Research Profile
Social Exclusion
The core mission of the Centre is the pursuit of practical applied research in the field of health care and its translation into evidence-based policy, practice, and clinical protocols.

The Centre benefits from the wider expertise within the University. Sheffield Hallam is one of the largest providers of health and social care professional training in the UK. This means we can access high levels of expertise in areas including nursing and midwifery, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, radiography, radiotherapy, social work, paramedics, and operating departments.

Beyond healthcare, we work with colleagues in areas including sport and exercise, psychologists, biosciences, design, modeling, engineering, computer science, business management, environmental sciences, and town planning. The Centre also benefits from an in-house team of experienced information scientists who support our research staff by conducting literature searches and reference management for bids and funded projects, and providing information skills training.

The Centre hosts a vibrant postgraduate research training program with over 80 doctoral students in health and a further 90 students in Sports and Bio-science.

Attached are a sample of recent research projects undertaken by staff from the Centre for Health and Social Care Research in conjunction with academic colleagues from the Nursing, Allied Health and Social Work Departments of the Faculty of Health and Wellbeing at Sheffield Hallam University.

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Research Profile Summary

**BME groups – exploring non-attendance at outpatients’ appointments**

This initiative examined the underlying contextual reasons and barriers which face patients from Black and Ethnic Minority communities in attending outpatients’ appointments. The study aimed to:

- explore experiences and reasons for non-attendance at outpatients clinics in Sheffield
- provide primary evidence that will help inform future interventions designed to address non-attendance
- provide background data which can be used as evidence for a larger National Institute for Health Research funding bid.

This project will provide valuable data for both commissioners and service providers and will help to reduce inequalities by addressing an important yet under-researched area of non-attendance of BME groups.

It is anticipated that a longer term output of further research will be that health institutions are able to identify and resolve any barriers which cause BME groups to miss appointments. This will save money in lost professionals’ time and reduce the knock-on effect for other patients.

The initial findings of the study will be presented at a participatory workshop involving health professionals involved in planning and delivering health services. A briefing paper and article in a refereed journal will also be produced.

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‘Looking at the reasons for non-attendance at outpatients appointments in Sheffield’
This project investigated how evidence and information on BME communities is being used in the commissioning of health services and aimed to develop tools to help health managers use this information better.

The project aimed to:

• contribute to the theoretical understanding of the political, emotional and ideological aspects of decision-making and to the theoretical literature that addresses mechanisms for enhancing the critical use of research evidence in complex decision making environments
• to identify factors which support or inhibit the critical and effective use of research evidence within the commissioning cycle
• to develop practical diagnostic, evaluative and change management tools to assess and promote critical reflection on current competencies and practice with respect to the use of evidence on ethnic diversity and inequality and to identify actions to strengthen this area
• to identify further research to support developments to assist managers charged with the task of commissioning services for multi-ethnic populations.

Despite government commitments to reduce health inequalities in general, levels of inequality have actually increased in recent years, including in the ‘spearhead’ regions where there are a high proportion of people from BME backgrounds. Generally people from BME backgrounds have a poorer patient experience than White British patients and may be actively or passively discriminated against within the health system.

In this project, supported by £350,000 of funding from National Institute of Health Research SDO, researchers aimed to improve understanding of and enhance the critical utilisation of evidence by strategic commissioners and public health managers.

The research team developed and tested a range of tools designed to support individuals, teams and organisations in their commissioning roles, including a stakeholder analysis tool to help identify funding and resource management for addressing minority ethnic health issues as well as a service specification tool constructed as a workshop exercise to challenge and improve services.

For further information visit http://research.shu.ac.uk/eeic
In this project, funded by the Sheffield Primary Care Trust, researchers from Sheffield Hallam University were commissioned to produce an evaluation of how local NHS organisations engage and consult with hard to reach groups, with six groups identified as the main focus of the project.

- older people
- people with motor or mobility problems
- people with sensory impairment (visual and hearing)
- people with cognitive or learning difficulties
- people with mental health problems
- people with a first language other than English

Evaluating The Engagement of Seldom Heard Groups in Commissioning Health Services was produced between December 2008 and August 2009 with £60,000 of funding from Sheffield’s relatively newly established Primary Care Trust.

Through a series of focus groups, the research team sought to gather ideas from patients and carers about their experiences and some of the barriers they encounter. The report also involved an extensive literature review and consultation with local voluntary and community organisations to identify suitable individuals and groups to take part.

The views, experiences and recommendations of participants were reported and analysed in six themes – credibility, consultation, collaboration, capacity, communication and culture, and commissioning. Recommendations were made on the level and nature of public engagement in PCT commissioning and in particular on the ways in which the PCT website can help to facilitate this.

Professor Angela Tod from the Centre for Health and Social Care research said, ‘Despite the breadth and range of people who took part, there was a great deal of agreement about the nature of the public engagement activity with seldom heard groups conducted by NHS Sheffield. Participants agreed that there was no easy answer to the question of how to conduct genuine and purposeful engagement with seldom heard groups, but they did provide useful ideas and insight.

‘It is worth remembering that the purpose was not to report findings as representative of communities in Sheffield, but rather to use this evaluation as a way to identify issues, raise questions and make suggestions for the future.’

The full report can be downloaded from www.sheffield.nhs.uk/getinvolved/resources/nhsevaluation.pdf
A study carried out by Sheffield Hallam’s CHSCR between 2007 and 2010 has been used by Barnsley MBC to initiate projects which address the issues of social exclusion among older people in the area.

Funded by almost £200,000 from the Big Lottery, the research project aimed to:

- determine how and to what extent older people in the former industrial communities of South Yorkshire are socially excluded
- examine the factors that lead to social exclusion of older people in such communities
- identify actions that can be taken to prevent or reduce this

The research was carried out in three phases. In the first phase the research team held a number of focus groups with older people to try and get an in depth understanding of the ways in which they felt socially excluded, and to inform the development of a questionnaire to be used in the second phase.

The second phase examined the extent of social exclusion amongst older people in former industrial areas, the factors leading to this social exclusion, and how it differed from other geographical areas.

In the final phase of the study there was consultation with experts from the field to look at how social exclusion amongst older people could be prevented or reduced.

The findings of the report were used by Age Concern Barnsley (now Age UK) to inform their practice and develop services and it has led to a continuing and mutually beneficial partnership between Age UK and Sheffield Hallam University.

‘Sheffield Hallam University’s expertise helps Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council and Age UK to look at the problems of social exclusion among older people and help to make future policy.’

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This study, commissioned by the Pensions Disability and Carers Service, aimed to review and synthesise available evidence to try and throw light on a number of issues, including:

- why Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) customers are less satisfied with the Pensions Disability and Carers Service (PDCS)
- why BME individuals eligible for PDCS benefits are less likely to apply for them
- what interventions might successfully raise levels of take-up and satisfaction with PDCS services
- what important gaps exist in the research evidence to provide answers to these questions

This research, backed by almost £20,000 from the Pensions Disability and Carers Service aimed to examine various issues faced by its ethnic minority customers. The report makes clear that ethnic minority customers do not form a homogenous group and that the lower levels of satisfaction with services reported are not caused by ethnicity but by a host of other factors, including poverty and language. The issues faced by BME customers are explored in three sections – personal, local and PDCS system factors.

A number of these factors are implicated and inter-relate. For example, English language is an important area of difficulty. The provision of good interpreters and translations services should help. However, this would not necessarily overcome the problems related to the complexity of the system and the need for individuals to make their case for benefits, something which requires high-level language skills.

Another important issue is the presence of multiple problems from some individual customers. A woman with poor English skills and multiple caring roles will find the process of claiming especially difficult, for example. The PDCS is now looking into the need for more interpreters and other related services.

The report can be downloaded here http://shura.shu.ac.uk/2717/rrep684.txt

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This study, commissioned by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, aimed to explore the feasibility and desirability of developing guidance at different points within the research cycle to help commissioners of research, investigators, applicants and peer reviewers to consider when and how ethnicity should be included in social science research projects.

The project involved a series of review, consultation and piloting exercises to enable the research team to:

- synthesise key ethical and scientific issues relating to ethnicity in social research
- explore current concerns and practices among social researchers
- identify factors that support or hinder the use and impact of guidance on research practice

There is an increasing demand for social research that can inform policy and practice development that is sensitive to, and serves the needs of, the UK’s multi-ethnic population. Currently much research does not include minority ethnic people and communities and does not engage meaningfully with issues of ethnic diversity and inequality.

Backed by almost £70,000 from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, the project findings suggest that brief guidance documents or checklists intended to alert social researchers, commissioners and research users to key issues for reflection may well be appropriate to integrate into commissioning and review procedures across the research cycle.

A majority of respondents across all the project activities were supportive of this type of concise, prompting tool. However, the findings from the consultation and piloting exercises also indicated a perceived need for more detailed training resources that can support researchers in navigating the complex issues that arise in designing and executing research that addresses ethnicity.

A series of workshops have been run with researchers and a website of resources has been developed. Checklists have been piloted in journals and a collection of papers and reports have been published.

The report can be downloaded here http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/ethnic-diversity-social-research

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