

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: University of Worcester		
Unit of Assessment: 20 Social Work and Social Policy		
Title of case study: Promoting social justice and inclusion for marginalised groups		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2015-2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Dr Peter Unwin	Principal Lecturer, Social Work	1999-present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2016-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>Marginalised groups have been given a voice in policy and practice contexts through a body of research focused on social inclusion. The research has changed fostering agencies approaches to recruiting disabled foster carers, informed national practice guidance on fostering and on working with parents whose children have been victims of sexual exploitation, and shaped policy in the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) on user and carer involvement and on engaging with disability in Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. The wide dissemination of the research to government, local authorities, disability organisations, communities and the general public has created a pathway to wider and ongoing impact.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>Unwin's applied research has broken new ground in social inclusion and social justice through facilitating the voices of marginalised groups.</p> <p>Three overlapping research strands are highlighted here:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) • Research co-produced with service users and carers • Reducing barriers to participation for disabled people <p><i>Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)</i></p> <p>Unwin's research on cross-cultural factors in CSE (see Reference 1) led to him being commissioned by PACE (Parents Against Child Exploitation) (Grant 1) to evaluate the impact of CSE on parents' health. The report (Reference 2) showed that most sexually 'groomed' children were victims of extreme criminality, and not abused because of parental neglect. This was the first study to illuminate the physical and psychological damage of CSE to the health of parents, affecting their ability to protect their children. Testimony from parents was highly profiled in this research and messages to the medical profession were that the collateral impact of CSE involvement must be on their agenda. If parents are not enabled to stay healthy then they will not be able to support their children, hence heightening the extent to which the children were at risk.</p> <p><i>Research co-produced with service users and carers</i></p> <p>Unwin facilitates a service user and carer group, IMPACT, which systematically contributes to the development of research projects, learning and teaching, quality assurance and recruitment</p>		

in the broad area of health and care at the University of Worcester. Unwin has worked closely with members to explore how the input of the group impacts on the education of health and care students: through shifting student's perception of disability (reference 3), through providing vital real-world context to academics delivering this education (reference 4) and insights into University recruitment (reference 5). This body of co-produced work is culture-changing and challenges hierarchical views of 'best' knowledge, giving equal weight to the views of lived experience.

Reducing barriers to participation for disabled people

Unwin won funding from *Disabled Research into Independent Living and Learning* (DRILL) for two projects: the first focused on barriers to disabled foster carers (Grant 2) and the second on disability in Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities (Grant 3). Both projects were co-designed and co-delivered with the *Shaping Our Lives Disability Network* with significant input from the University's IMPACT group, so build on the second strand of research highlighted above. Whilst the final reports for both projects have been published, academic outputs will follow in 2021. However, the applied nature of the research has meant that both projects have already led to impact.

- *Mutual Benefits* demonstrated that disabled people were largely excluded from the foster care workforce due to attitudinal and financial barriers and presented a series of recommendations for foster care agencies and government bodies to address these barriers.
- *Missing Voices* identified that stigma and shame were often associated with disability in GRT communities. Further, whilst disabled people's organisations took the general stance that they were inclusive organisations whose 'doors were open to all', the reality was that only a tiny minority of GRT members were involved in such organisations and the voices of Disabled GRT members are not heard in policy debates.

3. References to the research

1. Hayes, Sarah and Unwin, Peter (2016) Comparing the Cultural Factors in the Sexual Exploitation of Young People in the UK and USA: Insights for Social Workers. *Social Work Review*, 2016 (1), pp. 27-39.
http://www.swreview.ro/index.pl/comparing_the_cultural_factors_in_the_sexual_exploitation_of_young_people_in_the_uk_and_usa_insights_for_social_workers
2. Unwin, P. and Stephens-Lewis, D. (2016) [Evaluating the Health Implications of Child Sexual Exploitation on Parents](#). Report for Parents against Child Sexual Exploitation (PACE).
3. Unwin, P., Rooney, J., Osborne, N. and Cole, C. (2017) Are Perceptions of Disability Changed by Involving Service Users and Carers in Qualifying Health and Social Work Training? *Disability & Society*, 32 (9), pp. 1387-1399.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2017.1322498>
4. Rooney, J., Unwin, P. and Shah, P. (2018) Keeping Us Grounded: Academic Staff Perceptions of Service User and Carer Involvement in Health and Social Work Training. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 43 (7), pp. 929-41.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2018.1429581>
5. Rooney, J. and Unwin, P. (2020) Service user and carers' views of best practice in student selection at an English University. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2017.1281886>

Grants

1. *Evaluation of the Health Implications of CSE on Parents*, PACE, 2015-16, £10k.
2. *Mutual Benefits - The Potential of Disabled People as Foster Carers*, Disabled Research into Independent Living and Learning (DRILL), Jan 2018 – Jan 2020, £142,500.
3. *Missing Voices - Gypsy, Roma, Traveller Engagement in Disability Policy*, Disabled Research into Independent Living and Learning (DRILL), Jan 2019 – Jan 2020,

Outputs 1, 3 and 4 are included in the unit's REF2021 submission, having been selected through the processes set out in the University's REF2021 Code of Practice and identified as of at least 2* quality. Output 5 was also identified as of at least 2* quality through this process.

4. Details of the impact

Impact has been delivered across the research strands highlighted above:

Child Sexual Exploitation

Unwin's report on the impact of CSE on parents has helped change attitudes toward parents as allies in the fight against their children's exploitation and informed the ongoing work of PACE. The organisation's Chief Executive has highlighted the report's role in underpinning successful funding bids by the charity (to the value of £500k) to support its ongoing work (Source A). The report's findings have been widely disseminated nationally and internationally through practitioner events such as the Named GP Conference, York, 2016 (run by 4 North Yorkshire CCGs) and the International Federation of Social Work Conference, Reykjavik, Iceland, 2017. It has informed the [Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Board Child Exploitation Strategy April 2018–April 2021](#); is a key reference for Barnardo's, [What works in responding to child sexual exploitation](#) (2019); and is a key point of reference in The Children's Society, [Supporting Parents and Carers of Children and Young People Affected by Sexual Exploitation. A Toolkit for Professionals](#), a resource targeted at practitioners working in children's services and health and care settings more broadly (Source B).

Service User and Carer Involvement

Unwin's work with service users and carers at the University of Worcester has impacted significantly on policy and practice in the British Association of Social Workers (BASW). Unwin was the academic lead on the development of the BASW Service User and Carer Involvement Framework, the Association's first explicit statement about valuing lived experience alongside professional knowledge (Source C). It has led to service users and carers speaking regularly at conferences and seminars and the inclusion of service users and carers on groups such as BASW's Anti-Austerity Group, where practice and policy are formulated.

Policy and Practice in Foster Care Organisations

The "Mutual Benefits" project has not only highlighted the barriers to disabled foster carers but also demonstrated that this group has the potential to help meet the 8,600 shortfall in foster carers. The findings have been widely disseminated to:

- The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families, Department of Education who has committed to sharing with local authorities and fostering service providers (Source D).
- Local Authorities through, for example, the [Municipal Journal](#) and the [Local Government Chronicle](#).
- The UK'S 75,000 foster carers through the Fostering Network's *Foster Care Magazine* and *Foster Talks* newsletter. Further, the project was featured in Foster Care Fortnight (May 2019), the Fostering Network's annual campaign to raise awareness of the transformational power of fostering and to celebrate the fostering community, whilst Foster Talk have shared the project report with parallel organisations in Australia, New Zealand, Japan and Canada (Source E)
- Disabled people's organisations such as Disability Rights UK.
- Regional and national print media and radio including the Independent, The Guardian, and Radio 4's 'Woman's Hour'.

The project has already brought about change in practice in four pilot foster agencies: how the agencies promote foster caring, changes to wording on recruitment materials and websites about requirements to be 'fit and healthy', targeted recruitment campaigns and changes to the

recruitment and training programmes for foster carers (Source F). Further, the project team were able to gain clarifications – correcting widely mistaken views – on foster care access to disabled benefits from the Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work (Source G). Following on from this, Unwin was commissioned by CoramBAAF, a membership organisation for adoption and fostering agencies and for individual foster carers and adopters, to develop a practice note for members to assist practitioners who are assessing Disabled prospective foster carers, and supervising Disabled foster carers (see <https://corambaaf.org.uk/books/practice-note-73-disabled-foster-carers>). The note is intended to help fostering services work in a way that encourages applications from Disabled people and values what they can offer as foster carers.

In addition, the research has led to:

- The 'Fostering Network' committing to include disability statistics in its 2021 'State of Foster Care' survey (Source H).
- A senior OFSTED official committing to include consideration of disability alongside other diversity measures in future inspection guidelines (Source I).

Disability in GRT communities

The findings of the Missing Voices project have been disseminated through four accessible films co-produced by members of the GRT community (e.g. <https://vimeo.com/463393337>), targeting the community itself but also Deaf and Disabled People's Organisations. The film medium is excellent for reaching communities with low literacy levels and they serve as a powerful message that it is healthy to discuss mental and physical disability, especially for GRT men whose suicide rates are very high.

The impact of the project is early stage but the National Director for Wales, BASW Cymru & founder member of GRT Social Work Association has given testimony to the importance of this research in the BASW mission and emphasised the value of the films to social work practitioners and education (Source J). Further, BASW approved a motion, proposed by Unwin at its 2020 UK AGM, to develop practice and policy inclusive of GRT communities. Subsequently, Unwin was invited to join the GRT special interest group within BASW which was established to carry out this work.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- A. Testimony from Chief Executive, Parents against child exploitation (Pace) Leeds - Claim re using research findings to support further bids
- B. The Children's Society, *Supporting Parents and Carers of Children and Young People Affected by Sexual Exploitation. A Toolkit for Professionals*
- C. BASW Service User and Carer Involvement Framework
- D. Letter from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families, Department of Education
- E. Testimony from General Manager, Foster Talk
- F. Testimony from General Manager, Shaping Our Lives
- G. Letter from Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work
- H. Testimony from Policy and Research Office, the Fostering Network
- I. Testimony from Specialist Adviser (Children in Care), OFSTED
- J. Testimony from National Director for Wales, BASW Cymru & founder member of GRTSW Association