks all about the arts work people in the School are doing. This was enormously profile raising for the school and encouraging for people who are using these really innovative ways of working. As a result of this, we found out more about another research group who are working with people who have used alcohol and used a method called Photovoice for working with men with alcohol related brain damage. We are exploring how this methodology could be used with people with dementia in hospital to investigate ways in which someone's sense of identity and purpose in life are reinforced during a hospital stay."

3.4. Impact case study 4: A CLEAR IDEA of Innovation: how to be practically creative at work

Overview and format of the event

A CLEAR IDEA of Innovation was a one-day interactive workshop delivered by the University of Sheffield, in conjunction with Voluntary Action Sheffield. Its purpose was to introduce the CLEAR IDEAS methodology – a systematic process for creatively generating and implementing solutions to challenges at work. CLEAR IDEAS is based on the research of Kamal Birdi from the University of Sheffield, who organised the event. He used ESRC Festival funding to design an event aimed primarily at third sector organisations, to support them to use CLEAR IDEAS to progress their real-life, work-related challenges. Each workshop participant was asked to specify in advance one work-related challenge their organisation was currently facing. During the event, 18 participants worked together in small groups to tackle four of the specified challenges.

Outcomes and impact

Key outcomes of the event included:

- Communicating information about the University of Sheffield and its research
- Increased awareness and understanding of the CLEAR IDEAS methodology and the research on which it was based
- Application of the CLEAR IDEAS model to real-world challenges.

In addition, there were some notable connectivity, capacity-building, attitudinal, conceptual and instrumental impacts for those involved in the event.

In terms of **connectivity impacts**, the event organiser, Kamal Birdi, explained that the main purpose for seeking ESRC Festival funding was to establish new connections within that sector.

“I’ve done a lot of work with private and public sector organisations but not with the third sector. The Festival event provided a chance to try this out for free and to introduce them to the process. I was looking to establish connections in that sector and I also wanted to increase my own awareness of the challenges and concerns of the third sector.”

In order to run the event effectively, Kamal worked in partnership with Voluntary Action Sheffield, who provided the venue and refreshments, and helped to advertise the event to their network of third sector organisations.

“The event was held at Voluntary Action Sheffield HQ and that really helped in terms of networks and attendance. I think if we had held it here [at the University], then attendance would have been poorer as our connections with the third sector are not as strong. I drafted invitations and flyers and they sent them out to their networks.”

It was good to work with an organisation which has an established network and presence and can reach people who are likely to have an interest and will actually turn up!”

This partnership approach was key to the success of the Festival event and to ongoing connectivity with other third sector organisations.

“It’s helped in terms of credibility with that sector. We’ve built up a good level of trust and I know I can go back to them if I need to. I have done some work with other charities since the Festival event and it’s been nice to be able to say I have worked in this sector and I’m aware of the challenges they have and the unique things they bring.”

In terms of **capacity-building impact**, this Festival event was itself an opportunity for the transfer of skills and knowledge from research to practice. However this impact could be on-going via an iPad app that Kamal Birdi has recently developed based on the CLEAR IDEAS model. The app allows a user to input their particular work-based challenge and then be guided through the different stages of the process to find a creative solution. The intention is for the app to be publicised to all previous workshop participants as well as more generally, potentially increasing the reach of its capacity-building impact.

The CLEAR IDEAS event also appeared to have an impact in **attitudinal terms**. The link between research and practice was exemplified by a technique which had the potential to make a difference to the everyday working lives of the third sector practitioners who attended the event.

“It’s the first time that anyone had ever heard of the ESRC. I did cover social sciences and the ESRC and it gave the message that research doesn’t just come out of anywhere. Badging the event as part of a national festival, rather than just a university run one-off event, this really helped people to understand the purpose of social science research and how it can relate to people’s lives.”

In addition to connectivity, capacity-building and attitudinal impacts, there were also some significant **conceptual impacts**. The organiser explained that his own knowledge and understanding of third sector issues had increased, as practitioners attending the event shared their work-related challenges and provided post-event feedback on how solutions had been implemented. These stories and comments helped to inform further conceptualisation and to stimulate new directions for thinking and research.

“By getting people to give you comments and stories and point out issues, you do get more ideas about other things to follow up. So one thing I’m looking at now is collaboration between organisations around innovation.”

They have also provided case-study material for illustrating lectures and teaching sessions with students and other practitioners.

“I’ve used examples and stories from the workshop to put research into practice for students. I teach them about innovation so one thing is to tell them more widely about working with organisations and what they might expect.”

This Festival event appeared to have generated some **instrumental impacts** in terms of influencing the practice and altering the behaviour of some of the people who attended, albeit at a local level. A few weeks after the event, the organiser contacted each of the participants to seek information about any further impacts. Their replies gave details of some of the changes made to practice and behaviour since the Festival event, and included:

- Changes to the use of office space at one charity
- Alterations to a popular fundraising event to make it more cost-effective
- Continued use of the CLEAR IDEAS technique by participants themselves, and with other colleagues, to stimulate creative thinking and generate solutions
- Improvements in the diversity of trustees on the Board of one charity.

Finally, it is worth noting that the event organiser is planning another CLEAR IDEAS event for the 2015 Festival, this time targeted at international aid and development agencies. He believes that the contextual knowledge gained from working with third sector organisations as part of the 2013 Festival has been invaluable in helping to plan for the 2015 event.

4. Conclusions

This report has presented the findings of an online survey and a series of telephone interviews to explore and document the outcomes and impact of the ESRC's Festival of Social Science 2013. In doing so, this small-scale research project has further developed the methodology used for collecting impact data from organisers of ESRC Festival events¹⁵. Data were collected solely from the perspective of organisers; attendees were not asked to contribute direct feedback

4.1. The outcomes and impact of the 2013 Festival from the perspective of organisers: summary of key findings from the online survey

The research has documented a wide range of outcomes and impacts for organisers and others as a result of their involvement in the 2013 Festival. Findings from the online survey indicated there have been quantifiable learning and benefits in the following areas

- **Impact on relationships with external contributors or attendees** – Just over half the organisers surveyed said that their events had helped to create new relationships, or to strengthen existing relationships with external contributors and attendees.
- **Impact on organisers' relationships within their own organisations** – Eighty-five per cent of organisers said that the event had helped to raise the profile of their research internally. Around half of organisers also felt the event had helped to raise their own personal profile and 39% said it had brought about new connections with other staff within their own organisation. A few organisers noted other outcomes in this area including increased inter-disciplinary working and more networking across social science departments.
- **Impact on development of engagement skills** – Two thirds of organisers felt that their 2013 Festival event had provided a supportive environment in which to develop and practise skills in organising engagement events. Specifically, many organisers described how their events had provided a space to try out a new resource and/or a new way of communicating with non-academic audiences. Many organisers explained that they had used the information gained from, or developed for, the 2013 Festival event to inform the content and delivery of other engagement events. Very few organisers had used the event as a platform for increased media coverage of a social science issue or topic, or had made resources relating to the event available online after the 2013 Festival. Similarly to last year's findings, a number of organisers highlighted the role that the Festival played in providing a supportive

¹⁵ Townsley, R. (2013) ESRC Festival of Social Science 2012: An investigation into the outcomes and impact of the Festival from the perspective of organisers. Swindon: ESRC.
http://www.esrc.ac.uk/_images/Festival_2012_%20Evaluation_of_Impact_and_Outcomes_tcm8-31254.pdf

environment for early-career researchers, or post-graduate research students, to develop engagement skills.

- **Impact on research and teaching** – A large number of organisers (80%) said that their 2013 Festival events had provided an insight into the impact of their research on a non-academic audience. Around half also felt that the event had been a good opportunity to explore the relationship between research and practice. One third of organisers agreed that their events had generated new research questions or ideas for further research, whilst 20% said that events had helped to generate new research funding applications. Some organisers had used the event as a forum for collecting new, primary data from participants, or for trialling new or existing research and teaching materials. A few organisers had referred to the event as part of an impact case study for the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (n=10) or as part of a funding application (n=2).
- **Contribution of the ESRC Festival to the field of social science engagement** - Two-thirds of organisers responding to the online survey described their 2013 Festival event as an important part of their on-going social science engagement strategy and 42% explained that as such, they applied to take part in the ESRC Festival every year. Thirty per cent of organisers reported having taken part in other science or social science festivals or events in the past two years. These findings highlight the essential contribution the ESRC Festival is continuing to make, year on year, to the field of social science engagement.

Data from the telephone interviews showed evidence of the following types of impact resulting from the four events included as case studies:

- **Connectivity impacts** – the events helped to build and develop new and established relationships with wider research, practice and policy communities.
- **Capacity-building impacts** – the events provided opportunities for researchers and practitioners to work together to share and develop skills and knowledge.
- **Attitudinal impacts** – discussion with organisers highlighted examples of positive changes in attitude towards research and academic researchers from practitioners, policy makers, children and the wider public.
- **Conceptual impacts** – the events contributed towards a broader understanding of specific topics and methodologies, and helped to inform and re-frame debates and directions in thinking.
- **Instrumental impacts** – the events helped to guide further discussions and decision making about the social science topic and in some cases led to further engagement work. There was also some evidence that the events had influenced the practice and altered behaviour of some of those who had taken part, as organisers or attendees, although further investigation is needed to confirm the extent and nature of these instrumental impacts.

4.2. How might the ESRC continue to assess the outcomes and impact of events funded by the Festival of Social Science?

This research used two methods of data collection to explore and document the outcomes and impact of the ESRC's Festival of Social Science 2013. Firstly, the 2012 online survey tool was updated and amended for use with 2013 Festival organisers. Similarly to last year, the survey delivered a range of mostly quantitative findings relating to key areas of outcome and impact for organisers. Responses to the survey indicate that all questions were well-received and well-understood. The response rate of 38% improved upon last year's response rate of 24%, and met the agreed goal of a response of at least 10% over a four to six week data collection period, following reminders. Secondly, telephone interviews with a small sample of organisers provided more in-depth qualitative data, facilitating a deeper understanding of the nature of the specific impacts resulting from each of the four chosen events. This case study work made it possible to map the nature of impacts achieved and the processes and mechanisms through which they were generated.

If the ESRC wishes to undertake similar research in relation to the 2014 Festival, it may be helpful to consider some of the following adjustments to the existing methodology:

- The overall sample size is small - personalised emails may help to improve the response rate for the online survey
- One year post-event may be too long for full recall of all outcomes – running the survey six to nine months post-event may help to boost the response rate and recall
- An additional online survey could be developed for attendees to further build the evidence base of wider outcomes and impacts of Festival events
- It would be useful to consider more synthesis of the data collected by survey and by interview, particularly in terms of harmonised research tools and more clearly linked analysis and reporting. This was not possible for the 2013 Festival data, but should be achievable, if desired, for any future evaluation of outcomes and impact.

To conclude, the methodology used by this research has contributed towards an on-going understanding of the outcomes and impact of events funded by the ESRC's Festival of Social Science. As already explained, it is important to highlight that the small sample size overall means the results are likely to be indicative of data trends, rather than conclusive. Nonetheless, the findings provide a range of qualitative and quantitative insights into the outcomes and impact of engagement work, thus building on the initial understanding developed through the data collected last year about the 2012 Festival, and providing the basis for further developing our understanding of data themes and trends relating to future ESRC Festivals.

Appendix A Text used in the online survey

2013 ESRC Festival of Social Science - outcomes and impact

We are inviting you to complete this short online survey to help the ESRC understand more about the outcomes and impact of the 2013 Festival of Social Sciences. Your views and input are very important to us and will help us to make decisions about the strategic direction and sustainability of the Festival in the longer-term.

The questionnaire can be fully completed in about 10 minutes. You can pause and resume the survey at any time by clicking on the 'resume later' button. When you return, you can resume by clicking on the 'load unfinished survey' button at the bottom of this page.

Please be assured that any information you provide will be treated as confidential and stored securely. No findings will be made attributable to any individual or organisation responding to this survey.

1. What is your institution or organisation name?
2. What is your link with the ESRC? (please select one):
 - I am a member of staff at an ESRC-funded investment (research centre/programme)
 - I am an ESRC-funded grant holder/postgraduate student
 - I am representing an non-ESRC funded organisation
 - Other
3. What is the name of the event you organised as part of the 2013 Festival of Social Science?
4. Did you receive any cash or in-kind support from your organisation?
 - Yes – please tell us the type of support you received (please tick all that apply)
 - Staff time
 - Venue hire
 - Refreshments/catering
 - Cash sum (please specify value)
 - Printing/stationery/publicity/advertising
 - AV/technical support/recording
 - Other (please explain)
 - No

5. Did you receive any cash or in-kind support to organise the 2013 Festival event from external contributors?

Yes

Who was this external contributor?

Please tell us the type of support you received (please tick all that apply)

- Staff time
- Venue hire
- Refreshments/catering
- Cash sum (please specify value)
- Printing/stationery/publicity/advertising
- AV/technical support/recording
- Other (please explain)

No

6. *Add another contributor*

Who was this external contributor?

Please tell us the type of support you received (please tick all that apply)

- Staff time
- Venue hire
- Refreshments/catering
- Cash sum (please specify value)
- Printing/stationery/publicity/advertising
- AV/technical support/recording
- Other (please explain)

7. What were the primary objectives of your 2013 Festival event? (please tick all that apply)

- To communicate information about the ESRC and its work
- To communicate information about your own organisation/research group and its work
- To increase awareness and understanding of the social sciences in general
- To increase awareness and understanding of a specific social science subject or topic
- To encourage greater participation in social science by young people
- To introduce social science to a new audience
- To increase the take-up or application of your research findings (i.e. research into practice)
- To disseminate the results of your own research
- To provide a forum for networking
- Other primary objective (please state)

8. To what extent do you feel these objectives were achieved?

Objectives	Fully achieved	Partly achieved	Not achieved	Don't know
<i>List will populate automatically from answers ticked above.</i>	○	○	○	○

If possible, please briefly explain the reasons for these assessments.

9. Were there any other significant outcomes in terms of relationships with external contributors or attendees?

- Organising the event helped to create new relationships with external contributors
- Organising the event helped to create new relationships with attendees
- Organising the event helped to strengthen existing relationships with external contributors
- Organising the event helped to strengthen existing relationships with attendees
- There were other outcomes in terms of relationships with external contributors or attendees (please explain what these were)

10. And in terms of relationships within your own organisation?

- The event helped to bring about new connections within my organisation
- The event helped to raise the profile of my/our research within my organisation
- The event helped to raise my own personal profile within my organisation
- There were other outcomes in terms of relationships within my own organisation (please explain what these were)

11. And in terms of the development of engagement skills?

- The event provided a supportive environment in which to develop and practise skills in organising engagement events
- The event was a space to try out a new approach or technique to communicating social science research
- We have used information gained from, or developed for, the 2013 Festival event to inform the content and delivery of other engagement events
- The event was an opportunity to develop new resources to make our research accessible to non-academic audiences
- The event provided a platform for getting media coverage of a social science issue or topic

- After the 2013 Festival, resources relating to the event were made available online
 - There were other outcomes in terms of the development of engagement skills (please explain what these were)
12. And finally, in terms of contributions to your research, teaching or non-academic impact?
- The event provided an insight into the impact of our research on a non-academic audience
 - The event provided a chance to explore the relationship between research and practice
 - The event provided a platform for piloting a research tool or technique (for example, trialling a set of questions, trying out a participatory technique for involving young people in research, etc)
 - The event was an opportunity to collect primary data from participants in relation to a specific research question or topic
 - We used the event to obtain feedback on research materials and outputs aimed at non-academic audiences
 - The event generated new research questions, or ideas for further research
 - The event helped to provide the conditions for generating new research funding applications
 - We referred to the event as part of an impact case study for the REF
 - We have used information gained from, or developed for, the 2013 Festival event to inform teaching and other work with students
 - There were other outcomes in terms of the event's impact on research and teaching (please explain what these were)
13. Were there other outcomes that have not been mentioned (please explain what these were)?

14. The ESRC provides a range of communications advice and support for organisers of Festival events. Some of this is available as online resources, whilst other advice and support is provided directly to organisers by phone or email. Please rate your experience of advice and support from the ESRC to organise your 2013 Festival event.

Communications advice and support available from ESRC	Not used	Advice/support was unhelpful	Advice/support confirmed what I already knew	Advice/support enabled me to learn something new or improve my current practice	I have shared my learning and/or good practice in this area with others
Choosing a format for your event	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Planning the programme and booking speakers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Selecting and booking a venue	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Building a guest list	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Creating event-specific promotional materials	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Using ESRC and Festival identity and branding materials	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Promoting and marketing the event	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Media relations and targeting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Press release template	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Evaluating the event and audience feedback	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use of a conference firm (Vista Communications)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please state)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

15. Have you organised any Festival of Social Science events in previous years?
- No, this was the first Festival event we organised
 - Yes
 - 2012
 - 2011
 - 2010
 - 2009
 - 2008
 - 2007
16. To what extent was your 2013 Festival event part of your broader social science engagement work? (please tick all that apply)
- The 2013 Festival event was a one-off and we don't intend to do any more social science engagement work at present
 - We haven't done any more social science engagement work since the 2013 Festival, but we envisage doing so in the future
 - Since the event, we have conducted follow-up work with non-academic partners and contributors
 - Since the event, we have sought further funding to develop or continue engagement activities
 - The 2013 Festival event was part of our on-going social science engagement strategy
 - The ESRC Festival of Social Science is an important part of our on-going engagement strategy and we apply to take part every year
17. Have you taken part in any other science or social science festivals or events in the past two years?
- No
 - Yes – please tell us which ones.
18. Are you taking part in the 2014 Festival?
19. Did being part of an ESRC-branded event bring any of the following benefits?
- The ESRC brand provided internal and external credibility
 - The ESRC logo helped us to publicise an event
 - The ESRC brand helped to get public engagement buy-in from colleagues
 - The ESRC brand helped to engage external contributors and/or partners
 - The ESRC brand helped to pull in external support, or support in-kind from our organisation
 - Being associated with the ESRC brand helped in other ways (please explain)
 - There were no unique benefits in being part of an ESRC-branded event.

20. Would you be interested in sharing learning and good practice in doing engagement work (e.g. via a networking event or online forum)?
- No
 - Yes
 - Don't know
 - Not right now, but I might do in the future
21. Could we contact you to follow-up your answers in more detail?
- No
 - Yes – please provide a contact name and email address
22. Do you have anything else you would like to say about the ESRC Festival of Social Science?
- No
 - Yes – please write your extra thoughts here.

Thank-you very much for completing this survey.

[Options to submit, print and/or save responses]

Appendix B Topic guide used for telephone interviews

1. Could you provide an overview of the format of the event, who was involved, and what you hoped it would achieve?

2. In terms of cash or in-kind support from your organisation towards the 2013 Festival event, you said that you received ...

 Could you please say a little more about what this involved?

3. *[If relevant]* And I understand that you received ... support from external contributors. Could you tell us more about this?

4. You said that the primary objectives of your 2013 Festival event were ...
 - Thinking about the first of these ... You said that you felt you had [partly/fully] achieved it. Could you explain the reasons for this assessment?
 - Thinking about the second...
 - Third, and so on.

5. Thinking about the impact of your event in terms of relationships with external contributors or attendees... you said that organising the event helped to create or strengthen relationships with ...
 - How did these relationships come about?
 - How have they developed since the 2013 event?
 - Have there been any new or extra outcomes in terms of relationships with external contributors or attendees since then?

6. In terms of relationships within your own organisation, you said that ...
 - How did these relationships/other outcomes come about and develop?
 - How have they developed since the 2013 event?
 - Have there been any new or extra outcomes in terms of relationships within your own organisation since then?

7. In terms of the development of engagement skills, you said that ...
 - Could you explain how this came about?
 - How have these things developed since the 2013 event?
 - Have there been any new or extra outcomes in terms of development of engagement skills since then?

8. Thinking about the impact of your event in terms of contributions to your research, teaching or non-academic impact, you said that ...
 - Could you explain more about how this came about?
 - How have these things developed since the 2013 event?
 - Have there been any new or extra outcomes in terms of contributions to your research, teaching or non-academic impact?

9. *[If relevant]* I note that you felt there were other outcomes as a result of your 2013 event – particularly that ...
 - Could you explain how this came about?
 - How has this developed since the 2013 event?
 - Have there been any new or extra outcomes?
10. The survey asked about how your 2013 Festival event contributed to your broader social science engagement work, and you said that ...
 - Do you feel we have already covered this, or is there anything else you would like to add?
11. You said that being part of an ESRC-branded event brought the following benefits ...
 - Could you explain more about this?
 - Have there been any new or extra outcomes as a result?
12. And finally, what would you highlight as the most significant outcome of your 2013 Festival event?
 - What do you think were the key things that led to this outcome?
 - What advice would you give to other event organisers wanting to achieve a similar outcome as a result of their Festival events?
13. Do you have anything else you would like to say about the ESRC Festival of Social Science?