

HOW TO TELL YOUR IMPACT STORY

TELLING THE STORY OF YOUR RESEARCH IMPACT

*Whoever you're writing for, case studies are a really good way to present impact. The goal is to tell a compelling story about how your research led to change in or benefit to the economy, society, or culture. Impact is as varied as the research it is based on and the example used in this module (Professor Richard Layard's REF2014 case study) is just one from the many stories of impact around LSE. You can find another four examples in the module **Examples of LSE Research Impact** and many more through the KEI webpages lse.ac.uk/KEI.*

Whilst the narrative is key in this process, case studies can always be strengthened with data included in the form of metrics and indicators. In this toolkit you'll find a module **Examples of KEI Metrics and Indicators** containing examples of the kinds of evidence you can use when claiming impact.

1. SUMMARY OF THE IMPACT

It's useful to include a short summary of the impacts you're claiming. This should be clear, non-technical and focused on the impact – not the research.

The summary will need to be updated and refined as you progress. Like an abstract, it's usually the last thing to be finalised. However, it can be useful to pinpoint the most significant aspects of your impact in this way and to have a succinct statement of your (potential) impacts on hand throughout your project.

Example: The Wellbeing Programme at the LSE's Centre for Economic Performance (CEP) has had a widespread impact on many UK government policies, including policies for measuring national wellbeing; for Improving Access to Psychological Therapies in the NHS; for improving life skills in schools; and for apprenticeships. CEP research has also had significant impact worldwide, including on the OECD's measurement programme, the World Economic Forum, and the United Nations (UN) process towards making happiness one of the 'sustainable development goals' after 2015.



2. DESCRIPTION OF UNDERPINNING RESEARCH

Provide details (and where possible bibliographic details) of the research behind your impacts, including information about **what was done, when, where and by which staff at LSE**. If you're describing collaborative work, particularly with researchers at other institutions, clarify the 'material and distinct' contribution made by researchers at LSE specifically.

Make sure you **describe fully any research insights or findings** relating to impacts claimed in the next section.

It's helpful to provide some contextual information clarifying the contribution of the work to a discipline or field. Did it, for example, constitute a new area of work or bring new perspectives to bear on a substantial existing body of research? Did it support or challenge established paradigms? Why is this important?

Example: LSE Professor of Economics Richard Layard founded the Wellbeing Programme at the LSE Centre for Economic Performance (CEP) in 2001 to promote subjective happiness and wellbeing as criteria for public policy.

CEP researchers surveyed the evidence on possible measures of subjective wellbeing and, as a result, identified four questions that together were capable of capturing it. These questions related to the individual's overall satisfaction with life, whether they considered the things they were doing to be worthwhile, as well as their recent experiences of happiness and anxiety. The research produced the striking finding that mental health is more important than income in determining wellbeing. The research team therefore conducted a cost-benefit analysis of cognitive behavioural therapy to produce evidence for expanding psychological therapy programmes. They concluded that wider provision would generate such savings that there would be no extra financial burden on the UK Government.

CEP also persuaded 22 English schools to introduce trials of the 18-hour Penn Resilience Programme, which had been developed at the Positive Psychology Center at the University of Pennsylvania to increase the mental resilience of young people. This trial found that the programme had long-lasting effects on school performance but that its boost to emotional health faded over time. After searching the world for effective interventions, CEP is now trialling a 140-hour programme designed to produce long-lasting emotional effects.



3. DESCRIPTION OF IMPACTS

This part of the case study should explain **what happened and when and where that change or effect was felt**. It is helpful to start by setting out any original problems, challenges or opportunities relevant to your research. You can then go on to explain how your work catalysed or supported a response to these. Tell your reader **why and for whom the change or effect mattered: who was affected by or benefitted from the research?**

Don't forget to include details of secondary or 'follow-on' impacts resulting from the initial effect(s). For example, if the research informed a change in policy, who has since benefitted from that change and in what ways?

Example: Money does not equate with happiness. Population surveys have demonstrated that in many countries significant increases in average income have not translated into a corresponding rise in average levels of happiness and subjective wellbeing. In fact it has been found that, at least in rich countries, people care less about their absolute level of income than their income relative to their peers. For policy-makers, this was a startling discovery. To pursue happiness and wellbeing as public policy goals, it was clear that they needed better approaches to their measurement, and that their causes would need to be better understood to design practical and cost-effective remedies.

After the trials described above, the introduction of the Penn Resiliency Programme was expanded and is now being taught routinely in 60 schools across 10 local authorities.

However, the most significant single outcome of the research came in 2007 when the then Secretary of State for Health announced a programme for Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT). In 2010 it was extended from adults to children and young people. Professor Layard is an official adviser to the programme and has been instrumental in its implementation.

The magazine Nature has called the programme "world-beating". Now part of the mainstream National Health Service, the IAPT programme is already treating 400,000 people a year and recording 45 per cent recovery rates.

You should also make clear the **pathways, processes or means through which the research or its findings contributed to impact(s) outside academia**. In describing those pathways remember that, if the research was part of a wider body of work (including work by colleagues at LSE) contributing to the impact, be clear about the contributions of all collaborators.



3. DESCRIPTION OF IMPACTS

International efforts to gain recognition for happiness as a desirable policy goal culminated in the United Nations resolution, passed on 13 July 2011, encouraging member states to pay more attention to the pursuit of this goal. Layard was invited to co-edit the World Happiness Report, launched at a UN conference on this theme in April 2012.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) sought Professor Layard's assistance in devising questions for its national survey of wellbeing; from 2011 it adopted the four questions identified by CEP. Layard and colleague Paul Dolan continued to contribute to practical and theoretical issues of measurement through their membership on two official committees: the Measuring National Well-being Advisory Forum and its Technical Advisory Group.

Professor Layard and his CEP colleagues also introduced wellbeing measures to the world stage, notably through the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). They made presentations to three large OECD conferences on the theme of defining and measuring progress on happiness and wellbeing. Initially concerned with economic measures such as Gross Domestic Product, the OECD decided to adopt and recommend international measures of subjective wellbeing that mirrored those developed by Layard and others in Britain.

Layard also promoted the issue of wellbeing at the World Economic Forum, chairing its Global Agenda Council on Well-being and Mental Health and presenting its report, Well-being and Global Success, at Davos in 2012.


To reach the public more directly, Layard collaborated with Geoff Mulgan and Dr. Anthony Seldon to launch a movement called Action for Happiness in March 2011. By summer 2014 it had over 35,000 members in 142 countries who had pledged to make efforts to increase the world's happiness.

4. EVIDENCE

Remember that the impacts of research must be able to be corroborated using independent, auditable evidence. For example, if a case study claims that research informed the development of new standards or guidance, its author might include a copy of that guidance citing (or clearly quoting) the research, and/or a statement from an appropriate authority attesting to their use of the research in developing or modifying the guidance in question.

For more information about evidencing research impacts see the [Examples of KEI Metrics and Indicators](#) module of this toolkit.





MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR EFFORTS BY DELIVERING A COMPELLING IMPACT NARRATIVE

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Visit the KEI portal for contact details of KEI professional services across LSE and to find a downloadable version of this toolkit.



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