

KNOWLEDGE UTILISATION COLLOQUIUM 2011 (KU11) BELFAST, NORTHERN IRELAND – 14-16TH June 2011

Café Theme 3: Impact of knowledge use

Meta Question: How can research contribute to knowledge, and perhaps ‘make a difference’? What kinds of knowledge use, influence and impact should we be looking for?

1. Is ‘knowledge utilisation’ best conceptualised as (and evidenced by) demonstrable behaviour change, or should ideas around knowledge utilisation address instead the potentiating effects of new dialogue?

On the one hand, we might think that research only matters if it can clearly be linked to decisive course of action – to different patterns of professional practice; to different managerial choices; or to the selection of specific policy options...

...on the other hand, good research enables different sorts of conversations to be had about users, services, policy and practice than would otherwise be the case. It is about re-framing and re-problematising current ways of thinking, and about contributing new models, frameworks and conceptual categories that enable different ways of thinking. Qualitatively different conversations can then potentiate different ways of addressing service challenges. Perhaps these are the areas where we should look for research use, influence and impact?

- 2: What are the relationships (if any) between different types of knowledge and different types of use, influence and impact?

- 3: How can these developing understandings about use, influence and impact influence practice around, for example, research design, research funding, implementation work and impact evaluation?

Before the session:

Participants are asked to think of 2-3 specific examples where they think that research has contributed to knowledge and then seen use, influence and/or impact. These examples can be drawn from their own work or from the work of others. For each example, you are asked to reflect on:

- What, exactly, was influenced by which research, and to what effect? And how could you tell such influence had occurred?
- How did any research-based knowledge interact with other sorts of knowledge?
- What were the *processes* by which use, influence or impact occurred?
- What benefits or dysfunctions ensued?