

Everything you wanted to know about IMPACT but were afraid to ask!

Transcripts of video content

What makes research impactful? Fact number 1 - Sarah Geere Impact consultant

Hello my name is Sarah Geere and I work at research and innovation services. My job is to help academics and departments to understand the impact agenda and to make the best use of it when it comes to the different aspects of their work. Today I'm going to talk a little bit about public engagement and how it effects impact. Firstly it's important to point out that public engagement isn't in itself impact, it's just one of the many vehicles that we have which can help to deliver impact from the research that we do. So, if you do want to include public engagement as one of the activities on your pathways to impact and you are hoping that it will help you to maximise the impact of your work then there are few things you really have to bear in mind it's not enough just to have an evening, invite everybody along and talk a little bit about what you have been doing.

Impact or no impact? - Sarah Geere Impact consultant

So also, it's important to consider when its best to engage with your public. You can obviously engage at the end in terms of disseminating the results of your research, but that is only one particular form of engagement. You can also engage right at the beginning with potential end user groups or potential people who might be interested in your research make that a two-way engagement and from them you can understand a little bit more about the questions and problems you are trying to solve. That will make your research much more relevant to the real-world problem you are addressing. And it will also shape the way you go about your research and can give you a lot of information that you didn't have before that will help you inform the way you go about it. You can then keep engaging with the same groups or different groups throughout the lifetime of your research. As the results start coming in and as you start to feel a little bit about what the impacts might more concretely be because you won't always know this when you start out. So, you can engage right from before you start right through the whole course of your research project and then after the end of it, to help spread the results that you have got.

Perspectives on impact from our Academics - Professor Richard Jones

So, Sheffield has got many people who are very passionate about their research, and I think it, I just want it, Sheffield University to be the kind of place where those sorts of people would feel supported, that they could get help in doing that and they would get recognition for doing that. So that's really how I see, I would like to see public engagement as very much part of what people think the business of being an academic at the University of Sheffield is about. What we are very anxious to do is to say you know there isn't one best way of doing it I think there are many different ways many different audiences. Things that suit different people. What I would like to do is you know look around the University look at people who do it in different ways and really good at doing it according to the particular style they have got and helping other people learn from that. So, you know whether it's the very big events the sort of Festival of the Mind which I think was really exciting and innovative in bringing together people in the City people in the University to do joint projects I think that was something that was really distinctive really excellent. So that in a sense that's good practice, but then think all the people who go out talking to a class at school that can be excellent too. So it's a question of judging the different audiences, understanding the different ways in which you can do public engagement, the different purposes that it can have. I want everybody to be able to do it in their own style as best they can, we would like to support them in doing that.

Perspectives on impact from our Academics - Burmese working elephants

Asian elephants are a really interesting species to work with because they have huge cultural and religious significance in Myanmar, but they are also economically important. The elephants that I work with work in the logging industry which is one of the biggest export industries in the country and so what I try to do is look at the infant mortality the rates of reproduction and improve those to create a self-sustaining pool of logging elephants. Going out and to do this research in the field was really exciting because we were some of the first scientists that were actually able to get out to Myanmar when it was just opening up. So the elephants haven't been studied very much before, so it's great to be out there. Our research has allowed us to make direct management implications to the people who work with elephants. So for example, I showed that reproductive rates were highest in the rest season, and one thing that we are discussing to do is have reproductive females on rest throughout the year and to boost the number of elephant calves. The climate change is something that we are also interested in but actually a lot of the studies have focussed on short and medium lived species. So working with the elephants has given us this opportunity to look at what climate over a really long life span can do, and we found that shifts in just a few degrees of temperature can have huge implications for survival, and I think that these results are going to be applicable both to other long lived species, but also species that live in the same environment as elephants and kind of rely on elephants so it has huge repercussions. I think the funding has been absolutely vital in building this relationship between our group and our University in the wider sense, and the people the vets in in Myanmar working with the elephants but also the broader government who control the logging operations; and we have been able to have a really good exchange of knowledge, really good meetings and its built an amazing and strong relationship which I think will continue beyond the funding. So it's been fantastic.

Perspectives on impact from our Academics - Mercury Centre

This is a hip joint replacement and it's an interesting example of where we need better materials than we have at the moment. This particular one this has actually been in a patient. And this one in fact went wrong unfortunately. That is one of the things we are doing in Mercury is to develop a better material. So over in the Quarrell Laboratory you will see we will be able to make new ceramic materials, and one example of that is a much tougher ceramic. This is a golf ball and this is coated in a ceramic and as you can see I can drop it on the floor and it doesn't break. Its one matter taking a golf ball like this and coating it with a ceramic material which we can show off rather nicely, it's a completely different matter producing a femoral head that you can actually put in a body, which is what this is and that is what we are doing in the Mercury Centre is to produce new materials like this one that we manufacture over there and then we can come over here to the Sorby Centre to analyse them and understand the surface that we have produced.