

What's the role for research organisations in supporting change in society?



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Some members of the CHANGE team work from an office in the Olympia Building (pictured, below right) on Bridgeton Cross. The office, called the 'Olympia Social Research Hub', is shared with colleagues from the Glasgow Centre for Population Health (GCPH) and the University of Glasgow. This office was first opened in August 2015, with the intention of hosting a variety of research and wider engagement activities that aim to benefit and make a real, positive difference to both the local community and the wider city region.

"A real, positive difference" is a great aim but a big ask; sometimes traditional types of research can be quite tricky to relate to the everyday. But there many ways that research can be useful and useable for people working outside of a research organisation.

One direct way that research can be of help is by supporting and evaluating the efforts of the public and third sector to improve lives. CHANGE is a great example of this, as colleagues from the GCPH are providing an ongoing evaluation of the project, and learning from this will feed in as the CHANGE project continues. This includes both looking at how the project is progressing, and feeding back helpful suggestions, as well as looking at whether we're starting to see the expected changes in wellbeing for children and families as a result of the work CHANGE is doing.

Sometimes research findings can be much more palatable when you can separate out just the relevant information in manageable chunks, and read it in language that's more widely understood. For example, the GCPH has produced a number of profiles of neighbourhoods across Glasgow, which look at the key stats available for one particular area. You can access either the profiles about everyone who lives in an area, or just details related to children and young people – here's that profile for Calton and Bridgeton as an

example http://www.understandingglasgow.com/profiles/children_and_young_peoples_profiles/1_ne_sector/20_calton_and_bridgeton. Of course you'll only get part of the picture (even the best stats can't tell you what it's really like to live in a neighbourhood) and in this format it's much easier to get a better idea of what makes Calton and Bridgeton distinct from other parts of the city.

There's plenty more for research organisations to learn on how we increase the relevance of our research and its outcomes to others. In fact, part of the plan for setting up the Hub at Olympia was to do just that – to understand and spread better practice for research organisations working with communities and other partners. So if you have some ideas about the kind of insights and support you'd like to see offered by organisations like us to the rest of the world, get in touch: socsci-olympia-hub@glasgow.ac.uk

If you'd like to find out more, the Olympia Social Research Hub is home to:

[The Glasgow Centre for Population Health](#) generates insights and evidence, supports new approaches, and informs and influences action to improve health and tackle inequality.

[Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland](#) This initiative, led by the University of Glasgow and Glasgow City Council Education Services, brings a way of working which looks at all the different elements of a neighbourhood and how they support children and young people's attainment, health and wellbeing.

[UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence \(CaCHE\)](#) This research consortium looks across the UK at the major challenges in housing and will produce evidence and new research aiming to improve housing policy and practice.