

# Knowledge Exchange at CRFR: Past, present, future



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## Looking to the future (continued)

- **Knowledge Exchange in the recession.** Ways of using research and interacting between sectors have been fostered during a time of increased public spending. How social research is viewed by non-academics whilst budgets are shrinking and services are being cut remains to be seen. Creativity and flexibility will be needed in order to illustrate the usefulness of research in a challenging climate of reduced budgets.
- **Beyond the basics.** We have developed standard methods of sharing research through better communication, increased accessibility and closer collaborations. There are still huge challenges for many research users in learning from research. Further work is needed on improving the knowledge to action process through experimentation with different methods and through academics being more responsive to research user's needs.
- **Valuing brokerage roles.** There are an increasing number of people in the university sector with knowledge exchange roles and this has been key to the uptake of research in some cases. The challenge is how to get better recognition of the role and skills of knowledge brokering and other KE support activities in different sectors and wider acknowledgement and visibility of the support needed for successful knowledge exchange.
- **Learning and Reflection.** Knowledge exchange has made great strides over the last ten years with many more programmes and centres with explicit KE aims, and much experimentation and innovation. The next phase should build on this through developing methods for better planning and evaluation of knowledge exchange activities to identify and build on success.

### Author

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Thanks to all the many people who have taken part in CRFR's knowledge exchange activities over the last ten years.

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# Knowledge Exchange at CRFR: Past, present, future

CRFR set out with the aim to make research accessible to policy-makers and practitioners, and to act as a focal point for research on families and relationships. Over ten years it has emerged as a leader in the knowledge exchange field with its activities being acknowledged as 'outstanding' by the ESRC, as a 'market leader' by the Scottish Government and the Scottish Funding Council.

This briefing reflects on ten years of knowledge exchange (KE) activities at CRFR from 2001-2011 and looks to the future. It discusses CRFR's approach to KE, showcases some highlights of its KE activities, and identifies challenges for the future.

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CRFR's emphasis on making research relevant to practitioners and policy-makers and ensuring findings are accessible and useful has been exemplary  
Anne Houston, Children1st

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a key achievement has been sustained and mature engagement with both policy-makers and practitioners from both central and local government and the voluntary sector  
Ann Millar, Scottish Funding Council

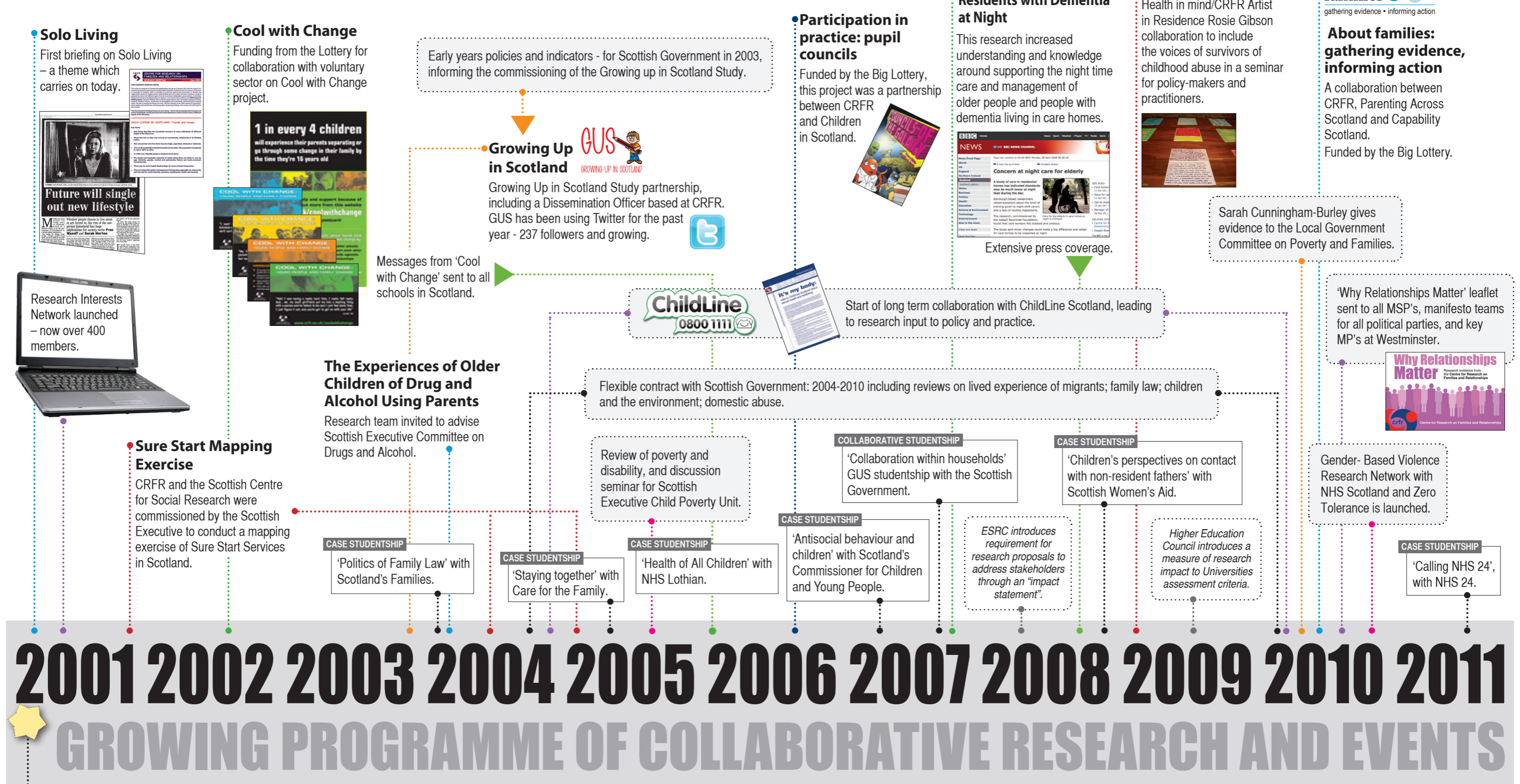
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CRFR has shown itself to be a market leader in establishing connections between the academic and policy worlds resulting in meaningful information exchange and discussion  
Helen Chambers, FRSA  
Head of Strategy, Inspiring Scotland

## CRFR's approach to Knowledge Exchange

- Interactive:** encouraging and involving researchers and research users to meet, discuss and develop research, through building a research interest network, conferences, seminars, web-based activities, research advisory groups, tweets, blogs etc.
- Keeping Connected:** building relationships between researchers and relevant policy makers, practitioners and others over time to build trust and create shared agendas and sustain a joined up approach, e.g. collaborations with Scottish Government, family organisations in the voluntary sector, and the NHS.
- Open:** freely accessible briefings, open events and web-based communication. Responding to research users and potential partners from small and large organisations, supporting small scale evaluations, developing joint research with partners e.g. Research Briefing 34 on sexual health was downloaded and distributed to hundreds of teachers.
- Innovative:** exploring different approaches to communication, engagement and action, e.g. packaging short messages for political debate in 'why relationships matter' booklet; working with an artist in residence to support research participant's communication with service providers; developing new ways of linking research to action through the About Families project.
- Reaching Out:** developing ways of including different voices: children, schools, and older people; in research and research communication, e.g. the Listening to Children course, and the dementia café.
- Supported:** recognising the importance of supporting KE work through skilled staff: KE specialists, project workers, innovation and experimentation, graphic design, and events management.

Overleaf we highlight some of our KE achievements over the last ten years.

# Highlights from our Knowledge Exchange activities



CRFR established with a mission to make research accessible and act as a focal point for policy makers and practitioners interested in families and relationships research.

Over 100 delegates attend launch with Scottish Secretary Helen Liddell.

**Looking to the future**

*In these times of austerity the challenges for social research will intensify and the CRFR's inherent approach to people, communication, and relationship building via Caplan's trilogy of trust, confidence and empathy, will be ever more essential for securing positive impacts in an environment where it's about people and society as well as the economy*

Barbara Doig  
Independent Knowledge Broker,  
formerly Chief Social Researcher Scottish Government

It is now a requirement of much of academic research to show that it can engage with research users and to create channels for research communication and use. Whilst open communication has become much more common, and more people from both academic and user communities are developing ways of working together to increase the impact of research, there are still a number of challenges for the future in developing knowledge exchange.

- Partnership and Collaboration.** Partnership and collaborative approaches lead to increased research utilisation and impact, but are in their infancy. Further exploration is needed of different kinds of collaborative approaches in developing research agendas and carrying out research. This could create greater synergy with policy and practice environments and more uptake of research, leading to research use and potential impact.
- New translation and communication methods.** There is enthusiasm for new technologies in their scope for communicating research and interacting in virtual environments which can increase opportunities for interaction as well as decreasing environmental impact. However, often in the excitement of using new methods, the reasons for communication and the needs of the audience can be lost. The challenge is to develop social media and web-based approaches to foster interaction, develop communication and as a meeting space.