

# Valuation of the economic impact of social science: pilot study - summary

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## Introduction

ESRC evaluates the quality and impact of its research investments and operates a well-developed system for evaluating academic quality and impact. In recent years, it has developed qualitative and quantitative approaches to assessing policy, practice and business impacts<sup>1</sup>. Many of these have used ‘tracking-forward’ assessments<sup>2</sup>, and in-depth ‘tracking-back’ case studies have also been trialled to identify social science impacts<sup>3</sup>. A recent study has also examined the scope for combining these methods to better gauge non-academic impacts from major ESRC economics investments<sup>4</sup>.

In January 2015, the ESRC asked The Carnegie Faculty at Leeds Beckett University (LBU) to carry out a pilot study to explore suitable methodologies for quantifying impact to inform the development of an on-going programme of work. This is ESRC’s summary of their report, which has been agreed with the authors.

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<sup>1</sup> Three syntheses of the ESRC’s impact evaluation work to date are available on the ESRC website for: *Cultivating Connections*, *Taking Stock* and *Branching Out*. See: <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/research/evaluation-and-impact/analysis-and-scoping/>

<sup>2</sup> Typically using a mixture of primary and secondary evidence to review the evolving impact experiences of researcher and engaged users.

<sup>3</sup> Focused on specific outcomes such as policy changes put in place, new policy measures or practices implemented so as to identify and review distinctive social science inputs to impact processes and achieved effects.

<sup>4</sup> Parsons D J, Thomas R, Strange I and Walsh K (2014). *Evaluating the Impact of ESRC’s Economic Centres*. Economic and Social Research Council (Evaluation Committee), March 2014. See: <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/research/evaluation-and-impact/policy-practice-and-business-impacts-evaluation-studies/>

The study was intensive, conducted over two and a half months, with the overall aim of identifying methodologies that might be further developed to support on-going valuation and/or other quantification of appropriate examples of the impact of social science. More specific objectives were to:

1. Identify and assess the actual or potential economic impact of the research and related activities on policy, public services, businesses and other users outside academia
2. Apply appropriate valuation techniques to calculate values for the identified economic impacts that can be attributed to the project
3. Present the results of the economic assessment within the context of the pathways through which impacts have been generated.

Applying the findings and evidence from 1) to 3), the study has also sought to identify lessons for ESRC and others for future development and application of economic impact evaluations.

## **Conceptual approach**

The pilot study's emphasis was to find practical approaches to measuring the value of impacts which were balanced to the circumstances of project-based impact evaluation.

The study was focused on the economic value of impacts from social science research and knowledge exchange to policy, public services, industry and commerce or other areas outside academia. Its particular focus was on the scope for measuring and assessing the economic value of identified impacts in monetary terms; although the study also took account of wider aspects of impact quantification which could not be monetised.

The study needed to:

- update past impacts to provide for an accurate picture
- account for any spill-over effects, alongside any unintended consequences, which may have subsequently been apparent to users and which might substantially extend the value achieved from the initial social science contributions
- develop indicators of value according to the particular circumstances of each impact example.

The study adopted a flexible method which could accommodate all of these elements. Using the principles of cost-benefit analysis<sup>5</sup> (CBA) as a starting point, the consultants designed a 'primary valuation' approach which could take account of the very different contexts in which the selected examples took place, and the expected data limitations. The methodology identified context-specific 'primary' indicators which were relevant to each case study, and data (and measurement) appropriate to the different circumstances of these. This focus has identified, and translated into values, primary impacts which could be

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<sup>5</sup> Specifically as set out in HM Treasury guidance and notably the Green Book: HM Treasury (2011) *The Green Book – Appraisal and Evaluation in Central Government* (and on-line updates) [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/220541/green\\_book\\_complete.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/220541/green_book_complete.pdf)

monetised, supplemented by taking account of non-monetary outcomes and impacts where these contributed significantly to economic impact for the diverse users and stakeholders concerned.

The conceptual focus on primary valuation has also provided for measuring (or estimating) 'net' value to take account of changes that would otherwise have taken place, and the 'additionality' of the impacts identified (ie the net measured or observed change to outcomes or impacts from an intervention over and above what was expected).

## **Approach**

The main criteria for the selections of case study examples were:

- clearly defined non-academic impacts already identified from past case studies or evaluation of the initial social science inputs
- a reported or recognised high degree of attribution of those impacts to social science research or knowledge exchange funded or co-funded by ESRC
- that the 'user' and organisational circumstances were likely to provide for continuity of assessment of the economic impact(s).

The final examples were selected by ESRC to provide a small cross-section of experience reflecting different forms of social science engagement (research, evaluation, knowledge exchange, capacity building training, etc), involving different disciplines and a range of universities. The selected examples were spread across HE-external user partnerships involving a total of six universities in the UK. All had involved work which was funded or co-funded by ESRC with the selections variously involving initial research or related development activities from 2006 to 2012.

Early agreement of the cases was followed by ESRC briefing principal investigators (PIs) or agreed alternatives from the funded projects to seek their co-operation, followed by a direct approach from LBU. All of the initially identified primary academic contacts agreed to take part.

As a starting point to this ex-post emphasis, the pilot drew heavily on existing documentation from the selected cases. This included summary and more complete impact case studies previously prepared when the academic contributions had been completed, or shortly afterwards, or where subsequent evidence had been given to ESRC. These were variously supplemented by published academic papers and, in some cases, updated evidence in the form of user and practitioner documentation, usually identified from supplementary interviews. Limited data on monetised impacts were available from the available documentation and interviews with users were the main source for relevant data for both monetary and non-monetary impacts.

Primary evidence gathering focused on:

- **Academic insights**, through interviews with the four PIs
- **Key user insights**, through interviews with 18 'users' at 13 organisations
- **Sensitivity analysis**, of the valuation and data sources, to which all lead interviewees and the PIs contributed. This helped to avoid the risk of relying on

valuations in isolation by setting the impact achievement in a clear context for how they came about.

The scope for a meta-analytic approach across the four cases proved to be limited by the considerable variability in the sourcing, depth (and focus) of the valuation evidence. The analysis therefore took a more case-specific approach to valuation. Nevertheless, common issues and implications across all four cases were assessed.

## **Economic impact case studies<sup>6</sup>**

### **Case study I: Cranfield DriverMetrics and Arriva: improving bus driver safety**

#### **Academic lead or partnership**

Cranfield University; Drivermetrics

#### **Focus for user organisation(s)**

Arriva Group; Arriva North West Region

#### **Initial academic inputs to user(s)**

Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) co-funded with Arriva from 2006-2008 (KTP funded 50 per cent by ESRC and 50 per cent by the Technology Strategy Board).

#### **Valuation focus**

Economic impact of continuing use of KTP developed Bus Driver Risk Index assessment and coaching in Arriva NW.

#### **Summary of the work**

As part of a three-year Knowledge Transfer Partnership, the Bus Driver Risk Index (BDRI) was developed by a research team at Cranfield University, following an approach from Arriva to Cranfield asking for help with driver safety assessment. Restructuring of Arriva and the dramatic reduction in new driver recruitment during the subsequent economic downturn saw use of the simulator stop after 2008. However, although use stopped in other regions, one of Arriva's quasi-autonomous regions (North West) has seen continued although more targeted use of the BDRI as an online assessment of bus driver behaviour and supported by post-assessment training of Arriva instructors as improvement coaches.

A more detailed valuation has been produced for the NW Region use of BDRI. Arriva North West has nine years' experience using the tool and coaching, and has worked with Cranfield to monitor changes in driver behaviour and the impact on this part of the company.

Cranfield's analysis of the NW project focused on BDRI assessment and coaching interventions with 74 higher-risk drivers from that region. A statistical analysis of accident data for three years before and after BDRI use showed substantial cost-savings over the project period.

This valuation was a cost-avoidance estimate based on a projected net reduction of 55 'fault' accidents drawn from the 'before and after' comparisons across participants. Available data from Arriva – produced for the purposes of monitoring its self-insurance costs for its

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<sup>6</sup> Evidence from the case studies reflects in-project and post-project economic impacts and circumstances updated through the pilot study at May 2015.

passenger service vehicles – provided unit ‘at fault’ incident (accident) costs of £5,500 based on a standard claims reserving policy.

### **Attribution of measured impacts**

There was substantial initial economic impact across participant Arriva regions (2006-2008) through measured improvements to driver safety (6.5 per cent reduction in ‘at fault accidents’ and 3.5 per cent for ‘non-fault accidents’) with a 31 per cent reduction in passenger fatalities.

Cross group impacts reduced post KTP due to the knock-on effects of recession and reduced regional use of BRDI (except NW where continued use focused on higher risk drivers). There was no evidence of spill-over effects.

The extended use of BDRI in the NW region for higher risk drivers (2009-12) saw a greater reduction (2010-2012) with 25 per cent fewer ‘at fault’ incidents and a 9 per cent reduction overall. The Cranfield impact evaluation estimated a net reduction of 2.2 ‘at fault’ accidents per driver in the three year test period alongside improved staff retention and reduced costs from vehicle damage and off-road losses to capacity and reduced passenger injury/compensation levels.

Although ‘experimental’ impact evaluation methods were not possible the use of a ‘before and after’ statistical comparison showed there was robust attribution to the KTP of the initial impact (and continuing use in NW) of the Cranfield developed and trialled BDRI assessment and coaching.

There was strong additionality and no evidence of deadweight.

### **Monetary impacts**

The initial (2006-2008) use of BDRI across Arriva regions was estimated to result in a £1.1 million reduction across the group for personal injury accident claims from passengers/others involved in driver ‘fault’ accidents. This was not otherwise quantified in the early use of the BDRI.

Extended use of BDRI in the NW region provided other evidence of monetary benefits, based on the projected net reduction of 2.2 at fault accidents per driver in the three years this was estimated to save £300,000 net cost savings over the project period for this region alone. These savings ‘greatly outweigh’ the costs of BDRI assessment and coaching.

Monetary impacts were also evident for improved staff retention and reduced costs from vehicle damage and off-road losses to capacity - but data are not available to estimate these at regional level.

### **Non-monetary impacts**

Staff turnover in the initial development and use of BDRI (and simulator) was reduced from 24 per cent to 20 per cent. There was a higher level of staff retention observed for high risk drivers in the NW continuing use of BDRI.

Driver absenteeism in the initial project was measured as falling by 26 per cent over the project period. These impacts were ‘particularly marked’ for new and novice drivers.

The success of the KTP saw DriverMetrics, a spinout company wholly owned by Cranfield University, set up to harness the commercial potential of the BDRI. Over 50 organisations and over 200,000 drivers in the UK and several other countries have since used DriverMetrics to risk-assess different types of driver groups, including bus drivers, police drivers and fleet drivers.

## **Case study 2: Project Bernie: reducing deliberate fire-setting behaviour in the South Wales valleys**

### **Academic lead or partnership**

Cardiff University; Sustainable Places Research Institute (formerly BRASS)

### **Focus for user organisation(s)**

South Wales Fire and Rescue Service (SWFRS)

### **Initial academic inputs to user(s)**

Research, evaluation and training support to SWFRS in 2008-2010 through ESRC core funding to the Centre for Business Relationships, Accountability and Sustainable Society (BRASS). Subsequent extensions to funding to 2012 through Welsh Government.

### **Valuation focus**

Contribution of research and data analysis/use to support a social marketing innovation and capacity building programme aimed at reduction in fire-setting behaviour in the South Wales valleys.

### **Summary of the work**

Project Bernie was a three-year collaboration (2009-12) between BRASS at Cardiff University and the South Wales Fire and Rescue Service (SWFRS), centred on the persistent problem of deliberate grass-fire setting in the South Wales valleys. The project emerged in 2009-2010 from BRASS's research programme on social marketing.

Following formative research in 2009 on the nature of the problem, and to identify high risk areas, BRASS worked with SWFRS and partners to develop a collaborative action plan to pilot a social marketing intervention in 2010 in Tonypany to counter deliberate summer-time fire setting.

Project Bernie has subsequently seen roll-out funding (for two years) from the Welsh Government and has continued with SWFRS funding since. BRASS provided continued guidance, monitoring and evaluation support during 2011-12.

Monitoring and evaluation were embedded in the project by combining 'incident' and other management information from SWFRS, and quasi-empirical evaluation methods. This drew on Aberdare as a 'matched' comparative (non-intervention) area which had similar problems and characteristics. The BRASS impact evaluation was recognised as crucial in demonstrating economic and other impacts, and the net effect of the 'Bernie' intervention. This proved crucial in demonstrating value within SWFRS and partners, and to the Welsh Government in supporting scale-up of the project to counter deliberate fire-setting in other areas.

The findings of the evaluation showed nearly 800 fewer fires from a trajectory analysis in the pilot area and much reduced anti-social behaviour. Spill-over effects were also subsequently

identified, including improvements in working practices within SWFRS, improved community cohesion, and changing social norms about fires. Project Bernie's subsequent 'scale-up' to other high-risk areas in 2011-12, and since (funded initially through the Welsh Government), has also been accompanied by continued evaluation which has proved a watershed to SWFRS in its approach to community safety challenges: "...Bernie style use of data and evaluation has transformed how we innovate and manage".

### **Attribution of measured impacts**

Substantial economic impact was found in the initial trial area and subsequently through the roll-out on reduced fire setting (initially 46 per cent reduction) with sustained (progressive) improvements.

Additionality was measured through comparative analysis in a non-intervention area and subsequent 'before and after' analysis through enhanced use of incident reporting data. There were unexpected positive consequences for reduced anti-social behaviour with a 29 per cent improvement in reduced crime reports as indicated by police data.

Spill-over effects occurred in some parts of SWFRS for 'data-led' improvements and evaluation of impacts for other community safety innovations.

There was strong attribution to BRASS inputs to initial changes and subsequent cultural spill-over effects.

### **Monetary impacts**

The impact evaluation showed (for 2010 alone) an estimated net saving to SWFRS of £1.7 million from reduced fire setting in the pilot area, based on 'Economic Cost of Fire' projections (£1.9 million adjusted to 2014 costs).

An alternate valuation from the pilot estimated projected savings for all SWFRS of £3.3 million if rolled out across the area.

The savings are seen as likely to make a significant contribution to the requirement of SWFRS to reduce its budget by £20 million by 2020.

The cost savings from the spill-over effects of reduced anti-social behaviour for policy response and community benefits are probably greater, but these are not quantified.

### **Non-monetary impacts**

There was increased partnership working from SWFRS – with a 'Bernie in a Box' resource pack and roll-out from the Community Safety team to Station Managers. A number of specific examples were identified.

Further development of co-creation activities is needed to understand causes of fire setting behaviour in other circumstances. A number of specific examples were identified.

A cultural change in middle managers has occurred – station managers and departmental managers are now more data-led in their improvement practice and initiatives and 'get the need for measuring outcomes'. This has not been quantified.

The project received an 'Excellence Award' from the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) in 2011 as setting: "a new standard in behaviour change campaigns".

### **Case study 3: KCL and Public Weather Service Customer Group: improving the forecasting of the Public Weather Service**

#### **Academic lead or partnership**

King's College, London

#### **Focus for user organisation(s)**

Meteorological Office (Met Office) and Environment Agency; Public Weather Service Customer Group (PWSAG)

#### **Initial academic inputs to user(s)**

Knowledge exchange through KCL research and report to PWSAG: 2011-2012. Report delivered March 2014.

#### **Valuation focus**

The impact of the King's College review is reflected in changes which have been introduced since the March 2014 report, against each of the recommendations.

#### **Summary of the work**

As part of a knowledge exchange initiative, ESRC co-funded a collaboration between King's College London and the PWSCG to review the perceptions and use of the Public Weather Service (PWS) in the UK. The review started in Autumn 2011 and was reported to PWSCG in March 2014. The project drew on the past expertise of the King's College team to conduct a systematic review emphasising the effectiveness of communications arrangements for producing, representing and using PWS forecasts. Underpinning the independent review was a survey of nearly 300 professionals across the emergency response community to assess perceptions of PWS and its use, followed by in-depth interviews with a cross section of users and user agencies. Following consultations, a report was produced for PWSCG which drew on King's College's wider knowledge of better practice in communicating ensemble forecasts for emergency and resilience professionals. A number of improvement recommendations were made and centred on:

- Capacity improvement to reduce reliance on a small number of PWS Advisors.
- Addressing the 'issue of advice at the margins' of forecasts – especially high impact low probability events.
- Improved consistency of use of information and advice.

The review also identified constraints coming from what was seen as a lack of proactive response culture among user organisations.

#### **Attribution of measured impacts**

Overall, the attribution of subsequent changes implemented after the KCL review is complex and diffuse. There is a 'double attribution' challenge of associating the review findings with the PWS impacts that were achieved; and then connecting these changes with cost savings or loss reduction resulting from enhanced capacity or systems improvements.

Despite the attribution challenges the KCL review contributed a clear and evidence based focus for action and was felt by those interviewed for the pilot study to have accelerated the changes taking place in the PWS. The main success factor enabling this impact was the perceived independence of the KCL review and its interpretation of the evidence base. Any



constraints to impact centred on the improvement proposals facing a background of wider priorities and pressures on a constrained overall budget.

### **Monetary impacts**

The challenges with attribution limit differentiated monetary valuation. Any Value for Money estimate for PWS advisors raises challenges on how to monetise impacts in terms of causality and deadweight - evidence is not available on what other influences there were on emergency response or if such responses would have otherwise have happened without advisor engagement. Monetising the King's College contribution to the changes achieved at the PWS consequently faces the double attribution challenge outlined above.

Quantifying the monetary value of the work of the PWS and its advisors was beyond the terms of reference for KCL's review. However some quantification of the value of the PWS is possible from elsewhere, including a 2006-7 cross-government review which combined survey based evidence with quantified case studies, based on estimates of exceptional returns on investment. This estimated an additional value to the UK economy per annum of £614m (£749m by 2015 values) from public funding of PWS. Following the KCL review, this valuation was updated through a separately conducted PWS Value for Money Review. Based on a series of value chain forecasts and systematic review this mainly harnessed past studies and reference data to monetise impacts. This estimated a total monetary net value across all PWS services to the economy of £1.5 billion.

An informal estimate from this projection suggested the PWS value to weather warnings and resilience agencies in those sectors covered by the King's College review accounted for just over £200 million (13 per cent) of the overall £1.5 billion additional value, arising mostly from reduced losses from weather events. However there is no differentiation possible for PWS advisors as they only represent a small part of this.

### **Non-monetary impacts**

Following the decision to increase advisor capacity in the UK, the team has expanded from 14 to 16. The additionality and the strength of attribution is uncertain – there were multiple influences on the decision to increase the number of advisors - but KCL's recommendation is seen as the lynchpin in raising the priority of increased capacity. The Met Office stated that significant impact and input from the KCL Review has provided a 'fantastic return' and helped justify the increased capacity (and added budgetary costs for) advisors.

A continuing review of PWS advisor capacity and support to emergency response planners and delivery agencies has been established. This has resulted, two years after the review, in an agreement to double advisor capacity in Northern Ireland (from one to two advisors).

### **Case study 4: Wirral Desistance Project and the DesKE initiative: reducing reoffending**

The Wirral Desistance Project developed out of an ESRC funded project (DesKE), which was a collaboration between the Universities of Glasgow, Strathclyde and Queen's (Belfast). DesKE focused on 'desistance' from crime – ie how offenders move away from crime – in order to help transform the practice of offender rehabilitation in the UK and beyond. The Wirral initiative was a targeted approach by the (then) Merseyside Probation Trust to trial and develop a desistance-based approach. The DesKE team were asked to run two workshops and to support probation professionals through the transition in practice with

informal guidance and resources. These activities were seen by senior managers as a watershed in changing practices. Drawing on this work, the service developed a Desistance Strategy and secured funding of £80,000 a year to fund the User Voice initiative in the Wirral, a national peer mentoring scheme, which is user-led.

Despite major subsequent changes in the delivery of probation services in England and Wales, with Probation Trusts being replaced by Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs), there has been sustained momentum for the Wirral Desistance Project, with some initiatives such as User Voice remaining in place and wider developments taking place helped by the emphasis on desistance.

The Wirral Desistance project has undertaken some evaluation and has sought a cost benefit analysis of the User Voice initiative. As the results from this analysis were not available at the time of the ESRC study, it was not feasible to produce any estimates of the value of the social science contribution to this initiative. It may be possible to return to this example at a later date, if the results from this analysis become available.

### **The extent and nature of economic impact**

Quantifying the monetary impacts of social science inputs has been challenging for these case study projects. However, significant economic impact has been identified across three of the four case studies, and two of these could be linked exclusively to the ESRC funded or co-funded investments (with partial attribution for a third). Quantification for non-monetary impacts has been less problematic and the case studies indicate extensive impacts.

Not all of the subsequently identified impacts were expected by the projects, but where unintended consequences were found through the pilot study these were almost wholly positive. In particular, spill-over effects were quite extensive and have extended the economic impacts achieved, in some cases providing for substantial added-value for the users. Most of the user-social science collaborations have achieved these outcomes in difficult circumstances.

Economic impacts were varied and most extensive and sustained in two of the projects – the Cranfield-Arriva Bus Driver Risk Index collaboration, and for the Cardiff University/South Wales Fire and Rescue Service - 'Project Bernie'. These are the earliest of the funded projects in this review, so this may reflect the time needed for securing both wider and spill-over impact effects. These are also the two projects with the more robust evidence for the measurement of impact: the other two projects had not made provision for impact measurement, although it may have been inappropriate for the circumstances of one.

### **Impact pathways and success factors**

The case studies provide illustrative evidence of pathways and success factors associated with achieving monetary and non-monetary impacts. In particular, these emphasise the importance of:

- A clear **problem or opportunity centred** focus of the social science contributions for the user organisation or stakeholders. This was evident for three of the four cases.

- Appropriately positioned **organisational commitment** to the collaboration which helped drive impacts for all but one of the cases studies, and (for two of these) enabled effective decision making by the user organisation to adapt well to changing circumstances.
- **User leadership and championing of initiatives** which contributed to both initial and sustained engagement in the user delivery of collaborations, and which was separate from but complementary to ‘organisational’ commitment.
- **Data led inquiry** and review, which were important to two case studies and especially to early quantification of impacts (and for providing the basis for subsequent valuation), as well as guiding the precise focus or targeting of initiatives to maximise their relevance and positive outcomes.
- The **independence of analysis** provided by academic teams which has been valued by users, and has enabled effective use of data and evidence to assess impacts in three of the projects.
- Outcomes and impacts facilitated (in two case studies) by relatively **low implementation costs**. This provided greater discretion for middle managers to act flexibly and was especially important at a time of cost-pressures on all the user organisations.
- Taking steps to **embed robust evaluation**, which has been an important agent for change in two case studies, often against early resistance by task-centred stakeholders keen to avoid what they saw as unnecessary costs or delays to implementation.
- **Quality of partnership working** between stakeholders and academic teams, a long recognised foundation for impact, which was a strong feature of three of these cases. Co-creation, building trust and a willingness to find ways of ‘challenging established ways of doing things’ were important facets of effective partnership working.

The case studies also indicated some specific issues for good practice in measurement of impacts, and in particular:

- co-creation of impact indicators (and measurement) at an early stage of the project
- embedding the evaluation and monitoring activity within the delivery of the project
- responsiveness to identifying and measuring unintended consequences arising from delivery
- mixed mode measurement (ie quantification and process evaluation)
- continuity of monitoring and measurement.

### **Constraints to impact**

Although these case studies were chosen as successful examples (where impact had already been demonstrated) they also provided some reflections on what had held (wider) impact back. Most of these were localised factors, such as changes to local management staff or to budgets. This has been a feature of all but one of the projects and in two had risked the loss of any impacts beyond very short term gains. Volatile circumstances were most commonly associated with factors such as national policy changes, economic downturns, and regulatory change, which were typically beyond the control or influence of individual projects.

## **Impact sustainability and legacy**

All of the case studies were successful in generating impacts and three had a clear legacy which has been sustained. The fourth has been substantially affected by changing national policy circumstances and radical organisational change and is still working on securing that legacy. Some of the features helping to build the legacy in the other three projects have been: continuity of leadership and championing; strategic fit of the activity to organisational priorities and goals; pro-activity in building the impact momentum post-project; and embedded (mainstreaming) of evaluation practice. Two of the projects with demonstrated and continuing impacts have also shown the value of achieving external awards in helping to build a legacy for the project activity or innovation.

## **Effectiveness and lessons from the valuation method**

All four case studies have been able to quantify at least some of the impacts by harnessing primary valuation methods - three have provided some monetary valuation. The most useful measure for monetising impacts has been estimating the value of cost efficiencies achieved through cost-avoidance, often using established value for money measures. These provide for user recognisable, credible and easily understood estimates of monetary impacts. However, this ex-post analysis and the necessary reliance on available measures of transfer value means the picture built up of economic impacts is partial and probably understates the case study achievements. Although the evidence base is limited, this suggests that partial monetary values can be quantified in practical and proportionate ways in at least some suitable research and knowledge exchange circumstances.

This is not to say that other approaches to assessing economic impacts might also not be viable, especially if (unlike these circumstances) the potential for valuation was built into *ex ante* or formative evaluation as the research or knowledge exchange was being implemented. Some caution may also be needed in suggesting that the primary valuation approach as adopted would be widely applicable. Nonetheless, the valuations that have been undertaken through this approach have shown that measuring (partial) values of economic impacts is possible in some circumstances. In particular Project Bernie and Arriva both show a primary valuation approach based on unit costs can have relevance, credibility and be of considerable value to users in sustaining the social science and collaborative legacy.

## **Conclusion and recommendations**

The pilot study has been successful in this small-scale review of approaches, but less effective in testing for a wider range of valuation methods. This is due mainly to the limited scope (and ambition) of these cases. Despite the care taken in selections for the pilot, in two case studies there was a lack of any dedicated indicators which could be realistically monetised, although this does provide some specific lessons about pre-selecting any future valuation case studies.

The early evidence of the potential for valuation is encouraging and the evaluation cautiously concludes that there is scope for wider application of value for money-based primary valuation approaches, and possibly also for other approaches. However, it concludes that more evidence is needed both of the various approaches, and across more case studies, to draw anything beyond these preliminary conclusions. The evaluation proposes that ESRC considers three actions to build on these observations:

- **Proposal 1:** To extend the current analysis through a two-stage mapping and subsequent meta-analysis of a larger number of case studies, to scale up the evidence base and shape valuation practice.
- **Proposal 2:** To set up a small number of demonstrator projects of selected, suitable research or knowledge exchange projects (about to be financed or co-financed by ESRC) to provide complimentary action-research about planning, designing, implementing and using guided systematic monetary transfer approaches to valuation of achieved impacts.
- **Proposal 3:** Subject to the findings from the meta-analysis (Proposal 1) there is also scope for ESRC to conduct specific development activities to: map the specific use and sources of existing VfM measures in public bodies; commission wider research on readily available alternative VfM measures, sources and their reliability; consider the production of a technical guide for Principle Investigators (PIs) for remedial action to calculate 'net' transfer values; and commission a systematic review to assess the scope for standardised measurement for selected non-VfM or other unit monetary indicators based on common potential indicators (clusters) indicated by the meta-analysis.

These actions will further clarify the scope for, and most appropriate use of, a wider range of monetary impact valuations, with the potential to underpin more generic guidance to future funded ESRC projects (and their collaborators).