Brighton is home to thriving communities of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people. Research from the University of Brighton is helping to support their needs, change policy and professional practice, and provide protection for vulnerable people where wider society’s attitudes are adversely affecting their lives.
Since 2003, academics at the University of Brighton have undertaken participatory action research to identify the specific health and wellbeing needs of LGBT people in areas such as mental health, suicide prevention, safety, housing, domestic violence, drugs and alcohol. The research has changed local and national policy and reshaped services to reflect the diverse needs and experiences of LGBT communities.

Participatory action research involves people in the design, implementation and the dissemination of research, not simply as ‘subjects’. This research has produced new knowledge about the mental health, health, housing and community safety needs of LGBT communities, demonstrating a need for a broader social policy and wellbeing framework that includes but, also, moves beyond constrained views of abuse and hate crime.

In the UK, the research has influenced policy resulting in the first local LGBT housing strategy and the first suicide strategy in Brighton and Hove that focuses centrally on the needs of LGBT people. Recommendations from the research have also been adopted by the Department of Health, the UK Drug Policy Commission, the Cabinet Office and the Equalities and Human Rights Commission, and other parts of the world are following suit, with national and state policy in Australia using the university’s research to improve services for LGBT people.

This work is being taken forward internationally by Dr Kath Browne, who is leading a new project funded by the ESRC as one of its 2014 transformative research projects into what makes a life that is liveable including examining the impacts of equalities legislation in the UK and India.

In Brighton a project called Count Me In Too (CMIT), with lead researcher Dr Browne, worked with the University’s Community University Partnership Programme and has been central to the development of local policies on alcohol, community safety and domestic violence, as well as contributing directly to LGBT-specific housing issues being a focus of the city’s housing strategy.
The project has identified a range of good practice in the use of social media, but has also highlighted shortcomings in the context of outreach communications. Reaching the hard to reach requires strategies that go beyond creating a social media presence. Early findings indicate that the most marginalised group – transgender and gender queer young people – actively seek out alternative social media platforms with a more open-ended structure than for example Facebook. Research is demonstrating that LGBT young people do not rate anonymity as a benefit of using online communication, welcoming the fact that staff and volunteers with whom they are interacting are visible as ‘out’ lesbian, gay, bi or transgender people and that young people can communicate openly and safely is a significant benefit.

CMIT was of fundamental use in helping us to develop the city’s LGBT People’s Housing Strategy. The research provided a vivid insight into the lives and experiences of the city’s LGBT communities that we would not have got from our traditional engagement routes. Whilst CMIT was some time ago, the relationships and understanding developed during this project have remained and LGBT-specific housing needs and action remain a key focus of our new housing strategy.

Andy Staniford, Housing Strategy Manager, Brighton & Hove City Council

The key finding was the importance of creating a safe environment via LGBT-specific services where LGBT people can talk about their mental health, and developing community networks for facilitating connections and overcoming a sense of isolation.

Research continues and the university’s new Transforming Sexuality & Gender research cluster will focus on innovative and creative methods to generate impact and change. “Not everyone wants to sit responding to questions about their lives,” says Dr Johnson. “For young people especially, talking about themselves is not something they’re used to doing. Using creativity, whether it’s photography, art, sculpture or even building with Lego, is a safe and engaging way to begin the process of discussion.”

Another new area of research is focusing on the part that social media plays in the way that a youth service provider reaches and engages isolated, marginalised, vulnerable and at risk LGBT youth in their everyday campaign work and service provision. Led by Dr Olu Jenzen and Irmi Karl from the College of Arts and Humanities, and in collaboration with Allsorts,

“CMIT was of fundamental use in helping us to develop the city’s LGBT People’s Housing Strategy,” said Andy Staniford, Housing Strategy Manager for Brighton & Hove City Council. “The research provided a vivid insight into the lives and experiences of the city’s LGBT communities that we would not have got from our traditional engagement routes. Whilst CMIT was some time ago, the relationships and understanding developed during this project have remained and LGBT-specific housing needs and action remain a key focus of our new housing strategy.”

Multiple experiences of discrimination leave some LGBT people with a sense of hopelessness that things can never get better. The Suicidal Distress project, led by Dr Katherine Johnson, worked with MindOut, a mental health service, and Allsorts, a youth project in Brighton, to address the needs of this group. The research showed that rejection by families and leaving home without a support network in place can lead to sexual exploitation and issues of personal safety. Bullying at school and workplace discrimination also increase the propensity for isolation, depression and suicidal despair.
Research at the University of Brighton is using short films to enable policymakers to engage with research findings on the everyday experiences of mobility and transport.

Dr Lesley Murray joined the University of Brighton after working for Transport for London. Her research has focused on the sensory and embodied dimensions of mobilities, as these are often neglected in transport planning. “My research findings challenge policymakers to think beyond behavioural change,” Dr Murray said. Short films based on her research ask policymakers to question current assumptions on people’s mobility and their ability to adopt low carbon travel.

One film, Through Our Eyes, which focuses on children’s mobilities, attracted attention from local authority travel planners, bus companies and Transport for London. Using their own footage, it presents children’s accounts of their journey to school. Eleanor Togut, a project co-ordinator for Living Streets in West Sussex argued: “The film that Dr Murray created as part of this research was particularly influential and I devised projects to challenge some of the views of risk-averse mothers with some very positive outcomes.” Following a presentation of her film work at the Global Challenges in Transport Leadership Programme at the University of Oxford, Dr Jennie Middleton, the Course Director, said that Dr Murray had “engaged a range of transport policymakers, practitioners and academics to her fascinating and empirically rich research on children’s independent mobility.”

Dr Murray is now turning her attention to researching how the interactions between generations impact on travel in cities, as well as taking part in a worldwide network of academics and community collaborators funded with £1.6m from the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council to study ageing in relation to mobile technologies.

Photograph: Shoes hanging from the wires signify that mobilities are not just about travelling between places but involve the interconnected movements of people, objects and communications.
Developing children’s resilience

University of Brighton research is helping children, young people and their families who are facing challenges or adversity to build resilience and to create better outcomes in all aspects of their lives.

Why do some children and young people facing similar difficulties do better than others? And what can we do to help those who struggle? These questions led Professor Angie Hart to consider what resilience means and how it affects each of us. “Our primary interest is in helping children and young people who are facing challenges or adversity because of mental health issues, deprivation, social inequalities or a range of other causes,” said Professor Hart. “Our goal is to help them build resilience to these challenges and to create better outcomes in all aspects of their lives.”

Resilience research has a long history, but by the mid-1990s there had been no systematic, yet easy to apply, synthesis of this work in relation to disadvantaged children and families. Professor Hart and collaborators reviewed more than 1,000 publications on resilience, challenging the view that resilience resides solely in individuals, rather than arising from person-environment interactions. Insights from this work and the activities of an inclusive partnership that involved 30 practitioners, 50 parents and 40 young people were used to develop a new approach to resilience building, known as Resilient Therapy, which has improved attainment, led to better life chances and improved mental health amongst young people.

In Malaysia an orphanage supporting 150 children have adopted Resilient Therapy in partnership with their local university. An approach for schools called Academic Resilience has been devised by Lisa Williams and Professor Hart, and adopted by YoungMinds. Partnership work to develop the approach is ongoing.

“From editorial groups that included parents and practitioners we created a resilience framework, which provides easy to understand ways of making ‘resilient moves’ in people’s lives. The demand for this actually comes from the parents, practitioners and young people as they had questions they wanted to be addressed. We’ve used some simple but effective techniques. For example, schools involved with trialling our approaches have used careers information screensavers for school computers, putting strong life choices in front of young people in an almost subliminal way,” said Professor Hart.

A community interest company and website called boingboing have been founded to promote the Brighton resilience work by Professor Hart and Kim Aumann, the former director of Amaze, a charity for parents of children with special needs. Those involved in the resilience work see themselves as part of the boingboing community. The popular website supports and disseminates resilience-based approaches in the UK and internationally using an inclusive approach, involving academics, parents, young people, practitioners and service users.

In the UK boingboing has helped deliver workforce training in resilience approaches to 10 local authorities, including Brighton, West Sussex, the London Borough of Newham and Hampshire. Resilience-based practice is now a central aspect of their work with young people and families. In Sweden, 500 professionals have been trained in Brighton’s resilience approaches and a resilience-based approach has been adopted in over 30 schools and preschools and as part of healthcare services for the 10,000 children and young people living in the local area. The Brighton approach to resilience has also been used to guide the delivery of children and family services in Greece and Germany.

Brighton’s resilience approach has impacted public policy, and the Chief Medical Officer for the UK included details of Resilient Therapy in the 2012 annual report. The Big Lottery Fund invited Professor Hart to join a panel of five decision makers allocating a £75 million fund to boost resilience in schools and local service systems. As Lyn Cole, Deputy Director, England for the Big Lottery Fund described: “We’ve drawn on Angie Hart’s extensive research in emotional resilience theory and practice, combined with her own experience of working in child and adolescent mental health services. Angie is one of the major driving forces behind Headstart. She is a key member of our expert panel and sat as a member of our HeadStart Committee, which recently saw grants awarded to HeadStart projects across England to run test and learn projects over the next 18 months.”
Discussion from the University of Brighton workshop formed the basis of Mind’s national briefing to the network of 150 local Minds as to our overall approach to resilience.

Dave Lowson, Local Services Strategy Manager, Mind, the UK mental health charity

10 UK local authorities have received workforce training

500 professionals have been trained in resilience approaches in Sweden alone

Over 60 EU schools and pre-schools have adopted the approach
Gun crime is a serious and high priority crime in the UK, but media coverage on the consequences of firearm violence often obscures the highly successful story that recorded gun crime in England and Wales has fallen by nearly 50 per cent during the past decade. One University of Brighton academic has been at the heart of the gun control and crime debates for 20 years, directly influencing new legislation, policy guidance and policing innovations to tackle gun-related violence.

Professor Peter Squires, a criminologist at the University of Brighton’s School of Applied Social Science, has played a central role in advising the Home Office, the European Union and many law enforcement agencies, as well as helping to shape public debate over gun crime and violence.

Professor Squires noted that “because gun crime was relatively uncommon until the 1990s, our understanding of how criminal supply and demand operated and how illegal gun markets interacted with various legal and ‘grey’ supply chains was little understood.” Intelligence-led policing has since moved on in leaps and bounds; we now know the sizeable contribution made by air weapons and replica firearms to the rapid growth in recorded gun crime in the late 1990s, and we have a much better understanding of the markets in converted, reactivated and even ‘antique’ firearms – what Professor Squires has called the “junk gun” markets. The introduction of the National Ballistics Intelligence Service (NABIS) has greatly enhanced the police ability to forensically examine firearms and ballistic materials from crime scenes, and to trace active criminal firearms.

Professor Squires’ research made big impacts in the wake of the 2010 Cumbria shootings, when the Home Affairs Select Committee undertook an inquiry into firearms control. His evidence submitted to the committee on the role of legal weapons in domestic violence and the role of ‘readily convertible’ weapons (such as replicas and starting pistols) in firearms supply was considered particularly important.

Subsequently, a new UK government Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Bill included recommendations based on this evidence for a new offence of ‘illegal firearm possession with intent to supply’. This Bill was passed and came into effect during 2014. Professor Squires’ evidence on the use of firearms in domestic violence was also part of the evidence base for new Home Office proposals on the need to consider domestic violence risk when granting gun licenses that were included in the Guide on Firearms Licensing Law 2013 distributed to all police forces to guide their determination of firearm licence applications and renewals.

The issue of how guns ‘trickle’ from legal ownership into a world of illegal ownership and use is a big concern. “All guns start out as legal, but there are points of slippage where guns move into the illegal side,” said Professor Squires. “Guns in the home are most at risk, with at least 1,000 being stolen each year, and they’re open to mis-use in the context of domestic violence.”
Further research at the University of Brighton on the complex area of domestic violence is being undertaken by Dr Paula Wilcox who has received a €750,000 European Union grant to examine child to parent violence in Bulgaria, Ireland, Spain, Sweden and the UK.

Following appointment in 2013 to the UK Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) National Independent Advisory Group on Criminal Use of Firearms, Professor Squires continues to contribute to policy and practice debates in these areas, he said: “If we want influence in areas of social problems like this, we need to take the opportunities to communicate when they come along.”

Photograph: Part of a cache of 70 firearms (rifles, handguns and sub-machine guns) recovered by Sussex Police from a private house in Brighton in 2014. Many were in full working order with ammunition. © Sussex Police.

“Squires is the country’s most-quoted academic expert on gun crime, whose voice has been much in demand over recent months, not least by the BBC.

The Guardian
The current research, funded by the British Academy and National Institute for Health Research, uses secondary analysis of the existing records to establish statistical patterns of s136 detention in relation to age, gender, location and other demographics, as well as in-depth interviews and observations with health professionals, police and people who have been detained. Professor Bendelow found that, “Brighton and Hove, Eastbourne, Hastings and Crawley all have significant demands on their mental health services, and, despite the provision of six s136 hospital suites across Sussex, over two-thirds of those detained were taken into police custody in 2012.” In particular, the statistics indicate a need for more appropriate crisis interventions by ‘out of hours’ services and Sussex Police were the first force to receive funding for a Street Triage pilot study to develop alternative approaches to detention in 2013 in Eastbourne.

In the new Sussex model, the trained police response officers work alongside an experienced mental health professional after 5pm from Wednesday to Friday and all weekend – the times when most emergency calls come in. The team uses an unmarked car to reach situations quickly so the triage nurse can make a rapid initial assessment and provide appropriate help for the person in need.

“Although there will inevitably be some people who will be so distressed that detention under s136 may be the only way to save their lives, the triage process is far more likely to prevent this taking place when it is not necessary and can instead signpost the person to more appropriate help or intervention,” said Professor Bendelow. Triage-trained officers and health professionals are able to share information to develop a clear understanding of what is available locally and how best to access it.”

Early findings from the research suggest that for the police, using alternatives to s136, such as Street Triage has strengthened their relationship not only with Sussex Partnership Trust, but with all relevant agencies, including South East Coast Ambulance Service, the coastguards, the Samaritans, Grassroots Suicide Prevention charity and many other voluntary organisations. “This joined-up approach across all the agencies is the only effective way forward,” said Professor Bendelow. The next stage will be to link the findings from the Sussex pilot to other regional pilots to develop a national model of good practice based on this integrated approach.

Academics at the University of Brighton are contributing to a Department of Health and Home Office response to a crisis in emergency mental health care, by providing vital insights and novel approaches to address the high number of Mental Health Act police detentions across Sussex.

Police in England and Wales are empowered to detain individuals who are thought to be a danger to themselves or to others under Section 136 (s136) of the Mental Health Act 1983. Use of this authority is widespread but controversial since it requires the police to make judgements about mental health and involves detaining individuals in police custody who may not have committed any crime.

Gillian Bendelow, Professor of Sociology of Health and Medicine at the University of Brighton, is leading research to build on and develop good practice in mental health emergencies across the NHS trusts, the Police and other agencies in Sussex. She conducted a pilot study using focus groups with police officers to discuss their use of s136 in three differing regional areas across the UK. The study found that police were using s136 mainly as a form of suicide prevention.
Dr Aidan McGarry’s research on the Roma has shone a spotlight on one of the last acceptable forms of racism in Europe and led to initiatives in Brighton to confront the marginalisation of Travellers.

Anti-Roma prejudice and persecution is growing across Europe, but much research and policy focuses more on the impact of discrimination rather than the causes. Dr McGarry’s work is being recognised for his insistence that governments and decision-makers address these causes. He has not only spoken in high level meetings, including for the Council of Europe, but has written two influential books with two more in the pipeline and has been involved in changing local policy on the treatment of Travellers.

Dr McGarry’s first book, *Who speaks for Roma? Political representation of a transnational minority community*, is a monograph on Roma politics based on his PhD. It was the subject of a three-book review in the leading academic journal *Citizenship Studies* covering the most important books on Roma issues in recent years. The book deals with the key barriers to effective political participation by Roma. Dr McGarry, a senior lecturer in politics in the School of Applied Social Science, co-authored a second book on migration and the rise of the far right in Europe. A third forthcoming book will deal with identity and social movements, and a fourth on Romaphobia, due out in 2016, will cover the issues of identity and territoriality that are at the heart of rights abuses against Roma people.

Dr McGarry has just received funding to support further research on Roma and territoriality. He said: “Most research focuses on the impact of prejudice, such as higher unemployment rates. Virtually no-one is working on the causes, the idea of the Roma being a nation without territory, of not belonging. It is this that is behind the idea that they can be treated differently, that they have no rights.”

For this research Dr McGarry will travel to countries in Eastern Europe with a high territorial concentration of Roma. One place he will visit is Prague, where a Roma pride parade is being held. Dr McGarry says the Roma pride movement has been building in recent years, modelled on gay pride events, and is part of an attempt to assert a positive Roma identity.

The idea for the Romaphobia book came out of an article Dr McGarry wrote on the acceptability of racism against the Roma in Europe for the website Open Democracy, following the supposed abduction of a blonde child by Roma in Greece last year. Dr McGarry’s research on the Roma also led to his appointment as the independent chair of the Brighton and Hove Traveller Scrutiny Panel whose aim was to scrutinise and inform the creation of the city’s new Traveller Strategy.

The panel won an award for the way in which it carried out the scrutiny process and influenced council policy. Brighton & Hove City Council’s housing unit attended all its meetings and has taken up the recommendation for a permanent Traveller site in the area. Dr McGarry says this is key to improving the health, education and job prospects of Travellers as well as their integration in local communities. He presented the panel’s recommendations to the council in 2012. The findings included the negative representation of Travellers in local media. One local editor was interviewed by the panel about his newspaper’s sensationalist coverage of Travellers. Stories about Travellers have since changed and are less negative. Dr McGarry said: “I found the experience to be incredibly rewarding, allowing me to apply my expertise as a researcher to a real-world issue. It was refreshing to come down from the ivory tower and put my knowledge to good use.”
Being able to take evidence from various voices around the city and within the Traveller community was really helpful in shaping an effective strategy with buy-in from different sectors.

Councillor Pete West, Brighton & Hove City Council
Peace through sport

Divided societies across the world have been brought together by the positive impact of sport, thanks to social intervention carried out by researchers at the University of Brighton through the Football4Peace initiative. Related innovative research is now creating opportunities for adolescent girls to grow into new empowering roles in their societies, all part of the potential change that sport can bring to the world.

Football is a universal language, part of today’s culture on every continent and in every section of society. Since 2001, academics from the University of Brighton have been working with sports and voluntary organisations around the world to help heal fractured societies and promote a fairer world. Football4Peace (F4P) emerged from a partnership between researchers at the University of Brighton and the World Sports Peace Project in Israel. Today, in many different countries, it has touched the lives of 8,000 children, nearly 600 coaches and some of the sport’s leading institutions, from England’s Football Association to the Korean Sharing Movement and the University of Johannesburg in South Africa.

Early research identified the primary challenges in developing and implementing F4P’s distinctive model of values-based coaching which is rooted in core values of neutrality, equity and inclusion, respect, trust, and responsibility. As the project grew, it confirmed that sport-based interventions can challenge prejudices in tangible and sustainable ways, helping to foster intercultural understanding and build stronger communities while at the same time embedding good practice for coaches, teachers and community leaders.

The impact of the F4P phenomenon has been felt in many parts of the world. Jane Shurrush, Manager of the British Council Israel’s regional office in Nazareth, commented on F4P’s work in bringing Jewish and Arab Israeli children together and training Israeli and Jordanian coaches alongside each other: “The research on F4P has shown that an approach that is developed alongside professionals in the field, accompanied by research that informs changes in project activity can have positive results that are not found in projects that simply bring people together without an informed approach. This methodology is now being implemented and expanded into other areas of sport.”

Michael Boyd, the Director of Football Development at the Irish Football Association (IFA) described his experience of F4P as “eye-opening” in promoting inclusion. The IFA has based its grassroots programmes on F4P, promoting the values in coaching to thousands of children in Northern Ireland and collaborating with partners north and south of the border.

Sport contributes to personal development and positive community relations but, too often, the integration of women and girls is overlooked. New research at the University of Brighton is helping to address this oversight by investigating the ways in which netball can help girls’ development through sport.

Today Football4Peace has touched the lives of 8,000 children, nearly 600 coaches and some of the sport’s leading institutions.
An equally important element to this programme is the way that the community sport coaches (CSCs) not only teach netball skills, but also become tangible role models for the girls. Through interactions with the CSCs, girls were subtly encouraged to reconsider previously accepted limitations that they had placed on themselves.

Research has shown how sport for women in countries of the Global South brings a wide range of benefits including learning about one’s physical capabilities and opening doors to social interactions in a way that few other activities can. Female coaches act as important role models, allowing young women to work alongside women who have received specialist training and who act as mentors.

Research on the potential of girls’ empowerment through sport is currently underway with The Goal-Delhi programme, led by Dr Megan Chawansky, from the University of Brighton and Dr Payoshni Mitra, an independent researcher based in Kolkata. Their research explores changes in Goal participants after completing the 10-month programme, which combines netball training with life skills modules on health and hygiene, communication skills, and financial literacy. This kind of programming gives them legitimate, safe and supervised access to a sport that otherwise might well be missing from their lives.

“Research tells us that adolescent girls can reap the benefits of sport participation. The girls we interviewed told us that they felt healthier and stronger from their participation,” said Dr Chawansky.

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Jane Shurrush, Manager of the British Council Israel’s regional office in Nazareth
A researcher at the University of Brighton is working with UEFA, the Union of European Football Associations, and groups representing football supporters to ensure that fans are involved in initiatives to tackle racism, homophobia and violence.

Football fans often receive widespread negative media publicity for antisocial behaviours and politicians blame fans for causing trouble. Dr Mark Doidge, a researcher at the university, successfully led a project funded by UEFA to investigate whether anti-racist activism by fans challenged racism and xenophobia. The research was undertaken in Poland, Germany and Italy in order to gain an international, cross-cultural understanding of fan engagement.

The findings revealed the different tactics and practices fans have used to establish progressive activist groups to pressure football clubs, federations and governments to tackle discrimination.

As Dr Doidge said: “Football has the power to unite millions of people across the world. It also becomes a way for fans to divide and discriminate. Across Europe, football fans have engaged in racist abuse for several decades; no football league has escaped. Solving this problem has to go beyond simple punishment and legislation, and build on the positive actions already taken by some fans and grassroots organisations.”

As a direct outcome of this research Dr Doidge is now working with the Football Supporters’ Federation and Football Supporters Europe, using his findings to advise on how fans can be involved in anti-discrimination campaigns. He has also published a report on Anti-racism in European Football which he presented at UEFA’s headquarters in Switzerland.

Racism is not only a problem in football, it’s a problem in society. Until we tackle it in society, we can’t tackle it in football.

John Barnes, former England player

Empowering football fans to challenge racism

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Making elite sport competitive and fair is a key task for the University of Brighton’s Sport and Exercise Science and Medicine research centre (SESAME). The university’s researchers are leading the world in the search for effective anti-doping methods, with new science emerging that could provide a tamper-proof test.

We are fascinated with human performance – watching elite athletes break world records is something every sports fan wants to see. But we also want to see it done fairly: when an athlete is caught using performance enhancing drugs, the world of sport is diminished.

Some athletes take Erythropoietin (EPO) a banned hormone that boosts oxygen delivery to the muscles and enhances performance. Current drug tests can be beaten by injecting saline or drinking large amounts of water to dilute the blood. But science being developed at the University of Brighton by Professor Yannis Pitsiladis has discovered more than 50 genes which are switched on and off by EPO – biological activity that is impossible to hide.

“EPO works like a dimmer switch,” said Professor Pitsiladis. “As the EPO switch is turned up, more genes are ‘switched on’. Theoretically, it would be possible to manipulate these genes, but since each one will have numerous functions, it would be a difficult and potentially hazardous thing to do. So this approach might not yet be 100 per cent effective but we’re certainly on the right track to create a test which can’t be tampered with. We’re not looking for traces of EPO itself, we’re after evidence of what EPO does.”

The latest EPO research is focusing on ‘omics’, a novel approach to biological and genetic analysis which identifies and quantifies molecules that represent the structure, function, and dynamics of an organism, in this case an elite athlete. Professor Pitsiladis is pioneering an approach to human performance which combines analysis of genes, Ribonucleic Acid (RNA), metabolism and protein modification to produce a highly sophisticated set of drug detection tools.

The aim is to create drug-detection methods that are simple to use and cost effective. “The price of initial research is high,” said Professor Pitsiladis, “as it is for cancer or heart disease tests. But once the development work has been completed, partners like the International Olympic Committee and the World Anti-Doping Agency will have a low-cost test at their disposal.”

Alongside the research, the university has invested in a new state-of-the-art anti-doping laboratory with bio-banking infrastructure – freezers with cutting-edge alarm and monitoring systems. And the investment is paying off, with the International Federation of Sports Medicine (FIMS) awarding the Centre for Sport and Exercise Science and Medicine (SESAME) at Brighton, status as the FIMS Reference Collaborating Centre of Sports Medicine for Anti-Doping Research.

“One of the most challenging parts of my research is the assumption that drugs are the best way, if not the only way, to maximally enhance performance,” said Professor Pitsiladis. “If I could use the resources that are devoted to anti-doping to help athletes hone their performance using purely legal techniques such as intelligent training, I’m confident I could contribute to some new world records.”
The University of Brighton’s sports and exercise research findings have been adopted by elite athletes across the world and been praised by the International Paralympic Committee.

During the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, Dr Nick Webborn, Principal Research Fellow at the School of Sport and Service Management, was Chief Medical Officer for the Paralympics and worked with injured Olympic athletes. He also oversaw the collection of unique data on injury and illness from the 4,000 athletes taking part in the Paralympics. These data are generating a raft of research articles. “We can use this to work on injury prevention strategies,” said Dr Webborn. “We were able to collect 50,000 days of exposure of athletes to sport. It would normally take 25 years to get the same volume of data in a single sport in the UK.”

Dr Webborn, who was involved in London 2012 from the bidding stage through to delivery, has recently been appointed to the International Paralympic Committee’s medical committee and is organising the research taking place at the Games in Rio. Dr Webborn has also recently been appointed as Chair of the Scientific Commission of the International Federation of Sports Medicine (FIMS). His work at the Olympics has its origins in a study he conducted on injuries sustained at the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Paralympic Games in the United States. The success of this first survey led the International Paralympic Committee to make the survey standard practice in all Winter and Summer Paralympics. Dr Webborn’s research into injury at the Paralympics has also led to rule changes for ice sledge hockey.

The University of Brighton’s links with London 2012 are only one example of its influential work with elite athletes around the world. This work has been adopted by the International Paralympic Committee, the US Navy and the 2016 Brazilian Olympic Committee, among others. The International Paralympic Committee
has acknowledged that the work has made a significant contribution to the Paralympic movement in relation to the education of clinicians in the field and improved medical care.

University of Brighton researchers have also been involved in ongoing work helping athletes involved in different sports and with different impairments deal with challenging climate situations. The work has influenced the strategy for Great Britain’s athletes from the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games onwards and also forms part of the USA Olympic Committee’s preparation manual.

The wider application of the University’s exercise research can also be seen in the team’s collaboration with the Peter Harrison Centre for Disability Sport at Loughborough University on toolkits that promote safe physical activity for people with various disabilities.

The recommendations of the toolkits have led to changes in how we deliver and frame our material to ensure that practical resources for people with disabilities to engage in physical activity can be sought.

Professor Vicky Tolfrey, Director of the Peter Harrison Centre for Disability Sport

Photograph: GB Paralympic archers use pre-cooling strategy for competition in thermally challenging environments. © ParalympicsGB
Dr Marina Novelli’s collaborative work with a number of local partners in Africa has facilitated the reshaping of the tourism industry and contributed to sustainable local development.

A series of research collaborations with governments and organisations across Africa have had far-reaching effects on tourism policy making, skills capacity building and industry planning, core to local sustainable socioeconomic development in a number of destinations.

Tourism is often promoted as a panacea for development by several international organisations and commentators, which often tend to adopt a Western focused approach. Dr Novelli’s view is that to be effective, tourism policy must be shaped in collaboration with experts on the ground.

As co-ordinator of the research group on Policy, Practice and Performance in Tourism, Leisure and Sport in the Centre of Sport, Tourism and Leisure Studies – CoSTaLS (an Affiliate Member of the UN World Tourism Organisation), Dr Novelli focuses on raising awareness among local people about the potential impacts of tourism on their lives, collaboratively working to build local capacity to address local needs. She said: “There can only be impact if there are local ‘voices’ involved.”

Dr Novelli has developed a participatory training method – the Peer-to-Peer Capacity Building approach – and employs the Rapid Situation Analysis, developed by one of her former PhD students, in most of her research. Amongst other methods, her fieldwork embraces participatory workshops, collaborative community mapping, public consultations and a range of creative research approaches.

Dr Novelli worked on a UNESCO-funded project in Nigeria to review the leisure, tourism and hospitality curriculum, and delivered a capacity building/train-the-trainers programme aimed at co-producing teaching materials with colleagues from Kaduna State University. This resulted in the adoption of new industry and employment-centred curricula replacing the previous one dating back to colonial times.

In 2010, Dr Novelli was part of a consortium of five experts, including Dr Angela Benson, undertaking research into best available practices/technologies in nine African destinations as part of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization’s (UNIDO) Collaborative Actions for Sustainable Tourism (COAST) project. Dr Novelli’s research specifically on Nigeria and The Gambia, and Dr Benson’s work on Ghana led to the identification of training needs and government guidelines for conservation and ecotourism development.

Dr Novelli led World Bank-commissioned research into capacity building to improve tourism and hospitality vocational training in The Gambia. This study underpinned The Gambia Tourism and Hospitality Institute (GTHI) Bill published in 2011, which established the GTHI, encouraging Gambians to study up to the level of a Higher National Diploma in tourism and hospitality. The study influenced the Spanish government’s decisions on how best to spend their funds, which led to the allocation of €2.7m budget for the GTHI infrastructure development, to become a national centre of excellence for tourism and hospitality education. The GTHI trains an average of 200 school leavers a year and will upgrade the level of professional training amongst the 30,000 workers in a tourism sector that contributes 16 per cent to the national GDP.
The impact of Dr Novelli’s work has been felt globally and across the African continent. Dr Messerli, Senior Private Sector Development Specialist at the World Bank, referred to Dr Novelli as being “on the leading edge of tourism research and its many applications”, commending her for “her continuing leadership in this dynamic discipline as she continues to grapple courageously with new research issues engaging academic, government and non-governmental communities globally.”

Geri Mitchell, Managing Director of Sandele Eco-Retreat and Learning Centre (Kartong, The Gambia), has witnessed growing confidence among Kartong’s village community where Dr Novelli has worked for the past seven years in a number of different projects and roles: “This new confidence has had a profound effect on the governance of the village. The value and impact that the peer-to-peer capacity building experience has brought to the village reach far beyond tourism development.”

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Geri Mitchell, Managing Director of Sandele Eco-Retreat and Learning Centre, The Gambia
Peer-to-peer learning for business excellence

Businesses tend to learn best from other businesses, valuing the real-world experience and the shared background that comes from managing a commercial organisation.

Academics at the University of Brighton have led the way on an 18-year journey helping small businesses around the world use peer-to-peer learning to become more profitable and increasingly sustainable.

Phrases like “sharing best practice” and “peer-to-peer learning” have become part of everyday business jargon, but research at the University of Brighton has ensured these approaches have measureable benefits for business and their employees. Peer-to-peer learning can happen informally, but a group of researchers from the University of Brighton’s Centre for Research in Innovation Management (CENTRIM) has played a key role in establishing a programme with systematic and regular processes underpinning such learning. This has helped to maximise the impact of the process on more than 1,000 small businesses in the UK, Ireland and South Africa.

The importance of peer-to-peer learning is well known,” said Dr George Tsekouras, a Principal Research Fellow in the Brighton Business School. “Our research has focused on creating a real understanding of how peer-to-peer activities work, what challenges the processes create and how peer-to-peer interactions can link small and medium enterprises (SMEs) with the knowledge base in universities. We established Profitnet to help embed the impact of our research in the business community.”

The university has established 84 peer-to-peer business networks in the UK, Ireland and South Africa, transforming the profitability and sustainability of the participating small companies. Evidence from SMEs in Sussex UK showed that firms that participated in Profitnet increased their gross profits by nine per cent compared with a decrease of 15.2 per cent in profits during the same period for non-participants. As well as profit growth, participants saw an 18.7 per cent increase in turnover compared with a 3.2 per cent increase for other local SMEs.

Since 2009, Profitnet has worked with a further 300 UK businesses together with 139 from Donegal in Ireland and 118 from Durban in South Africa. “Impacts have been very significant,” said Dr Tsekouras. “More than 90 per cent of participants have acknowledged improvements to their strategy skills, learning the value of planning in contrast to dealing with issues in a ‘fire-fighting’ mode.

Furthermore, 85 per cent have improved their problem-solving skills, learning to delegate problem-solving power to employees and learning how to develop key performance indicators to monitor operations.”

Profitnet offers a unique opportunity for small business executives to receive feedback from a group of trusted peers and validate their business choices with them, something the participants describe as “a unique opportunity to have a board of non-executive directors”. Through the process of peer-to-peer learning, the participants develop strong communication skills, allowing them to interact successfully with other parties, whether business partners, suppliers or customers. It comes as no surprise that, in the long term, the participants are empowered with a high level of self-confidence.

Profitnet has had an impact on smaller businesses from all sectors, helping them to weather the recession and gain confidence in managing innovation, understanding the management demands imposed by new product development and developing ways of addressing different kinds of customer value.

As a result of the Profitnet project, the University of Brighton has helped hundreds of business owners and employees to build their skills, confidence and effectiveness through peer-to-peer learning.
Profitnet has been an enlightening way of bringing in experts so we can all pick their brains. Sometimes we need really specialist things, and it’s great for getting other people’s ideas – I have benefited from some very positive input.

Peter Adlington, Managing Director, Plastipack
A VOICE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Rights-based education researchers have been working with international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to improve education outcomes and sexual health across the world.

Young people across the world have been given a voice in education and sexual health services through research led by the University of Brighton’s Education Research Centre in collaboration with Panos London and funded by the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF).

Dr Vicky Johnson has been working with an international NGO to realise youth sexual rights and improve young people’s access to sexual health resources in developing countries. Her work is based on research she led in Benin, Kenya, Nepal and Nicaragua, and has resulted in IPPF deciding to reconceptualise its youth programming to put young people’s views at the centre.

Dr Johnson designed the methodology in which researchers in the different countries interviewed young people, adults and service providers. She also worked with young peer educators and trained them to carry out their own research.

They successfully encouraged the most marginalised young people – from young people working in hard labour to sex workers and transsexuals – to depict their lives in photographs, and to tell their stories about access to sexual health services and to share their feelings about their sexual rights.

Findings from the youth-led research showed that young women in a mountainous region of Nepal were scared to say what was happening to their bodies. They described themselves as feeling like ‘trees with no leaves’ because they could not show their emotions due to gender violence and discrimination. Young peer educators took a picture of a rose coming into bloom to illustrate how young people of the ‘third gender’ should be able to be open about their sexual identity.

Young people appreciated the mobile health units funded by IPPF, which travel to poor rural areas and now include a separate space where young people can talk and access contraception confidentially. Service providers were trained to be more user-friendly and the focus was on building healthy relationships rather than illness. Following the research, Dr Johnson and the peer educators presented their findings to local, national and global staff and decision-makers.

The Programme Specialist for Adolescents and Young People at the South Asia Regional Office of IPPF, Manish Mitra, discussed how the research had illustrated positive change in Nepal as a result of IPPF’s interventions and that this had informed local funding decisions to continue services for vulnerable young people: “The life-changing impact the project has made in the lives of the young people in FPAN (Family Planning Association Nepal) in particular presents impactful learning for all our Member Associations (MAs) across the region. The assessment research has brought out excellent examples of MAs’ work in promoting and advocating for provision of comprehensive sexuality education in the national curriculum of Nepal.”

Dr Johnson designed the socio-ecological theoretical model from the research that is informing IPPF’s ongoing youth programming. She said that understanding the cultural context in each country through the eyes of young people was vital. Experiences differ from country to country. For instance, in Benin young people felt it was important to involve religious leaders and radio stations in sexual health education. In Nicaragua girls felt under pressure in their local community to get pregnant early. In Kenya young people felt sexual rights could not be addressed without confronting economic problems. “The important thing is for young people to be able to talk and that they are supported to be agents of change,” Dr Johnson said.

Although the programme is over, the journey is not. It will have an enormous impact on our strategic thinking in IPPF... influencing our work with over 20 million adolescents and young people in 152 countries. It will have implications for IPPF’s approach to communication and management.

Doortje Braeken, IPPF’s Senior Advisor on Adolescents

Helping Europe tackle youth unemployment

A €5m European Union research project on youth unemployment, using innovative multidisciplinary approaches involves the voices of young people and businesses from the outset.

Across the European Union over 5 million young people under 25 are unemployed. In the worst affected countries in southern Europe, more than 50 per cent of young people are without work. In the UK three-quarters of a million young people are looking for jobs. A new project, led by the Centre for Research on Management and Employment (CROME) at the University of Brighton Business School, is using state-of-the-art academic analysis to produce policy recommendations and practical resources in collaboration with organisations aimed at helping young people find work.

The four-year project Strategic Transitions for Youth Labour in Europe (STYLE) began in March 2014, and builds on a range of established international networks and projects funded by the Leverhulme Trust and Santander Universities.

“Previous research we found that ‘governed’ internships, linked to educational programmes or active labour market policies, are much more likely to have beneficial outcomes than unregulated ‘open market internships’. Positive governance conditions relate to contract, duration and partnership arrangements. When employers, interns and educational providers understand the mutual benefits is when they work best,” said Dr David Lain, early career researcher at CROME, who is leading the research on internships.

STYLE marks an ambitious step up from this initial research. It examines labour market mismatch in terms of education and skills, mobility and migration, as well as the potential for youth business start-ups in Europe. The project is generating new ideas about the legacy of long-term unemployment in some parts of Europe and the changing nature of skills for new types of jobs.

Central to the project are a number of international advisory partners, including the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the International Labour Office (ILO) and the European Youth Forum, together with a representative group of 24 universities from 20 countries across Europe. Employers have a key role to play in the project through the advisory network, which includes temporary work agencies and Business Europe, an organisation that represents the views of a range of enterprises in 33 European countries. The project’s advisory boards meet regularly to discuss the specific issues in their communities and the research analysis.

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Professor Jacqueline O’Reilly, Director of CROME and Co-ordinator of STYLE, said: “These advisory groups are a really important part of the project and its potential impact. They know what the issues and barriers are on the ground, and we need to listen to them to inform our research. Impact is about the young people at the heart of the project informing policy recommendations. A powerful collaboration at Brighton between the Business School and CUPP, the Community University Partnership, has built leading research expertise aimed at helping young people in the UK.”

The real value of CROME’s research will be its in-depth analysis into the skills gap and ways to tackle long-term unemployment effectively. It is very exciting to be involved in something that brings us so close to the latest academic research. I am very keen personally that we have something that unites an academic, rigorous policy approach with the fieldwork we do and have been doing for years.”

Abi Levitt, Director of Development Services at Tomorrow’s People
DELIVERING RIGHTS-BASED EDUCATION

The results of University of Brighton research jointly undertaken with governments and schools in Africa and the UK have boosted educational performance and improved young people’s awareness of their human rights.

Hundreds of thousands of teachers and young people across the world have been given a voice in education through two complementary research projects led by researchers in the University of Brighton’s Education Research Centre.

The first research project, The Quality Education Project (QEP), led by Professor David Stephens, focused on 300 primary schools, 1,000 trainee teachers and 120,000 children in four sub-Saharan African countries, and resulted in the implementation of new policies towards teaching-learning.

Professor Stephens developed culturally sensitive participatory action research to analyse, promote and evaluate strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning through a learner-centred methodology and reflective teaching. Using indigenous research teams to carry out classroom observations, interviews with teachers and pupils, and a comparison of examination scores taken from project and non-project schools, the research had a clear impact on learning outcomes.

A recent evaluation of the impact of the research by the independent consulting group EDCON found significant differences in the cognitive achievement of children taught in project as opposed to non-project schools: “In Zambia, where the schools in which we administered the tests were similar, we found statistically significant differences both in 4th and 6th grade, both in Language and Mathematics.”

The evaluation also found evidence of impact on teaching, “through classroom observation we found that project-trained teachers pose more open and challenging questions to their pupils, and they give them more individual help.” As a headteacher in Zimbabwe said about the QEP-trained teachers in his school: “They seek new ways of teaching different topics to different children of different abilities.”

As noted in the evaluation report, the next stage of development is the sustainability of this learning through a cascade model. In some areas this sustainability has already been achieved, as confirmed by one principal in Zambia: “I do not look at QEP as a project. A project has a life-span. Projects come and go, QEP is a programme. It has come to stay. It is an integral part of our work and life at the College”.
The second project was led by Dr Carol Robinson and was funded by UNICEF to evaluate its Rights Respecting Schools Award (RRSA), taking into account pupils’ views. Her findings on the value of a rights-respecting discourse were adopted by UNICEF UK and in his 2010 Review of the Office of the Children’s Commissioner, Sir John Dunford, who acts as an adviser to the House of Commons Select Committee on Education, said: “In conducting my review I visited some Rights Respecting Schools and saw at first hand that when children are taught about their rights they learn a greater appreciation of the rights of others. The evidence is that this has a positive impact on behaviour and teacher-pupil relationships. Rights, respect and responsibility are the three Rs of learning to be a good citizen.”

Sir John Dunford, Review of the Children’s Commissioner for England, 2010

Not only did it go on to form the basis of an international conference convened by Save the Children in Cambodia in 2009, but it has also impacted Save the Children’s international policy development. Professor Stephens is following up this research in Bangladesh where he is working with a number of European Union-supported non-governmental organisations to deliver more effective teaching and learning to children of the Dhaka slums and Sylhet tea estates.
Partnerships with communities to address disadvantage

Every university works closely with its communities, but Brighton’s Community University Partnership Programme (CUPP) is recognised as a world leader in embedding the notion of mutually beneficial research relationships at the heart of its social engagement work.

Working with local people to identify, shape, undertake and disseminate research is helping the University of Brighton to make some unique contributions to communities locally and outside the UK, giving students and academics valuable opportunities in pioneering a research-based model of community-university engagement that has gained international recognition.

“From the establishment of the Community University Partnership Programme (CUPP), in 2003, one of our governing principles has been the notion of mutual benefit, and that’s very important to us,” said CUPP’s director Dave Wolff. “Our research projects need to have a clear benefit to the community, but they also have to enrich the research and the teaching of the university.”

A central tenet behind CUPP’s approach to facilitating research is that academic knowledge is important and valid, but not uniquely so. The knowledge of professionals, practitioners and community partners is equally valid and can be equally important in the definition of research questions and the research process.

CUPP is funded as a core function of the university and, distinctively, the programme is an integral part of the University of Brighton’s corporate plan. “The reason CUPP works is that we’re pushing at an open door,” said Wolff. “Staff and students are keen to use their expertise and energy to help address inequalities in our communities whilst they develop their research and learning, and, in turn, our communities are open to the idea of developing their practice with their local university to tackle marginalisation and disadvantage.”

The CUPP team works with colleagues across the university to turn ideas and community priorities into research projects; it provides start-up funding and helps research networks and communities of practice to develop. In addition, CUPP’s community research fellowships enable community partners to have full access to resources such as computers and library facilities.

CUPP has enabled hundreds of research partnership projects to take place, resulting in new research findings which have been used to tackle disadvantage through: the development of new resilience initiatives for disadvantaged young people in the UK, Sweden and Greece; novel forms of inclusive arts practice with people with learning disabilities, which have been displayed on London’s South Bank; an enduring programme that links pharmacy students with older people in a befriending relationship, via which the older person’s medication is reviewed; and improved approaches adopted in the UK and Australia for understanding the needs of LGBT communities to inform new policies.

Wolff noted that “CUPP’s reputation is such that we now get enquiries from other universities within and outside the UK asking how they can develop community-university engagement strategies.” Staff from CUPP are now working closely with universities in Bosnia, Ethiopia, Senegal, Ghana and Kashmir, supporting them to make their own contributions to addressing marginalisation and disadvantage in their local communities.
CUPP’s work at the University of Brighton has been a significant inspiration to everyone who has encountered their unique approach to university-community engagement. CUPP has become a real magnet for anyone – whether from across the UK or internationally – who cares about effective university public engagement. It is one of the great ‘engagement’ success stories of the last 10 years.

Paul Manners, Director of the National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE)

Involvement in CUPP also gives the university’s own students access to a much broader set of experiences as one undergraduate described: “As a student you live in an incubated world, and this has enabled me to become part of a wider community and it has challenged my learning in the other courses I take.”

Conversely, local community partners in Brighton benefit from new thinking and a fresh set of challenges. “It’s been brilliant working with the university and having an independent person to talk to,” said the Director of an older people’s community organisation. “To get out of your own context is very refreshing.”

But, as Wolff reiterated, the academic needs of the university need to be met, alongside those of the community. “CUPP is not working with our communities as a form of charitable largesse,” he said. “We have a hard-nosed focus on improving research, and beyond that of including the knowledge held by practitioners and community members to create better research that can be used to make fundamental improvements to people’s lives.”