

IMPACT IN PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH: WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT?

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What is impact?

- ‘The demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to society and the economy’ (RCUK)
- Impact embraces all the diverse ways that research-related skills benefit individuals, organisations and nations. These include:
 - Global economic performance
 - The effectiveness of public services and policy
 - Enhancing quality of life, health and creative output
 - Impact must be demonstrable
 - Driven by quality research

Why make an impact?

- ***Benefits for society***
- Enhance social and economic wellbeing across all sections of society
- Improve the effectiveness and sustainability of public, private and third sector organisations
- Improve social welfare and cohesion
- Increase economic prosperity, wealth creation and regeneration
- Enhance cultural enrichment and quality of life

- ***Benefits for researchers***
- Early feedback – to help shape your research agenda and improve methodologies
- Relevance – ensuring your research is meaningful, timely and useful
- Participant recruitment
- Developing new skills and raising your profile

Why I like impact

- The application of psychology to the criminal justice system
- Prisons, prisoners, probation, and how various factors contribute to desistance
- Identity processes
- Phenomenological approaches
- Evaluation (pre-post differences)

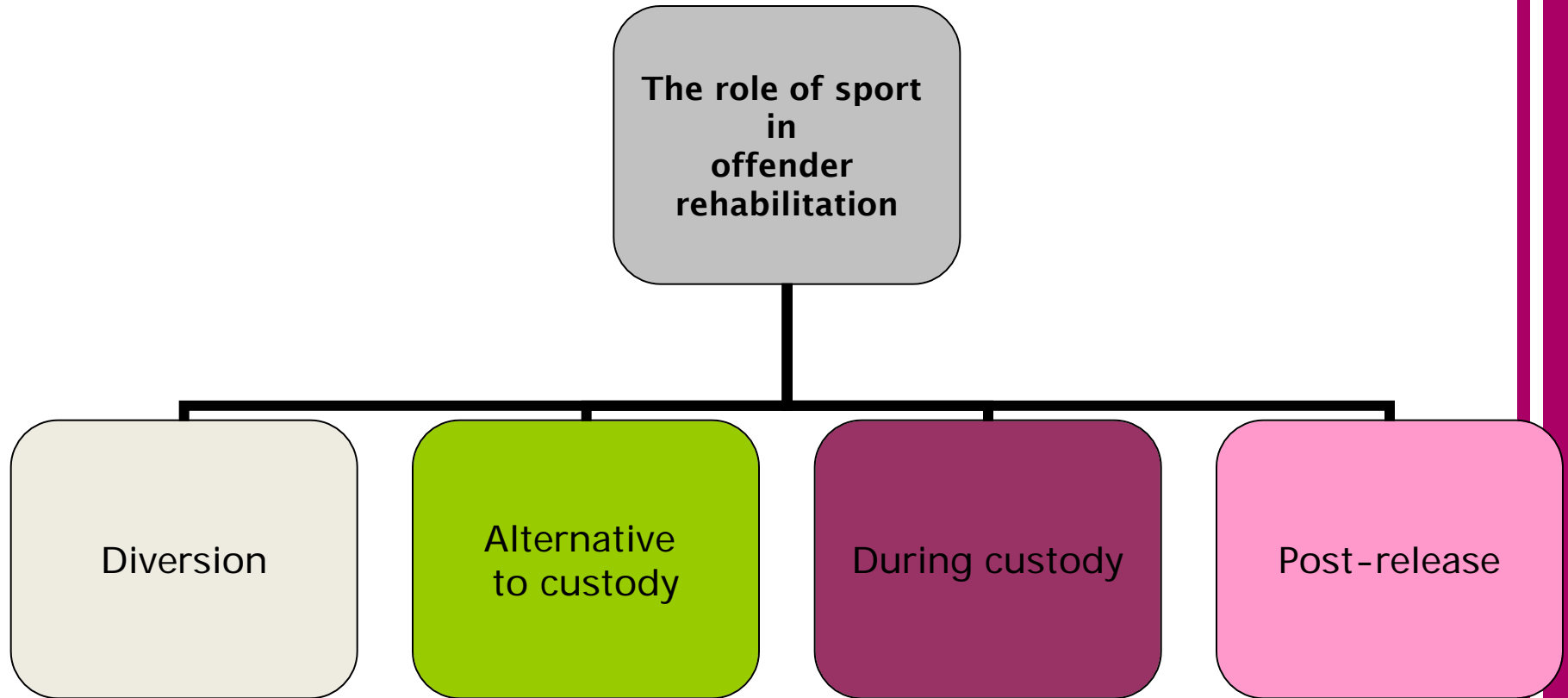
Example: The role of the Third Sector in Criminal Justice

- **Prisoner trust of voluntary and community organisations**
- **Volunteering identities and citizenship**
- **Relationships between criminal justice and third sector staff in prisons**

Established network of research users

- Prisons and prison staff
- Probation Trusts and probation staff
- Third Sector Organisations
- Government representatives
- Service-user groups

Example: The role of sport in the CJS



2nd Chance project



Football Foundation
football's biggest supporter



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Model of Delivery

- 15 week programme
- Community partnerships
- *Through the prison gate*



Types of impact

- **Academic impact** – the demonstrable contribution that excellent social and economic research makes to scientific advances, across and within disciplines, including significant advances in understanding, method, theory and application
- **Economic and societal impact** – the demonstrable contribution that excellent social and economic research makes to society and the economy, of benefit to individuals, organisations and nations

The *impact* of social science research can be categorised as:

- **Instrumental** – influencing the development of policy, practice or service provision, shaping legislation, altering behaviour
- **Conceptual** – contributing to the understanding of policy issues, reframing debates
- **Capacity building** – through technical and personal skill development

How to maximise impact

- Established networks and relationships with research users
- Involving users at all stages of the research
- Public engagement and knowledge exchange strategies
- Portfolios of research activity that build up reputations with research users
- Good infrastructure and management support
- The involvement of intermediaries and knowledge brokers as translators, amplifiers, network providers
- These factors relate to the **process** of generating impact, the **context** in which research messages are delivered and the **content** of research

Process

- Two-way process: research findings inform the development of policy and practice, which then informs further research.
- Research assignments on behalf of user organisations
- Providing formal advice directly to policy makers and practitioners
- Producing briefing papers or guidance for the implementation of legislation.

Context

- The environment in which you communicate your messages has a bearing on *any* potential impact
- Timing
- Maintain communication and engagement with research users
- Awareness of policy and practice debates and initiatives will help you to time your work most effectively

Content

- Content needs to fit with context
- Relationships with research users = key to ensuring that any research is relevant and timely

Planning impact

- To plan impact effectively you need to:
- Identify your key stakeholders
- Identify how they will benefit from your research
- Identify how you will ensure they have the opportunity to benefit

Evaluating impact

- Not a straightforward task: difficult to pin down the role that an individual piece of research has played
- The challenge of timing: Neither too soon or too late after the research is completed

Introducing the ESRC

Pathways to Impact...

- As part of your ESRC application you will be asked to complete an Impact Summary (4000 characters max) and Pathways to Impact attachment (maximum 2 x A4 pages)
- The Impact Summary should be an outline of the pathways to impact attachments and answer the two following questions:
 - Who will benefit from this research?
 - How will they benefit from this research?

Top ten tips for making an impact

- Clear, simple and measurable objectives
- ...but don't simply restate the objectives of the project itself!
- Set out your key messages in clear, accessible language
- Try out your messages in different media, for example, a press release, a report, a newspaper article or a web page
- Prioritise your target audiences and user groups
- Make sure you are using the most effective channels to communicate with your audience
- Draw up a project plan that includes all the activities you intend to carry out, with deadlines, responsibilities and costs
- Don't underestimate the time and money involved in carrying out your activities
- Ensure value for money by focusing on high impact/low cost activities: buy in specialist help where necessary
- Build in some simple evaluation measures at the start

Thinking about your current research, or a project you plan to carry out...

- **What** are your impact objectives?
- **Who** will benefit from this research?
- **How** will they benefit from this research?
- What **media** will you use?
- How will you **deliver** impact?
- How will you **measure** impact?