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# TECHNICAL REPORT

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## Policy and practice impacts of research funded by the Economic and Social Research Council

A case study of the Future of Work  
programme, supporting data

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Prepared for the Economic and Social Research Council

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# Preface

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This report, prepared for the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), examines the impact of the ESRC's 'Future of Work' programme on policy makers, professional practitioners and other groups outside academia. It also explores the applicability of the 'Payback Framework', a conceptual model for research evaluation, to social science. The Future of Work programme was an initiative that aimed to bring together leading researchers in the United Kingdom in an investigation of the future prospects for paid and unpaid work. The first phase of the programme started in October 1998, followed by a second phase in January 2001.

The report is presented in two volumes. This is the second volume and includes a brief literature review of the evaluation of social science and the influence of research on policy; an overview of the Future of Work programme; detailed analysis of a survey of Future of Work PIs; and four complete case study narratives of projects from the programme. The first volume presents the conclusions of the research and summarises the methods and results.

The report will be of interest to the ESRC and policy makers in the wider social science and policy community who are interested in how social science informs policy and practice. It will also be of interest to those developing methods to evaluate research.

The research was led by RAND Europe in collaboration with the Health Economics Research Group (HERG). RAND Europe is an independent not-for-profit think tank and research organisation that serves the public interest by providing evidence for policy making and public debate. HERG, a Specialist Research Institute of Brunel University, has as one of its main research themes, methodological and empirical studies of the impact of research. This report has been peer reviewed in accordance with RAND's quality assurance standards (see <http://www.rand.org/about/standards/>) and therefore may be represented as a RAND Europe product.

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## Overview of impact

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The Future of Work (FoW) programme succeeded in bringing together an interdisciplinary group of academics, stimulating constructive discussions and providing access to policy makers to ensure the wider impact of the research.

### The FoW programme had significant academic and wider impacts

There was substantial output from the programme in the area of knowledge production. To date this has included 11 books and 69 book chapters; four journal special issues and over 100 peer reviewed articles, alongside over 200 conference presentations. Six of the researchers felt they had changed the direction of their research field.

In terms of capacity development, involvement in the FoW programme was seen as a moderate or considerable contributor to 20 academic promotions, and the most common benefit of the programme cited by researchers were the opportunities to meet other researchers and in providing fora for discussion.

In our survey of Principal Investigators they reported 50 policy impacts, across a range of organisations including national government, political parties, employers and unions. Contributions to the policy debate included more than 60 working papers and official reports; seminars for the DTI, Low Pay Commission and Cabinet Office. More directly there were nine secondments which placed the researchers in a policy environment, including a senior role in the DTI Women and Equality unit, where the researcher was able to influence strategy and policy decisions relating to equality. Further specific examples of policy impact were: the chairmanship of the TUC Partnership Institute by a researcher, allowing him to impact on employer/union relationships; the drafting of guidance notes on complying with employment legislation for the DTI by a research group; direct input into the Work and Families Bill (2003) which introduced new legislation on maternity and paternity leave; and citation in a House of Lords judgement on pay and conditions, specifically looking at unfair dismissal.

Outside the government sectors our case studies identified a number of impacts on employers, including changes in workload policies and career structure; effects on maternity and family friendly working practices in a large consulting organisation and the negotiation of union-employer partnership deals.

### Dissemination

Almost half of the PIs felt the extensive networks of the Programme Director, and steering committee, had provided them with direct access to policy makers. These policy makers included those in the Health and Safety Commission and the Work Foundation.

In addition the FoW Media Fellow enhanced the impact of the research on more distant policy makers. He achieved this by producing research summaries set in the context of current policy and other research findings. Crucially, he worked to timescales suitable for policy makers rather than those of researchers.

#### Evaluation methodology

This evaluation used the Payback Framework as a conceptual structure and showed that the framework is useful for evaluating the wider impacts of social science. We used a number of techniques to collect data for study: document review; key informant interviews; an on line survey and case studies. However, we found that some impacts are inaccessible to evaluation because of political sensitivity or anonymity guarantees.

## Executive summary

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We examined how the ESRC Future of Work (FoW) programme influenced policy and professional practice. While doing so we reflected on the methods used to assess and identify impacts. Specifically, we considered whether the Payback Framework, a conceptual model for research evaluation, was appropriate for social science. Here we summarise the key findings.

**The FoW brought together an interdisciplinary group of academics, stimulated constructive discussion and provided access to policy makers.**

This may be especially significant given the view expressed by key informants that employment policy and management practices may be especially hard to reach with evidence as they are heavily contextual and apt to be influenced by fashion and ideology.

### Impacts

**The FoW programme had significant impacts on knowledge and research.** This was evident in the numerous publications and conference presentations attributed to the programme. Most Principal Investigators (PIs) attributed incremental changes in their field of research to their projects, and some attributed a clear change of direction in their field of research to their projects. Most of the projects also influenced other researchers.

**The FoW programme had significant impacts on public policy.** Although some PIs could identify specific impacts of their research, many found it difficult to identify actual policies they had influenced. PIs generally thought they had influenced policy in an incremental way and informed the policy debate. PIs also gave many presentations of FoW research to policy audiences.

**The FoW programme had significant impacts on career development.** More than 75% of PIs thought the FoW programme had helped them to form networks with researchers, policy makers and practitioners; nearly half of PIs attributed career development for researchers to their FoW projects, including nine secondments to government.

**The FoW programme impacted on the policies and practice of organisations.** There were many presentations given in organisations; PIs thought organisational practices were influenced by the research, but only some were easily identifiable.

**The policy environment determines policy impact.** In one case the heightened awareness among policy makers of issues around maternity leave and women returning to work provided fertile ground for research on how women make these decisions. In a second case the waning interest in union-employer partnerships was thought to have reduced the impact of a TUC institute chaired by a former FoW researcher. In general, the FoW research seldom caused major changes in policy but often resulted in impacts such as stimulating debate, fine-tuning policy, dispelling myths and providing confirmatory support.

#### Dissemination

**The FoW programme provided access to policy makers.** It effectively combined the networks of the Director and steering committee, and provided the researchers access to these networks which included key policy makers in the DTI, Low Pay Commission (LPC) and Cabinet Office.

**The FoW Media Fellow enhanced the impact on policy makers.** This was achieved largely for two reasons. First, because his summaries of the FoW research were produced to a timescale suitable for policy makers, rather than researchers. And second because they were accessible to policy makers: setting the FoW research in the context of other research and current policy discussions.

**Researchers and policy makers differed in their views on how best to disseminate to policy makers.** The two groups consider different channels to be important: researchers favouring academic publications, policy makers favouring the Media Fellow's publications.

### The Payback Framework is a useful model for evaluating social science research.

The Payback Framework provides a structure for research evaluation. It comprises a logic model of the research and dissemination process and a classification scheme for the immediate and wider impacts of research. This consists of five categories: Knowledge; Impacts on future research; Impacts on policy; Impacts on practice and Wider social and economic impacts. Both the literature review and fieldwork showed that the Framework could be effectively applied to social science research.

#### Impacts and attribution

**Some impacts may be inaccessible to evaluation,** for example some impacts were politically sensitive, so participants requested that they were not discussed. Also, subjects of the original research may have been influenced by their participation in that research, but their identity could not be revealed to the researchers in this evaluation.

**A confluence of inputs and incremental 'knowledge creep' make it difficult to attribute policy change to a given input.** The Payback Framework provides a structure in which to explore the context within which projects are developed. However, the incremental nature of policy remains a difficulty in assessing impact at the project level.

**There are few mechanisms in social science to codify and synthesise research.** In contrast to biomedical science, in the fields covered by the FoW programme there are fewer formal mechanisms to systematically review research; these mechanisms can offer tracers of policy influence.

#### Timing

**Research on impacts may happen too early or too late.** If research on impacts occurs too early, some impacts may not yet have occurred. If it occurs too late, certain impacts may have already come and gone. This possibility of transience makes it harder to investigate the impacts, as they may not be captured by a current snapshot of policies and policy debates. In order to provide a comprehensive view of the wider impacts of research it this project suggests it would be important to warn researchers at the start of the project about likely evaluations; provide researchers with a mechanism to capture early impacts; and then evaluate research after further impacts have had time to develop, probably 5-10 years after completion of the research. The literature suggests that for research relating to 'hot topics' in policy, initial impact is likely to occur earlier and that 2 years post completion may provide the best time frame for evaluation.

#### Implementation of evaluation

**There was widespread cooperation in the evaluation.** The majority of PIs (including all case study PIs), 80% of nominated research users, and others nominated by PIs, agreed to participate in the research when approached.

**Researchers and users may prefer structured interviews to written surveys.** Our experience also suggests that such interviews would provide more useful information for evaluation. Our on-line survey required significantly more of most participants' time than predicted.



## Acknowledgments

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This study would have been impossible without the generous support of those involved with the Future of Work programme – we would like to thank them for their constructive criticism and for sparing their time for interviews and to fill in our survey. We would particularly like to thank those researchers whose grants were the subjects of case studies. We would also like to thank Veronica Littlewood of the Economic and Social Research Council for her help, advice and input into the project at the analysis workshop. Finally, we would like to thank Professor Martin Buxton and Stijn Hoorens who acted as the quality assurance reviewers for this project.



This volume presents the data collected as part of the study 'Policy and practice impacts of ESRC funded research: a case study of the ESRC Future of Work programme'. The main report (RAND Report TR-435-ESRC), a companion to this volume, presents the methodology and discussion, alongside a summary of the results. This volume is intended to be read alongside the main volume and not considered in isolation. It is presented as a series of chapters detailing the results of each aspect of the research.



## CHAPTER 2 Summary of the Future of Work programme

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### 2.1 What was FoW for?

Questions about employment and jobs have produced a lot of further questions and many commentaries, but there have been few studies that span the range of disciplines needed to establish a picture of the future of work. This is the reason that the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) research priorities board decided in November 1997 to fund an interdisciplinary programme of research into the future of work. The aims of the programme are shown in Box 1.

- To create the evidence base that would then ground theories of work
- To enhance public understanding of the critical developments most likely to impact on people's working lives
- To deepen accounts of the future of work by systematic mapping of past and present shifts and continuities
- Foster interdisciplinary and comparative perspectives
- Use innovative methods to engage with research users
- Act as a focus for debate within and between the academic, practitioner and policy-making communities.

Box 1. Aims of the FoW programme

### 2.2 The initial ideas

In 1996, informal discussions with other academics and ESRC officers in the field of work and employment led to broad agreement that something needed to be done to ensure that the next generation of researchers was attracted to these issues. By 1997 there was clear steer from the ESRC Research Priorities Board that a major programme needed to look at work in its broadest sense (the ESRC already had various specific investments such as the Centre for Economic Performance at LSE, and the Psychology of Work unit at Sheffield). The next stage was a report by Professor Peter Nolan, drawing on other academics' input, setting out the case to ESRC for a programme in work studies. Professor Nolan then ran a consultation among 140 people (including policy makers, academic

communities, employers, government departments and labour representatives), inviting comments on an outline of the programme. All this information was given to the ESRC Research Priorities Board.

### 2.3 Setting up FoW

The Future of Work programme was launched by the ESRC on the 1<sup>st</sup> October 1998, with a total budget of £4 million (see Figure 1). It was originally envisaged to run for four years, with an end date of the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2002. The programme was split into two overlapping phases (I and II), with the projects in Phase II building upon the work that had been done in Phase I. It also allowed the programme to respond to the changing political climate following the election in 1997. The funding for these two phases was also split, although not evenly. Phase I received the larger injection of funds.

Part of the original FoW plan was to put in place a Director of the programme who would act as its ambassador and facilitate cross-project working, dissemination and impact making for the researchers. In March 1998, Professor Peter Nolan was appointed Director of the programme after an open call (in which there were four applicants). Professor Nolan is Montague Burton Chair of Industrial Relations at Leeds University, although the ESRC FoW project bought out 80% of his time. In June 1999, a full-time administrator was also appointed for FoW. By bringing in Professor Nolan, the FoW programme also gained potential partnership funders and policy makers through his networks. Professor Nolan also had contacts in the Labour Party, who moved into government, and he would give them briefings on the progress of the programme.

Figure 1. Breakdown of funding between Phase I, Phase II and non-research funding

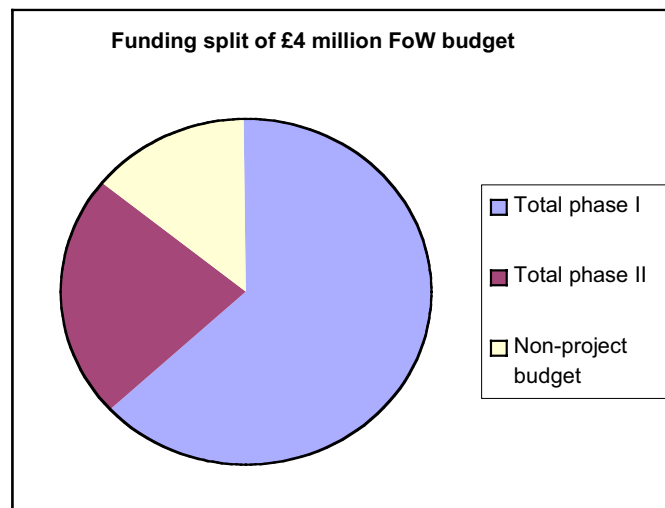


Figure 2 shows how the dates and durations of the projects were spread across the whole programme. Six areas were originally suggested in which proposals should fall for FoW. These are shown in Box 2.

- Concepts, meanings and changing forms of work
- Work trajectories and the centrality of work

- Welfare, work and inequality
- Employment restructuring and the household
- Employment regulation and security at Work
- Organisational change and performance.

Box 2. Original topic areas for FoW proposals

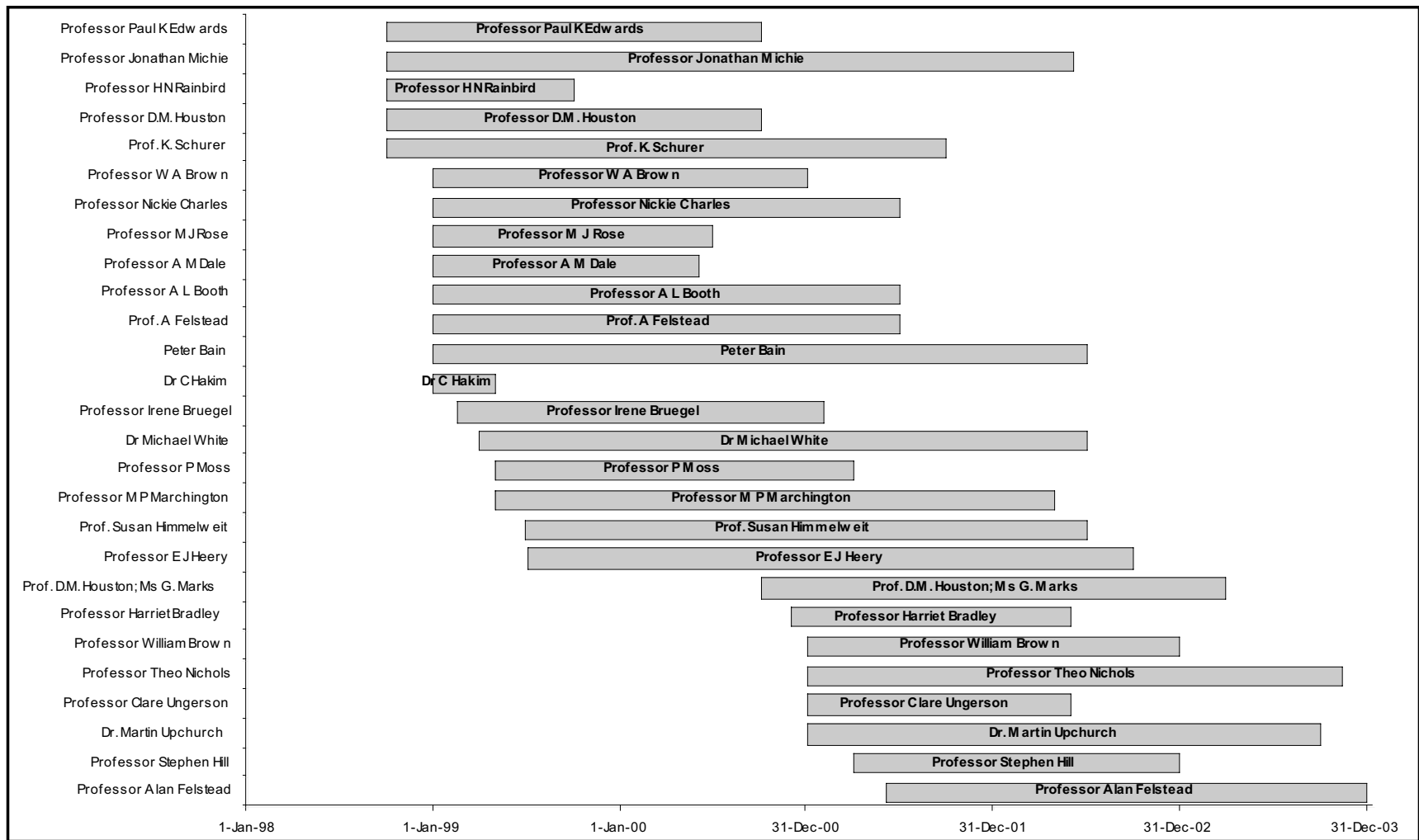


Figure 2. Dates and durations of projects within the FoW programme

## 2.4 Phase I

The call for proposals for Phase I yielded 221 responses to the commissioning panel (chaired by Bill Callaghan – then chief economist at the Trade Union Council, TUC), of which 43 were shortlisted. These were then assessed by ESRC-identified referees and narrowed down to the 19 that received project funding under Phase I. Project proposals were assessed, in the first instance, for quality of research, with policy relevance used as a secondary selection tool. Despite requesting proposals across the six areas shown in Box 2, the final list of 19 accepted projects in Phase I spanned a slightly different set of research topics. The projects selected for funding fell easily into four areas. These four subject areas are shown in Box 3.

- Work–life balance
- Organisational change and performance;
- The future of employee relations
- Labour markets of the twenty-first century.

Box 3. Key theme groups for the projects of Phase I of FoW

The budget for Phase I projects was around £2.4 million, split between the 19 projects (see Figure 3). These projects covered around 80 researchers working in over 20 universities in the UK; of these 29 were primary investigators (named on the project award). Projects in Phase I ranged in length from 4 months to 45 months. The project start dates were staggered and seven started in 1998, whilst the other 12 started in 1999.

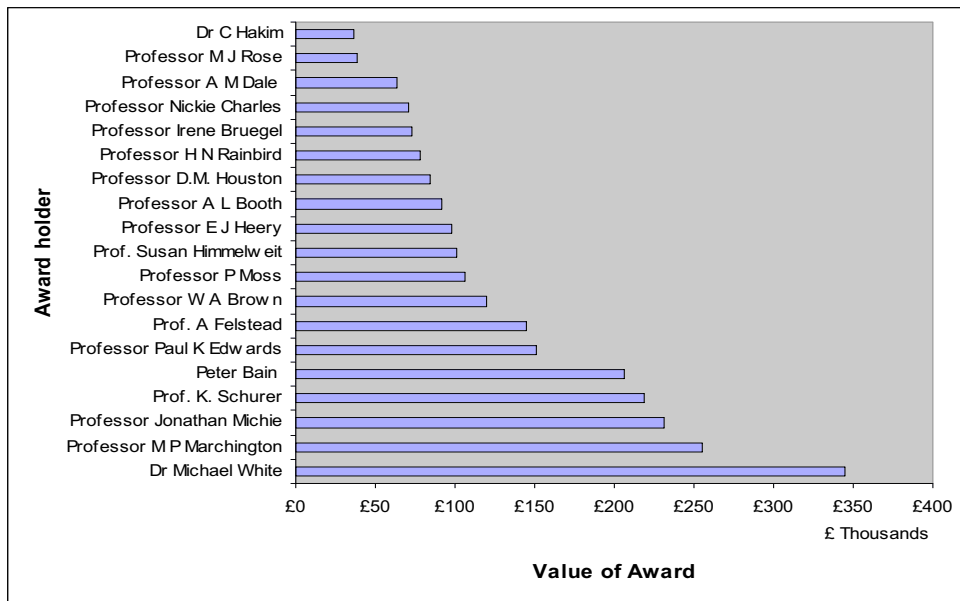


Figure 3. Funding allocations within Phase I of FoW

There were key theme groups for the projects, which became small working groups chaired by one researcher and with around 15 researchers in each group. Each group

organised their own events in addition to the ones organised by the whole FoW programme. These covered dissemination events as well as intra-project learning events.

## 2.5 Phase II

Projects within Phase II looked to build upon the work done in Phase I, with the additional aim of bringing an international and comparative stream of work to FoW in order to illuminate both domestic and international changes in the character, regulation and distribution of work. The areas within which proposals would be accepted were finalised in November 1999 by the programme advisory committee. The programme advisory committee was a body of 19 people including the programme Director and administrator, and representatives from government, TUC, academia and business. Its roles were mainly to review what was happening, advise on the selection of projects and consider practical ways of disseminating research findings; and also for members to go out individually to review projects and report back to the advisory board.

Requests for proposals were issued in the areas shown in Box 4. The themes outlined for Phase II were chosen in consultation with the Programme advisory committee, incorporating interests of policy makers and those areas the Director thought were particularly important.

- Workplaces of the future
- The labour markets of the twenty-first century
- The future of employee relations.

### Box 4. Thematic areas for Phase II of FoW proposals

From the 22 proposals that were shortlisted by the commissioning panel, eight were chosen for funding. Officially, funding began for Phase II projects on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2001, however two projects that were led by Phase I award holders continued their work through from the end of their Phase I award. Thus, two projects started before the official 1<sup>st</sup> January Phase II start date. Projects ranged in length from 17 to 33 months and were financed from around £1 million of the FoW funds, split between eight projects (see Figure 4).

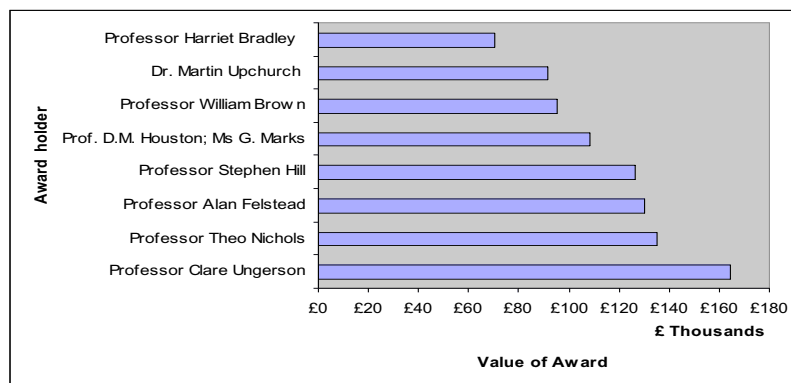


Figure 4. Funding allocations within Phase II of FoW

## 2.6 Dissemination of results

Since one of the key aims of the FoW programme was to facilitate the transfer of knowledge between academics and policy makers, having a dissemination strategy was a vital strategic aim. One of the first things put in place by Professor Nolan was a communications strategy for the programme. Shortlisted researchers had to outline their dissemination and user engagement strategies within their proposals, and successful awardees were required to address the issue in their end of award report. To support researchers in the dissemination of their results, the FoW programme set up a communications workgroup that included specialists in translating research into policy (the DTI and DfEE). It also drew on the expertise of the programme advisory committee (chaired by John Hougham – then chair of ACAS) and more specifically the networks of the programme Director (in government, business, the media and academia) and the Media Fellow appointed to the programme (Robert Taylor – former *Financial Times* Employment Editor). Additionally, a collaboration strategy was included in the communications strategy. This had three key objectives:

1. Develop new networks of research users and secure maximum exposure for the research findings and scientific advances generated by the research activities under the programme
2. Encourage co-operation and collaborative outputs within and between the different project teams
3. Promote international collaboration between the programme and parallel research initiatives overseas.

To succeed in the first objective, the programme used the networks of programme advisors and integrated them into a database of contacts for the whole programme. They also ensured cross fertilisation of ideas between projects through the key theme working groups and programme conferences. This strategy also addressed the second objective. In order to promote the overseas collaborations, the Director had a specific role in setting up international links, such as the one with the Swedish Council for Work Life Research. There was also an International colloquium organised in 2003.

Disseminating findings to the media used the Media Fellow, specific media outputs such as the programme launch coverage in the *Financial Times*, and the dissemination of programme packs that contained information on all the projects. The idea of having a journalist (FT Employment Editor) on the programme was a very new idea for the ESRC. However, this acted to popularise the programme, providing media contacts.

The role of Media Fellow was not the one originally envisaged by Robert Taylor, who wanted to join as a researcher. In his role as Media Fellow he had a free hand in how to write and interpret the results sent to him by the researchers and he used his own background knowledge to add to the results. The topics for his reviews were not formalised originally, he based them around the streams within the FoW. The first report (Future of employment relations) was very successful, with a lot of positive feedback and this laid down a marker for the six further reports. The ESRC also funded media courses for researchers involved in FoW, which a number took up.

The interactive website was the main point of contact for the public. It also had the effect of engaging policy makers, with the Office of National Statistics appointing two researchers to their project team on household satellite accounts through the website. The business and professional communities were involved within the structure of the programme itself, with members of the business community on the advisory committee, and professional bodies, such as the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), co-funding certain projects. Academic dissemination was performed through the normal channels of journal and book publications, with special editions of journals dedicated to the programme. FoW also organised conferences and had speakers at non-FoW conferences. Most of the dissemination routes to policy makers have been mentioned, although there were also FoW briefings to the Cabinet Office by researchers from individual projects and direct distribution of reports produced by the Media Fellow to policy makers.

Table 1 shows the types of published outputs that arose from FoW with the numbers of each type of publication shown split by year.

<b>Published outputs</b>	<b>2001/02</b>	<b>2002/03</b>	<b>2003/04</b>	<b>Cumulative</b>
Books	2	2	7	11
Forthcoming books				5
Journals special issues		1	3	4
Book chapters	21	12	36	69
Refereed articles	45	42	32	119
Non-refereed articles	44	6	7	57
Monograph chapters	6			6
Working papers	27	2		29
Other working papers	16	6	2	24
Official reports	7	6		13
Conferences	148	47	23	218
Seminars	116	21	19	156
Public lectures	4		8	12
Miscellaneous	11			11
Newspapers	233	11	5	249
Magazines	127	13	3	143
Radio	21	1	1	23
TV	6		1	7

Table 1. Published outputs from the FoW programme

## 2.7 Identifying impacts

Being able to disseminate the findings of FoW is only half of the battle; there is also the need for these results to be taken up by policy makers, business and the public. In the end of award reporting, researchers were required to identify impacts of their research as well as outputs. A selection of the types of impacts seen is shown in Box 5.

- Creation of international datasets and international research topics
- Contribution to government consultations
- NGO policy making
- Specific input into government policies and papers
- Findings taken up and incorporated by business
- Reporting directly to professional bodies (e.g. CIPD)
- Academic institutions use findings in business practices rather than just more academic work
- Participation in government and international policy making working groups
- Findings used in employment law judgements
- Study organisations taking on board recommendations and findings
- Future of Work programme in Canada that was, to an extent, stimulated by the UK programme. Also a Work and Well being in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century programme in Finland modelled on the UK programme: Peter Nolan is part of a panel of their expert assessors.

**Box 5. Examples of impact types shown in FoW end of award reports**

Impacts from the programme can fall into two distinct categories. Firstly, impacts arising from the individual projects (these are discussed in the main report), and secondly impacts arising from the programme as a whole. Box 5 above contains examples of both types of impact. Examples of impacts specifically relating to the programme as a whole include high profile coverage in political speeches,<sup>1</sup> mentions in House of Commons debates<sup>2</sup> and multiple newspaper articles. There are also the international impacts of the programme. As mentioned in Box 5, there are two international programmes related to the FoW programmes but there have been other international impacts too, for example two international colloquiums (2003 and 2004) and the inclusion of major international thinkers in the FoW seminar series.<sup>3</sup>

The programme's policy impacts will most likely occur in the future. However, one good example of policy impact is Diane Houston's project on mothers returning to work. This investigated the factors that determined whether mothers would return to work after pregnancy and, if so, on what timescale. Houston was seconded to the Women and Equality Unit at the DTI. After her project, she did further work on potential female returners in areas of high occupational gender segregation, and on increasing the number of female returners in areas of skill shortages. The DTI then commissioned work on the

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<sup>1</sup> David Cameron (Leader of the Opposition) speech to Google Zeitgeist Europe 2006, Hertfordshire: available at [http://www.conservatives.com/tile.do?def=news.story.page&cobj\\_id=129957&cspeeches=1](http://www.conservatives.com/tile.do?def=news.story.page&cobj_id=129957&cspeeches=1)

<sup>2</sup> For example recorded in Hansard on the 30<sup>th</sup> April 2002, there is specific mention of Peter Nolan and the ESRC FoW programme results.

<sup>3</sup> For example, Professor Tom Kochan (Senior Professor at MIT in Management, in the Engineering Systems Division) asked to meet with Peter Nolan when he was in London as he knew about the FoW programme and then volunteered to provide a seminar in the FoW Programme Policy Series at the DTI.

back of this project. This work was launched by Meg Nutman, the Deputy Minister for Women and Equality, as three reports. It is possible that this will only influence policy in ten years' time, but it has definitely influenced the current research agenda.

## 2.8 The end of the FoW programme

There was a complete absence of an exit strategy from ESRC. The programme had built up a large amount of momentum, but this simply dissipated at the end of the programme. Two years after the end of the programme Professor Nolan (and others) are still working for the programme although they are not being supported for it. The advisory committee was very concerned about the issue of continuation. In fact, it backed going for a third phase and increasing the international dimension, but the ESRC was not keen to do this. The networks that were generated are no longer supported and the website (which is a major resource for the area) will be switched off in 6 months time.

Discontinuing the FoW programme means a missed chance to include topics as yet not covered by the programme (e.g. the role of elderly workers, migration of workers, low levels of productivity in the UK, etc). It also means a failure to build on the framework and networks in place, with connections with the Office for Economic Cooperation and Development, International Labour Organisation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology and International Trade Unions (amongst others) unable to be maximised. There is also a missed opportunity to put an emphasis on institution building and the role of the state (active role required). In general, discontinuation means a missed opportunity to create something of lasting value.

## CHAPTER 3 Literature overview covering evaluation of social science and the use of research evidence in policy making

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This review places the study of the impacts from the FoW programme within the existing literature about methods of assessing the wider impacts of social science research and established models of policy making. It relates these to, and considers their implications for, a Payback Model for the social sciences. The Payback Model was described in detail in the original proposal for the work. This review touches upon the main models and concepts in the field and does not aim to provide a comprehensive overview.

Early in the project, lists were produced of models of policy making, models of research utilisation, conceptual frameworks used in impact assessments and types of impacts previously identified. These drew on a wealth of social science research and usefully informed our study. They were contained in the interim report. This chapter now selectively builds on those lists and highlights issues of greatest relevance for our analysis.

Several main issues are addressed:

1. The purpose of assessments, the role of the ESRC and the expectations of its stakeholders
2. The growth of evidence-based policy and models of the policy process
3. Models linked to research utilisation
4. Conceptual frameworks and impact assessment (in relation to social science research)
5. Practical issues and examples of the assessment of impacts.

### 3.1 The purpose of assessments, the role of the ESRC and the expectations of its stakeholders

Analysis about how best to assess the wider impact of the ESRC's research should take place in the context of a recognition of the various expectations held by different stakeholders. The first recommendation from the 2005 ESRC symposium on approaches to assessing the non-academic impact was that the purpose of the impact assessment should be clarified (Davies et al., 2005). In the current pilot project there was a strong motivation to examine methodological issues, but clarification of purposes has been a key

feature of previous substantive applications of the Payback Framework (Buxton et al., 2000).

Considering the purpose of impact assessments is inevitably linked to wider questions about the purpose of the research and the role of the research-funder. Moves by the ESRC in the 1990s to assess the non-academic impacts of social science research immediately raised such issues (Cave and Hanney, 1996). More generally, some social scientists used the term 'epistemic drift' to describe, and criticise, a move towards concern with external legitimisation of social science by policy bureaucracies and away from internal legitimisation via the process of peer-review (Elzinga, 1985). Specifically in relation to the ESRC, others point to the long tradition of the council in funding social science that was perceived to bring benefits as a result of being applied by a wide range of users (Thomas, 1985).

The basis on which government-funded research in the public services should be assessed has long been debated. It is important that the assessment criteria are compatible with the basis on which the research agenda is set and the research commissioned (Kogan and Henkel, 1983). Over the last two decades pressures on all publicly funded research in the UK seem to be increasing: the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) is vital, but has traditionally used a narrow assessment approach and yet the demand that research should be relevant to policy and practice has never been so strong (Davies et al., 2005; Kogan et al., 2006).

## 3.2 The growth of evidence-based policy and models of the policy process

The growing focus on evidence-based policy and practice in the UK and elsewhere (Davies et al., 2000; Pawson, 2006) has increased attention on the relationship between research and policy and practice. In the UK this was particularly associated with the return of a new government in 1997: 'This rise of *evidence-based policy* reached its apotheosis in 1997, when a Labour government was elected with the philosophy of 'what matters is what works' (Davies et al., 2000).

There are various models of the policy process in the literature. Consideration of models of policy making is highly relevant in several overlapping ways. First, the debate about the feasibility of evidence-based policy making is partly informed by reference to the models of policy making. Some critics suggest it is overly reliant on a rarely achievable rational model of policy making (see, for example, Klien, 2000, Black, 2001). Second, the different models can imply different timescales and roles for any impact that research might make on policy making. Various analyses of the role of research in policy making have listed a range of models of policy making and considered how they might match onto models of research utilisation (Nutley and Webb, 2000; Neilson 2001; Hanney et al., 2003). Below, some of the most important, but overlapping, models of the policy process are outlined with some implications for research utilisation noted.

### 3.2.1 Rational model

This model assumes a rational sequence of steps towards the generation of a policy decision. These are: identification of the problem; collection and review of evidence for all the possible options and their consequences; assessment of these options against the

objectives; and the selection of the option that best matches the goals. The evidence-based movement is particularly associated with a rational approach to policy making but it seen as very difficult to achieve in practice. The field in which it is probably most widely adopted is in health, but even here it is found more often in clinical policies than in issues to do with the organisation of health service issues. Rational policy making may also be more difficult to achieve in the area of employment policy.

### 3.2.2 Incrementalist model (Lindblom, 1959)

This model sees scientific knowledge as one amongst several possible factors influencing policy making. Scientific evidence has to compete with *ordinary knowledge* that originates from common sense, casual empiricism, or thoughtful speculation and analysis. Other factors could include: interests, values, established positions within institutions, and personal ambition.

The ‘disjointed incremental’ model assumes that policy decisions are small steps rather than fundamental decisions. As resources rarely allow policy makers to follow the complex *rational model*, the reality resembles rather a process of ‘muddling through’ using the evidence in the best way allowed by resources (Lindblom, 1959).

### 3.2.3 Non-decisional processes producing policy outcomes (Weiss, 1982)

Similar thinking comes in the analysis developed by Carol Weiss. Decision-making processes have traditionally been assumed to have five characteristics: *boundedness*, *purposiveness*, *calculation*, *perceived significance*, and *sequential order*. However, many decisions may lack one or more of these characteristics. These are deemed *non-decisional processes*, and produce a range of policy outcomes:

- Reliance on custom and implicit rules
- Improvisation (decisions based on the ingenuity of the decision maker)
- Mutual adjustment (simply adapting decisions)
- Accretion (setting a precedent that is used in future decisions, becoming more rigidly used as it becomes more common)
- Negotiation
- Move and countermove (a route often followed in international relations)
- Window for solutions (very similar to the garbage can model – using existing solutions for novel problems)
- Indirection (any policy outcomes are unintended by-products of other decisions).

Few opportunities exist for targeting research results in these non traditional decision-making processes, as they are shaped over long periods of time through incremental actions of multiple actors – often without obvious decision making. In these cases, involved parties instead absorb knowledge through informal routes. This diffuse process may favour research that is less focused and that looks comprehensively at issues with all their complexity using the most sophisticated conceptual methods. The title of a 1980

article from Carol Weiss sums up this position well: 'Knowledge creep and decision accretion' (Weiss, 1980)

### 3.2.4 Network models (e.g. Rhodes and Marsh, 1992)

This approach stresses the importance of the different actors and their interests in the policy-making process. It suggests that policy making is the result of conflicts, bargaining and coalition forming. 'Policy networks' cover different relationships and can be split into different types: *issue networks* (a large number of participants with differing levels of commitment and often conflicting interests that are bound by their knowledge on an issue); *epistemic communities* (leading experts sharing a similar approach on an issue, Haas et al., 1992); *policy communities* (long-term relationships between government and interest groups representatives); and *advocacy groups* (groups who share a belief system). Research could play a variable role in relation to such models: the networks could facilitate the uptake of research, or hinder its uptake if the findings were contrary to the interests of powerful interest groups within a policy community (Hanney et al., 2003).

Networking more broadly defined is often seen as a way of encouraging the uptake of research findings (Yin and Gwaltney, 1981).

### 3.2.5 Garbage can model (Cohen et al. 1972)

This concept assumes that solutions that are not applied to policies remain in a pool of options. These can be used in another situation and as such are 'collections of choices looking for problems' (Cohen and March, 1972).

### 3.2.6 Agenda-setting (multiple streams) model (Kingdon, 1984)

Building on the garbage can model, this assumes that there are three separate streams relevant for setting a particular issue on the political agenda. These streams are:

- The *problem stream* that brings problems to the attention of the policy makers, who then use indicators to assess the problem's magnitude
- The *policy stream* – referring to the possible solutions generated in the policy community
- The *political stream* that covers the national mood, organised political interest, and government views. Policy windows open up based on changes in the political streams that allow policy makers to adopt an initiative.

In this model the 'policy entrepreneur' plays a central role in coupling a problem with a solution taken from the *garbage can* of potential policy solutions and pushing for it to be placed on the political agenda. This type of model illustrates the long timescales that can elapse before research findings are used in policy.

### 3.2.7 The realities of evidence-based policy making

Many of those who analyse and/or advocate evidence-based approaches recognise that several of the models discussed above are, in reality, more likely to be appropriate than the rational model (Nutley and Webb, 2000; Pawson, 2006). Even when research findings

are used in government policy making they often have to take their place alongside many other, usually more powerful, influences (Kogan and Henkel, 1983; Davies, 2004).

### 3.3 Models linked to research utilisation

In addition to the various models of policy making, the literature on research use suggests a number of models of the routes from researchers to policy makers and other users. This section begins with probably the most comprehensive and frequently discussed categorisation of research use: that developed by Carol Weiss (1979). The later points deal with a range of related issues.

#### 3.3.1 Weiss's models of research utilisation

Weiss (1979) lists a number of models of research utilisation that identify the ways in which research can enter policy. The importance of such a list, which was developed primarily in relation to social sciences, has been recognised in various attempts to develop frameworks for the assessment of research utilisation (e.g. Cave and Hanney, 1996). The list from Weiss includes:

##### *Knowledge-driven model*

A linear model similar to that found in natural sciences where basic research drives applied research, which in turn drives development and finally application. This approach is unlikely to be equally applicable to social science research. Social research tends not to be focused on implementation and is seldom seen as being as authoritative on a subject as basic science research results are.

##### *Problem-solving (policy-driven) model*

This is an issue-led linear model in which policy makers identify a problem to solve. They subsequently seek empirical evidence and conclusions drawn from research to solve this problem. This can involve the review of existing research findings or the commissioning of research specifically to address the problem.

##### *Interactive model*

In this non-linear model, social science research is one among many inputs to policy making, including experience, judgement, political insight and pressure. Policy makers seek information by a variety of actors such as administrators, practitioners, journalists and interest groups.

##### *Political model*

In this model, research can serve as ammunition in the political arena to support predetermined positions and increase credibility and acceptance of political decisions, as research is perceived as an indicator of rational and unbiased decisions. This suggests that the research is not independent of the political process.

##### *Tactical model*

In situations when policy makers are faced with strong pressure to act, they can use the announcement of doing (or commissioning) research to prove their responsiveness and

decrease the pressure upon them. This is similar to the *political model*, in that research is a means to maintain a political stance rather than to solve a specific problem.

#### *Research as part of the intellectual enterprise of society*

In this model, policy and social science both respond to fashions of social thought and influence each other.

#### *Enlightenment/percolation*

This is a conceptual use of research, in which social science research is not directly applied to decision making but creeps into policy decisions through the context from which concepts and ideas derive. Research knowledge shapes the general thinking that provides the framework within which decisions are taken, rather than targeting specific issues or policy makers.

Weiss argued that all such models can be relevant sometimes, but that models such as the final one, enlightenment, were likely to be more frequently applicable than the more rational model. This enlightenment model has attracted considerable support in analyses of the use of social science research in the UK, where it has also been called the limestone model (Thomas, 1985).

Molas-Gallart et al. (1999) argued that such a list mixes types of impact (direct use, percolation) with the environment of research generation and application (problem-driven, technology-driven, interactive), and forms of use (problem-solving, political use). Whilst this view may have some validity, it can also be seen as an advantage that the Payback Framework for assessing the impact of research can encompass any of these models. Furthermore, Molas-Gallart et al. go on to state: 'We are not concerned, when assessing impact, about the way in which the research subject was defined; that is, whether it responded to the requirements of a potential 'client' (problem-driven), or to intellectual curiosity (research-driven) or to a mixture of both' (p.18). The Payback Framework makes the assumption that such issues should be incorporated into a framework for assessing the impacts from research because they are likely to have a considerable influence on the level and nature of impact. The Payback Framework for assessing the impacts from research, and the model developed by Molas-Gallart et al. (1999), are discussed in the next section.

The overlaps between the two sets of models in the above sections are far from being complete (Hanney et al., 2003). Nevertheless, some overlaps can be identified. For example, the first two models of utilisation both fit with the rational models of policy making, though it is the problem-solving model that has the same starting point: identification of a problem by a policy maker. The more incremental models of policy making have the longer timeframes implied by interactive and enlightenment models of utilisation, but sometimes these forms of utilisation lead to paradigm shifts which are much more radical than is inherent in incrementalism.

### 3.3.2 Developing Weiss's modelling (Lavis et al., 2002)

Lavis et al. (2002) put forward three ways of using research, each of which is similar to a model (or models) put forward by Weiss. In the **instrumental** model, policy makers use

research in a specific and direct fashion similar to the *problem-solving/policy-driven* models of Weiss. In the **conceptual** model, research influences the ideas forming the background to a decision. This model is similar to the *enlightenment* model of Weiss. Finally, the **symbolic** model suggests that research is used to support a predetermined position or to justify other activities. This is very similar to *political* and *tactical* models of Weiss.

### 3.3.3 The ladder of research utilisation

It is important to recognise that using knowledge effectively is not the same as disseminating knowledge. Knott and Wildavsky (1980) consider seven standards or steps that can be taken as different interpretations of the term ‘utilisation’:

- Reception (information is received by the policy maker)
- Cognition (policy maker reads and understands the information)
- Reference (the information changes the mindset of the policy maker)
- Effort (the information influences the action of the policy maker)
- Adoption (the information influences the policy outcomes)
- Implementation (not the adoption but the implementation of the policy is the criterion)
- Impact (the output of the policy – if the intended benefits are reached – is the criterion).

Such a list usefully highlights the many activities that can be considered as utilisation and this is compatible with the approach taken in the Payback Model (Hanney et al., 2000).

### 3.3.4 The two communities and ways of addressing it

It has been hypothesised that knowledge-producers (researchers) and knowledge-consumers (policy makers) belong to two different communities, characterised by different (often conflicting) value systems, reward systems, and even languages. While researchers are concerned with more conceptual issues, policy makers are ‘action-oriented’. These cultural differences result in a gap between these two communities, which hinders the utilisation of research in policy making (Caplan, 1979).

Lindquist (2001) suggests that a route of exchange between these communities occurs when people change career from inside-government to outside-government positions and vice versa. There may also be a third community of organisations inside and outside government that are neither policy-makers nor scientific researchers, but who share a commitment to produce policy-relevant data, research or analysis. Outside government, for example, this role may be filled by think tanks. A key role for knowledge brokers has long been advocated, especially in relation to government-funded research (Kogan and Henkel, 1983; Kogan et al., 2006). Sometimes groups of researchers develop strong links with a particular political party and their views can become influential in a process akin to the interactive model described above. The role of the ‘Titmus school’ in informing debate within the Labour Party is cited as such an example (Smith, 1991).

### 3.3.5 Models of research use in social care practice (Walter et al., 2004)

Within social care a set of models of research use has been identified, but they may be generalisable across areas of social research uptake.

#### *The research-based practitioner model*

In this model it is the role and responsibility of the individual practitioner to keep up to date with research and apply it to practice. It views the use of research as a linear process in which practitioners have high levels of professional autonomy to change practice based on research, and in which professional education and training are important in enabling research use.

#### *The embedded research model*

This states that research-informed practice is achieved by embedding research in the systems and processes of social care, such as standards, policies, procedures and tools. Responsibility for ensuring research-informed practice lies with policy makers and service delivery managers, while funding restrictions, performance management, inspection and appraisal regimes are used to encourage research-informed practice. The use of research is a linear and instrumental process within this model.

#### *The organisational excellence model*

The organisational excellence model suggests that the key to successful research use lies with social care delivery organisations: their leadership, management and organisation. There is local adaptation of research findings and ongoing learning within organisations. Developing a research-minded culture within the organisations supports research use.

As noted by Davies et al. (2005), the relevance of this model is that it helpfully categorises research use environments and suggests the need for a customised approach to impact assessments contingent on the dominant modes of research uptake and use.

### 3.3.6 Collaborative approach/‘linkage and exchange’ (Kogan and Henkel, 1983; Lomas, 2000)

An extensive formative evaluation of the operation of the Rothschild principle in a UK government department (health) indicated the need for, and difficulties in achieving, a collaborative approach between researchers and potential users (Kogan and Henkel, 1983). If research is to make an impact then several steps are desirable to enable the boundaries between the research system and the policy system to be crossed. First, considerable collaborative work is necessary to generate a research agenda that meets the needs of users and will engage researchers. Second, institutional arrangements are necessary, including knowledge brokerage and the construction of ‘receptor bodies’, if the findings are to feed back into government departments in a form that is likely to be used. Further progress has been made recently by the UK Department of Health than was made in the original exercise (Kogan et al., 2006). There have also been important developments in other UK departments (see, for example, Sanderson ). On issues such as this it is sometimes, as again noted by Davies et al. (2005), unclear how far models are merely descriptive or go further and embody notions of prescription.

However, an unambiguously prescriptive approach has been taken with the most substantial development and operationalisation of such a collaborative approach: the ‘linkage and exchange’ model of the Canadian Health Services Research Foundation

(Lomas, 2000). This takes the level of collaboration further and encourages it during the course of the research as well as at the beginning and end. This type of approach was, in turn, featured in the review of government-funded research conducted by the National Audit Office (NAO, 2003). It could be argued, however, that there are limits on how far such approaches can, and should, be adopted by a research council operating under the Haldane principle.

### 3.4 Conceptual frameworks and approaches for impact assessment

Measuring the impacts of research is a topic that has historically proved difficult to nail down. A number of models and frameworks have set out ways in which research impact can be measured, although none is definitive and uncontested. Developing a conceptual framework to use in assessing the non-academic impacts from research is seen as being an important way of facilitating the organisation and comparison of a series of case studies (Hanney et al., 2004; *International Social Science Journal*, 2004).

Below we set out some of the most relevant and important of the recent frameworks. Many of these frameworks and approaches do not differ wildly in the elements contained within them; they essentially ‘cut the cake’ of research impacts in different ways. They are informed to varying degrees by the models of policy making and research utilisation described above. The Payback Framework used in the evaluation of the impacts of the Future of Work programme can encompass many different conceptual approaches due to its focus on impacts rather than mechanisms of research use, and this is discussed first.

#### 3.4.1 The Payback Framework (Buxton and Hanney, 1996; Hanney et al., 2004): development and limitations

This framework is described in the main report and consists of a multi-dimensional categorisation of benefits and a logic model of where benefits are likely to appear and how they can best be assessed. Developed originally for assessing the payback, or benefits, from health services research (Buxton and Hanney, 1994 and 1996) the logic model was extended as part of the analysis undertaken for the ESRC on assessing the impact of its research on non-academic audiences (Cave and Hanney, 1996). Issues of particular concern to the ESRC included the long timescales that can elapse before social science research makes an impact, and the problems of the contributive role made by any one project. This last point is also referred to as ‘additionality’, or the counterfactual, and relates to how far the impacts would have been achieved without the specific project in question having been conducted. The role of stocks of knowledge was implicit in the original logic model of the Payback Framework but was made more explicitly part of the model along with the flows of knowledge (Cave and Hanney, 1996; Hanney et al. 2000).

The logic model in the Payback Framework is compatible with acknowledgement that there can be both flows of knowledge to potential users – with sometimes possibly fairly rapid responses – and contributions to a stock of knowledge that might take a long time and complicated pathways to get to users. In this context it is particularly important to consider the role of a range of outputs from a research project.

A number of limitations of the forward-tracking or payback-type approach were identified in the report of the ESRC symposium by Davies et al. (2005). These included, first, the fact that because the impact from research is diverse and unlikely to be normal in its distribution then it might be necessary to include all projects within a programme rather than a sample, and that this would have serious resource implications. Second, the payback models, especially, tend to highlight linearity in moving from identification of research outputs to assessments of impacts. It is suggested that, 'such a view simplifies and under-specifies the complexity of the processes at work, and brings to the fore complex issues of *attribution* (was the research really the key driver?) and *additionality* (how does the contribution of the research compare to that of other drivers)' (Davies et al., 2005, p.17). The third limitation is that these approaches can often be comparatively neglectful of the *context* within which research is communicated and acted upon. There is some validity in all of these points, but to some extent they counteract each other. It is true that the payback approach can be resource-intensive. Nevertheless, it is to some extent the attention in the questionnaires and case studies to all the stages of the logic model that provides some of the context in which the research is conducted and communicated and allows issues of attribution and additionality to be addressed, even though they remain extremely difficult to resolve.

The multi-dimensional categorisation of impacts in the Payback Framework goes wider than many other models. This has been criticised as being unrealistic and, indeed, in practice it has been difficult to identify many examples of the final outcomes, even in the field of health research (Buxton et al., 2000 ; Wooding et al., 2004). Some, nevertheless, have been identified.

Whilst the Payback Model is not limited to considering the impact of research made through any one model, it does give particular focus to boundary issues analysed by Kogan and Henkel (1983). The concept of interfaces between the research system and the wider political, professional and industrial environment, and the level of permeability at the interfaces, are key elements of the original model. These were elaborated into an 'interfaces and receptor' model (Hanney et al., 2003) that could inform the assessment of the impact of health research on health policy and help identify factors that are likely to increase the utilisation of research.

#### 3.4.2 Framework for assessing research impact on a non-academic audience (Molas-Gallart et al., 1999)

This framework for assessing the non-academic research funded by the ESRC consists of three elements: research outputs, diffusion channels, and impacts.

**Research outputs** are the new skills and tacit knowledge that are embedded in individuals and the codified knowledge that is generated. The codified knowledge may be instrumental, in the form of new methodologies and tools, conceptual, or consist of descriptions of causal relationships.

**Diffusion channels** are the methods by which research is transferred to a non-academic audience. This can be through the usual channels of the media and publication, but can also be through networks between researchers and non-academic users. Networks can also

be generated by research, with researchers coming into contact with new non-academics through the process of research itself.

**Impacts** are the ways in which a non-academic audience uses the research outputs. This will vary depending upon the subject addressed by the researcher. The outputs may be used as tools to solve practical problems directly (without further modification) or indirectly (if modifications of the concepts or additional training are required). They are key intermediary variables in the process of realising the societal value of research. The conceptual and theoretical outputs (in the form of descriptions of causal relationships) can influence judgement by justifying decisions already taken, confirming the adequacy of strategies or supporting decision makers in the choosing between different alternatives.

This framework was applied to assess the AIDS program of the ESRC to map the networks of researchers and relevant non-academic beneficiaries, distinguishing between pre-existing and generated ones. It also traced the post-research activities of researchers and tracked whether and how the researchers used the outputs of the projects in their subsequent extra-academic careers. The applied framework is not linear, as it allows not only for sequential impacts but also for simultaneous ones. The study also involved the application of the ‘user panel’ approach to study the non-academic outputs of the then ongoing Innovation programme.

#### 3.4.3 Approach to measure the impact of health research (Lavis et al., 2003)

This approach focuses on the impact of research knowledge in terms of informing decision making, not the ultimate goal of societal changes (i.e. the change of the health care status). First, the target audience has to be identified; in case of the health research this might be the general public, patients and families, clinicians, managers, researcher and development officers or public policy makers. Impact measures are categorised in three groups depending on who plays the active role in promoting the research:

1. Producer-pushed measures – when the researcher is the active promoter
2. User-pull measures – when the decision maker is taking the active role in identifying relevant research
3. Exchange measures – in case of joint effort by both groups to ask and answer more decision relevant questions.

Within each of these categories, measures can be grouped according to their focus on either:

- a) The process (e.g. number of papers published)
- b) The intermediate outcomes (e.g. change in awareness about the research)
- c) The full outcomes (e.g. decisions that reflect impact by research).

It is important to select which of the three categories is most appropriate for the assessment that is being undertaken. This allows selection of measures of impact based on the available resources. It is also important to assess not only whether research was used, but also how – whether it was instrumental, conceptual or structural. This is different to the Payback Model, which does not start by classifying impacts by the key players driving

the impact but rather examines the impacts and works back to look at how they came about.

#### 3.4.4 Measures of impact of publicly funded research in the humanities, arts and social sciences (CHASS) (Council for the Humanities, 2005)

This Australian impact assessment, took the Payback Model developed by HERG/RAND Europe as its starting point. It is part of the overall assessment of the excellence of research funded by CHASS and encompasses the quality of research, the impact of the research and its capability (in terms of capacity building and conceptual dissemination).

The four conceptual steps in mapping the research process within the CHASS framework are:

- The origin of funding (who is funding the research, such as private or public sector)
- The production of research (where the research is done and who it is done by, such as university or government researchers)
- The outputs of research (dissemination channels of the research, such as journals or the media)
- The outcomes of research (in terms of societal benefits).

#### 3.4.5 Framework for the strategic evaluation of the influence of IDRC-sponsored research on public policy (International Development Research Centre)

In 2001 a background paper on the framework for the evaluation of IDRC (Lindquist, 2001) highlighted concepts in the fields of knowledge utilisation, policy communities and networks, policy-oriented learning and conflict, and agenda-setting. It also recommended that the framework should not integrate all of the available concepts, as it would make the framework overly complex. Rather, it suggested distilling only the crucial information that would need to be supplied to the evaluation unit. This would leave the remaining concepts to be used only to understand questions about the framework itself.

The original framework for IDRC identified three types of influence: expanding policy capacities, broadening policy horizons, and affecting policy regimes. A fourth, developing new policy regimes, was added later. This fourth category aims to capture research that provides input into emerging policy areas that currently lack an evidence base (Graham, 2004).

The framework identified a number of types of policy influence experienced by IDRC staff (Carden, 2004):

- Dissemination of research results to policy makers, in appropriate formats
- Interaction between researchers and policy makers during the design of the research, dissemination, and/or the research process itself
- Public dissemination of, and debate on, the research results
- Use of the research results by groups in society to encourage or advocate change
- Strengthening organisations in terms of their capacity to carry out policy enquiry

- Strengthening key individuals within a generation of researchers who will, in the future, be in a position to implement or encourage policy change.

### 3.5 Practical issues and examples of the assessment of impacts.

Many practical issues were explored and commented upon in previous studies. Some of the key points are discussed here along with some examples of the findings. This section is inevitably selective and concentrates on some of the issues most relevant for the assessment of the impact from the FoW programme.

#### 3.5.1 Timing of assessments

As demonstrated by the models of policy making and research utilisation, there is considerable variation regarding when the wider impacts from research might be expected to accrue. Respondents to the ESRC's pre-symposium consultation suggested that the most appropriate time to assess non-academic impacts would vary depending on the impacts that were being assessed (Davies et al., 2005). Useful information about the most appropriate time to conduct assessments comes from previous assessments of research programmes, where the assessments were conducted at one point in time, even though the projects in question had been completed for varying lengths of time. Buxton et al. (1999) recommended that assessment be completed about two years after the completion of the project, and Molas-Gallart et al. (1999) recommended leaving between one and two years before conducting the assessment of a project. In both cases, therefore, the proposal was for a rolling system of assessment of the projects within a programme rather than a one-off exercise.

#### 3.5.2 Institutionalisation of impact assessment

Ad hoc retrospective impact assessments can face resistance from some researchers, who point out that such exercises impose an additional burden on them that was not stated at the time the research was commissioned. In view of this, Buxton et al. (1999) recommended: 'at the start of the project the researcher should be given copies of an end of project report form and an impacts assessment questionnaire.' (p. 134).

#### 3.5.3 Direction of assessment

In assessing the impacts from a specific research programme, Molas-Gallart et al. (1999) considered moving in both directions – i.e. from the research to impacts and tracing backwards from impacts to the research output of specific, short-term projects – but thought that the latter would be particularly difficult to do. Therefore, they concentrated on tracing impacts from the bottom up, from generation through to diffusion and application. In practice this forward direction is the approach taken in most applications of the Payback Framework, although there is scope for working in both directions.

#### 3.5.4 Unit of analysis

Some argue that assessing impact at the level of individual projects is not an appropriate approach (Cozzens, 1996). In their assessment of the impact of the ESRC's AIDS programme, Molas-Gallart et al. (1999) included all the projects. The skewed distribution of impacts called into question, they claimed, the use of standard sampling

techniques. In applications of the Payback Framework, all projects within the North Thames NHS R&D Programme were sent questionnaires and then some projects were selected to form the basis of case studies. A purposive selection process was used rather than any of the traditional sampling approaches (Buxton et al., 1999).

### 3.5.5 Data collection techniques

Molas-Gallart et al. (1999) did not use a mail questionnaire. In their recommendations they pointed out that whilst they were cheaper, they may fail to clarify the objectives of some of the questions, and their relevance, because of the lack of opportunity for real-time dialogue. Whilst they saw face-to-face interviews as the best solution, their cost and time-consuming nature meant that they recommended telephone interviews. One of the key advantages of interviewing is that it allows questions that can attempt to tease out the nature of the contribution that the specific project in question has made.

As noted above, Buxton et al. (1999) did send questionnaires to the 164 PIs of the projects included in the impact assessment. The case studies then involved face-to-face interviews. Part of this project also involved a comparison between the results obtained by the two approaches, mainly to see how far the less resource-intensive questionnaire approach was appropriate (Hanney et al., 1999). A scoring system was devised and this indicated that a questionnaire could be a useful and sufficiently reliable technique to obtain a broad-brush picture, but the case studies provide a fuller picture.

### 3.5.6 Identification of users

It can be very difficult to identify the most appropriate users with whom to conduct interviews. At one level the whole approach of the ESRC in encouraging researchers to identify users has been criticised in the article by a former member of the council's evaluation committee: 'Users and unicorns: a discussion of mythical beasts in interactive science' (Shove and Rip, 2000). In the assessment of the AIDS programme researchers were asked during the interview to name users who might be willing to be interviewed. These users were interviewed and asked to provide names of further potential users who were then approached in a second stage of the user interview programme. Sometimes the users in the first round may only provide an avenue for the dissemination of the findings and may not be responsible for the application of the research results. This snowball technique proved appropriate, but the time elapsed since the completion of the projects made the tracing difficult.

### 3.5.7 The role of the researcher in promoting uptake of the findings

There is considerable evidence about the important role that researchers themselves can play in promoting the utilisation of their findings (Wooding et al., 2005). Such activities also formed a major part of what was examined in the assessment of the impact from the AIDS programme (Molas-Gallart, 1999). There is much to be gained from such activities, but not all researchers necessarily want to play such a role (Mays, 1990). Furthermore, some commentators have suggested there is a potential paradox in that whilst interaction may result in greater use of the evidence, it might also lead to a partial selection of evidence not consistent with a systematic overview of the evidence (Hanney, 2005).

### 3.5.8 Impact at programme level and the role of the programme director

The application of the Payback Framework to the North Thames R&D included the assessment of a programme of mental health research. There was no clear evidence that the programme as a whole had added value to the processes, outputs, or influenced the outcomes, of the individual projects (Buxton et al., 1999). As a result, the following recommendation was made: 'The ESRC approach of appointing a programme director...is a possible model with which an NHS region could usefully experiment.' (p. 131). In fact the assessment of the AIDS programme identified there had been an informal approach to management and dissemination, with a programme co-ordinator rather than a director (Molas-Gallart, 1999). The other ESRC programme examined, the Innovation Programme, had a more tightly managed style. Notwithstanding the informal nature of the dissemination at programme level, the AIDS programme co-ordinator suggested that in terms of both theory and policy it had had the most impact of any ESRC programme. Furthermore, at the end of the programme the researchers attempted to persuade the ESRC to fund another round of research.

### 3.5.9 Does the quality of the research influence its level of impact

The *International Social Science Journal* (2004) suggested in its editorial that the evidence about the link between research quality and impact was mixed. The frequently cited study by Weiss and Bucuvalas (1980) was clear, however, that policy makers would be more inclined to use research that was considered to be of good quality. Their reasoning held good in a case study conducted in the UK using the Payback Framework (Hanney, 1994).

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## CHAPTER 4 Analysis of survey of principal investigators and summary of user interviews

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As part of this research project we surveyed the PIs from the 27 grants supported by the FoW programme. The survey was an online survey using the MMIC survey tool.<sup>4</sup> This allowed participants to enter and exit the survey at will, filling in answers over a period of time if they wished. Of the 27 potential responses, we received 23 responses; although due to the online nature of the survey, one response was not completed and contained no information other than the data we had included as part of the study.

The following analysis of the data gathered through the survey was performed using SPSS<sup>5</sup> and Excel, depending upon the nature of the data and analysis required. During the analysis, the links between inputs (such as grant size) and outputs/outcomes (such as the number of policy impacts produced by a project) have been investigated. These are included at the end of the analysis in order to understand how several different inputs (e.g. money and policy input at outset) could be linked to different outputs (policy impacts, practice impacts and promotions). If applicable, the question asked in the survey is in parentheses in each figure legend. The analysis is split into ten sections:

1. **Researcher information** – covering the length, volume, methodologies, expectations of the grant, etc.
2. **Outputs 1: career** – covering the qualifications and secondments to policy making organisations as a result of the project
3. **Outputs 2: research** – covering the benefits to future research arising from the project
4. **Outputs 3: policy** – covering the benefits to current and future policy arising from the project
5. **Outputs 4: practice** – covering the benefits to current and future work practices arising from the project

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<sup>4</sup> MMIC™ (Multimode Interviewing Capability) is a comprehensive information system under development by RAND, building on work by CentERdata in The Netherlands. For more details see: <http://www.rand.org/labor/roybald/mmhc.html>

<sup>5</sup> SPSS: <http://www.spss.com>, Microsoft Excel 2000: <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/FX010858001033.aspx>

6. **Networks** – covering the networks affected by the project (e.g. with policy makers, media, other academics, etc.)
7. **Socio-economic outputs** – covering any wider socio-economic impacts arising from the project
8. **Effect of the FoW programme** – covering the added effect of the project being part of the FoW programme
9. **Publications/presentations/media** – covering the outputs from the projects (in the form of publications, presentations and media)
10. **Links between inputs and outcomes** – covering the potential reasons why some projects might produce more policy/practice outcomes than others.

At the end of the survey analysis is a section examining the issues that came out of the user interviews performed as part of the research. The users were nominated by PIs as part of the survey, with the definition of ‘user’ left to the PI to decide; we only stipulated a desire to understand the wider influence of the research. Users were contacted by email and then interviewed by telephone.

#### 4.1 Researcher information

The 27 projects in the FoW programme all received different values of grant, with the projects all lasting between 4 and 45 months. Project duration and the value of grant are shown in Figure 5. The grants are numbered, but not in the order that they occurred in FoW. Figures 5 to 7 are based upon ESRC data and therefore contain all projects.

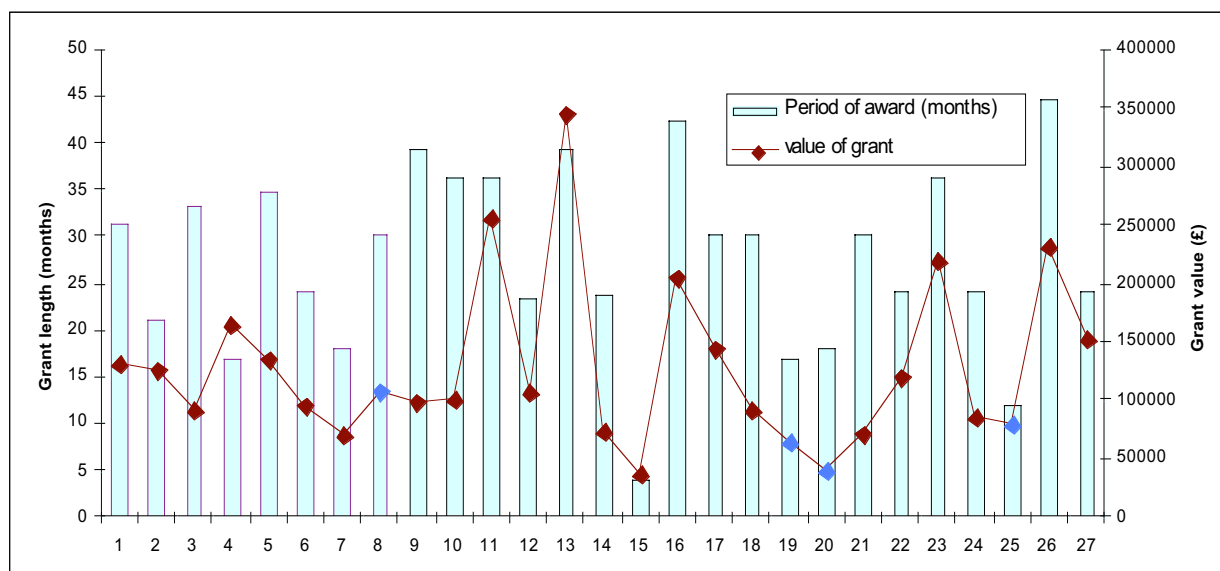


Figure 5. FoW project grant duration and value (blue diamonds in the ‘value of grant’ line represent the four projects that did not provide survey responses)

It is also interesting to see how large the teams for each research project were, and Figure 6 compares the team size to the value of the grant. It shows that the value of the grant is relatively well related to the number of people employed upon it.

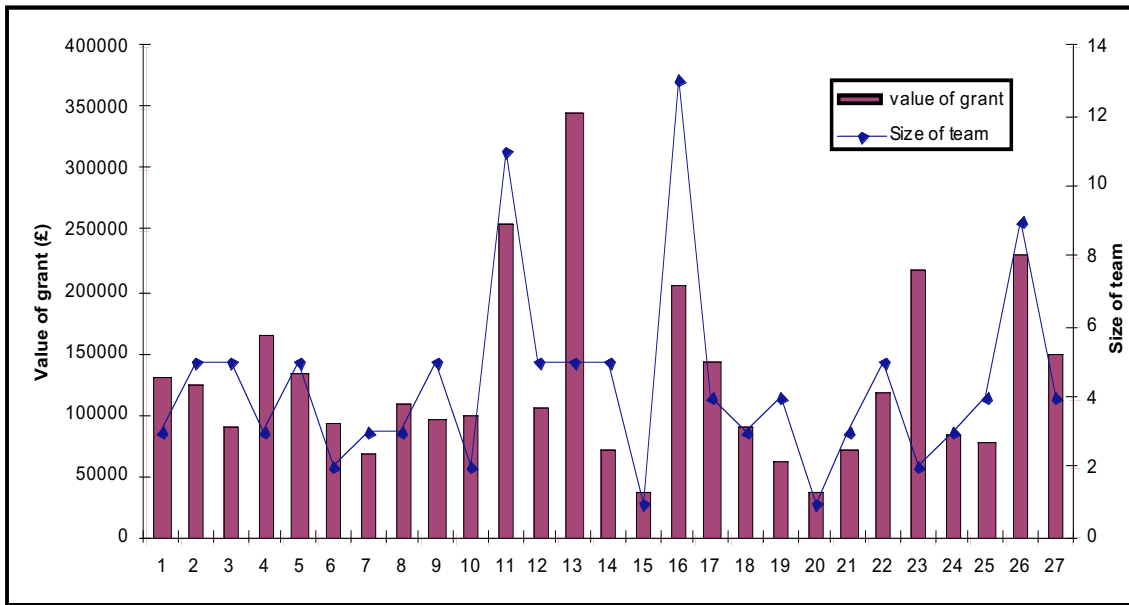


Figure 6. FoW grant value and project team size

The duration and the timing of the grants in the programme are shown in Figure 2.

The research projects came from a variety of disciplines, ranging from Sociology to Management and Business Studies. The PIs were asked to give one primary discipline for their project. The breakdown of primary disciplines is shown in Figure 7.

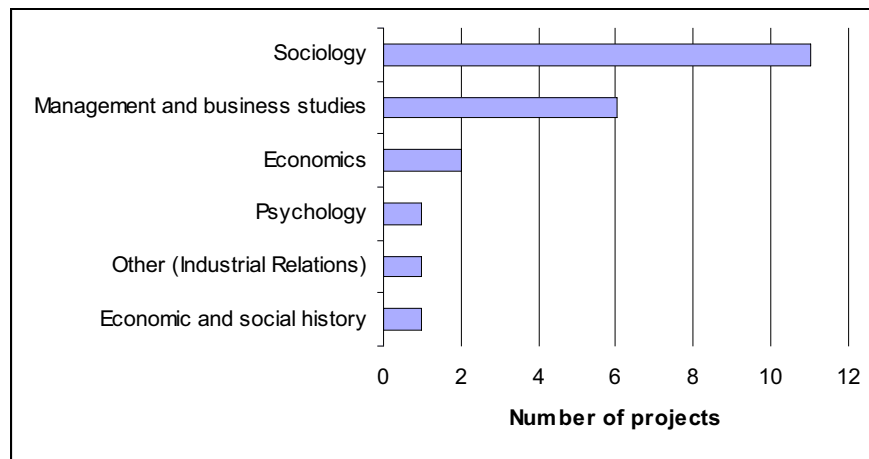


Figure 7. Number of FoW projects citing primary research disciplines (Could you please identify one primary and any contributory research disciplines for your research?)

The PIs were also asked to name the secondary disciplines involved in the research. The list of primary and secondary disciplines is shown in Table 2.

Primary discipline	Secondary disciplines
Economics	Sociology
Sociology	Economics, psychology, economic and social history, management and business studies, computing and statistics
Management and business studies	Sociology, political science
Management and business studies	Economics
Management and business studies	Other (Industrial relations)
Sociology	Economics, management and business studies, computing/stats
Sociology	Economics, management and business studies, computing/stats
Sociology	Economics, management and business studies
Sociology	Management and business studies
Management and business studies	Economics, psychology
Sociology	Economics
Management and business studies	Economics, sociology
Sociology	Other (demography)
Sociology	Economics, management and business studies, computing/stats
Sociology	Economics, psychology, management and business studies
Other (Industrial relations)	Sociology, management and business studies
Economics	Psychology
Sociology	Education, economic and social history
Management and business studies	Economics, sociology
Economic and social history	Economics, sociology
Sociology	Social anthropology
Psychology	Economics, sociology

Table 2. Primary and secondary disciplines of the FoW projects

When asked what the relationship of their research was to previous work by the PI, most suggested that their FoW project had a complex relationship to their previous research (Figure 8).

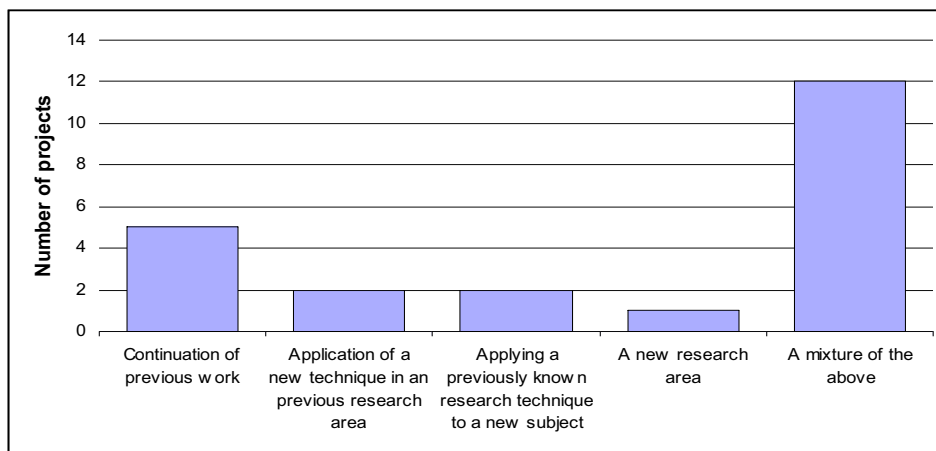


Figure 8. Relationship of proposal to previous research work (Which of the following was the proposal primarily?)

The projects used a range of methods (Figure 9), with most projects using more than one method to investigate their research question. The ‘other’ methods specified in the survey were archival research, database creation and comparison to previous datasets.

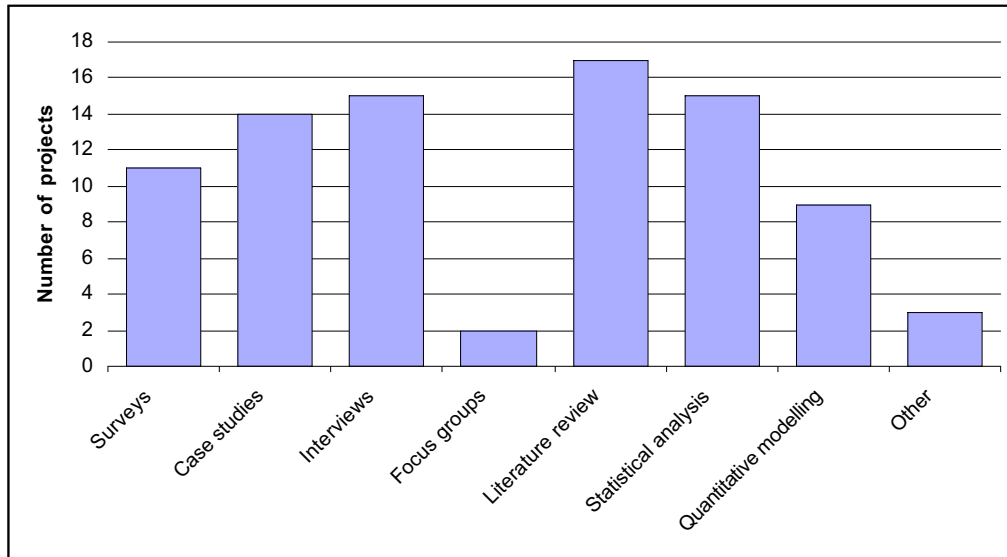


Figure 9. Range of methodologies used in the FoW programme and the no. of projects using them (What techniques and methods are used in your research project?)

The PIs were also asked if they had included policy makers in the original design of the project. Most suggested that they had included them (Figure 10). PIs were also asked if the reviewers’ comments had significantly altered the project. Only two PIs suggested that they had (Figure 11).

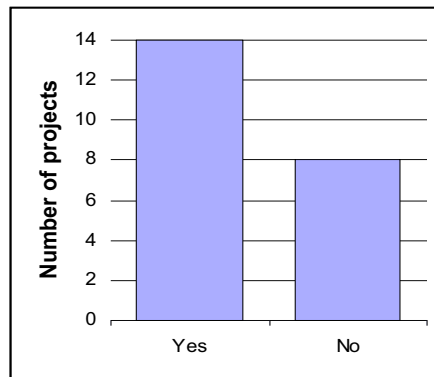


Figure 10. Policy makers involved in the original design of the research (Were policy makers or other potential users involved in the original design of the project?)

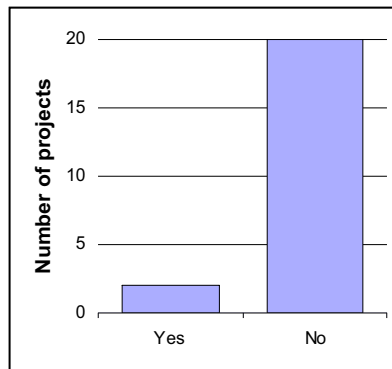


Figure 11. Effect of reviewers' comments (Did reviewers' comments make a significant difference to the project?)

The PIs were asked whether they had received co-funding or support in kind for their research projects. Only four of the 22 respondents suggested that they had received co-funding (Figure 12). These projects were funded by the CIPD (£50k), the Work Foundation (£15k) and the host university (funding the researcher's salary); one researcher did not state what the co-funding was. Nine of the researchers received support in kind (Figure 13), with support including membership of advisory groups, providing locations for interviews, train tickets and accessing study organisations and interviewees.

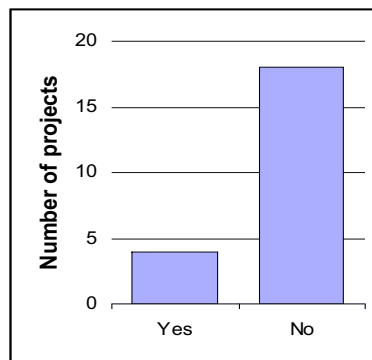


Figure 12. Co-funding for research (Was your research co-funded?)

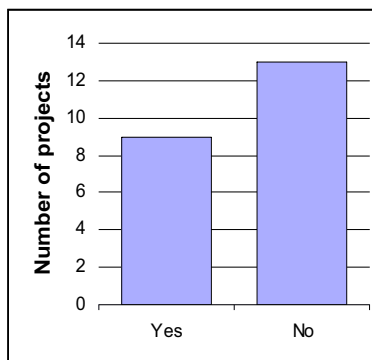
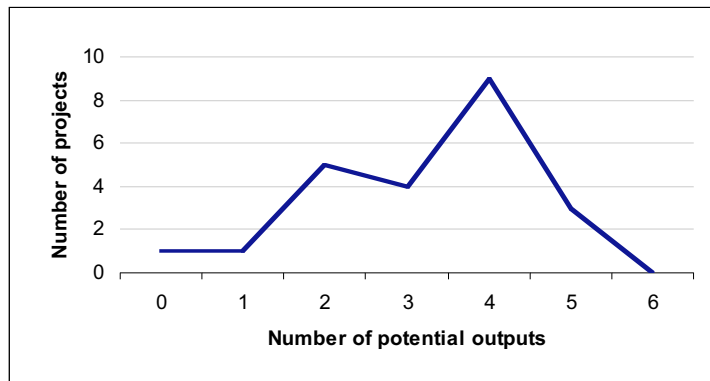


Figure 13. Support in kind for research (Did your project receive support in kind?)

We also asked researchers to try and identify the expected outcomes of their research prior to it occurring. All of the researchers expected publications would be a major output of their research (Figure 14). Few people thought that practice impacts or career development would be a main output or outcome of their research. Most of the PIs thought that their projects would have multiple outputs and outcomes, although no-one thought that their work would have impacts in all of the seven categories offered to them



(Figure 15).

Figure 14. Expected outcomes from the research (no. projects expecting particular outcomes)

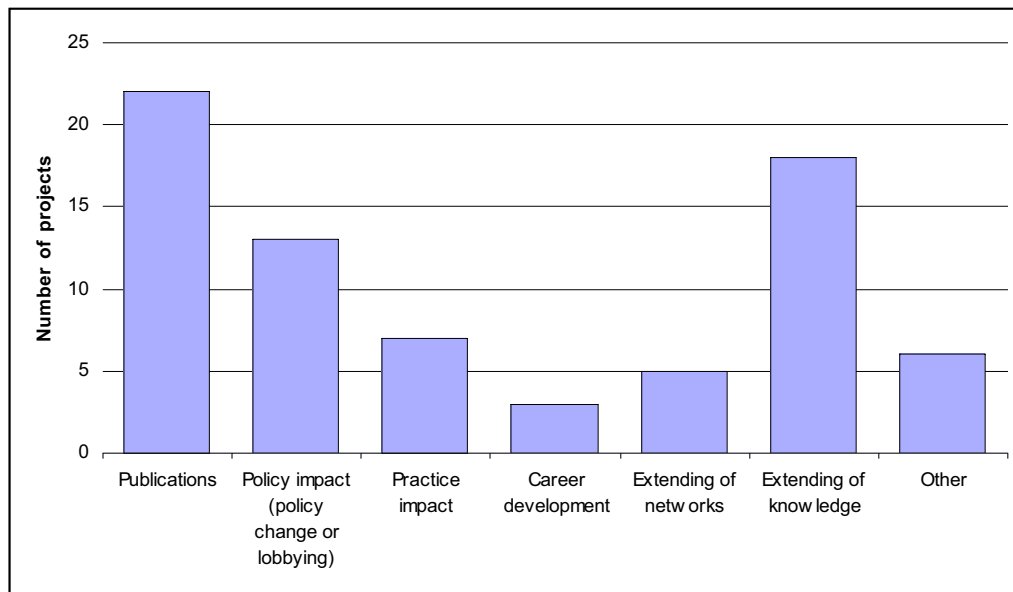


Figure 15. Number of expected outcomes from research per project (What did you expect the main outputs and outcomes of the project to be?)

#### 4.2 Outputs 1: career

PIs were asked whether the FoW grant had contributed to any qualifications or promotions for their research team. Twelve grants did lead to qualifications or promotions, and these ranged between one and six per grant. Figure 16 shows the types of qualification or promotion coming out of the grants, and also how much the FoW grant contributed to the qualifications/promotions. PIs were given the option of the FoW

providing a small, moderate or considerable contribution to each qualification or promotion. The promotions were all either senior research fellowships, lectureships, senior lectureships, readers, or chairs. One promotion was a modification of the researcher’s contract.

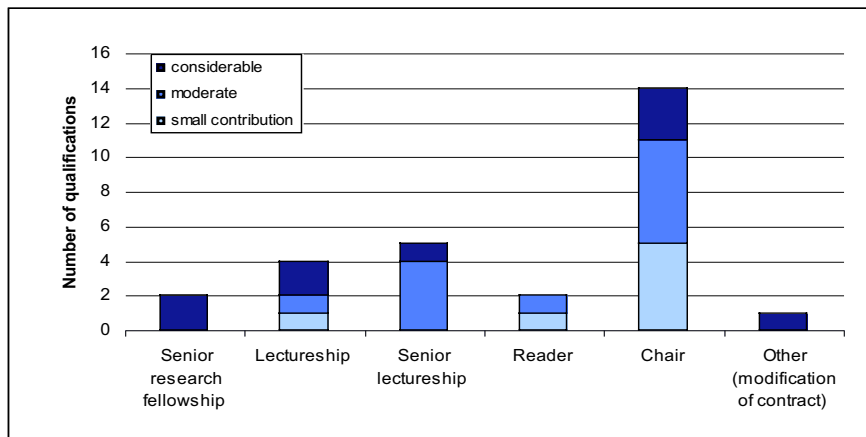


Figure 16. Qualifications/promotions and their attribution to FoW<sup>6</sup> (Has the grant contributed to qualifications or promotions for members of the research team?)

We also asked PIs to identify any secondments to government as a result of their FoW research. Most PIs were unable to provide any examples of secondment (only six of the 22 could provide responses). These six PIs provided details of nine secondments, and all of these were either moderately or considerably attributable to the FoW grants (Figure 17).

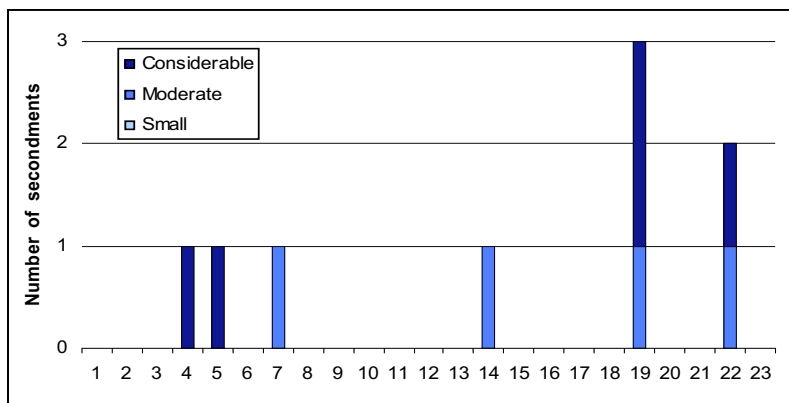


Figure 17. Number of secondments to government and attribution to FoW (Has the grant contributed to you or a member of the research team securing a secondment or transferring into employment within policy or practice?)

### 4.3 Outputs 2: research

PIs thought that their research had affected the understanding of the field in three ways: solidifying the direction of a field, advancing knowledge incrementally in the field, and

<sup>6</sup> ‘Attribution’ here means the level of influence of the FoW research project on any impact that the researcher has had. It does not refer to the level of influence of the researcher on policy or practice.

changing the direction of the field. Most felt they had advanced knowledge incrementally the field (Figure 18).

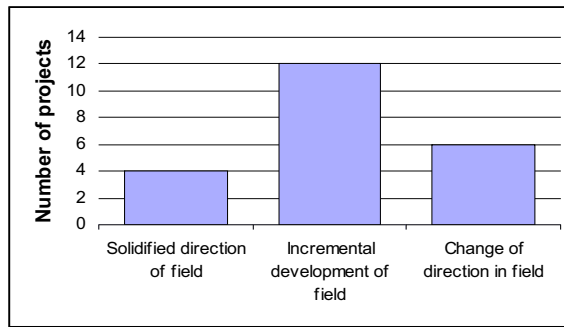
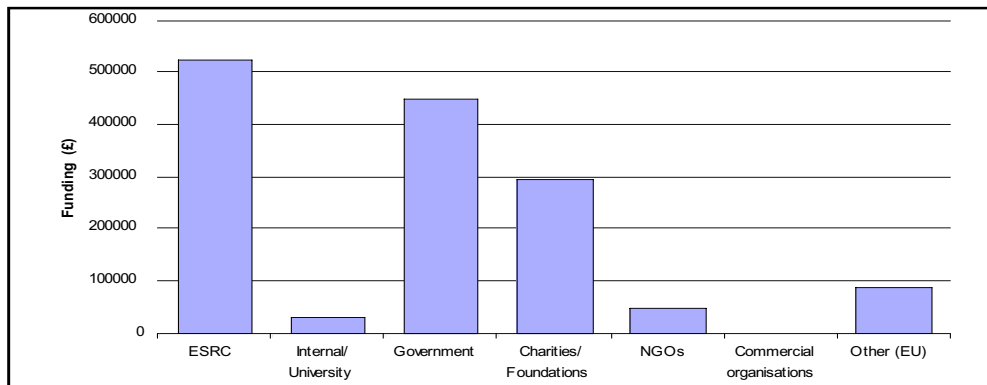


Figure 18. Impact of FoW research on the field of study (How has the project affected the understanding in the field of study?)

Subsequent research by the PI or group that could be attributed to the FoW research was mainly funded by the ESRC, government and foundations. These three groups also contributed the most money to subsequent research grants (Figure 19). The number of research grants followed the same pattern as the funding, suggesting that no one group is



funding with significantly larger grants than any other.

Figure 19. Research funders for subsequent research by PIs and research groups (income) (Have the project findings, methodology or theoretical developments helped generate subsequent research by members of the team?)

PIs were also asked if their research had influenced other researchers. Perhaps surprisingly, few researchers suggested that it had (only seven of the 22). These seven PIs nominated 14 instances of influencing other researchers. One of the 14 instances was not attributed to the FoW research, but the other 13 were mainly considered to be either moderately or considerably attributable to the FoW research (Figure 20).

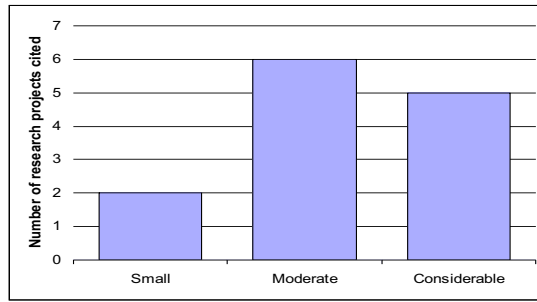


Figure 20. Attribution of the influence on others research to FoW (What was the contribution of FoW grant to this subsequent research?)

#### 4.4 Outputs 3: policy

When asked where they felt their FoW research had had a policy impact, most PIs suggested that it was at the level of national government, trade unions and professional organisations such as the CIPD<sup>7</sup> (Figure 21). Most impacts were in the UK, but a small number (nine of 50) occurred internationally.

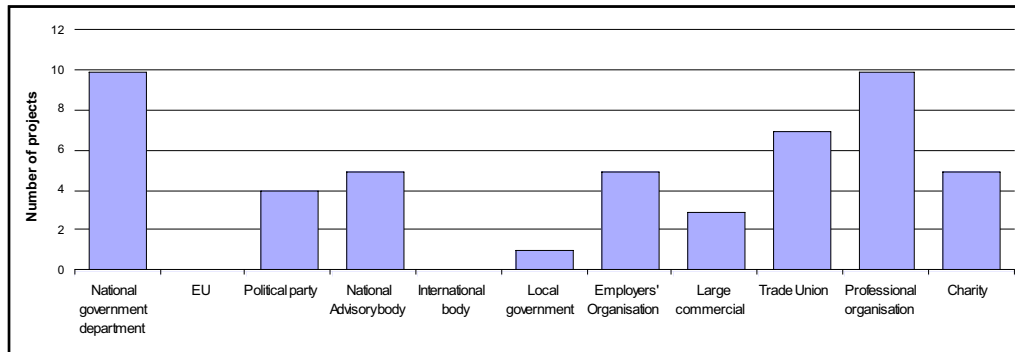


Figure 21. Organisations on which FoW research had an impact (Are you aware of your research being used to inform policy making, advocacy or agenda setting by any of the following organisations?)

In terms of the impact on policy, most PIs felt their research suggested policy should move in a particular direction (Figure 22). However, the direction suggested was not always the same as current policy direction (Figure 23).

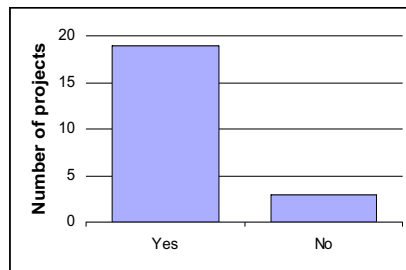


Figure 22. Did FoW research suggest policy should move in a particular direction?

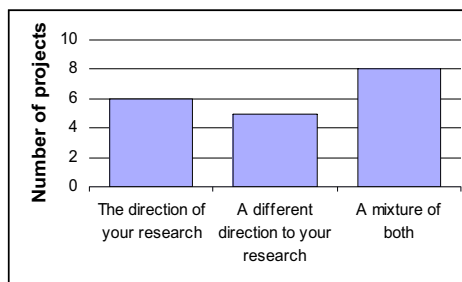


Figure 23. The direction of policy in relation to the research (What was the direction that policy and/or practice was moving in?)

<sup>7</sup> CIPD – The Chartered Institute of Personnel Development

When asked to identify policy impacts from their research, two thirds of the PIs could identify at least one policy impact. Overall, the 14 PIs identified 18 policy impacts (Figure 24) ranging from lone parent policies to the monitoring of the minimum wage. Most PIs could not identify specific documents that had been affected by their research, however (only one PI cited any policy documents).

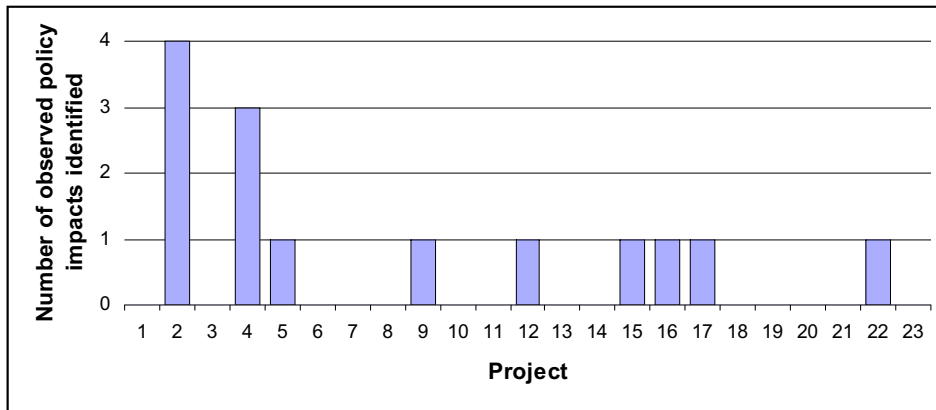


Figure 24. Number of policy impacts per grant (Could you please provide more details about the most significant policy impacts of the project?)

When asked if their FoW research had had a more general or more instrumental effect (on a scale of 1–5, where 1 is ‘mostly instrumental’ and 5 is ‘mostly general’), most PIs felt that they had been mostly general in their contribution to the policies identified. Of these policies, the contribution of FoW research to the PI’s impact on policy was smaller if the research only had very general effects on policy development (Figure 25).

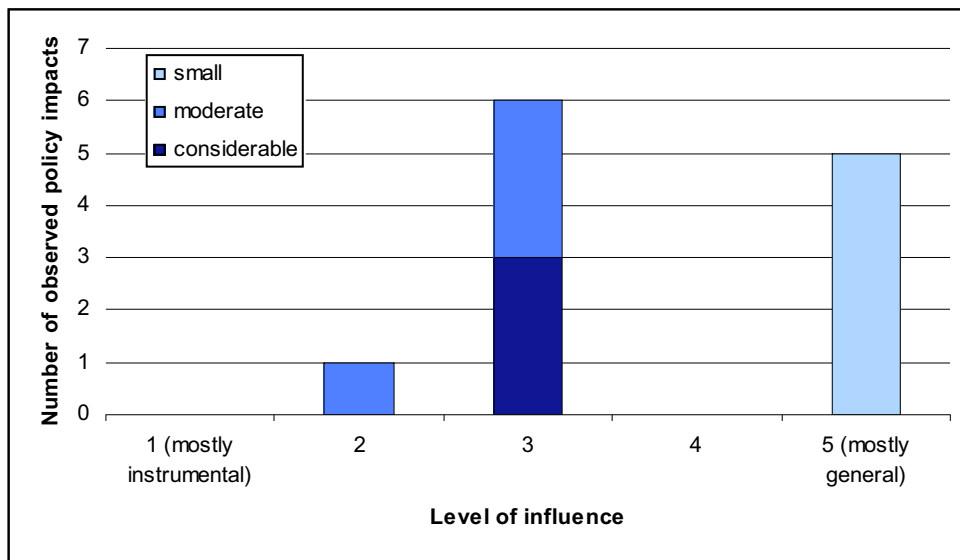


Figure 25. Level of influence of FoW research (1–5, where 1 is ‘mostly instrumental’ and 5 is ‘mostly general’) and the attribution of research impact to the FoW project “?

In terms of the influence on policy of their FoW research, PIs felt that they had mainly had an incremental effect on policy changes, rather than changing the direction of policy. This time, the spread of the attribution of these impacts to FoW was wider and did not show a pattern (Figure 26).

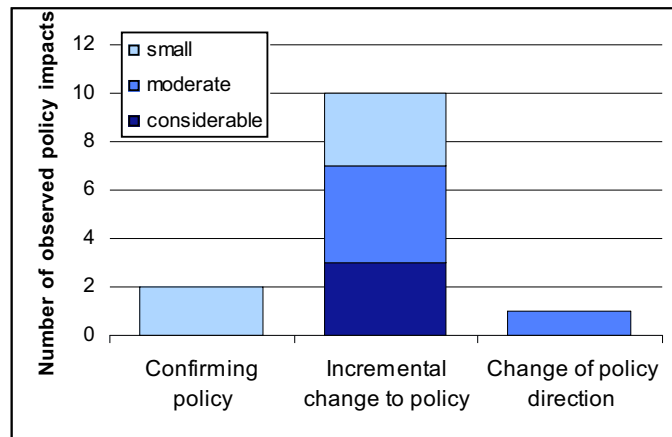


Figure 26. Influence of research on policy (How did research influence policy and the attribution of that influence to FoW?)

Research was disseminated to the policy makers using a variety of methods, but publications were the most common method (Figure 27). One response was not coded since it was ambiguous as to which category it would fall into.

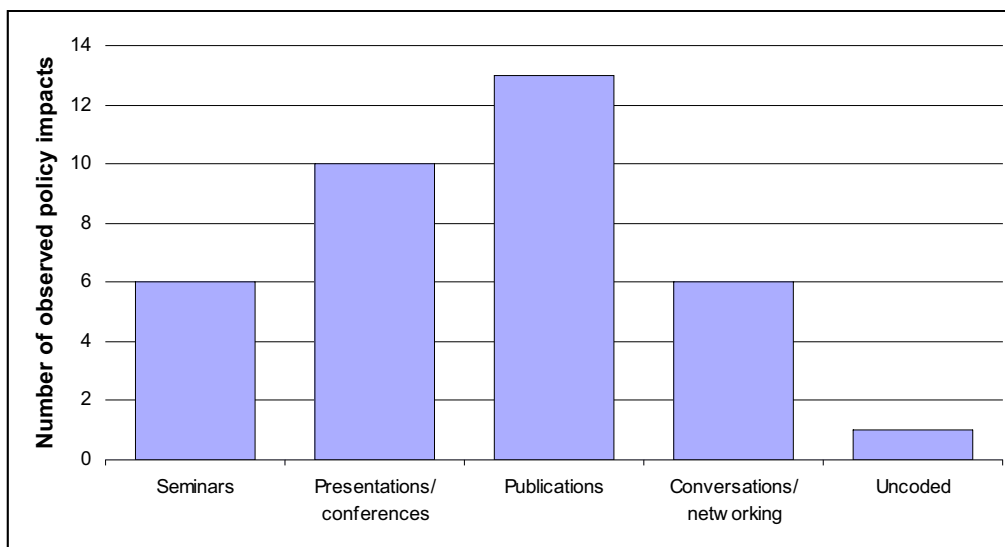


Figure 27. Methods used to disseminate to policy makers (How was research disseminated in these cases of policy impact?)

When asked about the importance of different dissemination methods in getting research to policy makers (as opposed to the methods the PIs actually used), there was a range of responses. We coded the responses to show the method (or methods) that each PI thought most important based on the scores each method was given. The results of this coding exercise are shown in Figure 28, and clearly indicate that PIs think that academic publications are the most important method of providing information for policy (with nearly twice as many PIs scoring it as either the most important, or one of the most

important, methods for disseminating research to policy makers than the next dissemination method – ‘discussions with policy makers’). Interestingly, none of the PIs thought that the FoW publications, explicitly including the Robert Taylor FoW series, were most important in reaching a policy audience. This is in contrast to the views of policy makers themselves, who when interviewed often bought up the Robert Taylor reports as an example of how to make research usefully accessible to policy makers.

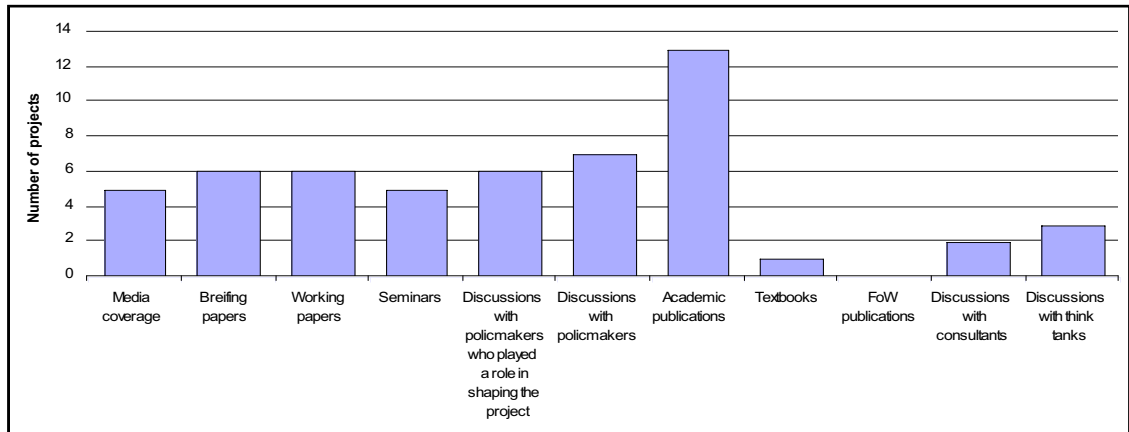


Figure 28. PI rated most important methods of dissemination (On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being not at all important and 5 being vital, could you please indicate how important each of the following channels is in facilitating the policy influence of your research?)

When asked to identify potential future policy impacts, PIs found it more difficult to be specific and those who answered in the affirmative only identified one policy each (except for one PI who identified two). In total, this produced ten potential policy impacts. Eight of these were given a level of influence (1–5, where 1 is ‘mostly instrumental’ and 5 is ‘mostly general’) and an attribution to the FoW programme (Figure 29). These do not show a pattern, in contrast with realised policy impacts, so more general impacts are not necessarily less attributable to the FoW projects.

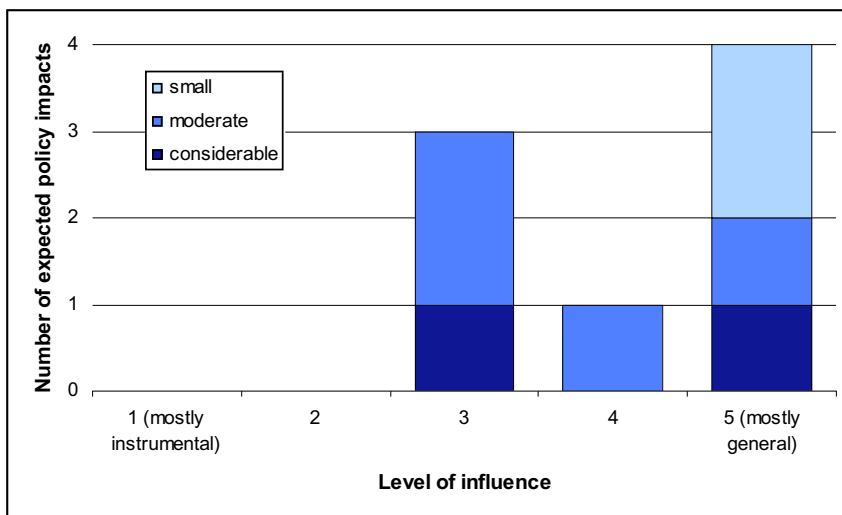


Figure 29. Influence of research on future policy (How will research influence policy and the attribution of that influence to FoW?)

Since our definition of policy is broad ranging and does not just cover government policy, we asked PIs whether they were aware of the impact of their FoW research on HR policies in a variety of employment sectors. The results, shown in Figure 30 suggest that only around half of PIs know definitively if their research has had an impact on HR policies in any given sector, and of that half, most do not think they have had an impact on HR policies.

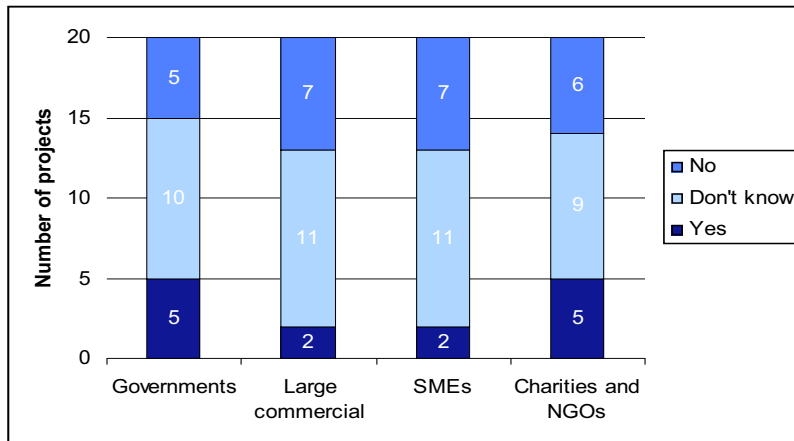


Figure 30. Did FoW projects affect the HR policies of organisations? (Are you aware of your research being used to inform HR policies of any of the following employers?)

#### 4.5 Outputs 4: practice

PIs found it difficult to identify practice impacts from their research. Only five PIs managed to name impacts their research had had on practice. The seven impacts named by PIs influenced practice by either confirming, causing an incremental change to, or changing the direction of, practice. Practice impacts mentioned included managerial behaviour and trade union negotiating stances. The contribution of FoW research to the impacts showed a similar pattern to that seen for realised policy impacts, with more considerable contribution of the FoW research to the impact if the influence is to change policy direction (Figure 31).

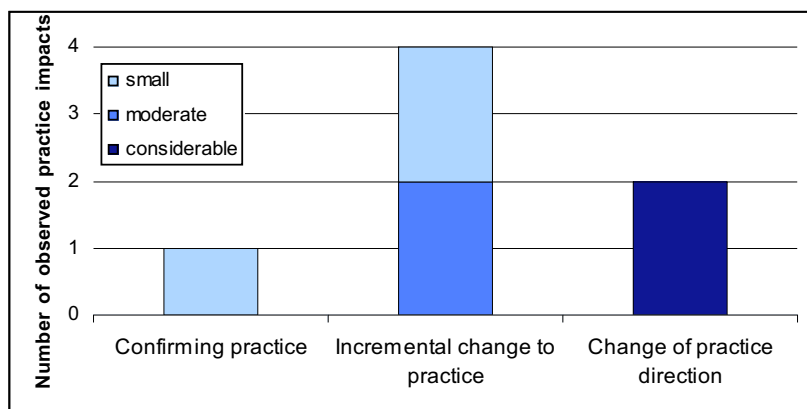


Figure 31. Influence of research on practice (How did research influence practice and the attribution of that influence to FoW?)

When asked to identify future impacts on practice, PIs again identified seven practice impacts (across six PIs). Practices likely to be influenced included training and approach to work design. The likely level of influence of research on practice was spread across the three categories (confirming, causing an incremental change to, or changing the direction of, practice) and the attribution to FoW did not show as strong a pattern as with realised practice impacts (Figure 32).

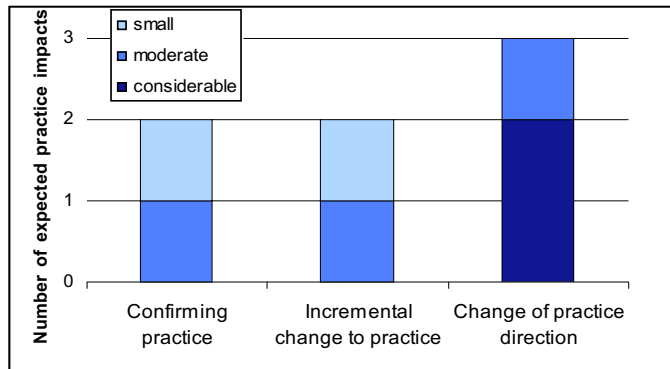


Figure 32. Influence of research on future practice (How will research influence practice and the attribution of that influence to FoW?)

As with the dissemination of research to policy makers, we also asked about the importance of different methods for disseminating to practitioners. Again, we coded the responses to tally the most important method(s) scored by the PIs and the results are shown in Figure 33.

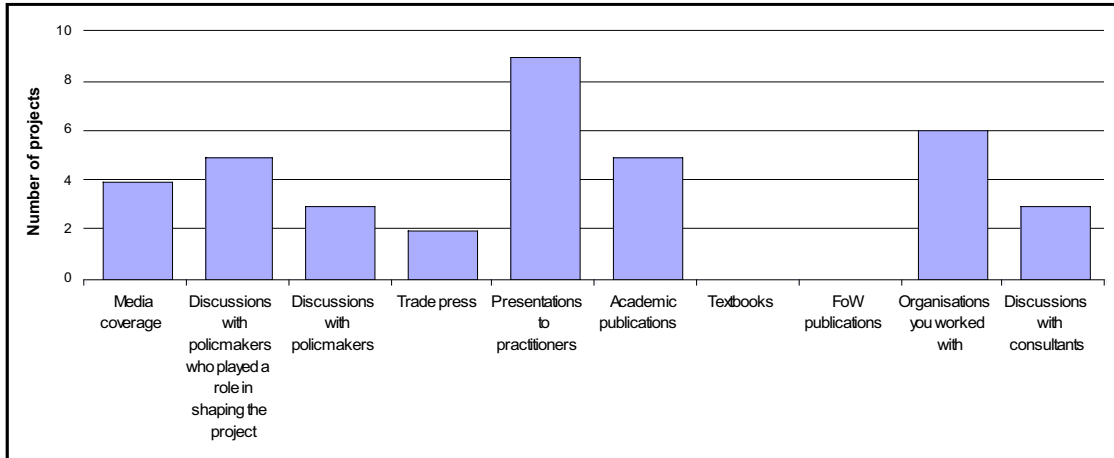


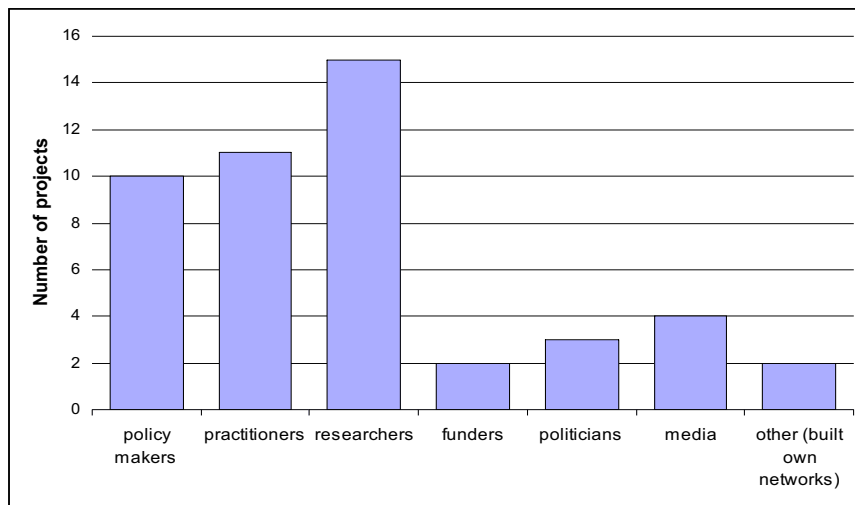
Figure 33. Most important dissemination routes to practitioners [according to PIs] (How important were the following channels of dissemination in facilitating the practice influence of your research on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being not at all important and 5 being vital?)

As shown, ‘presentations to practitioners’ was seen as the most important dissemination route for getting research to practitioners. This was followed by dissemination through organisations the researchers’ worked with and then academic papers. Again, the FoW publications (including the Robert Taylor series) were not seen as most important by any PI. This was less in contrast to user views than for policy makers, as practitioners we spoke to suggested that the work they were interested in was often that of an individual researcher working on a subject that was particularly relevant to them. The Robert Taylor

series summarised multiple projects in each publication and therefore contained information that would not have appealed to practitioners, within which they would have to find the research that they had a particular interest in.

#### 4.6 Networks

PIs were asked to consider whether the FoW programme had helped them to form networks with a number of groups. By far the majority of networks that were formed or enhanced through FoW were with researchers, policy makers and practitioners (Figure



34).

Figure 34. Networks formed with different groups (Which of the following groups did the project help you or your researchers form or develop networks with?)

The majority of PIs also found that the programme was helpful in creating networks, with only five PIs not claiming any networks had been formed through FoW (Figure 35).

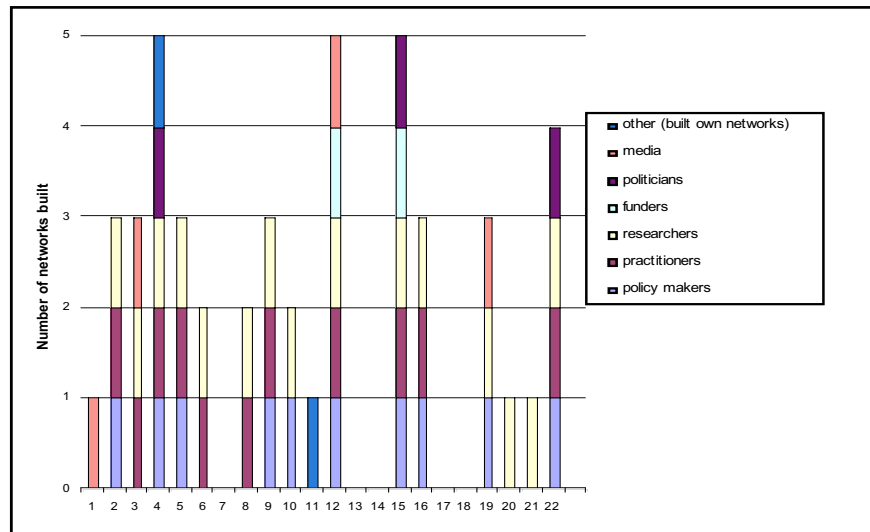


Figure 35. Different networks formed by PI (Which of the following groups did the project help you or your researchers form or develop networks with?)

### 4.7 Socio-economic outputs

PIs found it almost impossible to identify specific socio-economic impacts arising from their research. They tended to identify more specific employment-related outcomes, such as increasing the understanding of the role of trade unions or the nature of work in specific employment sectors. This is in contrast to the response of PIs when asked whether they thought their project had had any socio-economic impact (Figure 36). This difference is probably due to the difficulty of identifying how much of an influence any one piece of research might have on socio-economic impacts.

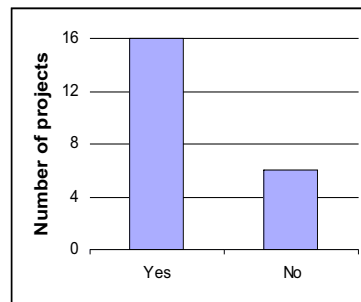


Figure 36. Has your research had any socio-economic impact?

### 4.8 Effect of the FoW programme

The FoW programme was designed in such a way as to benefit the researchers involved through dissemination and networking assistance. None of the PIs thought that their project was less successful because of association with the FoW programme; with most feeling their projects had been more successful (Figure 37).

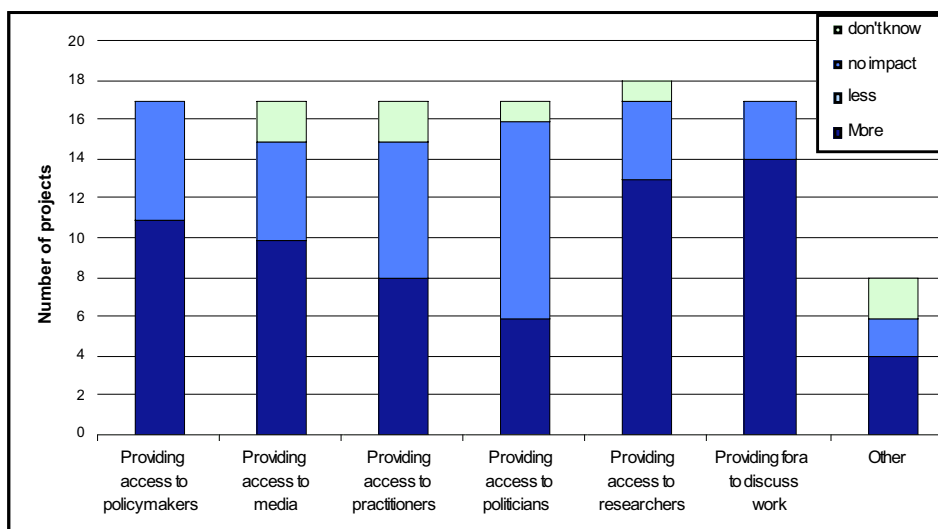


Figure 37. Impact of FoW on the success of project (Was your project more or less successful than it would otherwise have been had it not been part of the FoW programme because of any of the following areas?)

The impact of the programme on wider utilisation of the research was also seen as positive. Only four projects thought that being part of the FoW programme had had no impact on the wider utilisation of their research, whereas ten PIs considered that the FoW programme had considerably affected the wider utilisation of their research (Figure 38).

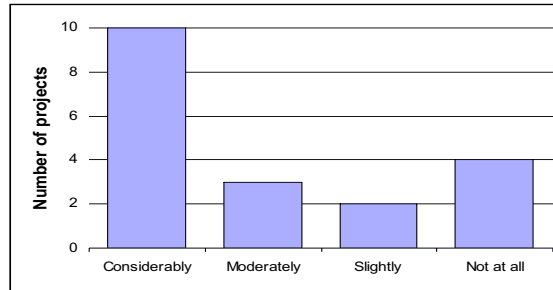


Figure 38. The effect of the FoW on wider utilisation of the research (To what extent was the utilisation/wider impact of your research affected by your association with the FoW programme?)

#### 4.9 Publications, presentations and the media

Using the database of publications kept by the ESRC, we included a list of publications, presentations and media outputs that were considered attributable to the FoW project in each PI’s questionnaire. PIs could decide whether individual publications, presentations or media pieces were attributable to the FoW project and whether there were missing items that needed to be added in each category. shows the publications, presentations and media outputs from each project. Starred projects are those that were initially selected as case studies prior to compiling this information. Reassuringly, they include those with the largest number of publications, presentations and media outputs. Very few additions were made to the lists of publications (23 additional papers in total), presentations (17 additional) and media outputs (5 additional) sent to PIs.

Figure 39 shows the publications, presentations and media outputs from each project. Starred projects are those that were initially selected as case studies prior to compiling this information. Reassuringly, they include those with the largest number of publications, presentations and media outputs. Very few additions were made to the lists of publications (23 additional papers in total), presentations (17 additional) and media outputs (5 additional) sent to PIs.

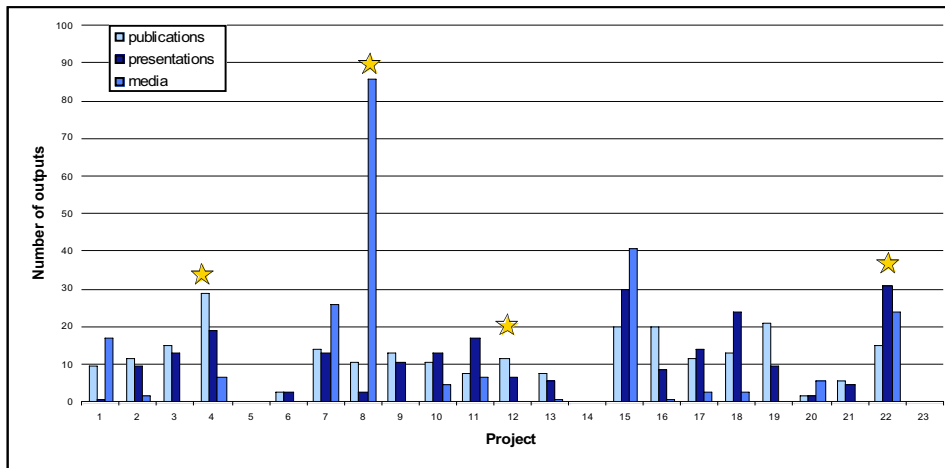


Figure 39. Publications, presentations and media outputs produced by individual projects in the FoW programme

### 4.10 Links between inputs and outcomes

We assessed the impact of different inputs on outputs and outcomes by looking at the total impacts of projects (policy impacts, future policy impacts, practice impacts, future practice impacts, and career advancement). The effect of most inputs was not significant on either combined outputs or individual outputs. However, the time since the grant had finished to the present was correlated with the combined and individual impacts. As Figure 40 shows, in terms of total impacts, time since the end of grant was negatively correlated with the number of impacts (Pearson correlation = -0.736; significant at the 0.01 level {2-tailed}).

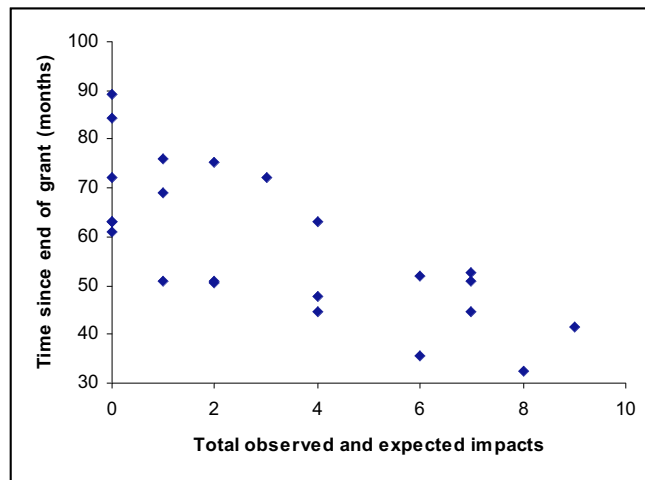


Figure 40. Total impacts per project and time since end of grant

It is possible this result is due to PIs on more recent projects expecting more outcomes to occur in the future. However, as Figure 41 shows, when comparing time since grant with total realised impacts (those that have already occurred) there is still a significant negative correlation (Pearson correlation = -0.720; significant at the 0.01 level {2-tailed}).

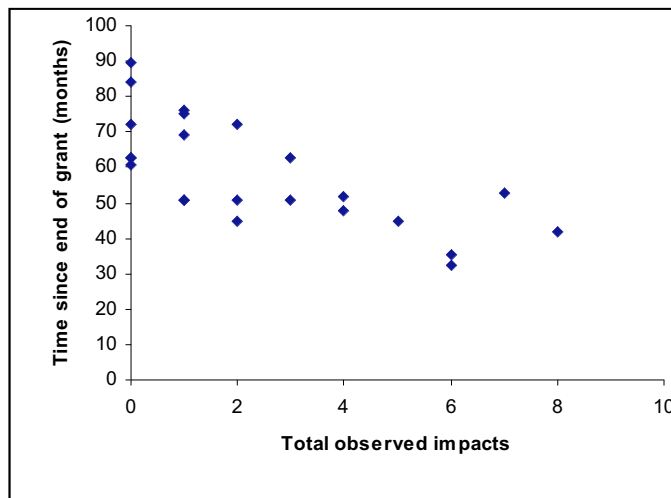


Figure 41. Total realised impacts and time since end of grant

The inclusion of policy makers appears to be an interesting issue in creating policy impacts as those projects with policy maker input had 14 impacts, whereas those without only had seven. However, since only eight projects did not have policy maker input and 14 did, the difference in policy outputs per project is not significant (Chi square test) (Figure 42).

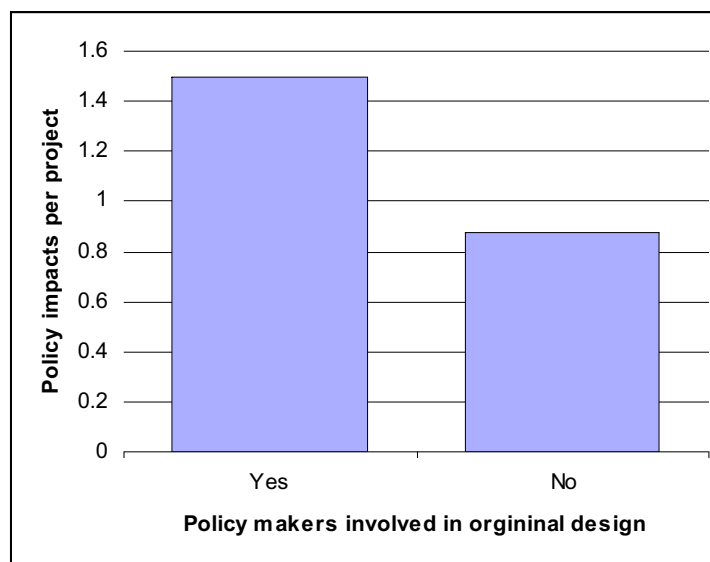


Figure 42. Total policy outputs (realised and future) per project, shown by policy maker involvement in the project

#### 4.11 User interviews

As part of the survey, PIs were asked to identify users of their research that we could contact to understand how the research had informed policy and practice. Fourteen PIs nominated users (often more than one), although only 11 of these were able to name people as users rather than organisations. Of the 21 named users, we contacted 17 by email and then by phone if no response were received. Of the 17 contacted, 13 agreed to participate and were interviewed by phone using a semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix B). Users interviewed represented the DTI, Work Foundation, TUC, Equal Opportunities Commission, Chwarae Teg,<sup>8</sup> the Small Business Research Centre, the Call Centre Association and DEGW.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, interviewees came from both policy and practice and were well placed to understand how the FoW research had entered the two sectors. The following summary of the user interviews pulls together the main findings. It does not go into detail on the specific issues surrounding how each research project affected policy or practice, since this is not an evaluation of specific projects but an exploration of the value added by the programme as a whole on getting research into

<sup>8</sup> Chwarae Teg is a Welsh women's rights organisation that promotes the economic development of women in the Welsh workforce.

<sup>9</sup> DEGW is an international design consultancy that delivers design strategy as well as practical design solutions specifically for business environments.

practice or policy. Box 6 shows the key findings from the user interviews, which are discussed in more detail in the text that follows.

- Policy makers do not know much about specific research projects from 6 years ago. Those that do suggest that their influence was general and helped the way they think about issues.
- Research can have an impact at any stage of policy making since it is very often not specific enough for a single policy.
- Policy makers thought the benefit of FoW was to dispel employment myths.
- The FoW research series by Robert Taylor was very highly regarded in policy circles, but not known by practitioners.
- Having policy makers/practitioners on steering and advisory groups was beneficial by allowing dialogue throughout the research process.
- Networks between researchers and policy makers are important but there is not enough dialogue at present.
- Policy makers need work to come out at the time it is being done – long time lags to publication can make good research useless.
- Overall, there is a desire for research by policy and practice, but it needs to be ‘fit for purpose’.
- Practitioners are aware of specific pieces of work that are useful for them at a given time.
- Several policy makers knew Peter Nolan’s work best, despite him not having a project in the FoW programme.

**Box 6. Key findings from the user interviews with policy makers and practitioners**

The user interviews suggested that the projects had produced both policy and practice impacts, but that these were often hard to trace to individual pieces of work – particularly because the research happened between three to seven years ago. Most research from the FoW programme added to the general understanding of work issues, rather than informing specific policies. This means that research can have an impact on policy making at any stage, as it affects understanding. There was a significant role for FoW in policy in discrediting ‘myths’ about work, which were widespread in government prior to the programme. Policy makers found it hard to remember specifics of research conducted during the FoW, but often knew a researcher’s work more generally, or even the work within a field more generally (for example, several researchers in FoW were involved in research that impacted on equal opportunities and this body of work was known by those policy makers interested in that area).

The policy makers spoken to suggested that the Robert Taylor FoW series was particularly informative and useful for them, since it provided an overview of the projects involved in FoW and made links between them that were useful for policy. One policy maker still uses the FoW series in his day-to-day work. In contrast, those working in practice-oriented organisations (either business or business representatives) did not know of the Robert Taylor series, but were informed directly by the researchers. This may be because the practice organisations spoken to were involved in the research itself, either as study organisations or informing the research by identifying study organisations.

The other main route for getting research to policy makers was through consultation with researchers. Both policy makers and those in practice suggested that through talking to researchers it was possible to get more appropriate information for their needs. This was through seminars, presentations and more informal networking and discussion with researchers. This dialogue can occur at several points through the research lifetime, and to be most useful for policy and practice it is needed at the start, during the results phase, and at the end of projects.

By involving policy makers and/or practitioners at the start of projects it was felt that questions asked by the research would be more suited to policy and practice needs. In some cases this had clearly occurred and those policy makers who had been on research steering groups had found it a valuable process. The presence of policy makers on steering groups also meant that they were informed of results as they came out and not just at the end of the project, allowing them to have the results in a timely fashion. Policy makers felt generally that research took too long to be published, as research affects the understanding of a moment in time and if the published results were a long time coming, then they were no longer as relevant to policy. By having a dialogue with researchers at the end of a project, policy makers felt they could understand the nuances of the work better and could ask focused questions based on their reading of reports. Interestingly, one policy maker had even got involved in the dissemination of results from the project. However, this was an exception rather than the rule. It was generally considered that there was not enough dialogue between the research and policy/practice communities; despite the desire from policy makers and practitioners to base their own work in a solid evidence base. Both policy and practice interviewees expressed a desire for research to inform their work, but stressed the need for it to be 'fit for purpose' by being timely and addressing the questions they wanted answered.

In general, the FoW programme was known by a lot of policy makers, but practitioners and those policy makers in roles that were single interest (for example women's rights) were generally only aware of the research relevant to their practice or policy area. Policy makers that knew of the programme were often aware of the role of Peter Nolan as the Programme Director and his work was often mentioned in relation to the FoW. This was an interesting insight since he did not perform any research as part of the FoW programme, but his research is associated with it through his role as Director.

CHAPTER 5    **Case study A:**  
**Grant I. Employment choices for mothers  
of pre-school children: a psychological  
perspective**  
**Grant II. Paid and unpaid work in early  
parenthood: psychological causes and  
consequences**

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### 5.1 Introduction to the research project

The research for these two grants took place in the context of rising numbers of women combining work with early parenthood. By the late 1990s approximately half of mothers of pre-school children were returning to work either part or full-time (Macran et al., 1996). However, these women generally returned to more poorly paid or less influential positions than they had previously occupied, indicating that motherhood continued to have a significant impact on women's work and careers (Joshi 1997). The research on which this case study is based looked at psychological factors influencing women's decisions to return to work after childbirth.

The research included two grants as described below in sections 2.1.1 and 2.1.2. The first grant ran from 1998–2000 and was for £84,880. The second ran from 2000–2003 and was for £108,560.<sup>10</sup> Professor Diane Houston<sup>11</sup> was award-holder for both of the grants. The project was given a “Good” grade by all the ESRC reviewers.

During the time the grants were held, Professor Houston was a Lecturer and then Senior Lecturer in Psychology at the University of Kent. Professor Houston was project director and supervisor, in control of the budget and appointment of staff for both projects. She was involved in questionnaire design, writing up of outputs and personally engaged in most of the dissemination activities. With the funding and research assistance provided

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<sup>10</sup> Because the two projects and their paybacks are tightly interwoven, the discussion of the research is in most places integrated. Where relevant the two projects are distinguished as Grant I and Grant II, or as first and second project or award.

<sup>11</sup> This case study is not anonymous because Professor Houston considered the research to be recognisably hers.

by the grants, she ran The Work Life Research Group at the University of Kent. On the first grant she appointed one research associate (75%) to help with designing questionnaires, coding data, conducting interviews, analysing data and writing up of outputs (jointly with Professor Houston). A secretarial assistant (secretary grade 3) was in charge of database management and transcription of interviews, as well as assisting in data coding. Professor Houston, the researcher and the secretarial support continued to work together on the second grant, on which the researcher was then full time. The project team was based at the Department of Psychology, Keynes College, University of Kent, Canterbury.

**Table 1. Breakdown of project costs– taken from the project application; the amount in GBP will not be the same as the exact amount awarded.**

Description of cost	Money allocated (£)
Salary costs	44,940
Travel and subsistence	3,943
Consumables and equipment	8,020
Exceptional items	1,925
Indirect costs (46% of staff costs)	20,673
<b>Total</b>	<b>79,501</b>

**Table 2. Breakdown of project costs– taken from the project application; the amount in GBP will not be the same as the exact amount awarded.**

Description of cost	Money allocated (£)
Salary costs	65,769
Travel and subsistence	3,965
Consumables and equipment	1,548
Exceptional items	2,901
Indirect costs (46% of staff costs)	30,254
<b>Total</b>	<b>104,437</b>

This case study is based on review of ESRC grant files including award applications, rapporteurs' comments and end-of-award reports, an academic publication from the grant, various policy documents drawing on the findings of the research (contributed to or commissioned by Professor Houston while she was seconded to a position in the DTI), a face-to-face interview with Professor Houston, three follow-up telephone interviews with users of the research in relevant policy areas and one email conversation also with a user of the research. For purposes of clarity the two grants are briefly described separately below. However, in the remainder of the chapter they are referred to together unless otherwise specified. According to Professor Houston, the two projects were very closely related and it would be difficult to pick apart their dissemination and impacts as so much of the substance was the same or closely related.

#### 5.1.1 Grant I: Employment choices for mothers of pre-school children: a psychological perspective

This research was undertaken in the context of rising employment rates for mothers of pre-school children. At the time of the research (1998–2000) approximately 50% of mothers of pre-school children in the UK were employed. Professor Houston wanted to explore the intentions/motivations and decision processes of women through the transition to motherhood in early parenthood, through the first year of their first child. She also explored the impact of employment choices on the women's relationships and well-being. According to the end-of-award report, the project had three primary aims:

- a) To examine the psychological processes and demographic variables behind women's decisions about work and childcare patterns after they have their first child.
- b) To explore changes in attitudes, beliefs, norms and identity as a function of becoming a mother and beginning a new pattern of employment of employment and/or childcare.
- c) To look at the impact of employment decisions on women's psychological well-being and their relationships.

Two additional aims of the research were:

- d) To examine differences between part and full-time workers, not just compare those who work with those who do not.
- e) To examine the relationship between intentions and actual work behaviour as well as to compare 'intenders' (those who intended to return to work) who did and did not carry out their original intention.

According to Professor Houston the aims of the project did not change during the study, and all were met.

#### 5.1.2 Grant II: Paid and unpaid work in early parenthood: psychological causes and consequences

The second award was designed to extend the first project. The first sample was contacted again and two further samples were recruited. The main aims of the second project according to the grant application were:

- a) To investigate the role of fathers in women's decisions about work.
- b) To examine the impact of the birth of second and third children on women's work decisions and patterns.
- c) To compare childless women's views about work with those of women with pre-school children.
- d) To draw out differences between attitudes/intentions and actual behaviour in relation to paid and unpaid work in parenthood.
- e) To look at the impact of different work choices on relationships and well-being.

## 5.2 Stage 0: topic/issue identification

2.2.1 The first project grew out of Professor Houston's personal interest in how women make decisions about work and motherhood. She and the researcher had conducted a previous piece of research on attitudes to work, motherhood and combining the two roles.<sup>12</sup> Apart from this work, Professor Houston referred to two relevant studies by other researchers in psychology, one of which had a very small sample, and one of which looked at women's attitudes to combining work and motherhood generally rather than their own plans (Nieva and Gutek 1981; Gerson 1986).

In light of her personal interest and the lacunae in the psychological literature, Professor Houston designed the research for the first FoW project as a psychological investigation of women's attitudes and decision making. The project was designed largely without reference to policy issues in the area at the time, and was therefore not influenced by users of the research. The project design was only moderately influenced by the Industrial Relations (IR), Sociology and Economics literatures which, according to Professor Houston, tended to provide overviews of employment patterns rather than detail about women's attitudes, decision making and employment choices. The research built on work by Azjen (1991) on the theory of planned behaviour to shift the focus from social trends to examine women's attitudes as well as the attitudes of their partners and employers (stated or perceived respectively) to the women's employment, as well as other factors women reported as influencing their choices about motherhood and work. Having examined these attitudes and other factors, the research went on to investigate the impact of having a first child, and then in the second study the impact of subsequent children, on women's attitudes, decisions and behaviours in relation to work.

According to a senior policy official (who was a user of the research at the time), coincidentally, and apparently fortuitously for the policy impact of the research, women's employment patterns had already been identified as problematic by relevant policy makers. For example, this user explained that the work of Katherine Rake presented in a previous seminar was influential in highlighting the wider economic significance of women leaving work or returning to less skilled positions after having children. It was increasingly acknowledged that individual families were often missing out on significant income, and employers and the wider economy were losing valuable skills and investment, with the loss of women employees. Thus, there was a growing awareness of the need to look behind these patterns to understand why many women continued to leave work or return to less well-paid jobs in early motherhood.<sup>13</sup>

Professor Houston emphasised the disjunction between the psychological and wider literature in this area, commenting that there was tension early on in the programme meetings. She said she encountered wariness among the IR researchers, sociologists and

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<sup>12</sup> for the researcher's PhD thesis.

<sup>13</sup> Embedded in this interest lay questions about whether some women were giving up work through the pressure of external constraints rather than personal choice, and about whether adapting policies and employment practices to be more accommodating of work-life balance and motherhood would encourage those women who returned to work to return to jobs more in line with their skill and ability levels. Professor Houston commented that after her first FoW seminar presentation she was immediately thrown headlong into what was at the time a vigorous debate about agency and constraint in women's employment patterns.

economists who were already well established in the field of women, work and employment, and among whom she felt like an outsider: younger, new to the area and with a markedly different approach to and perspective on the issues being addressed within the remit of the programme.<sup>14</sup> However, Professor Houston said that the interdisciplinarity of the FoW programme was significant and formative for her thinking. She described her work at the outset of the project as purely psychological, but said that her thinking became increasingly informed both by other disciplines and by a policy focus that led to exploring questions from other angles and using approaches that would not be considered psychological within the discipline.<sup>15</sup>

### 5.3 Interface A: project specification and selection

Professor Houston said that the first project for the FoW grant was designed without significant input from the programme participants, policy makers, practitioners or reviewers. The second project, however, was much more informed by the findings of the first study and by the policy debates and discussions at the time.

The rapporteurs for both grants were generally positive. They were satisfied with the intended use of the theory of planned behaviour and recommended that the projects be supported, expecting them to produce worthwhile findings of interest to academics, employers and practitioners in policy. There were, however, reservations expressed about the somewhat homogeneous sample that was likely to be recruited through NCT classes, and about the apparent lack of awareness of, or reference to the wider sociological literature in the field. According to Professor Houston, comments by reviewers did not lead to significant alterations to the design of the research. However, some minor changes were made, such as the addition of suggested questions to the questionnaires and a sampling change. In particular, the proposal for the second FoW grant project was to include 400 women in the final sample who were full-time workers with no children. However, reviewers suggested that this would not be the best use of resources. Taking account of reviewers' comments, the research was redesigned to survey UNISON members as described below in section 2.5.

Professor Houston said that the research would probably have been funded and conducted without the FoW grant programme. However, she thought that the findings would almost certainly not have had such a significant impact on policy and practice if the programme had not existed or had not funded the project.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Professor Houston explained that she thought that she had more or less gained acceptance by and the respect of most (but not all) of the programme participants further into the research.

<sup>15</sup> In fact, Professor Houston said that she tends to 'see the world more in terms of policy questions – not just policy but behaviour and through to intervention.'

<sup>16</sup> Also see section 2.6.3 for Professor Houston's views on the importance of the programme to her own career development.

#### 5.4 Stage 1: inputs to research

Professor Houston had received ESRC funding for previous research, but this funding was not described as relevant to the design of the FoW projects or to obtaining of the FoW grants discussed here. However, as mentioned above, she and the researcher had worked together prior to the FoW grants on a related study of women's attitudes to work. The University of Kent did not have an established reputation in the field of work-life balance before the centre was set up in the psychology department and Professor Houston's research began. The Head of Department at the University of Kent supported the application and allowed Professor Houston to adjust her timetable to enable her to direct the research.

The first ESRC FoW grant was for £84,880. There was no additional funding on that project, but Professor Houston obtained corporate sponsorship in the form of vouchers for nappies for participants in the first two questionnaires of Grant I, to the value of £10,000. This support was lost before completion of the third questionnaires at which point Professor Houston redirected funds to purchase high-street vouchers as incentives for participants in the third questionnaire. The project overlapped with a Rowntree Foundation funded project grant of £90,000 looking more broadly at attitudes to flexible working and work-life balance. The second ESRC FoW award was for £108,560. There was no additional funding for this project either, although corporate sponsorship in the form of £10.00 vouchers for participants amounted to £25,000.

#### 5.5 Stage 2: research process

For the first ESRC grant, Phase I of the research consisted of a survey of 412 women and three follow-up interviews of a sub-sample of 54 of them to find out about the women's employment choices after the birth of their first child. Marks and Houston had conducted previous research (1998) that identified the attitudes and beliefs shown to be important to women in relation to work and childcare. This first ESRC funded FoW study built on that previous research with quantitative analysis of questionnaires using SPSS, and with qualitative analysis of face-to-face interviews. The researchers were based in the Work-Life Research Group at the University of Kent.

There were some early difficulties in the first award. In particular, there was a delay in appointing the secretary to the project. However, Professor Houston explained that the eventual recruitment of a highly skilled secretary three months into the project allowed the project to progress on schedule.

The project for Grant 2 consisted of surveying three samples. The first of these comprised the original sample from Grant I. The 348 women who had participated in that study were surveyed again to see how the arrival of subsequent children affected women's attitudes to, and decisions about, work and motherhood. Three hundred and twenty-five valid responses were received about second children and 312 were received for third children. The second sample in Grant II consisted of 477 valid responses from couples at Time 1 (pregnancy), 397 at Time 2 (six months post-partum) and 355 at Time 3 (child's first birthday). The third sample was a random survey of UNISON members that achieved a response rate of 42%, made up of 820 women who worked full-time,

divided into those with no children (408), those with pre-school, primary, secondary and adult children.

In the second project Professor Houston had several significant difficulties to overcome. In the end-of-award report she highlighted the time spent obtaining and maintaining corporate sponsorship to provide incentives for participants in the research. She also explained that the research associate left the project in August 2002 to take up a permanent position elsewhere. This loss of staff meant that Professor Houston committed much more time to the project than was intended. Further, she underwent a high-risk pregnancy and the birth of premature twins in need of special medical care during this second project grant. The secretarial support she received throughout the project represented an extension of the original secretarial contract and allowed the longitudinal study to continue, with questionnaires going out as planned. This strong administrative support, which included questionnaire posting, follow-up contacts and data coding, was funded by virements and additional University funding.

## 5.6 Stage 3: primary outputs from research

### 5.6.1 Knowledge (payback category A)

Outputs (published and forthcoming) from the grant application for both grants included a book, three refereed journal articles (see References, below) four chapters in edited volumes, four non-refereed papers, seminars, presentations and workshops for a range of academic audiences including conference presentations (see Box 1 below). Academic publications included refereed papers in the *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, *Work, Employment and Society* and the *Journal of Education and Work*. However, Professor Houston commented that the success of other means of dissemination, and the time she spent on presentations and engaging with policy, limited the amount of time she had to spend writing articles for academic journals. She believed that this had reduced the academic impact of her research, and noted that in the discipline of psychology the RAE did not tend to value such forms of dissemination as policy consultation and policy documents.

One of the key academic areas to which the research contributed was the debate about the extent to which women's employment behaviour is chosen or constrained. Catherine Hakim's work<sup>17</sup> presented one of the most well-known perspectives on this debate at the time. Hakim's research highlighted the extent to which women tended to choose to leave employment after childbirth, rather than leaving work because it is difficult for them to combine work with motherhood. According to Professor Houston, Hakim interpreted Diane Houston's research as supporting Hakim's findings about women choosing their employment trajectories. However, Professor Houston said that her work on women's attitudes and decisions about work highlighted the difficulties women face attempting to continue to work after the birth of a child, and more significantly after subsequent children. Her paper clarifying this debate is forthcoming.

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<sup>17</sup> See for example Hakim's position as put forward in her 1995 paper.

There were two key findings from the FoW research that Professor Houston and users emphasised as generating the most interest. The first of these was that women who returned to work earlier were more likely to give up work. The second was what Professor Houston termed 'the planning finding', showing how women benefit from supportive colleagues and employers, and suggesting that women and employers would both benefit from a consultation process about whether and when to return to work after childbirth.

Professor Houston reported that she gave numerous presentations, workshops and seminars around her findings throughout the time that she held the FoW grants. Box 1 below lists some of the presentations and seminars related to the FoW grants.

*Houston, D. M. and G. Marks (February 1999). 'Employment Choices for Mothers of Pre-school Children: A Psychological Perspective.' Paper presented at ESRC Future of Work Programme, Westwood Conference, Leeds.*

Marks, G. and D. M. Houston (1998). 'Contemporary Attitudes to Work, Motherhood and Combining the Two Roles.' Proceedings of the British Psychological Society, Vol. 6, No. 1.

Marks, G. and D. M. Houston (July 1999). 'An Application of the Theory of Planned Behaviour to the Employment Decisions of First-time Mothers.' Paper presented at the General Meeting of the European Association of Experimental Social Psychology, Oxford.

Marks, G. and D. M. Houston. (March 1999). 'What Now? The Employment Choices of First-time Mothers.', Invited paper presented at the Women Returners' Network AGM. London.

Marks, G. and D. M. Houston (1999). 'Using the Theory of Planned Behaviour to Explain the Employment Decisions of First-time Mothers', Proceedings of the British Psychological Society, Vol. 7, No. 2.

Marks, G. and D. M. Houston. (2000). 'The Role of Planning in the Intention-behaviour Link', Proceedings of the British Psychological Society, Vol. 8, No. 2.

Seminars and Workshops  
Houston, D. M. and G. Marks (1999). 'Who Returns After Maternity Leave and Why?', 'Networking Lunch', BP/Amoco.

Houston, D. M. (November 2000) 'Employment Choices for Mothers of Pre-school Children', Family Policy Studies Centre, London.

Houston, D. M. (2000). 'Families and Work', Report to the Women's Unit, Cabinet Office.

Houston, D. M. and G. Marks (2000). 'Predicting the Work Intentions of First-Time Mothers', University of Surrey.

Houston, D. M. & Marks G. (2000). 'Predicting the Work Intentions of First-Time Mothers', Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Essex.

Houston, D. M. & Marks G. (March 2001). 'Using the Theory of Planned Behaviour to Predict the Work Intentions of First-Time Mothers', University of Queensland, Brisbane.

Houston, D. M. & Marks G. (March 2001). 'First Time Mothers Work Behaviour: Using the Theory of Planned Behaviour', Griffiths University Gold Coast.

Box 1. Examples of conference presentations and proceedings, seminars and workshops

### 5.6.2 Benefits to future research and research use (payback category B)

According to Professor Houston, one benefit of the first grant to future research was that the findings of the first project, and the questions raised by these findings, informed the

design (including questions that may not otherwise have been asked), and more significantly the analysis, of the second grant project.

Further, she was seconded from September 2003 to the position of Research and Strategy Advisor to the DTI as a result of her presentation of the FoW findings to a policy audience in Whitehall. This was a part-time position (80%) that allowed Professor Houston to work from her University Office some days as well. The position eventually grew to encompass research for all of the DTI in the wake of restructuring of the department during Professor Houston's period in position there that lasted for two and a half years. From that position she was able to shape a wider research agenda that was related to her own initial FoW work by commissioning research from at least three other research groups, including one project from the University of Surrey on which Professor Houston is also an author, one from the LSE with whom there is an ongoing consultation by the DTI, and one from the Institute of Work Psychology at the University of Sheffield (see References).

In addition to her position at the DTI, Professor Houston also consulted on various commissions and bodies on issues related to her FoW work and her accumulated academic expertise. These are discussed in more detail, in Section 2.7. Professor Houston emphasised the significance of her personal engagement with the relevant policy context, and the key role of the programme in shaping that engagement. Professor Houston and users interviewed commented that they thought the research had a notable impact on policy makers and government because the FoW programme put the research and researcher together with those who wanted to hear the findings to inform policy. The functioning of the programme, especially the role played by, and personal involvement of, Peter Nolan, and the willing and concerted personal presence and dissemination efforts of Professor Houston, may provide lessons for future academic-policy crossover and engagement. As described below in section 2.7 on dissemination, Professor Houston and users interviewed thought that the unfolding of her engagement with policy in this case shed light on factors facilitating the dialogue between the policy and research communities. Professor Houston stated that the FoW programme was the single biggest influence on her career.

The research team did not continue to work together through to completion of the second project, so academic collaboration was not an ongoing benefit to the project team. However, Professor Houston and other researchers with whom she came into contact through the FoW programme and her work in policy have maintained a fruitful dialogue about research findings, as well as ongoing engagement with relevant debates in the field of women, work and parenthood.

### 5.6.3 Researcher benefits

During the course of the two grants Diane Houston was promoted from Lecturer in Psychology to Senior Lecturer (SL) and then subsequently to Professor. She was cautious about attributing these specific promotions to the grants, although considered that the FoW programme had a 'considerable' impact on her promotion to SL and 'moderate' influence on her promotion to Chair.

Secondment into government in a relevant policy area as Research and Strategy Advisor to the DTI was directly attributed to the research and the impact of her own presentation of her research findings in Whitehall. Professor Houston commented that she had one or two relevant links prior to the grant, but that most of her networks and policy contact occurred during and through the programme. She said that relatively early on in the programme and with her contact with the policy community, she became gripped by policy questions and by ‘making a difference.’

In her interview, Professor Houston emphasised the significance and formative influence of the programme for her personally and the fruitful discussions that emerged from contacts made within the programme as well as beyond. The academic dialogue was stimulating, and she highlighted one of the strengths of the FoW programme was that ‘Peter (Nolan) encouraged people to collaborate and disseminate, but they were allowed to do their own thing.’ She also noted that the impact the programme had for her thinking, policy engagement and career could not easily be generalised, as ‘Peter was keen on dissemination and the others did not necessarily want to do that, so it was the right time for me and the programme was the right place.’

The researcher who worked with Professor Houston went on to a further academic position. The administrative assistant was promoted several times through the project until she eventually obtained a senior position in University Administration at Kent.

## 5.7 Interface B: dissemination

The research was disseminated to policy makers, practitioners, other researchers, politicians and through the media. Professor Houston considered media coverage of the findings to have been a vital part of the dissemination of her research. This was at least in part because she considered the media exposure to have given the research wider recognition (outside of academia and the FoW programme), and to have added a perceived credibility in the eyes of policy makers and practitioners. The research was reported in national broadsheet newspapers such as *The Daily Telegraph*, local newspapers and magazines, as well as in other publications such as *Family Circle* and *The Express*. Professor Houston reported that she continues to receive requests for interviews and comments, or articles for various magazines (up to approximately two interviews per month), as well as requests for reprints of the academic papers emanating from the FoW research.

For this set of FoW projects Professor Houston considered government users, policy makers and the media to be the most significant non-academic audiences or users of the research. Presentations to government, practitioners and policy officials were highlighted throughout the case study interviews with Professor Houston and users as highly significant, and the policy community rapidly became ‘the main audience’ for the findings. By showing that women faced ongoing constraints in their ability to fulfil their work/care plans, the findings gave a renewed impetus to a view held by some that there was a need for further policy change in the areas of work and parenthood. For example, one user interviewed said that Professor Houston’s findings helped to reopen for some, and reinvigorate for others, the discussion about gender equality at work, dispelling the

mistaken belief held by some that 25 years after the Sex Discrimination Act women and men had equal opportunities with respect to work and family life. By surveying large samples of women and couples, as well as interviewing a substantial subset of participants, Professor Houston's research provided some insight into the complex mechanisms at work impeding women's ability to fulfil their work/care intentions with the arrival of first and subsequent children.

She acted as academic advisor to the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), which she described as the organisation 'leading the pressure on work and families.' Other organisations concerned with women's rights and parenthood that were able to draw on the evidence highlighted in the research included Parents at Work, Fathers Direct, The Fawcett Society, Maternity Alliance, the Women Returner's Network and Women Like Us, which Professor Houston described as 'a small organisation for women returners helping upskill women returners and providing information on why women returners make good employees.'

The research findings were also of use to several users in the business community and employers as a 'practising' audience. By helping to shed light on what women wanted in relation to work and family life, Professor Houston said that the research was especially relevant for employers seeking to develop family-friendly policies in order to attract and maintain a diverse and skilled workforce that included women, as well as for those employers seeking to retain women workers after childbirth by developing a more consultative approach to decision-making about maternity leave and returning to work. Research payback along these lines occurred as a result of the consulting and presentations Professor Houston gave for a range of companies, and included a networking lunch for one large organisation in 1999 on 'Who returns after maternity leave and why?'

Users interviewed highlighted one particular presentation that highlighted ongoing constraints on women's ability to return to work after childbirth and drew the research to the attention of policy makers, facilitating the significant impact on government policy that the research had at the time. Peter Nolan arranged for Professor Houston to give a seminar in Whitehall shortly after the first project was completed (Families and Work: Report for the Women's Unit, the Cabinet Office, September 2000). According to a senior policy official who was present at the seminar, there were many significant government and policy figures there, including the Minister for Women, senior policy officials such as the Director and Deputy Director of the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Women and Equality Unit, as well as other influential figures from the CBI, TUC and other organisations.

In the seminar Professor Houston discussed the conclusions of the first project and the initial findings of the second. The seminar was a success and, according to a user, 'resonated with policy makers and officials around the room.' And, with what Professor Houston called 'Peter's good contacts in government', there were subsequent seminars at which she presented her findings to high-level audiences, for example at DFES. Professor Houston also emphasised the significance of the advisory group to the FoW programme, who she thought vetted the researchers by coming to their presentations for various FoW seminars, and were then able to put the PIs in contact with the most appropriate policy

audiences and practitioners. She and a user interviewed emphasised the significance of the contacts made available to the researchers by the strong and well-connected advisory panel.

Professor Houston considered the impact the research might have had if she had not become so involved in dissemination through the many presentations, consultations and eventual secondment into government. She suggested that the research would probably have had greater academic impact if she had spent more time publishing as opposed to engaging personally in other forms of dissemination. She considered the question of whether or not with more significant early academic output the research would eventually have reached similar users through a different, albeit more circuitous, route.<sup>18</sup>

## 5.8 Stage 4: secondary outputs

It is difficult to trace through the policy outputs directly linked to the FoW project grants. However, for these two FoW grants Professor Houston disseminated her findings throughout the research and entered a position influential to policy outputs during the period of the grant awards. This multifaceted and complex engagement itself partly grew out of the impact of her initial presentations and the interest they generated. This interest resulted in invitations to present further high-level seminars, to consult in the writing of several policy documents and eventually to take up a position writing and commissioning reports from within government herself. Thus, the extent to which her FoW project findings, her existing background knowledge and the wider knowledge in the field she gained as part of the FoW programme, and her rapidly accumulating policy knowledge fed in to any individual document is in most cases unclear. Interviews with users and Professor Houston emphasised that both the researcher and the research contributed to the policy debates and to many significant policy documents in at least incremental and diffuse ways, but that this was in large part attributable to her personal style and skill at reaching a policy audience.

One user interviewed said that Professor Houston's presentation had a profound impact on those present in a way that very few presentations do in the course of a senior policy official's career. She explained that after many years in the world of policy and after sitting through numerous presentations, not many stand out and remain ingrained in memory in the way that hers did. There was a consensus among users interviewed for this case study that the research was highly influential and caught the attention of key policy figures. Users and Professor Houston attributed the impact of the presentation to several factors:

- The research was designed around large samples. Its scale gave the research a perceived strength and credibility for policy makers that a small qualitative study would not have provided.
- The psychological perspective and the qualitative follow-up allowed the research to look beyond what was already known about patterns of women's employment

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<sup>18</sup> However, in considering this question it is worth bearing in mind the above-mentioned timeliness of her findings filling a gap in understanding in relevant policy circles.

to provide insights into why those patterns were occurring. For example, the research shed light on why some women were not returning to work after childbirth or were returning to lower skilled and lower paid work. These insights were especially informative in light of the emergent findings from the second grant that the impact of subsequent children on women's employment decisions is even greater, a possibility users said had not previously been considered by policy makers in the area.

- The research took the issue of women's decisions about work in early parenthood out of the domain of 'women's issues' and into wider policy debates. It did so by demonstrating the cross-cutting relevance of women's employment decisions to the economy more widely, with implications for employment policies, maternity as well as paternity leave policies, education and childcare policies.
- The timing and attendant receptiveness of policy officials to the information at a time when the Government had a commitment to making changes in the relevant areas of education, childcare, maternity and paternity policy and gender equality, as well as a desire to obtain the wider economic benefits that could potentially stem from such changes.
- The style of the presentation enhanced its accessibility: the findings were very clearly presented and Professor Houston's style of presentation was skilfully attuned to its audience.

It is difficult to unpick the weight of the various factors contributing to the impact of the findings, but because of its wide relevance, timing, quality and the presentation/accessibility of the research, the findings were influential at several stages of the policy process, and in several different policy areas.

The main stage of influence noted by Professor Houston and users to which the research findings contributed was that of policy formulation. Substantively, there were findings that were relevant and useful to policies ranging from paid paternity leave, maternity leave (including planning consultation between women and employers), reducing the gendered pay gap and ongoing segregation by encouraging women to return to positions more commensurate with their skill levels after childbirth, changes in childcare and, according to users, education policies that can effect changes early on when children form beliefs about their futures as workers and parents.

Although the greatest emphasis was placed on the diffuse and indirect impact the research findings had on policy formulation, there was also some indication of agenda shaping and even, according to one user interviewed, to changing a policy direction. In particular, one user suggested that the research contributed indirectly to the introduction of paid paternity leave. However, this user indicated that, more broadly, Professor Houston's input supported an existing line of thinking in policy,<sup>19</sup> and helped policy makers think through the best ways forward for those policy lines. She also said that, in supporting the EOC and the Minister for Women by showing that women were constrained and that inequalities persisted, the research challenged the TUC and the CBI to come up with

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<sup>19</sup> In the form of a government commitment to tackle problems around work-life balance.

ways of ameliorating the situation to the extent that it was a problem occurring within employment.

Finally, according to this user, the research also opened up new lines of thinking in two ways. First, the findings suggested that the problem needed to be resolved at least in part back in the family and through education as the sites of children's formative development and thinking about themselves as workers. Second, by bringing to the surface women's experience of external and internal constraints on their employment decisions, and the concomitant loss of women workers and their skills, and by showing how these difficulties were exacerbated with second and subsequent children, policy makers were forced to think about new ways of facilitating work–life balance.

Professor Houston mentioned several policy documents to which she had contributed or on which she had been consulted, to which her research findings were disseminated, or on which she worked during her secondment to the DTI (see Table 3 'Payback Category Impacts').

In addition to policy documents, from her position as Research and Strategy Advisor to the DTI and as advisor to the Women and Equality Unit and the Equal Opportunities Commission, Professor Houston also invited other academics, including academic psychologists, into government for seminars and policy consultation. She also wrote research briefs and commissioned research from other academic departments and research groups. These research projects included one from the University of Sheffield and one from the University of Surrey (see below, References).

## 5.9 Stage 5: adoption

Professor Houston said that one aspect of her research was of particular interest to organisations and employers. The research found that the lack of planning around women's return from maternity leave was problematic for employers and for women choosing to return to work. Women's return from maternity leave and employers' ability to plan their staffing would be facilitated by a more systematic dialogue between women and employers about this issue. This aspect of the research was called 'the planning finding.' Consultations on the subject of maternity leave were already on the agenda in some organisations, and in the wake of Professor Houston's research and consultation in various workplaces, this finding had generated further interest and provided an impetus for moving forward with that agenda in some cases. For example, a large consulting organisation had taken up the implications of this finding as 'a woman-friendly and a business-friendly policy.' Users also emphasised the indirect influence that Professor Houston's findings may have had on the introduction of paid paternity leave.

## 5.10 Stage 6: final outcomes

Professor Houston reported that there had been a small rise in the birth rate just after the introduction of the Work and Families Act. She said it was conceivable that people's perceptions that the UK was adopting more family-friendly policies could lead to an increase in the birth rate, and she indicated that Sweden had much more family-friendly

policies and a significantly higher birth rate. She and users noted that further societal benefits potentially generated by the research included better life satisfaction for parents combining work and parenthood, and reducing gender segregation and the gendered pay gap. Professor Houston suggested that these might come about through incremental changes to maternity and paternity leave. These were implemented both through government policy changes and through individual changes implemented by managers in organisations to whom she personally communicated the findings of her research.

### 5.11 General observations

While Professor Houston thought the project would probably have gone ahead without the FoW funding, she was unequivocal about the significance of the FoW Programme in shaping the trajectory of the findings and her own career. She did not think that Robert Taylor enhanced the dissemination or impact of her work, and this was not necessary as she played such a pivotal role herself in accessing the relevant ‘policy and practice’ audience. The methodology and content of the first grant were shaped independently of the programme. However, the analysis of the data from the second grant, and the uptake of the findings from both grants, were influenced by Professor Houston’s position in the DTI and her work on related bodies, for example as academic advisor to the EOC. Table 3 illustrates the payback categories and the impacts of the projects.

Table 3. Payback category impacts

Payback Category	Example
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 peer reviewed papers in journals in leading and respected journals (more forthcoming)</li> <li>• 3 further academic papers commissioned by the PI from within Government</li> <li>• The production of 4 book chapters</li> <li>• One book (forthcoming)</li> <li>• 20 presentations to academic audiences</li> </ul>
Impacts on research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing dialogue with other researchers introduced through FoW Programme</li> <li>• Ongoing debate about agency and constraint in women's employment decisions</li> <li>• Interdisciplinary contribution to PI's academic research</li> <li>• Constructive academic-policy crossover feeding into policy and policy needs feeding back into PI's research and interpretation of findings</li> </ul>
Impacts on policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government White Paper on Work and Families (2003)</li> <li>• Work and Families Bill (2003)</li> <li>• Key Indicators of Women's Position in Britain (2005)</li> <li>• Key Indicators of Women's Position in Britain (2003)</li> <li>• Shaping a Fairer Future Women and Work Commission Report (2006)</li> <li>• Government Green Paper: Work and Parents: Competitiveness and Choice</li> <li>• Various EOC documents on work and families from 2001–2006 (10 of which cite her)</li> <li>• The effect of 5 non-peer reviewed articles</li> <li>• The effects of numerous presentations to policy makers</li> </ul>
Impacts on practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The 'planning finding' taken up by various corporate practitioners as the way forward for women and employers to negotiate decisions regarding maternity leave and return to work</li> <li>• Contributed to discussions on the introduction of paid paternity leave, which was implemented</li> </ul>
Broader social and economic impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6 articles in local newspapers</li> <li>• 11 articles in national newspapers</li> <li>• Numerous magazine articles (plus ongoing requests for interviews and articles)</li> <li>• 4 radio interviews</li> <li>• 1 BBC television appearance</li> <li>• Possible reduction of gender segregation if recommendations about better quality part-time work available for women returners</li> <li>• Possible reduction of pay gap if flexible working and better part-time options available for women returners</li> </ul>

Professor Houston and users were cautious about claiming too much for the impacts of the research findings. She and two users expressed awareness of how difficult it is to unpick the confluence of factors that go into agenda setting, policy formulation and changes in policy. However, users were unambiguous about the way in which Professor Houston's engagement with the policy context was an encouraging example of how a fruitful dialogue between academic research and policy can occur. They further noted that from her position in the DTI she was able to shape a wider research agenda related to her own initial FoW work, by commissioning research from at least three other research groups. Professor Houston also commented on this.

It was clear that many factors contributed to the success of Professor Houston's engagement, including the strong encouragement, support and networks of Peter Nolan. It was also clear that that engagement had its own outcomes and benefits that have already fed back into academic research agendas at her university, as well as the other academic contexts from which research was commissioned during Professor Houston's period at the DTI. Users reiterated how important it was for policy officials and research officers in government departments to be exposed to academic research, to support, challenge and broaden their thinking. One user who is a senior policy official (who had come from academia herself) commented on how important it is also for academics to find out what the relevant policy questions are in their fields of research. She emphasised how academics can otherwise end up engaging in isolated research activities, hoping that their research might be useful in some way. However, without contact with and information about potential users' needs, they have no way of knowing how to design research that would respond to those needs.

Professor Houston and other users stated that the FoW programme had been a good example of how a mutual engagement between policy makers and researchers can be facilitated. She also emphasised the benefits of the programme not only to her own career development, but also to her academic approach, broadening her knowledge base and encouraging what she had found to be a constructive interdisciplinarity.

When considering this methodology it is interesting to note that all of those approached to take part in the research for this case study were willing to participate and were both helpful and accommodating. Some of the participants were extremely busy and a short email response to a few focused questions was all that could be arranged, while another answered questions quickly and briefly by telephone without much room for expansion. Professor Houston and three other users interviewed, however, were willing to answer the interview questions and discuss them thoughtfully and at length.

One concern was that researcher participation in dissemination may distract from or reduce academic output for those researchers who engaged in extensive dissemination activities, as in the case of Professor Houston. Users were generally agreed that it was extremely valuable to policy users to have academic advisors brought in to government in specific areas, and that this was a model that could be used more widely. Further, one user suggested that academics would benefit from better awareness of current policy questions when formulating their research and proposals. Although this user acknowledged the importance of independent research occurring without being driven by an existing agenda as well, she thought there was also an increased role for more direct

access to information about the issues on the policy agenda at a given time informing research questions for those who wish to feed into policy and practice.

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CHAPTER 6    **Case study B**  
**'Pay, working time and performance in  
small enterprises'**

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6.1    **Introduction to the research project**

The research project investigated the management structures in place for pay and working relationships in the small firms in the UK. Most research in the area of pay structures had looked at large firms, with quite structured systems in place for payment of employees. By contrast, while small firms employ a large portion of the workforce, little was known about how they organise their working relationships.

The PI's research aimed to explore the management of pay and work organisation in small businesses in three sectors: clothing, hotels and catering, and printing. The clothing, hotels and catering sectors are known to have low pay for employees particularly relevant in light of the introduction of the National Minimum Wage (NMW), and at the level of small firms this is even more marked. The printing industry does not have a reputation for low pay, but was used in the project as a comparator (ESRC, 2000).

The PI was Director of the Industrial Relations Research Unit (IRRU) at the University of Warwick Business School for four years and prior to that he was Deputy Director for ten years. He has been a fellow of the British Academy since 1998 and is now Senior Fellow at the Advanced Institute of Management (AIM). At the time of the FoW project, he was the newly appointed Director of IRRU. Aside from the PI, there were three other researchers working on the project (one senior researcher and two junior researchers). The senior researcher, from De Montfort University, had expertise in ethnic minority businesses, which comprise a significant proportion of the small businesses in the UK, particularly in the East Midlands. The other two researchers on the project were both research fellows based at the IRRU.

The project ran from the 1<sup>st</sup> of October 1998 until the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2000 (24 months) and received £151,362 in ESRC funding. The breakdown in the spending of the grant between salaries and other costs is shown in Table 3. The research project was given a 'Good' grade by the ESRC reviewers, with two of the reviewers awarding a 'Good' grade and the other awarding an 'Outstanding' grade.

Table 3. Breakdown of project costs– taken from the project application; the amount in GBP will not be the same as the exact amount awarded.

Description of cost	Money allocated (£)
Salary costs	92,558
Travel and subsistence	9,000
Consumables and equipment	10,000
Exceptional items	1,925
Indirect costs (46% of staff costs)	42,577
<b>Total</b>	<b>156,060</b>

This case study is based on documentary analysis of the relevant ESRC files, publications and outputs from the project, a face-to-face interview with the PI and one co-researcher, and phone interviews with one other co-researcher on the grant and with three research users involved in policy-making or practice. Research users were identified through discussions with the PI, and then through discussion with other users.

## 6.2 Stage 0: topic/issue identification

The PI, in association with his research team, chose the topic for the research. The original idea was the PI's, and he saw this as an opportunity to start collaborating with a former PhD student who was now performing his own research in a similar field of study at De Montfort University. This was the first time that the two had collaborated on a study. At the time of the study the PI was Director of the IRRU at Warwick Business School (WBS), and a fellow of the British Academy.

The introduction of the NMW in April 1999 provided a natural experiment for the business and employment studies community to understand how employers were setting up payment structures. As mentioned earlier, the majority of work in the field looked at the structures of large firms, but the NMW meant that small firms now had to think about payment structures too. Therefore the NMW introduction was a very good opportunity to research an area that, in the opinion of the PI, had not been sufficiently studied. The PI had previously been involved in studies looking at the introduction of the NMW for the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD); this research also informed the Low Pay Commission (LPC) and the Trade Union Council (TUC) (Sisson and Edwards, 1996; Sisson and Edwards, 1997).

By collaborating with the senior researcher, the PI was gaining a researcher not only with expertise in the small business and ethnic minority business field, but also with contacts in the small business community in the East Midlands. This meant that the research would be able to access the businesses that would form the study material for the project – without this access, the project would have been considerably harder and may not have been able to take place. Therefore, the ability to collaborate with the senior researcher determined the answerability of the research questions.

Although the project did not explicitly consult with either policy makers or practitioners in the issue identification stage, the PI and researchers were aware of the wave of

practitioner concern in the 1990s surrounding the introduction of the NMW. Practitioners, particularly those in small firms, were worried that the NMW would lead to significant job losses. The PI and research team were also aware of the general policy debate surrounding the area through their personal networks with the DTI and TUC, although there was no formal move to include policy makers in the identification of a research topic.

### 6.3 Interface A: project specification and selection

All five of the reviewers recommended that the project be funded, with two recommending this strongly. The overall viewpoint was that the project subject matter was an under-researched field and that the timing of the project (to coincide with the introduction of the NMW) was particularly appropriate. Three of the reviewers mentioned the applicant's record in producing high quality work and in disseminating it widely. One reviewer even stated that the PI had a particularly strong academic record and would be likely to produce a high quality project. Another reviewer cited the LPC's lack of a research stream as making this project particularly important to an understanding of the impact of the NMW, since there was to be no government-based research into the subject.

Reviewers did suggest a small number of concerns and changes that could be made to improve the project. One reviewer recommended including another employment sector from one of the 'new' industries, such as computing or biotechnology, to gather information on workers in those sectors. One reviewer questioned the availability of data on attendance, working hours, etc. in small firms, but also suggested that the project would allow that particular research question to be answered.

The methodology proposed, surveying a large number of firms (75) and then performing more in-depth case studies on a smaller number (6), was mentioned specifically by two reviewers. One suggested that the methodology would be particularly useful, and praised the proposal for triangulating methods. Another reviewer had reservations about the method. The study involved answering a number of distinct questions (what are the characteristics of small firms; what are their payment processes; how do they adjust to regulation; how do they appear ethnographically?) and the reviewer suggested that the two methods possibly would not be able to capture enough appropriate or detailed data to be able to answer all of the questions satisfactorily.

Although the reviewers made a number of suggestions, the ESRC did not insist on any changes and the PI suggested that the comments did not affect the way that the project had been set up or had performed.

### 6.4 Stage 1: inputs to research

The project received £151,362 over 24 months from the FoW programme. This funding ran from the 1<sup>st</sup> October 1998 to the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2000. The project did not receive funding from any other sources, and did not receive 'support in kind' from any other source.

When asked whether the research work would have occurred without the funding from FoW, both the PI and senior researcher on the project suggested that it might not have. Although there might have been funding available from other sources for this area of research, the freedom of the FoW grant (as opposed to the restrictions of regular grant funding) allowed the project to explore interesting issues that were too wide in scope to be covered by a regular grant. In a sense it allowed the research to be a little more ambitious and adventurous. Funding for projects in the same research field was available, and other projects looking at similar issues were funded. However, these did not have the same ambition and breadth as the FoW project.

The FoW grant was also particularly timely, both in terms of the introduction of the NMW, and of putting together the study team that the PI wanted. It allowed him to include two researchers on the grant who were just completing work on other studies and would not have been available for the project had the funding come later.

The University of Warwick Business School (WBS) has a strong reputation in producing high quality employment research. However, the PI suggested that the influence of the Industrial Relations Research Unit (IRRU) was more important than the influence of the WBS when accessing funding and academic collaborators, since the IRRU has such a strong academic reputation. The WBS reputation, along with the senior researcher's networks with small firms, helped to enable small firms to participate in the research. The positioning of Warwick University and De Montfort University in the Midlands also acted as an input to the research. The geographical location of the researchers was useful in co-locating them with a high number of ethnic minority small firms (particularly in the East Midlands).

User concerns were considered in identifying the topic, but the users themselves were not considered to have had an input into the project. The same could be said of policy makers, with whom the PI and researchers had links and therefore knew of their concerns, but did not consult in the project design. However, policy makers and practitioners were included on the steering committee set up by the research team.

The steering committee was made up of nine members. Four of these came from employers' associations, two from bodies with an employee perspective, two from local authorities and one from a bank with small business interests. The organisations making up the steering committee are shown in Box 7. The steering committee was used as a sounding board for ideas in the project. In particular, the committee advised on the design of the survey and on the best ways to approach small firms for the research. The questions on the survey were sent to the committee and also to a group of Small Medium Enterprises (SME) experts to look at prior to the start of the survey. The senior researcher believed that there had been quite a lot of consultation during the research process.

- Birmingham and Solihull TEC
- Birmingham City Council
- British Hospitality Association
- British Printing Industries Federation
- Federation of Small Businesses
- Leicester Asian Business Association
- Lloyds Bank
- Trade Union Congress
- West Midlands Low Pay Unit

**Box 7. Membership of the steering committee.**

Previous studies by the PI, for example looking at the introduction of the NMW for the CIPD, meant that a level of expertise on research into the minimum wage was already in place. This was also true for the other researchers in the group, since the senior researcher had considerable experience of working with small ethnic minority firms: he had just finished an ESRC-funded project on ethnic minority businesses in inner cities prior to FoW, and one junior researcher was employed on a project prior to the FoW study looking at payment and working time in large firms. This expertise meant that the design of the study and methods used were informed by personal experience of the research field.

## 6.5 Stage 2: research process

The research used qualitative surveys and case studies. The qualitative surveys comprised face-to-face interviews with an owner manager and afterwards with an employee. These interviews had some structured questions and some semi-structured aspects. Qualitative surveys were deemed more appropriate than conventional surveys since the response rate to surveys in small businesses is known to be low. The surveys looked at around 25 firms in each employment sector examined (printing, clothing and hotels and catering), although the research team ended up performing more than 75 surveys with owner managers (81) and employees (79). The research team also performed 5 case studies in the clothing (2) and hotel and catering (3) sectors. There were no case studies in the printing sector since the qualitative surveys suggested that there were no specific issues to address for this sector. The senior researcher had performed a project prior to the study that used case studies and this was his preferred methodology. He suggested that this was his major input to the way the study was performed. There was also a longitudinal aspect to the research, with interviews performed at about the time of introduction of the NMW and again a year later.

The research load was spread between the four researchers on the project, although the two researchers who were working exclusively on the FoW project at the time carried out the majority of the fieldwork. The benefit of having a team that had worked together previously, and knew each other's research priorities, was particularly evident in the use of qualitative surveys, as these require the researchers to perform studies in a similar

fashion so that rich comparable data can be extracted from research subjects. The research group all knew the requirements of the methodology and the way the PI wanted the project to work.

The researchers did not claim to have made any specific methodological advances, although they did feel that the mixture of methods and the access to a sector that has been notoriously hard to research suggested a 'distinctive achievement'.<sup>20</sup> Other researchers have since suggested that the balance of methodologies used was particularly valuable in researching the small firm sector. A research summary for the DTI in 2005 (Small Business Research Centre, 2005) suggests that the problem with standard survey data is that it can only scratch the surface of employment issues. In contrast, it suggests that the PI's work on NMW produced more worthwhile results.<sup>21</sup>

'A proper understanding of the impact of regulation on small business performance needs to go beyond business owners' general perceptions of regulation issues and investigate the impact of specific regulations in specific business contexts. In the particular context of employment regulation, [the PI] et al. note how business owners' overall perceptions of legislation need not coincide with owners' concrete experiences of managing the impact of regulation on their own enterprises.'

The Small Business Research Centre even suggests that the work done by the PI and his research team is the best in the field.<sup>22</sup>

'Using case study evidence of the impact of the National Minimum Wage (NMW) and other employment regulations, [the PI] and his colleagues have, in a series of publications provided the most adequate understanding of regulatory impacts on small firm performance to date.'

In performing the research, the access to research subjects was important. As mentioned, this was made easier by the reputation of WBS, the presence of the senior researcher on the project (with his network of small firm contacts) and the actions of the steering committee. The research process itself had an impact on the firms being studied by the research team. One manager was asked in his second interview whether he had considered changing his payment system, and said that without the research project he would not even have thought about the issue.

One issue in the research process about which the PI expressed regret, was not succeeding in involving the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) more in the research. The PI felt that the team had not tried hard enough to involve the RDAs in the research. This meant that the RDAs were not taking on board the research findings (since they were not engaged in the process).

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<sup>20</sup> Taken from the project End of Award Report – Summary of Research Results.

<sup>21</sup> Small Business Research Centre (2005) 'Regulation and Small Firm Performance and Growth: A Review of the Literature', SBRC, Kingston University, p. 8, para 4.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p. 10, para 3.

## 6.6 Stage 3: primary outputs from research

The primary outputs from the project can be broken down into three categories: knowledge production; benefits to future research; and benefits to the researchers. These are all immediate outputs of the research.

### 6.6.1 Knowledge production

The project produced 12 peer-reviewed papers in a variety of journals. Of the journal papers, according to the PI, the highest impact paper in academic circles was that of 2003 in the *British Journal of Industrial Relations* (Arrowsmith et al., 2003). This paper was published in the leading journal in the field (Impact Factor: 1.689),<sup>23</sup> and the PI received very positive academic feedback about it. The paper covered the findings of the FoW project and focused on the longitudinal study of the firms surveyed during the FoW project.

The PI also identified the 2002 paper in *Policy Studies* (Edwards et al., 2002), on small firms' reaction to the NMW, as being particularly high impact with policy makers. The paper looks at the business networks of small firms and how they could broker relationships with government business support services. It also makes recommendations on government strategy for industrial relations with regards to small firms. This paper was written for a policy audience and the PI received around 30–40 requests for reprints by email. It also received a lot of attention from the broad policy community, including specific interest from the local economic development agencies. The PI was unaware of any specific impact that arose from this interest however.

### 6.6.2 Benefits to future research and research use

Aside from the impact mentioned – that the project's methodology was cited as being the most appropriate to study regulatory shocks on small businesses (Small Business Research Centre, 2005) – the research has benefited future research for both the research team and other researchers.

In terms of the research team, the PI and senior researcher have collaborated consistently since the FoW project, which was the first time they had worked together since the senior researcher was the PI's PhD student. This collaboration has proved fruitful, with research commissioned by the DTI (Edwards, Ram and Black, 2003) and Low Pay Commission (Ram, Edwards and Jones, 2004) after the FoW project and a stream of current and future work around the themes present in the FoW research. This current research includes an ESRC research project by the PI and the senior researcher looking at the organizational roots of productivity in SMEs, and work with Work Foundation and the DTI by the PI. The senior researcher is also highly involved in follow-up work from the FoW grant, including a current study addressing ethnic minority participation in the labour market.

Other research in the area of small firms and employment has called on the work of the PI and, specifically, the recent work by Heerey (2005) and Grimshaw and Carroll

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<sup>23</sup> ISI Journal Citation Reports Ranking: 2005: 1/16 (Industrial Relations & Labour)

(2006) have cited the *British Journal of Industrial Relations* paper from 2003 that reviewed the FoW project (Arrowsmith et al., 2003).

### 6.6.3 Researcher benefits

Although it is difficult to attribute the success of individual researchers on the FoW grant, it is possible to suggest that the success of any researcher is likely to be at least partly attributable to the funding received by the researcher.

The PI suggested that his career had been influenced by the FoW funding, and that the direction of his research had been shaped by the FoW research. Specifically, he mentioned that his research projects with the Low Pay Commission and the Work Foundation would not have occurred without the FoW research project. He suggested it was difficult to know what research he might now be engaged in without the FoW project. Since the project the PI has been appointed as a member of the DTI Advisory Forum on the Impact of Employment Policies (a forum with a mix of academics and policy makers who aim to help ensure employment policy is developed in light of the latest available research and analysis).

The senior researcher has achieved considerable success in the years following the FoW project. In 2004, he received an OBE and in 2005 he was the Professional Excellence Award winner in the Lloyds TSB Asian Jewel Awards 2005. Both of these he received for his services to ethnic minority businesses. He is also now a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, a director of the Institute of Small Business Affairs, director of the Centre for Research in Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship (CRÈME – an organisation comprised of academics from De Montfort University and the East Midlands Development Agency). He is also the only academic member on two DTI councils, the Ethnic Minority Business Forum and the Small Business Council. He suggested that the main benefit he received from the FoW programme was the opportunity to network with other academics and to use them as a sounding board for ideas, and to provide critical opinions on outputs (such as performing talks to academics as dry runs for conferences).

The two junior researchers on the project both now have lectureships. One is a senior lecturer at the WBS and the other is a senior lecturer at the University of Kent. The researcher who has remained in Warwick lectures in Industrial Relations & Personnel Management and is also a Senior Research Fellow at the IRRU. He suggested that although the FoW research project was not a specific factor in his success, it did add to the body of knowledge that helped advance his career in terms of jobs and researching new fields. He does now include the research from FoW in his lectures to undergraduates whom, he feels, are more involved in the lectures when it is about something they are familiar with – such as working in or experiencing small firms.

The second junior researcher is now a senior lecturer in Industrial Relations and Human Resource Management, and is also a Director of Studies for Industrial Relations and Human Resource Management in the Centre for Regional Productivity (CRP) at the University of Kent. The CRP aims to provide a combination of high quality independent research combined with practical advice for business and social partner groups within the Kent area on human resource management and operational issues, in particular examining 'best practice' and the promotion of efficiency.

## 6.7 Interface B: dissemination

The project produced a number of academic papers, and also presented findings to a variety of audiences. The PI suggested that the dissemination of results to policy makers was attributable to the networks and relationships that were held with policy makers. By keeping dialogue open with policy makers, the PI pointed out that any research results not currently useful could be used later, when they might fit a specific policy need.

The dissemination policy of the research team prior to the project was to produce two reports, one on each section of the project. In reality, the project produced a series of papers and a report for the ESRC FoW bulletin (ESRC, 2000). The outputs are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Outputs from the research.

Publication type	Total
Book chapter	1
Journal article	12
Non peer-reviewed article	1
Presentation	7
Publicly available full report	1

The academic papers were disseminated to interested policy makers in the DTI, local government and Regional Development Agencies. The team also produced a project bulletin that was disseminated to all the participating firms, to the steering committee and to other interested parties. The PI and researchers were also requested to produce a detailed report (37-pages) to the Low Pay Commission (LPC) providing evidence to their investigations into the NMW (Gilman, Ram and Edwards, 1999), and a separate report on the research for the LPC.

The research team presented their findings to a number of different audiences and in several locations. The PI suggested that the forum run by the research team for small firm representatives (including representatives from the DTI, the Regional Development Agencies and the Federation of Small Businesses) was not as successful as perhaps it should have been. This was attributable to the participants coming to the meeting with preconceived ideas about how small firms are at a disadvantage. This affected the discussion and turned the meeting into a debate rather than a useful engagement.

The PI and senior researcher also ran a discussion session for the Institute of Small Business Affairs (ISBA – now the Institute for Small Business and Entrepreneurship) at which there was a mixture of policy and practice-based delegates (Edwards et al., 2001). The ISBA was based within the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ICCA). This workshop was seen as a success by the senior researcher, who suggested that the strong academic underpinning of work on small firms made it credible to the small business community. One rapporteur of the project was a member of the LPC and attended the workshop. He claimed:

‘I was impressed by the range and influential “weight” of the audience gathered there from small business organisations and government.’

Policy makers whom we spoke to at the DTI suggested that the mixture of seminars and research papers that came out of the project were useful in informing them of the results. However, the networking between researcher and policy maker was cited as being important in getting a message to policy makers. One policy maker did not have a strong memory of the project and was not very knowledgeable about its outputs, although he knew a lot about the FoW programme as a whole.

Wider dissemination through the media was neither an expressed nor realised ambition of the project, according to the PI. The PI suggested that the reason there had been no media interest in the research was that when the idea of a NMW first appeared the press were interested in the concept and potential issues. By the time a NMW existed there was no longer any interest from journalists.

Research was also disseminated to study organisations through discussions with managers and owners during the research process.

## 6.8 Stage 4: secondary outputs

The main point made by the PI about the policy impact of his research was that it was not a focused project that was looking to inform a specific policy. Since the project was designed to show what was happening in small firms, it really could only inform policy makers, rather than specific policies. The PI nominated a number of potential policy makers and researchers who would be able to talk about the policy impact of the research. Of these, it was possible to set up phone interviews with two members of the DTI and with a researcher at the Small Business Research Centre at Kingston University. The following policy impacts include the views of the researchers, policy makers and the other researcher in the field. Interestingly, the researchers did not name anyone at the LPC who would have an insight into the FoW research.

The PI and senior researcher suggested that although the impact on policy was not a direct and instrumental one, there was a considerable dissemination to policy makers that led to a closer relationship and further funding. The LPC and DTI were identified prior to the project as potential users of the research. The research did not suggest a particular policy answer or clear direction for policy, so it merely reflected the LPC remit, providing a better understanding for the commission to frame future research questions. Policy debates that are likely to have been influenced include those on 'red tape' and 'better regulation'. The rapporteur of the project, who was a member of the LPC, suggested that the team could not have done better with the project.

In the follow up to the FoW research, the PI and senior researcher were both involved in projects for the LPC and the DTI along similar lines. The work for the LPC and DTI, however, was more focused on policy than the FoW project, which took an overview of the situation. An example of a direct impact on the LPC future research was the visit to The Coventry Clothing Centre in a review by the LPC,<sup>24</sup> which was a case study in the FoW project. The research for the DTI that followed the FoW research was sent to the

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<sup>24</sup> See [http://www.lowpay.gov.uk/lowpay/press/news26\\_06\\_02.shtml](http://www.lowpay.gov.uk/lowpay/press/news26_06_02.shtml) for more details.

Small Business Council and has percolated into policy from there, according the senior researcher.

The interviewees at the DTI also upheld the view that the research was not focused on a specific policy; rather, it informed policy makers in the Employment Relations Directorate (ERD) at the DTI since they were thinking along similar lines to the researchers. The ERD found the research to be challenging, although helpful, in terms of understanding the ways to research small firms and the overview it provided of the situation with small firms in the UK. One DTI interviewee suggested that research was better for policy if it was more focused on specific policy issues with more depth to the research.

The researchers also had an impact on the Regional Development Agencies in the Midlands, although the PI suggested that this was a difficult task since the RDAs have limited resources and their agendas were not the same as the research findings. The senior researcher is currently involved in working with RDAs and also with the East Midlands Business Services, both of which are considering the research from FoW and the following research (although this is again not a direct feed into specific policies). One of the researchers on the project and also a research user suggested that RDAs are now tailoring their advice to sectoral groups of small firms, rather than just to firms by size.

One of the most interesting impacts on policy from the project was the interest shown in the research from abroad. The Manitoba Minimum Wage Board in Canada contacted the PI to find out more about the research, and University of Manitoba research subsequently quoted the FoW research in recommendations to provincial government (Godard, 2002).

## 6.9 Stage 5: adoption

It is not possible to identify any specific practice differences attributable to this project. The work was fed back to study organisations, but the way they took it on board is unknown to the PI and researchers since the main finding of the research was that small businesses do not change their practice in the face of regulation. The senior researcher suggested that the work has been well received by practitioners, since it is both academically rigorous and focused on the practitioners themselves. However, he is unaware of whether small businesses have taken on the research directly, since the questions that the research asked about the way small businesses react to regulations are not of the type that small businesses would ask if identifying research questions themselves. The senior researcher thought that the small business community had an understanding of the issues but no reason to take things into practice.

The PI felt that since the research showed that small firms do not make changes in response to regulatory shock, the ability of the research to have an impact on practice was low. The sorts of impacts that the research may have had on practice are based on anecdotal evidence from the researchers. For example, when one junior researcher asked an interviewee whether they had considered changing their pay structure in light of the NMW introduction, the interviewee replied that without being involved in the research he would not have even thought about it. The senior researcher suggested that the very act of interviewing small firm owners meant that the owners could stop thinking about the

business for an hour and consider management strategy, a rare occurrence for people in that role.

Interviewees at the DTI also thought that the practice benefits of the research were quite small, suggesting that the major changes to practice occur because of research performed by the ERD or work carried out by the Small Business Service, both of which are based at the DTI.

#### 6.10 Stage 6: final outcomes

There have certainly been broad economic benefits from the introduction of the NMW, for example increased pay for lower paid workers leading to increased productivity in certain employment sectors such as the security business (Low Pay Commission, 2000). However, the role played by this research project in the economic benefits seen is very difficult to gauge – specifically as the findings were that small business owners do not react to regulatory shock but maintain the status quo. This indicates that there would not be major changes to economic benefits arising from the research.

Since the research has had a diffuse effect on policy by showing the state of affairs in the field of small firm response to legislative shock, it is very difficult to attribute even a policy response to the research. Trying to attribute social benefits to the research is almost impossible. In fact, the main result of the research was that the introduction of the NMW actually would not change the way people behaved, so the change to people's behaviour because of the research is negligible.

#### 6.11 General observations

Without the FoW programme, the PI suggested that the project would not have gone ahead in the form that it did. Since the project was not bound by a strict topic guide, it could address questions that were not likely to be funded by other mechanisms – specifically the impact of regulation on small firms. Although the FoW did not specifically increase the academic networks of the PI, it did allow the research team to rehearse and polish their presentations for conferences to a group of academics. The Robert Taylor series of FoW reports also helped the policy impact of the project. Table 5 shows the payback categories and the impacts of the project. Payback categories only consider impacts and not simply dissemination.

In terms of the methodology used for this study of the FoW programme, the PI suggested that the survey was difficult to answer since it did not provide opportunities for him to include areas of his knowledge that did not fit with specific questions. This is in contrast to the case study interview with him, in which he talked freely about a number of areas that would not have been covered by the survey alone. The PI was happy to be involved in the research, both in the survey and the case study research. The information provided in the survey was, perhaps unsurprisingly, not as rich as that provided in the interview. Information about potential research users was more easily recalled at interview than in the survey. The PI did feel that the interview was more open and broad than he had expected. He suggested that the questions could have been more focused on specific

impacts of the research, to get more information about the follow-up research for the LPC, for example.

Overall, this FoW project has had a general impact on policy, but it is difficult to attribute impact to the project specifically. This is because the work allowed policy makers to understand the situation in the UK for small firms, rather than making specific recommendations for policy. This attribution problem is also true of researcher benefits, since it is very difficult to say how much a specific project attributes to promotions or honours compared with the whole body of a researcher's work.

Table 5. Payback category impacts

<b>Payback Category</b>	<b>Example</b>
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 12 peer-reviewed papers in journals, of which two appeared in the leading journal in the Industrial Relations field</li> <li>• The production of a book chapter on 'Managing labour in small firms'</li> <li>• 6 presentations to academic audiences</li> </ul>
Impacts on research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research methodology recognised by DTI as the most appropriate for studying small firms</li> <li>• Successful ongoing collaboration between PI and senior researcher</li> <li>• Follow-up research for the LPC, DTI, Work Foundation and ESRC</li> <li>• Other researchers' publications citing papers from this project</li> <li>• Researcher career advancement and achievements (e.g. senior researcher OBE and Professional Excellence award)</li> <li>• Informed research by the University of Manitoba on the minimum wage in Manitoba, Canada</li> </ul>
Impacts on policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report to LPC providing evidence on the NMW</li> <li>• Informed policy makers at the DTI and LPC about the situation in small firms</li> <li>• One case study organisation was investigated in a LPC review</li> <li>• Helped the ERD at DTI to understand the situation with small firms in the UK</li> <li>• Graduate course content is now different for those lectures given by one researcher involved in the project</li> <li>• One non peer-reviewed article (ESRC FoW Bulletin) and one presentation to policy makers</li> </ul>
Impacts on practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informed small firm owners/managers of the likely impacts of the NMW, but difficult to know if they changed behaviour due to that information</li> </ul>
Broader social and economic impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impossible to attribute any socio-economic benefits to the project</li> </ul>

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## CHAPTER 7 Case study C

### Workplace change (pseudonym)

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#### 7.1 Introduction to the research project

'Workplace Change' was one of the larger and more prolonged projects funded under Phase I of FoW. The project was designed against a background of public and academic interest in apparent changes in the working world. These included: the growth of managerial and professional jobs and the decline of manual work; the growth of the service sector of the economy and the decline of manufacturing; increased job insecurity and fewer 'jobs for life'; new ways of organising companies and work; the spread of self-employment and portfolio careers; the effects of the recent and widespread adoption of new information and communication technologies; the weakening of trade unions; changes in working hours. The changes had initially affected manual workers but more recently spread to managerial employees. There was not always a clear direction of change. In this context the study addressed both the empirical and conceptual issues of employment. The same research team carried out a closely related project under the second phase of FoW. In some respects it is hard to isolate the impacts of these two projects, but we attempt to do so, partly to investigate in what ways separation is possible. The emphasis of the case study is on the first Phase project.

According to the grant application, there were five primary aims of the first phase project:

- 1) To contribute to the identification and description of change in the employment relationship and in the contractual basis of the employment over the 1980s and 1990s, and to assess the implications of these changes for workers and employers.
- 2) To advance understanding of these changes by testing concepts and theories concerning both changes and continuity in the employment relationship and the contractual basis; by distinguishing cyclical and temporary changes from persistent trends; and, where necessary, by developing new interpretations that can be tested in future research.
- 3) To provide, within this framework, a special focus on higher occupations (professionals, managers), which are thought to constitute areas of particularly intensive change.

- 4) To contribute to methodology through the integrated use of qualitative, case-study and survey data, and within the survey, to develop methods of extending the information collected about each of the broad occupational groups.
- 5) To provide means of involvement in research for user groups, and to generate early publication and dissemination to the benefit of both user groups and of other research in the programme.

The project incorporated a smaller-scale intensive study of employers, along the lines of a series of case studies, and a large survey of employees and the self-employed. These two parts were designed to complement each other. The project was conducted collaboratively by a team drawn from two institutions.

The intensive study began with semi-structured interviews with managers and non-managerial employees in a small number of establishments. These employers were selected for the way in which they represented different sizes, industries and sectors. This was followed by more extensive interviewing in selected cases. This qualitative work provided ideas that fed into the subsequent survey.

The large-scale survey, focusing on employees, was designed to allow comparisons with previous studies and replicated questions from several sources. The new questions were informed by the intensive study and the contemporary debates about the changing nature of work and the economy, and introduced issues such as working time practices and team working. The survey made use of both personal interviewing and a self-completion questionnaire. A separate questionnaire was designed for the self-employed.

As mentioned above, the research team carried out a substantial and related study within Phase II of the FoW programme. This project focused on employers' perception of workplace change.

This case study is based on documentary analysis of the relevant ESRC files, publications and outputs from the project, face-to-face interviews with the two PIs, written comments by two of the other researchers, and interviews (mainly by phone) with one Advisory Group member, and with six research users involved in policy making or practice. Research users were identified through discussion with the PIs.

## 7.2 Stage 0: topic/issue identification

Initially, there were two separate proposals for the first Phase of the FoW programme, from different institutions. Due to the limited resources of the FoW programme and the similarity of the two proposals, the ESRC asked for the two proposals to be merged. This produced a joint team from the two institutions, which was the first collaboration between the two groups.

There were two motivations behind the proposal: first it was driven by belief in the value of systematic comparisons over time, as a method of assessing change; and second there was a strong interest in testing newly emerging concepts about what appeared to be significant changes in employment and society. These concepts included the idea of portfolio careers, the decline of the importance of traditional social class differences and the

growing importance of the service class. Even though the impetus was an academic one, the research team was aware that many of the issues were relevant to policy makers. One such issue is whether people choose self-employment or are forced into it.

The timing of the project was also fortuitous, as the economy had shifted with unemployment clearly on a downward trend by the time the fieldwork started.

The initiative for the follow-up study in Phase II was initially suggested by the Director of the Programme although members of the research team were already interested in developing such an extension. The follow-up project was intended to look at issues from the employers' rather than the employees' perspective.

### 7.3 Stage 1: inputs to research

The ESRC's FoW programme provided the major funding for the projects, with a small amount of additional funding coming from an external organisation at a later stage in the project, to offset increased costs. One of the PIs said that he had previously tried to obtain funding for very similar projects but had not succeeded. He suggested that this was because surveys have high costs and hence are difficult to get funded. This suggests that the project probably would not have taken place without the FoW programme.

Additional funding was also provided from internal sources within the two participating institutions, especially to support the work on publications. One member of the research team pointed out that, in addition, considerable unpaid time was devoted by team members to the project, as is often the case with research activities.

Advisory group members (from business, public sector, media, employer and union bodies) contributed their time by attending meetings and three of them provided access to their organisations for case studies.

The researchers' networks provided a continuing link with the corporate sector, particularly to those organisations that participated in the advisory group. Members of the advisory group were informed about interim results through a formal presentation, and were also provided with informal feedback throughout the project.

One of the PIs stressed that the resources provided by the ESRC were limited and designed only to support the research work. Consequently, when the project generated significant media interest, the resources required for this were a substantial drain on the project's resources and one of the reasons why it was not possible to make more rapid progress with academic publications.

### 7.4 Stage 2: research process

Two separate factors contributed to a delay in the survey phase of the project. First, just prior to tendering for a survey contractor the research team discovered that new EU regulations required open tendering. This caused a two month delay. Second, interviews were delayed by a further four months because of problems with the subcontractor's

fieldwork, which put the quality of the project at risk. However, remedies were agreed with the subcontractor that allowed the completion of the survey.

Survey costs increased because of the delay in commissioning and increased interviewer costs due to the Working Time Directive. These could not be met by the ESRC but were balanced by the external financial support already referred to.

Some of the scholarly outputs were delayed because of the effort put into supporting the dissemination process; in the first half of 2002 the team supported two dissemination channels (the ESRC's, and the external sponsor's). The project team perceived this coverage as very valuable to increase public awareness but it also proved very time consuming. Direct media enquiries to the principal investigators also produced additional work. However, the PIs also had very substantial help and support in connection with media work from the Director of the Programme and from ESRC Press Office.

The researchers thought cooperation with the advisory group, which was set up 6–9 months after the project started, was very fruitful. The group was established via personal contacts of the researchers and included people from big companies, representative organisations and professional bodies. Academics were not represented. The idea was that the advisory group would be able to provide input on current trends. The group's input helped to integrate current issues into the survey. The advisory group commented on initial results from the first project and was briefed on the scope of the second, although they did not contribute to it in an on-going capacity. A member of the advisory group suggested that their contribution had been more related to current practices than likely future trends. The member also commented that, as the role of an advisory group can be a very important one, members should be carefully selected to ensure they provide the adequate experience and skills to steer the work towards the achievement of the established objectives.

## 7.5 Stage 3: primary outputs from research

### 7.5.1 Knowledge<sup>25</sup>

The research team is continuing to work on material linked to the project: one major output is an academic book expected to be finished in Autumn 2006. The target audience is academics and post-graduate students.

To date, the project team has published three peer reviewed articles based on Phase I research. Additionally, four non-peer reviewed articles and one academic discussion paper have been published.

The main outcome from the Phase II project has already been published as a book aimed at practitioners and a policy audience, as well as students and academics. This was made a priority as early publication was of high importance for the ESRC. According to the

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<sup>25</sup> This listing includes the outcomes of both projects undertaken by the research team (Phase I and II) as the PI stated that the two projects were closely related, and isolating them would be difficult.

interviewees this book has been very well reviewed by a leading academic journal. One peer reviewed article has also been published from Phase II.

### 7.5.2 Benefits to future research and research use

The Phase I project provided input to the design of the questionnaire for the Phase II project.

Both datasets have been deposited in the ESRC data archive but there is normally a time lag between the deposit of such a dataset and its use as it takes time for other researchers to discover the dataset, prepare the research, conduct the research and then publish it. The PIs see a great potential for the use of the dataset by other researchers once awareness about its existence has risen. The publishing of the forthcoming book will contribute to this awareness. For the time being researchers at 23 UK universities, and eight universities abroad, have registered to use the data generated by the research, and several publications have already made use of this dataset. This includes one other team in the FoW programme, who have referred to the data in a book and in several articles, and an economist (not in the FoW programme) who used the data in a book published in 2006. Publications resulting from the project have already been cited by other researchers.

### 7.5.3 Researcher benefits

The PIs were already very senior figures, and the project has not yet made a clear contribution to the careers of the other team members. One of the researchers said that his participation had not been entirely positive, as he felt the interdisciplinary and collaborative nature of the work would count against it in the next Research Assessment Exercise, where the emphasis in his academic area is on single authored publications. Another of the team members had similar reservations. He felt that there was an increasing tension between careers in academic departments where the main criterion is scholarly publication, and ESRC's emphasis on policy contributions and dissemination to wider audiences.

The Phase I project established a stronger link between the two institutions' researchers that continued their cooperation in the Phase II project and in subsequent work on the jointly authored books. The researchers already had an important network of contacts with senior figures in the corporate world, which they used for the project to establish the advisory group and to gain access to the case study establishments.

## 7.6 Interface B: dissemination

The FoW's Media Fellow used the findings extensively in several of the ESRC publications. His work was seen as very effective, given his resources: he produced things quickly and was widely cited. However, his timescale of operation was different from those of the academics: his requests for support from the research team necessarily came at short notice, and the researchers felt it disturbed their scientific work. A user from a professional body felt that the summaries provided a valuable introduction to those not familiar with the field. He stressed that the reports of the FoW's Media Fellow had been widely read in his own organisation.

In total, the ESRC lists around 20 articles in national and 50 in local newspapers as well as about 15 in magazines, which cited findings from the Phase I study. Furthermore, the research team gave at least 16 presentations, some to academics others to non-academics.

The Chair of a governmental agency invited one of the PIs to give a presentation to the Board that sets the framework for the agency. The presentation focused on work-related stress and work–life balance issues and had a big influence on the future policy of the agency in this area.

One of the PIs featured on a lunchtime television news programme for ITV, and was interviewed in 2005 for a BBC Radio 4 series on the changing world of work. Material from the interview was used in three of the four programmes in the series.

The PIs took part in a briefing of a central government policy unit organised by the ESRC, but the PIs were not aware of the impact this meeting had. Furthermore, one of the PIs spent a day at a workshop facilitating a discussion between HR managers at a leading management college in 2003. Another team member spent half an hour briefing a senior member of an opposition party on family-friendly employment practices.

At the end of the second study, short fact sheets were sent out to the businesses that had participated. However, this had been set up as a courtesy and an incentive to get the firms involved in the study, and there was no feedback from this distribution.

The main output of the Phase II project was a book that targeted mainly practitioners. According to the interviewees the book received favourable reviews in several influential business and professional publications, but the chosen publishing format was not well suited to this type of book as it was printed in a plain hard cover edition of a sociology series, with a high cover price. The PIs felt that this meant the book failed to reach the intended audience of practitioners and trainers.

## 7.7 Stage 4: secondary outputs

As already noted, the project findings on work-related stress influenced the work of a governmental agency in the area of work related stress.

The external organisation that provided additional funding for the Phase I project became a ‘policy customer’ and consequently they were interested in getting something out of the project. The organisation used the early results from the survey on job satisfaction in their own publications. The results were also presented at an event attended by a large invited audience. Users from the organisation felt that the research was very influential and provided solid work for conceptualising what was happening in the working world at the moment. The ongoing relevance of the work is also confirmed by the fact that the Phase II book is cited in a recent publication of the same organisation.

One of the interviewed users suggested that the research would be the most enduring work from FoW programme, and the book from Phase II was the best output of the programme so far. He felt that the programme needed more such studies to have a lasting impact.

The representative of a professional body praised the quality and objectivity of the project. He felt that although the results did not change the organisation's policies or guidelines they were valuable because they provided especially high quality independent evidence to confirm its existing stance. This is a particularly valuable role in a field in which those with vested interests conduct much of the research.

A user from a regulatory agency said that their own research had drawn on the findings, and that a recent report of their own referred a lot to the book published under Phase II.

According to one researcher of the project team one organisation changed its policy regarding junior staff workloads, the behaviour of managers, and the structure of the career ladder. Furthermore, one PI was invited to become a member of a central government task force that developed a corporate social responsibility competency framework for companies and other organisations.

## 7.8 Stage 5: adoption – by practitioners and public

Neither of the PIs was aware of actual changes in practice resulting from the research. The PIs thought that the findings were unlikely to have had direct impact on the practices of the advisory group members within their organisations, as these were all highly expert people. One advisory group member suggested that because of her background in the field, membership of the group had little effect on her practice. The member also suggested that the difficulty with such research influencing practice was that it provided rather a broad overview and was not directly applicable to individual organisations. The application of findings would have required adapting and shaping them to the specific working environment, which would have been very time consuming. She also highlighted the fact that in general, advisory group members tend to come from large organisations, given that they have the necessary human resources to delegate someone and also provide a higher reputation. Consequently, the focus of SMEs is neglected.

Even though the Phase I project had a rather academic inclination, the fact that the project team reported back to the organisations involved in the case studies might have had direct input on individual employment practices. One of the PIs had done two presentations on the findings at one of the companies that had found them very interesting. One of the other team members had similarly received positive comments from a case study organisation, following feedback given to them. Due to confidentiality issues it was not possible to establish user interviews with the case study companies to define the extent of impact the findings had on their practices.

One of the users felt that the most effective route to have an impact on practitioners for this type of work is likely to be via consultants who provide training, rather than direct to practitioners.

The researchers had the feeling that the Phase II study would have catered to practitioners, but they felt that there is no concrete evidence of it other than the comments from external sources that are reported above. The impact might also have been compromised by the sub-optimal positioning of the book in the market and the lack of marketing to practitioners.

## 7.9 Stage 6: final outcomes

No final outcomes attributed to the grant could be identified at this time. The PIs hope that the work has helped provide a better understanding of employees and innovative work practices, which could help organisations redesign the workplace to improve equality and quality of life.

## 7.10 General observations

One of the PIs suggested that his earlier attempts to obtain funding for such a research project had failed, so the outcomes can be directly attributed to the ESRC funding. Several users have suggested that the project findings had an impact on their future work or have reinforced their policy line. In this respect they highlighted in particular the importance of the high quality and objectivity of the research work, which provided it with a special status among other research that presented the same conclusions.

There might be further long-term impacts of the project once the outputs of the research (e.g. datasets, upcoming book) are taken up by the academic community.

It was not possible to trace specific cases in which the research findings had changed practice. However, both projects contained interactions with employers that could have stimulated such an adoption. In the first and more academically oriented phase, the research team provided feedback to the case study organisations. These individuals and organisations may subsequently have adopted new practices. The second phase project directly targeted practitioners with a management book.

A number of influences assessed in this case study suggested that different impacts may take very different time to come to fruition, e.g. direct presentations to or training of practitioners (rather short term), integration in curriculum of management schools (medium term), change of policy climate (long term, rather cumulative impact of many studies, media, etc.). Consequently, the chosen time frame for an evaluation may prove too late for immediate impacts, and too early for wider impacts.

Thus, given that the time needed for answering the questionnaires and the interviews was similar for the PIs, and that in the interviews the PIs provided a lot of additional input to questions they had not answered initially in their questionnaires, resorting to interviews might be preferable.

One problem encountered in this case study was that when evaluating the impact of projects that aim at influencing high profile senior policy makers, these policy makers may not have time for interviews with evaluators. Confidentiality guarantees given to research subjects may also prevent the follow-up of the impacts of research on those who were studied.

The researchers suggested that it would have been helpful to know what evaluations were likely when the grant was awarded, as this would help them determine what records should be kept.

The PIs felt that employment policy takes place in an ideological climate that helps or hinders the uptake of research findings. Different from other sciences, such as

biomedical science, social sciences have no strong linear progress with the possible exception of economics. They suggested that it is rather seldom that one individual piece of research is the tipping point for changes in policy. Research projects mainly have a cumulative effect in respect to changes in wider public thinking.

One of the PIs stressed that to have a short-term impact on policy it is important to have a policy customer; if someone pays for a study the aim is to gain some useable value (a message) for the money.

One of the PIs said that evidence for direct impact on policy makers may be difficult to trace as, first, policy makers have many different sources and do not attribute their decisions to individual studies; second, the information provided by research is reprocessed by the target audience and thus outcomes may diverge strongly from the research findings.

One PI felt that dissemination efforts compromised the time he could invest in research. Early clarity on the evaluation criteria for research would help form priorities and work-plans. If one of the main scopes of their project is to raise public awareness, they could then plan to allocate sufficient time to this.

One researcher felt that there a tension existed between getting press coverage and the scientific process of producing sound academic outputs, which involved among, others, peer reviews.

One researcher and an advisory group member commented that it is unrealistic to expect direct impact on practice of a large survey if the results are not 'translated'. In the employment area such a translation cannot be identical for every working environment but needs to be adjusted to the kind of organisation where it should be applied. Consequently, consultants and training are of major importance for translating research findings into impact.

One advisory group member felt that to gain maximum benefit from an advisory group its members needed to be very carefully chosen. She felt it was important to avoid individuals who were simply delegated the role by their organisations, and who might not be fully engaged in the process. The member also commented that it was particularly hard to get members from SMEs as they cannot spare staff as easily as large organisations.

Table 1. Payback category impacts

Payback Category	Example
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 peer reviewed papers (three from Phase I, one from Phase II)</li> <li>• 1 academic discussion paper</li> <li>• 1 management book of Phase II</li> <li>• Upcoming academic book of Phase I</li> <li>• A forthcoming book chapter</li> <li>• Over 16 presentations to academic and non academic audience</li> </ul>
Impacts on research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formed new collaboration between research groups</li> <li>• Foundation for grant in Phase II</li> <li>• Other researchers' publications citing papers from the project</li> <li>• Datasets are available to other researchers in ESRC archive (23 UK universities, and eight universities abroad have already registered for use), and have already been used for additional work by team and by two other researchers</li> </ul>
Impacts on policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informed a governmental agency's work on work-related stress and work-life balance</li> <li>• External sponsoring organisation used early survey results in own publication</li> <li>• Reinforced the policy line of a professional body</li> <li>• Research of a regulatory agency drew on the project work</li> <li>• One organisation changed its policy regarding junior staff workloads, the behaviour of managers, and the structure of the career ladder</li> <li>• 4 non-peer reviewed articles</li> <li>• Numerous presentations to policy makers (including a central governmental policy unit)</li> <li>• One PI was invited to become member of a central governmental task force developing a corporate social responsibility competence framework for companies and organisations</li> </ul>
Impacts on practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impossible to attribute any impact on practice but there have been occasions of feeding results back to practitioners (Phase I: informal briefing of case study organisation, briefing of project advisory group members; Phase II: distribution of fact sheets to organisations that participated in the survey), as well as the production of a practitioner book.</li> </ul>
Broader social and economic impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased awareness of workplace issues and equality through extensive media coverage (extensive use of findings by FoW media fellow; around 20 articles in national and 50 in local newspapers as well as about 15 in magazines and features on TV)</li> <li>• Difficult to attribute any socio-economic benefits to the project</li> </ul>

CHAPTER 8    Case study D  
‘The future of collectivism in the  
regulation of the employment relationship  
and pay in Britain’ and ‘The basis and  
characteristics of mutually beneficial  
employer–trade union relationships’

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### 8.1 Introduction to the research project

The PI received two awards from the ESRC FoW programme, one in each phase of the programme. His Phase I project was called ‘The Future of Collectivism in the Regulation of the Employment Relationship and Pay in Britain’. It investigated what was happening to UK trade unions at the time of the 1999 Employment Relations Act (ERA), and considered how they would organise themselves in the light of policy changes, such as the introduction of legal support for the unions when attempting to gain recognition from employers. His Phase II project was called ‘The Basis and Characteristics of Mutually Beneficial Employer–Trade Union Relationships’ and investigated the nature of partnership deals between employers and unions using nine in-depth case studies.

In 1998, the idea of partnership deals between unions and employers was particularly fashionable, with employers seeing the benefit of cooperation from the unions, and unions acknowledging partnership as a way to achieve their members’ goals. When the 1999 ERA was introduced, it offered unions the opportunity to gain recognition from employers who had previously been able to ignore them. This provided a natural opportunity to understand how unions would react to the new legal powers offered to them by the ERA.

The Phase I project, ‘*The Future of Collectivism in the Regulation of the Employment Relationship and Pay in Britain*’, was based on a large number (60) of *mini-case studies*<sup>26</sup> of employer–union relationships, founded on interviews with managers and, in some cases,

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<sup>26</sup> *Mini-case studies* are built on a small number of interviews with key players in a union–employer relationship and are not as long or in-depth as full case studies. This terminology (our own) is used to distinguish these case studies from the more in-depth case studies performed as part of the Phase II project.

unions. It provided an evidence base on partnership deals in the UK. The project involved five researchers.

The Phase II project, *'The Basis and Characteristics of Mutually Beneficial Employer–Trade Union Relationships'*, was a more focused study looking at just nine case studies in more depth than the Phase I project. This allowed the research to investigate the true meaning of partnership working between employers and unions and how each side viewed the process. The project involved two researchers.

The Phase I project ran from the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1999 until the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2000 (24 months) and received £119,571 in ESRC funding. The Phase II project ran from the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2001 until the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2002 (24 months) and received £95,223 in ESRC funding. The breakdown in the spending on the two grants between salaries and other costs is shown in Table 6. The Phase I research project was given an 'Outstanding' grade by the ESRC rapporteurs, with four of the rapporteurs awarding an 'Outstanding' grade and the other awarding a 'Good' grade. The Phase II research project was given a 'Good' grade by the ESRC rapporteurs, with all three of the rapporteurs awarding a 'Good' grade.

Table 6. Breakdown of project costs – taken from the project application; the amount in GBP will not be the same as the exact amount awarded.

Description of cost	Money allocated (£)	
	Phase I	Phase II
Salary costs	71,979	55,945
Travel and subsistence	7,000	6,755
Consumables and equipment	3,590	1,401
Exceptional costs	4,500	2,349
Indirect costs (46% of staff costs)	33,110	25,735
<b>Total</b>	<b>120,179</b>	<b>92,185</b>

This case study is based on documentary analysis of the relevant ESRC files, publications and outputs from the project, a face-to-face interview with the PI, and phone interviews with two co-researchers on the grant and with two research users involved in policy making or research specifically for policy. Research users were identified through discussions with the PI, and then through discussion with his co-researchers.

## 8.2 Stage 0: topic/issue identification

Phase I was very timely, in that the FoW funding became available at the end of a Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) research project by several members of the research team (Brown et al., 1998) and at the time when the 1999 ERA was coming into force. The opportunity to study the changing relationship between unions and employers in the light of the new regulations that were being introduced was of interest to policy makers and the research community. Since the research followed on from the DTI project, the issues that arose in the DTI research about partnership could be addressed in the new project.

Although policy makers were not explicitly involved in the identification of the research topic for the project, the PI had very strong links to policy (through his roles on the Low Pay Commission and at Acas, and his prior involvement with the DTI) and the views of policy makers were well known to him through informal discussions.

The key question being addressed in the Phase II research was:

‘What are the context and characteristics of partnership and other cooperative arrangements currently emerging between employers and unions at the workplace level in the UK?’

The researchers came to this question using a number of inputs. As a result of the first phase project, the research team were aware that true partnership deals were not as common as initially thought in the UK but that many other types of employer–union relationships did exist. The mini-case studies were not an appropriate method to reveal the characteristics of these relationships, so a more focused approach was required.

During the dissemination of the research findings from the first project, the research team often received interesting feedback from a variety of sources (academic, public policy and practitioner) that fed into the thinking for the second project specification. The paper that the team presented at the ‘Assessing Partnership: The Prospects for and Challenges of Modernisation’ Conference at the University of Leeds in 2001 (Oxenbridge and Brown) was particularly key in helping to crystallise the thinking of the research team about the questions that they wanted to ask for the Phase II research. This constituted an informal inclusion of policy makers’ and practitioners’ views in the identification of the topic, but there was no formal inclusion of views in topic identification.

### 8.3 Interface A: project specification and selection

In general, reviewers for the Phase I project application were very positive about the research being proposed. One reviewer had reservations about the number of interviews involved in each case study and whether that could pull together enough evidence for the project. Another reviewer expressed concern at the breadth of the study, in that it attempted to include the reactions to regulatory shock and the nature of partnership, as well as trying to factor in the changes due to the introduction at the same time of the National Minimum Wage (NMW). The same reviewer also saw the breadth of research as a major strength of the application, so the concern was tempered by the potential benefits. All the reviewers believed that the project provided a value-for-money study that would further the knowledge in the field. The PI suggested that the reviewers’ comments did not significantly alter the project.

The reviewers for the proposal for the Phase II research were highly positive about the work, with one claiming that they were ‘pleased to support this application in the strongest terms’. The theoretical questions involved in the project were the main factor that created such support from reviewers. There were some concerns over the language of ‘partnership’ from one reviewer, as it was deemed a political statement to suggest that there were partnership deals occurring rather than participation or involvement in employer–union relationships. One reviewer expressed a concern that the proposed sampling framework was not sufficiently specific. However, all the reviewers were in

favour of funding the project, and any comments made were focused on possible ways of adding to the study design. The PI did not make significant changes to the study design as a result of the reviewers' comments, aside from expanding the scope of the study in response to one reviewer's suggestion that union members should be interviewed in case study organisations.

#### 8.4 Stage 1: inputs to research

The Phase I project received £119,571 from the FoW programme, and did not receive any additional funding or support in kind from other sources. As the research followed on closely from the DTI research project completed by the PI prior to FoW (Brown et al., 1998), it built on an established research collaboration (between the PI and an academic lawyer – who was a researcher on both projects) and the background of research results. This meant that the research team already had a certain amount of research experience in the field, to complement the experience of the PI. The DTI project and the subsequent questions added into WERS98<sup>27</sup> meant that the research team could inform their selection of case studies for the project.

Without the FoW funding, the PI still believes that another funding body might have funded the Phase I research. There are two reasons for this:

- (1) The research was a follow-on from a successful DTI project and was therefore an attractive proposition to funders.
- (2) The project had the potential to appeal to a wide policy audience and to a variety of funders.

The PI would have applied for money to carry out the project even without FoW, but the programme made the project more successful (owing to dissemination and networks formed).

Another key input to the first phase research project was the reputation of the PI and of Cambridge University in obtaining research subjects (see Stage 2: research process). Policy makers were not explicitly addressed in the specification of the research, but the PI's close links to policy meant that there was an informal input from the ideas and questions of policy makers. The PI suggested that the way to use the input of policy makers and practitioners was to understand the questions that they wanted answered and then to dig deeper to the more significant questions behind those. Employers' associations, trade unions and Acas<sup>28</sup> conciliators were talked to in order to help identify potential case study organisations.

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<sup>27</sup> WERS (The Workplace Employee Relations Survey) is the world's only national survey of workplace practices, providing a large data set for labour and employment academics to mine. A multi-organisation research team that consults with policy makers in the DTI, academics and some practitioners determines any new questions on the survey. The survey is conducted around every 4–8 years. Each survey is named with the year, therefore WERS98 is the survey from 1998.

<sup>28</sup> Acas was formerly ACAS - the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service. It is an independent non-departmental public body of the UK Government whose main function is to provide arbitration and advice services in the field of industrial and employment relations.

The Phase II project received £95,223 from the FoW programme, but no additional money from other research funders. The project did, however, receive support from Acas in identifying case studies for the research. The relationship already formed with Acas through the first stage of the work and its dissemination meant that a good relationship between the research team and Acas was already in place before the start of the project. Other than the role of Acas in identifying case studies, policy makers did not make a significant contribution to the study. Since four of the case study organisations in the Phase II project had already been studied in the Phase I project, and since a fifth case study was identified with the help of Acas and trade unions with whom the researchers had strong relationships, the reputation of Cambridge University was less important in obtaining study organisations than it had been in Phase I.

The experience of the two researchers on the team was vital in making the study work, since both had been on the first research grant and had been involved in the *mini-case studies* and understood the background to the study. Other research conducted by the two FoW researchers also acted as an input to this project, specifically a comprehensive literature review that the pair were asked to write for the Trades Union Congress (TUC) and the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) - in partnership - in 2002. The knowledge from this review was used in, and used knowledge gained from, the FoW project, a process of feedback between the two research projects. The significance of this input to their FoW research was deemed to be small by both researchers.

Figure 43 shows the different inputs to the two Phases of FoW research.

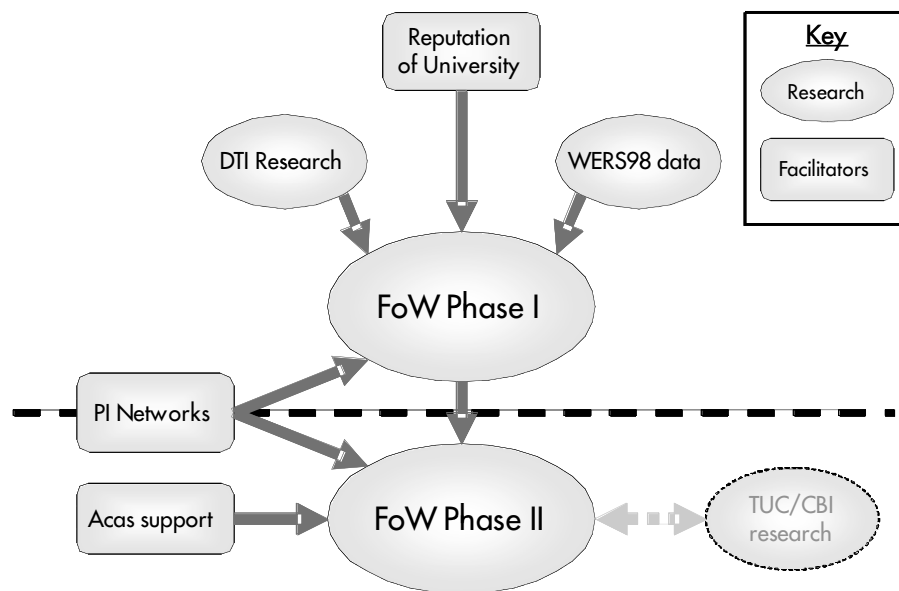


Figure 43. Inputs to the two Phases of FoW research. The TUC/CBI research is dotted since it was only a minor input to the research according to the researchers.

The PI noted that without the FoW funding for the Phase II project, the research probably would not have happened in the form it did. This is because the central question was not of interest to policy makers; it was more interesting to practitioners. He suggested that he would not have conducted the second project without the FoW funding

and that he was actively encouraged to apply for the second phase of FoW funding by the steering committee.

## 8.5 Stage 2: research process

The research process varied for the two projects. Phase I used a *mini-case study* methodology of 60 firms that characterised a range of attitudes towards trade unions (from hostile to conciliatory). Interviews were held with management, trade union officers and employer or trade association officials. The research also followed up the 30 case study organisations used in the preceding DTI study to provide a longitudinal aspect to the research. The research team that had worked on the DTI project put the methodology together, but the new members of the team also had an input into the questions that would be used in the case study interviews. Methodologically, the research was not ground breaking, but the fact that partnership became ‘unfashionable’<sup>29</sup> to research shortly after the two projects were completed has meant that it is difficult to tell if the research methodology is the most appropriate to study partnership.

The access to firms was made easier by the placement of the research team at Cambridge University. One researcher on the project suggested that of the potential study organisations approached only a few organisations had turned down the opportunity to be studied. Although research was not fed back to the study organisations as part of the research process, the researchers did maintain lines of communication with organisations through the project, and on one occasion (during the Phase II research) presented research findings to a trade union involved in one of the case studies.

The breakdown of tasks on the research meant that the PI worked at 60% for the first year and at 40% for the second year; one researcher worked at 40% for the first year and then moved onto another ESRC funded project; one researcher worked at 20% throughout the project; and the other researcher worked full time on the project. There was also a PhD student involved in the data analysis aspect of the project. Interviewing for the case studies was split between all four main members of the research team, but the full-time researcher performed the majority of the analysis.

The Phase II project was a more focused study looking at only nine case studies. Originally, the research team had planned to perform 15 case studies, but this number was reduced to nine during the course of the research as it became possible to pursue two of the case studies in far greater depth than had been envisaged. Of the nine case studies, four were with companies that had been studied in the first research project. Case studies involved interviews with HR staff, union officials, senior workplace union representatives and union members (although the latter only appeared in three of the case studies as

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<sup>29</sup> In general, many people have mentioned the idea of ‘fashion’ in work-related research. In reference to partnership in employment relations, the PI and his researchers all suggested that the fashion was now to not study partnership as the political climate had moved away from seeing partnership deals as a positive way to organise union/employer relationships. This was backed up by two of the policy makers interviewed, who suggested that partnership is now rarely discussed, because other words (such as “cooperative working” or “joint working”) are used to describe those kinds of union/employer relationships.

employers were reluctant to give employees time off work to speak to the researchers). The project did not produce any significant methodological advances.

The full-time researcher conducted the majority of the case study research, and designed the methodology for the study in conjunction with the PI. The research process itself led to strong relationships with the organisations involved. Therefore the research process itself was responsible for the researcher's subsequent move to Acas as a contract researcher (see Section 8.6.3.) and for the interaction with the negotiation of a partnership deal by a major employer in the UK (see Section 8.9).

## 8.6 Stage 3: primary outputs from research

The primary outputs from the project can be broken down into three categories: knowledge production; benefits to future research; and benefits to the researchers. These are all immediate outputs of the research.

### 8.6.1 Knowledge production

The Phase I and Phase II projects are hard to prise apart in terms of the resultant papers and publications. It is possible to identify some that are exclusively from the first project, but papers from the second project build on the knowledge from the first and are probably not exclusively attributable to the second grant. Overall, between the two grants the PI and researchers have produced to date nine journal papers (three of which were published in the top journal for industrial relations<sup>30</sup> – the *British Journal of Industrial Relations*), and 14 book chapters. An additional book, currently being written by the PI and two co-researchers, summarises the knowledge produced in Phase I and Phase II of FoW, and the preceding DTI project.

The researchers specified two journal papers as having a large impact on the research field. The first of these, produced in 2000 (Brown et al.), looked at the changes to employment contracts in relation to individual rights and collective bargaining. The second paper (Oxenbridge and Brown, 2002) was initially presented at the 'Assessing Partnership: The Prospects for and Challenges of 'Modernisation' Conference at the University of Leeds (Oxenbridge and Brown, 2001). This paper, and in particular the presentation of it, was key for informing academics and IR practitioners about the research, and also for crystallising the thinking of the research team for the Phase II project. It also led to the publication of an academic article (Oxenbridge and Brown, 2002) and a book chapter (Oxenbridge and Brown, 2005).

At the time of our interview, the PI had recently returned from an international conference on Industrial Relations in Galway (56th British Universities Industrial Relations Association Conference). At the conference he had been at a themed session on 'Partnership, Productivity and Quality of Working Life' in which several of the papers presented cited the FoW and the PI's other research.

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<sup>30</sup> ISI Journal Citation Reports Ranking (2005): 1/16 (Industrial Relations & Labour) – Impact Factor: 1.689.

### 8.6.2 Benefits to future research and research use

The Phase I project obviously provided the base for the second phase of the research. However, the PI is unaware of any other research that has been generated by other research groups as a result of the FoW projects in either phase. The complicating factor here is that partnership research became unfashionable towards the end of the Phase II project; and so other people were not starting to research the subject or building on the work carried out by the research team. The main benefits to future research are more researcher-specific, such as the networks formed with other researchers through the FoW programme. When interviewed, the PI and two co-researchers suggested that their ensuing research owed much to the FoW projects, with one researcher suggesting that all their subsequent work was due to the FoW project grants.

### 8.6.3 Researcher benefits

The PI is a well-established researcher and is acknowledged as a leading expert on partnership deals and union negotiations in the UK. As such, the changes to his career were minimal as a result of the FoW project. Because he had been researching the field of union relations for over 25 years prior to the FoW, it is very difficult to attribute the research projects that followed to his FoW research, since all of the research he has worked on has contributed to a coherent body of work. The main outcome of the research for the PI was the invitation to become Chair of the TUC Partnership Institute Advisory Board, formed in 2000.

The other researchers on the Phase I project suggested that they benefited significantly from an involvement in the FoW project. The academic lawyer on the project was a lecturer in a law faculty at the time of the FoW research. He subsequently became a professor at the same university's business school. He is currently in the process of moving back to the law faculty to take up a chair. He is of the opinion that the FoW research has helped him to be involved in half a dozen key projects for the ESRC that he might not otherwise have participated in. He also suggested that the FoW research, and the following ESRC research, gave him the opportunity to work in interdisciplinary teams of researchers and to branch out from the law research he was previously involved in. This is tempered by the fact that he had worked on the previous FoW research study for the DTI with the PI so was already taking part in some interdisciplinary research. There was also a PhD student involved in the data analysis for the project. He is now a lecturer at a different university and collaborates with the PI on projects.

One researcher was involved in both the Phase I and Phase II projects. She suggested that all the research she has carried out since the FoW was a result of the FoW projects. It is possible to pick apart the impact of each project on some aspects of her career advancement. The Phase I research allowed her to access a number of different organisations and unions to perform interviews on the nature of partnership deals. These fed into her network of contacts for future research work. There was also the opportunity throughout Phase I to enhance her networks with policy makers at the DTI, Acas, CBI and the TUC. The PI's delegation of responsibility for seminars and presentations to the researcher facilitated this.

Phase II resulted in further career opportunities. Specifically, her work with one case study in the North East involved close collaboration with Acas over their role in a

partnership deal. During her research, she became interested in the partnership-brokering role that Acas play and, since she realised that her contract with the FoW research would finish, she asked about working for Acas. She duly became a contract researcher with Acas until the dissemination of the immediate outputs of the FoW study were completed, when she became a senior research officer there. Her knowledge of case study research from her PhD and the FoW research made her ideally placed to be the first researcher at Acas to draw on case study research to evaluate the benefits of using Acas brokering in union–employer relationships. While at Acas she was involved in a small (seven person) multi-organisation research team adding questions to the latest WERS questionnaire. She also designed an evaluation survey for the Acas workplace projects that fed back directly to Acas advisors to improve services, and was a member of two theme groups (the *Public Sector* and *Workplace Innovation* groups) whose aim was to develop new initiatives and new areas for Acas.

## 8.7 Interface B: dissemination

The dissemination policies of the two research projects were quite similar. Both projects aimed to produce a number of written outputs (both journal articles and books) and to present findings at conferences and workshops. Table 7 shows the total outputs from the two projects combined, and illustrates the breadth of dissemination activities by the research team.

Table 7. Number of disseminated outputs from the two projects

<i>Dissemination type</i>	<i>Number</i>
Book (in progress)	1
Book chapter	14
Journal article	9
Local newspaper article	3
Magazine article	4
Non peer-reviewed article	11
Presentation	23
Publicly available full report	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>

The papers and peer-reviewed publications from the two phases are described in Section 8.6.1, and cover a wide range of academic journals, from publications in the *British Journal of Industrial Relations* to chapters in Law books (Brown, 2001a). The non peer-reviewed articles, of which there are 11, are mainly ESRC working papers, although two are papers submitted to trade journals (*People Management* and *Public Money and Management*). There were also two reports produced for policy organisations, one of which was for the International Labour Organisation (ILO), suggesting a global impact of the research (Brown, 1999). This paper also included findings from the research study conducted for the DTI prior to the FoW research, so is only partially attributable to FoW.

Although not a report produced by the research team, the Robert Taylor series report that included the work on partnership was seen as particularly helpful in getting the message of the projects across to a wide range of policy makers in an accessible format. This was the view of policy makers in the DTI and the Work Foundation (and also of a former member of the TUC now at the Work Foundation), as well as the view of the researchers.

The research team on the two projects was keen to disseminate the results of the project widely and actively sought out opportunities to present the findings to a range of audiences. One researcher deemed it particularly important to feed back research findings to the policy and practice audiences. A former TUC member suggested that it had been the willingness of this researcher to travel to conferences and seminars organised by the TUC specifically that had made the research so well known to the TUC and its members.

Overall, the FoW projects produced 23 presentations to policy makers, practitioners and academics. The FoW project set up was very helpful for this, as the networks with other academics meant that the researchers could gain good feedback on presentations. Interestingly, the PI suggested that ACAS should take account of the Phase II project since the research team was asked to present the results to regional Acas conferences (Brown and Oxenbridge, 2001); something that had not happened with the Phase I research. As mentioned (Section 8.6.1), the researchers saw one presentation as particularly useful in disseminating results to interested parties and also in getting feedback that could inform the Phase II project (Oxenbridge and Brown, 2002). Two presentations were given to international audiences in Berlin and Tokyo, aiding the international dissemination of the research. A list of presentations to policy makers and think tanks is shown in Box 8.

Brown, W. and S. Oxenbridge (June 2001) 'Do Trade Unions have a Future?', The Future of Work, ACAS Northern Regional Conference, Harrogate.

Oxenbridge, S. (November 2001) 'Current Research into Partnership', Associates of the TUC Partnership Institute.

Deakin, S. (2000) 'Trade Union Recognition and Derecognition', DTI, London: Central Arbitration Committee.

Deakin, S. (June 2001) 'Employed or Self-employed? A View from Labour Law', IFS Conference on Tax Reform, London.

Oxenbridge, S. and W. Brown (May 2002) 'Trade Union Organising, Recognition and Partnership Strategies since 1999', ESRC/TUC *Future of Worker Representation* Conference, TUC London.

#### Box 8. Presentations to policy makers

As suggested in Table 2, there were a small number of media outputs from the research projects. All of these media outputs were from the Phase I research (since they all occurred before, or around, the start of the Phase II project). There were three local news articles known of (Brown, 2001b; Brown, 2001c; Brown, 2001d); these are shown in Box 9. They picked up on the shift in attitudes of employers towards trade unions, based on the findings of the large number of *mini-case studies* used in the Phase I research. Interestingly, two of the three local papers were in the same county as the PI, suggesting that local networks played a part in publicising the research.

'Survey Finds Change of Attitudes to Trade Unions', *Cambridge Evening News* (22<sup>nd</sup> June 2001).

'Survey Finds Change of Attitudes to Trade Unions', *Huntingdon and St Ives Evening News* (22<sup>nd</sup> June 2001).

'Unions: A Shift in Attitude', *Burton Mail* (28<sup>th</sup> August 2001).

#### Box 9. Local newspaper articles from Phase I of the FoW research

There was also a level of informal feedback from the researchers to the study organisations involved in the research. Apart from one formal presentation made to senior officials of a union involved in the Phase II study, most feedback to interviewees was not designed to inform the practitioners, rather to get clearance for outputs from the case studies.

## 8.8 Stage 4: secondary outputs

The **Phase I** project was more policy oriented, and as such had an impact on the DTI, TUC and other policy makers. The impact on the DTI came about through presentations to DTI members and through the networks that were already in place following the DTI-funded project that immediately preceded the research. Policy makers at the DTI suggested that the research was very important, but that its role was to demonstrate the situation in the UK with regard to partnership in employer–union relations, rather than to inform specific policies on the subject. One member of the study team was involved in writing notes of guidance for the DTI on the 1999 ERA statutory recognition procedure.

Other policy outputs are difficult to separate between the two projects, although policy makers suggested that the Phase I research was more important to them than the Phase II research, a view echoed by the PI. The TUC Partnership Institute was not specifically set up as a result of the project, but the installation of the PI as the Chair of the Advisory Committee owed a great deal to the researcher's reputation. Policy makers felt that the Partnership Institute had not made the best possible use of the PI's knowledge and this had meant that the Institute was not as successful as it could have been. At the time of the project, the TUC found the research very useful in that it showed the current situation in terms of UK partnership deals. However, changes at the TUC meant that a number of people who were willing to accept the findings retired and were replaced by others more sceptical about partnership as a concept.

In response to their knowledge about partnership, gathered through research on the FoW projects, the PI and the researcher who worked on both projects were consulted by the DTI as part of its review of the Employment Relations Act 1999 (DTI, 2003). The two researchers provided written evidence to, and were interviewed by, the DTI panel. The majority of questions were concerned with the Phase I research, and the DTI maintained contact with the PI and researcher to clarify answers and ask supplementary questions.

The PI and researcher who worked on both projects developed questions about partnership for the DTI-run WERS04 survey. They used project-gained knowledge of union-management relationships, collective bargaining, and the nature of consultative

arrangements to develop new questions for all three of the WERS04 sections (management, employee representative and employee surveys). The researcher also had a role as part of the WERS team in coding and cleaning the datasets, and analysing the results of the surveys (Kersley et al., 2006).

The position of the PI on the Low Pay Commission (LPC) and the Acas council meant that he was constantly in contact with policy makers. Although policy makers did not ask specifically about his work when he met them, there were often discussions that were informed by his FoW work. This helped disseminate the research in policy circles.

The research was helped to permeate both the TUC and the DTI where senior members of each organisation were represented on the steering groups for the FoW programme. Their knowledge of the projects filtered through the organisation, although not in a structured fashion. The policy makers stressed the importance of a personal relationship with researchers in getting the research to where it is needed for policy.

The key policy output from the FoW projects as a whole (although the two that form this case study are certainly ones that policy makers are acutely aware of), was the elimination of work myths and the importance of evidence in supporting a political position. One policy maker suggested that since the FoW research, politicians are more likely to speak about evidence than opinion.

Since the Phase I project had an academic lawyer involved in the research, it provided an opportunity for outputs to be directed towards a different audience from that for most social science research. The use of the research in a House of Lords appeal judgement on an employment dispute over unfair dismissal (Lord Steyn, 2001) suggests that the research was successful in reaching a legal audience.

‘At the time of the Donovan Report collective bargaining was seen as the main form of protection of individuals ... It has, however, been contracting steadily ... In the result individual legal rights have now become the main source of protection of employees: see Brown, Deakin, Nash and Oxenbridge, “The Employment Contract: From Collective Procedures to Individual Rights” (2000) 38, *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 611, 613–616.’

The case in question (*Johnson vs. Unisys*) was about unfair dismissal, with the Lords appeal upholding the original judgement in the case. This means that damages for an unduly harsh and humiliating dismissal are not recoverable under the commonlaw of contract in the case of wrongful dismissal, or under employment legislation for unfair dismissal. The research itself was cited as an example of how individual rights have become more prominent than collective rights, a situation with serious implications for the legal system. Judges often cite legal judgements in cases, but citing of social science research in judgements is, according to the lawyer on the research team, quite a rare occurrence and is a major impact of the research. The fact that House of Lords judgements now cite social science also has a knock-on effect on barristers who realise that they need to understand more than just the employment law to be able to make convincing cases.

## 8.9 Stage 5: adoption

The Phase I project, as mentioned above, had more of a policy focus to it than the Phase II project, which, by the nature of the project (a small number of very in-depth case studies of practitioners and unions), was more practice oriented and of less interest to policy makers. However, the practice impacts of the Phase II project were very limited, since the project found that genuine partnership deals were few and far between. Thus, addressing issues to do with partnership would only affect a small number of firms.

Despite the small number of true partnership deals, there was one very large practice impact of the project. During the process of the research, the researcher had been observing the negotiation of a partnership deal between a large UK employer and a union. The employer was briefed on the research they were partaking in and since they were about to negotiate their own partnership deal, asked to be briefed on the research findings in exchange for access to high-level management. Through the briefings, advice given, and comments on successive drafts of memoranda of understanding and partnership agreements, the researcher had a significant effect on the way the employer dealt with the union, preventing them from trying to negotiate a stance that would have led to problems with the union. The researcher was particularly proud of this effect, since the HR managers at the employer were not aware of the likely issues for the union, and she had to use the knowledge from the previous FoW study and her own PhD to inform the HR managers. The researcher suggested there was also an impact on a number of manufacturing unions. They read and drew from the in-depth case study of a North East manufacturing organisation (Phase II) in the course of developing their own partnership agreements.

The Phase I project may have had some smaller practice impacts through the research process of interacting with managers and union representatives, but these are very difficult to track and are mainly about informing people involved in practice. The TUC Partnership Institute of which the PI became Chair of the Advisory Committee, was sold to a private concern in 2003 and was mentioned by one of the policy makers interviewed as not now being credible.

## 8.10 Stage 6: final outcomes

The broader economic benefits of partnership deals are potentially large. Better relations between workers and unions could lead to decreased industrial action and more efficient work organisation and therefore less working time lost to the economy and productivity improvements. However, having been a fashionable idea at the time of the research, partnership in union–employer relations is no longer studied or talked about. The TUC Partnership Institute was seen by a policy maker within government as having failed in its mission, existing merely as an expensive way to introduce unions to employers. As such, the broader economic benefits of the projects are almost impossible to assess.

Trying to discover the socio-economic benefits of the two projects is incredibly difficult. As mentioned, the research informed people's thinking on the subject of partnership in employer–union relations but did not have immediate impacts upon policy or practice. The interaction with the major employer during the Phase II project may well have had

an effect on the way that the employer and the union negotiate over issues such as pay for workers, which could have a considerable knock-on effect on quality of life for a very large group of employees. However, whether this has happened or not is very difficult to tell without a full evaluation of the situation before and after for the workers involved. Unfortunately, due to high turnover among HR managers in large firms, the main contact at the employer is no longer working for the company or in the UK and was not available for interview.

The other potential socio-economic impact comes from the legal implications of the *Johnson vs. Unisys* appeal judgement (Lord Steyn, 2001). The upholding of the original judgement means that there is still no recourse to damages in cases of unduly harsh and humiliating dismissal under employment or contract law. This will have an effect on the way in which contracts are drawn up and on the way that employers have to behave, thus affecting employees. It is, however, very difficult to say what kind of larger effect this might have on society.

### 8.11 General observations

Without the FoW programme, the PI suggested that the Phase I project might have found funding elsewhere but that the Phase II project would not have gone ahead at all. The Phase II project was more focused on the questions that would be of interest to practitioners (and practice oriented government organisations such as Acas) and might not have been of interest to most research funders. With the FoW funding, the project could use in-depth case studies to really understand partnership in a small number of firms.

The FoW programme was particularly useful for the junior researcher on the first project (who went on to work on both projects) since it allowed her to access a network of researchers in the UK. It was also useful for the PI as it allowed him to meet researchers in different disciplines whom he would not normally have come into contact with. The PI suggested in the surveys for both projects, that the FoW had been helpful in accessing policy makers, the media, practitioners and politicians as well as other researchers. The PI and the researchers thought that the Robert Taylor series of FoW reports also helped the policy impact of the project, although in a simplified form that allowed people to access the work. Table 8 shows the payback categories and the impacts of the project. Payback categories only consider impacts and not simply dissemination.

In terms of the methodology used for this study of the FoW programme, the PI thought that the questionnaire represented a good compromise between getting information from the PIs on the FoW projects and providing a light-touch research project. Specifically, he was grateful that the publications were already included in the survey, since finding all the references associated with the FoW projects would have been time consuming. The PI was happy to be involved in the research, both in the survey and the case study research. The information provided in the survey was, perhaps unsurprisingly, not as rich as that provided in the interview. Information about potential research users was more easily recalled at interview than in the survey.

Overall, the two FoW projects have had an impact on policy, but it is often difficult to attribute impact to either project specifically. This is because the work allowed policy

makers to understand the situation involved in partnership in the UK, rather than making specific recommendations for policy. Another important issue concerns the attribution of research that occurred after the FoW projects, and how much the FoW research contributed to that. For example, the researcher on the Phase II project produced a body of research for Acas after her role in the FoW research. She suggested that all the work she carried out after FoW was as a result of her work on the programme, therefore there should be a way to attribute some part of her work with Acas to the projects, but this is very difficult. This attribution problem is also true for other researchers, since it is very difficult to say how much a specific project attributes to promotions or honours compared with the whole body of a researcher's work.

Table 8. Payback category impacts

Payback Category	Example
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9 journal articles (3 in the top journal in the field)</li> <li>• 14 book chapters and one complete book (the latter in progress)</li> <li>• 17 presentations to academic audiences</li> </ul>
Impacts on research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further research by the PI and other researchers on the two projects would not have occurred in the same format without FoW</li> <li>• PI made Chair of the Advisory Committee to the TUC Partnership Institute</li> <li>• Career progression of the academic lawyer on the team to research more social science topics</li> <li>• Creation of new networks of researchers for the PI and research team members</li> </ul>
Impacts on policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Installation of the PI as Chair of the TUC Partnership Institute Advisory Committee</li> <li>• Referenced in House of Lords Judgement in the case of Johnson vs. Unisys in 2001</li> <li>• Input into the new employer–union deal with a major UK employer</li> <li>• Movement of the junior researcher into Acas and her subsequent impact on their research and evaluation programmes and new policy initiatives</li> <li>• Acas taking on board the results of the Phase II project</li> <li>• DTI, Work Foundation and TUC all claimed the work had helped show the current situation with relation to partnership working, although there was no specific policy affected. The Robert Taylor FoW series was key in this impact</li> <li>• Two researchers were interviewed by the DTI as part of the review of the Employment Relations Act 1999. They also submitted written evidence to the DTI</li> <li>• Reports to the ILO and Labour Relations Commissions Review</li> <li>• Summary report of academic literature on partnership for TUC Partnership Institute/CBI</li> <li>• 12 non peer-reviewed articles (2 international, 2 magazines, 1 FoW publication, 7 Cambridge Centre for Business Research working papers) and 6 presentations to policy makers</li> </ul>
Impacts on practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research was fed back to study organisations as part of the clearance process, but there are no known practice impacts from this</li> <li>• The way that the major UK employer conducted itself in the negotiations of the new partnership deal was affected by the presence of the researcher</li> <li>• Manufacturing unions drew from the in-depth case study in the course of developing their own partnership agreements with employers</li> </ul>
Broader social and economic impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 pieces in local newspapers about the Phase I research</li> <li>• 3 items in magazines (trade press)</li> <li>• Difficult to attribute any socio-economic benefits to the project</li> </ul>

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## APPENDICES

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# Appendix A: Survey form

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## 1. Contact information

Name of researcher

Title of grant

Value of grant

Dates of grant

Size of team

Researcher address

Telephone number

## 2. Project specification

Were policy makers or other potential users involved in the original design of the project?

Yes

No

Don't know

If yes, could you please provide details?

Was the proposal primarily:

- A continuation of your previous work  The application of a new technique to an area you worked in  Applying a technique you were familiar with to a new subject area  A new area for you  A mixture of the above  None of the above

What did you expect the main outputs and outcomes of the project to be?

- Publications  Policy impact (policy change or lobbying)  Practice impact  Career development  Extending your networks  Extending of knowledge  Other, please specify:

Did the reviewers' comments on your grant significantly change the project?

- Yes  No  Don't know

If yes, could you please enter details about the reviewers' comments that changed the project?

### 3. Inputs to research

Was your research co-funded?

- Yes  No  Don't know

Who co-funded your research for the FoW programme?

How much did that co-funding amount to?

Did you receive external support in kind from research users or policy makers for your FoW programme research?

- Yes  No  Don't know

From whom did you receive support?

Could you please provide details?

### 4. Research process

Could you please identify one primary and any contributory research disciplines in the list below?

<b>Discipline</b>	<b>Primary</b>	<b>Contributory</b>
Economics		
Sociology		
Psychology		
Political science and international relations		
Social anthropology		
Education		
Human geography		
Environmental planning		
Economic and social history		
Management and business studies		
Socio-legal studies		
Linguistics		
Area studies		
Statistics, computing, methodology		
Other, please specify		

If other: What other primary subject area?

What other contributory subject area(s)?

What techniques and methods are used in your research project?

- Surveys
  Case studies
  Interviews
  Focus groups
  Literature review
  Statistical analysis
  Quantitative modelling
  Other, please specify:

## 5. Outputs

### 5.1 Career

Has the grant contributed to qualifications or promotions for members of the research team?

- Yes
  No
  Don't know

If yes, could you please give details for each qualification or promotion?

Qualification  Masters  PhD  Research Fellowship  Senior Research Fellowship  Lectureship  Senior Lectureships  Reader  Chair  ESRC Centre Director  Other – please specify:

Date

Contribution of FoW grant to this qualification or promotion  Small  Moderate  Considerable

Has the grant contributed to you or a member of the research team securing a secondment or transferring into employment within policy or practice?

Yes  No  Don't know

If yes, could you please provide details about the member(s) of the research team who secured a secondment or transferred into employment within policy or practice?

Name of researcher

Post moved to

Date

Contribution of FoW grant to this secondment or transfer  Small  Moderate  Considerable

## 5.2 Research

How has the project affected the understanding in the field of study?

No impact  Little impact upon field  Solidified direction of field  Advanced knowledge in same direction (incremental contribution)  Change of direction in field  Created new field

Have the project findings, methodology or theoretical developments helped generate subsequent research by members of the team?

Yes  No  Don't know

If yes, could you please give details for each instance of subsequent research that was generated?

Funder

Type of funder  ESRC  Internal/University  Government department  Charities/foundations  NGOs (including trade unions, etc...)  Commercial organisations  Other – please specify:

Approx amount

Contribution of  Small  Moderate  Considerable  
FoW grant to this subsequent research

Are you aware of any ways in which your research has strongly influenced the research of others?

Yes  No  Don't know

If yes, could you please give details for each research area that strongly influenced the research of others?

Research team

Project Topic or Title

Contribution of  Small  
FoW grant to this influence  Moderate  
 Considerable

**5.3 Policy**

Are you aware of your research being used to inform HR policies of any of the following employers?

	Yes	No	Don't know
Government	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Large commercial	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
SMEs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Charities and NGOs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Are you aware of your research being used to inform policy making, advocacy or agenda setting by any of the following organisations?

	UK	Foreign	International
National government departments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
The European Union			<input type="checkbox"/>
Political parties	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
National advisory or regulatory bodies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
International bodies (e.g. ILO)			<input type="checkbox"/>
Local government	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Employers' organisations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Large commercial organisations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Trade Unions (in terms of trade union policies for members)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Professional organisations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Charities as campaigning organisations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Taking your research as a whole and considering the time from the beginning of the FoW programme to the present, does your research suggest that policy and/or practice should move in a certain direction?

- Yes                       No                       Don't know

What was the direction that policy and/or practice was moving in?

- The direction of your research    A different direction to your research    A mixture of both

Could you please provide more details about the most significant policy impacts of the project?

What policy was influenced?

Which policy makers were influenced?

- How did it influence policy direction?    Confirming policy    Incremental change to policy  
 Change of policy direction    Creating new policy field (e.g. equality)

Stage of influence  Agenda setting  Policy formulation  Policy implementation  Policy evaluation

Level of influence Scale 1–5, where 1 is ‘mostly instrumental’ and 5 is ‘mostly general’  1  2  3  4  5

How large was your FoW research contribution to this influence?  Small  Moderate  Considerable

How was research disseminated?

References to policy documents

On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being not at all important and 5 being vital, could you please indicate how important each of the following channels is in facilitating the policy influence of your research?

Media coverage	1	2	3	4	5
Briefing papers	1	2	3	4	5
Working Papers and Official Reports	1	2	3	4	5
Seminars	1	2	3	4	5
Discussions with policy makers who played some role in shaping the original research	1	2	3	4	5
Discussions with policy makers	1	2	3	4	5
Academic publications, e.g. books and journal articles	1	2	3	4	5
Textbooks	1	2	3	4	5
FoW publications (Robert Taylor series)	1	2	3	4	5
Discussions with consultants	1	2	3	4	5
Discussions with think tanks	1	2	3	4	5

Other, please specify

1 2 3 4 5

Do you expect your research findings to influence policy in the future?

Yes  No  Don't know

If yes, could you please give details about each future policy influence?

What policy will it influence?

Who will it influence?

How will it influence policy direction?  Confirming policy  Incremental change to policy  Change of policy direction  Creating new policy field (e.g. equality)

Stage of influence  Agenda setting  Policy formulation  Policy implementation  Policy evaluation

Level of influence  1  2  3  4  5

Scale 1–5, where 1 is ‘mostly instrumental’ and 5 is ‘mostly general’

How large is your FoW research contribution to this influence?  Small  Moderate  Considerable

How was (will) the research (be) disseminated to them?

References to policy documents

**5.4 Practice**

Are you aware of changes in practice that have been influenced by your research?

Yes  No  Don't know

If yes, please state details of impacts that are relevant. For example, practice impacts could be: behaviour of human resources managers; negotiation stances adopted by trade unions; opportunities for remote working.

Could you please provide more details about the most significant employer or employee practice impacts of this project?

What practice has it influenced?

Who has it influenced (practitioner, manager or equivalent)?

How has it influenced practice?  Confirming practice  Incremental change to practice  Change of practice direction  Creating new practice

Degree of influence from FoW research  Small  Moderate  Considerable

How was research disseminated?

References to practice changes

Do you expect your research findings to influence practice changes in the future?

Yes  No  Don't know

If yes, could you please provide details about how your research findings may influence practice changes in the future?

What practice will it influence?

Who will it influence (practitioner, manager or equivalent)?

How will it influence practice?  Confirming practice  Incremental change to practice  
 Change of practice direction  Creating new practice

Degree of influence from FoW research  Small  Moderate  Considerable

How was (will) the research (be) disseminated to them?

References to practice changes

How important were the following channels of dissemination in facilitating the practice influence of your research on a scale of 1–5, with 1 being not at all important and 5 being vital?

Media coverage	1	2	3	4	5
Discussions with policy makers who played some role in shaping the original research	1	2	3	4	5
Discussions with other policy makers	1	2	3	4	5
Trade press	1	2	3	4	5
Presentations to practitioners	1	2	3	4	5
Academic publications, e.g. books and journal articles	1	2	3	4	5
Textbooks	1	2	3	4	5
FoW publications (Robert Taylor series)	1	2	3	4	5
Organisations you worked with	1	2	3	4	5
Discussions with consultants	1	2	3	4	5
Other, please specify	1	2	3	4	5

**5.5 Networks**

Which of the following groups did the project help you or your researchers form or develop networks with?

- Policy makers
- Practitioners
- Researchers
- Funders
- Politicians
- Media
- Other – please specify:

**6. Social and economic impact**

Has your research had any wider social or economic impact (other than academic understanding)? For example, wider impacts may be: decreased social inequality; decreased unemployment; increased gender equality; increased housing choice; increased racial equality.

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

If yes, could you please provide details about the wider social or economic impact your research has had?

Has anyone evaluated policy changes based on your research?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

If yes, could you please provide details of these evaluations?

**7. Users**

We would like to try and understand the wider influence of your research in more detail, please nominate two or three possible users of your research whom we could contact to discuss the mechanisms of its influence.

Name

Department/employer

Contact Details

**8. Effect of the FoW programme**

Was your project more or less successful than it would otherwise have been had it not been part of the FoW programme because of any of the following areas?

- More
- Less
- No Impact
- Don't know

Providing access to policy makers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing access to the media	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing access to practitioners	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing access to politicians	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing access to researchers (for example in different fields)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing fora to discuss work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other, please specify	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="text"/>				

To what extent was the utilisation/wider impact of your research affected by your association with the FoW programme?

Considerably  Moderately  Slightly  Not at all  Inhibited

**9. Publications**

Please add any additional publications that have been omitted and categorise the publications.

Details

Type  Peer-reviewed journal article  Journal editorial  Journal letter  Published abstract  Book  Chapter  Non peer-reviewed article  Published conference proceedings  Publicly available full report (including Future of Work Series Monograph Chapters and Working Papers)

Attribution  Incorrectly included  Slight  Moderate  Considerable

**10. Presentations for policy makers and practitioners**

Could you please provide details of any additional presentations made as a result of the FoW programme funding?

Details

Audience presented

to

- FoW contribution to initiating discussion
- Slight
- Moderate
- Considerable

### 11. Media coverage

Could you please provide details of any additional media outputs that have been omitted. Please categorise the media outputs.

Details

- Type
- National newspaper (please specify)  Local newspapers (weekly mentions in local newspapers)  Magazine  Radio  Television  Other – please specify:

- Attribution  Incorrectly included  Slight  Moderate  Considerable

### 12. Other comments

If you wish to make other comments about your project please put them in the box below.

We would welcome comments on the questionnaire, please make them in the box below.

- Would you be happy for us to contact you?  Yes  No



## Appendix B: User interview protocol

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### 1. Contact and networks:

- a. Did you know the researcher prior to X project being conducted?
- b. How did you first come into contact with the researcher?
- c. How did you come into contact with the researcher in relation to this project?
- d. Did you play any role in discussing the design of the project proposal or in the processes of the research project?
- e. Were your links with researcher X strengthened as a result of contact over Y project?
- f. Have you subsequently had contact with the researcher over further work that he/she has conducted?

### 2. Influence:

- a. How far do you think the project by X informed or influenced Y debate (or the construction of guidelines by Y professional body, or the policy making of Y body, etc.) and what type of policies emerged from that debate?

### 3. Organisational influence:

- a. What aspect/findings of the project were particularly useful or influential?
- b. Did the findings have a direct, instrumental impact on the content of certain specific policy developments or was the impact more on the way that you or other people thought about particular issues?
- c. Did the findings support a line that you or your organisation were promoting?
- d. Did the findings fit with the way other groups and/or policy makers were thinking or did they promote new thinking?

- e. Did the findings challenge the values or interests of other key stakeholders in the policy debate?
- 4. Stage of influence:**
- a. At what stage did the findings play a part in the policy-making considerations: at the stage where the agenda for a policy debate was being set; during the formulation, implementation or evaluation of a policy?
- 5. Degree of impact:**
- a. How influential do you think X project was in relation to Y policy?
  - b. In any policy discussion was different research evidence used to support the same policy line?
  - c. In any policy discussion was the same policy line being supported for other reasons?
  - d. Was different research evidence used to support alternative policy positions?
- 6. Influence on practice:**
- a. Have the findings of project X had any influence on the way either yourself or other people conduct their work?
  - b. If so, what influence have they had? Is this a direct influence, or as a result of the research informing policies that impinge on working practices?
  - c. How important were the research findings as opposed to any other influences that encourage such changes, or confirm existing practices?
- 7. Continuing impact:**
- a. Do you think project X is continuing to make an impact?
  - b. Do you think project X will have any influence on policy or practice in the future?
- 8. Socio-economic impact:**
- a. As a result of the impact of the project on policy or practice do you think there will be any wider social or economic impacts such as X?
- 9. FoW as a whole:**
- a. Are you aware of any other projects from the Future of Work programme or of the programme as a whole?
  - b. In what context have you heard about them/it?

- c. Have they/it had any impact?

**10. Other points/questions:**

- a. Are there any other points you'd like to make about project X or the Future of Work programme?

**11. Research in general:**

- a. In general how far do you think research does have an impact on policy and/or practice?
- b. What could be done to increase the impact?