

Institution: Loughborough University

Unit of Assessment: C20

1. Unit context and structure, research and impact strategy

Our Unit plays a significant role in UK and international social policy and applied criminal justice. Its research provides the basis for the UK Living Wage by establishing minimum income standards, shapes national policy and local practice on young carers, plays a leading role in a policy shift towards 'Child First' youth justice and promotes victim-focused treatment of rape survivors. Over this REF period, we achieved a 40% increase in grant funding, and strategically prioritised research quality enhancement, to complement our reputation for impact enabled by our extensive networks among policy makers and practitioners.

1.1 Research structure

Our submission comprises **12 staff (11.6FTE)** in Social and Policy Studies (SPS), one of five units within Loughborough's School of Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH), alongside Geography, Politics and International Studies, Communications and Media, and Humanities. SSH is one of 9 autonomous Schools at Loughborough University (LU) with a strategy for research and its impact led by a Dean, and Associate Deans for Research (ADR) and Enterprise (ADE) – the latter (Hirsch) is from SPS, demonstrating this Unit's significant leadership contribution to the School.

Our Unit is led by three professors playing complementary leadership roles: Aldridge as Director of Research, Case as Head of SPS and Hirsch as Director of the Centre for Research in Social Policy (CRSP). Case and Hirsch are members of the SSH Executive, and Aldridge of its Research and Enterprise Committee (SREC).

Research is organised under three **Research Themes**:

- **Low Income and Poverty** research (Hirsch leads) is concentrated in CRSP (established 1983) whose pioneering work on the Minimum Income Standard (MIS) makes it the leading UK centre producing evidence of what households need for an acceptable standard of living.
- **Young People and Families**, which includes the Young Carers' Research Group (YCRG, established 1993, Aldridge leads), shapes health and social care policy and practice on young carers and their families in the UK and other countries, as well as studies of parental experiences of egg donation and of women's mental health following childbirth.
- **Applied Criminal Justice** (ACJ, Case leads) is a new area of research, reflecting our strategic ambition to apply our expertise to new foci, and responds to the need for a solid evidence base to support current priorities in criminal justice policy, notably: a 'Child First' youth justice strategy, reforms to improve victim interactions with criminal justice, and strategies promoting non-criminal identities and hence desistance from crime.

1.1.1 Interdisciplinary Research

Unit specialisms have clear and established links to related work across different institutional disciplines. For example, research concerned both with living standards and with youth justice draws in expertise in health and sport from our School of Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences (SEHS), illustrated by:

- Evaluations by Kay, Case and Aldridge of the role of sport in rehabilitation in the Street Games project, a charitable, community-based programme harnessing sporting activities to prevent youth crime.
- Investigation by Hirsch and an SEHS economist of life-course impacts of health on social and economic outcomes, funded by the Health Foundation.

The institutional 'CALIBRE' strategic research framework drives interdisciplinary activity across all Schools. Of particular relevance are the Communication and Culture Beacon (led from SSH), the Health and Wellbeing Global Challenge, with which we engage in our work both on living

standards and on health issues, along with contributing to the work of the Institute of Advanced Studies (e.g. 'Children's Rights in Youth Justice' international symposium in 2019).

1.2 Review of objectives and research plans described in REF2014

Our REF2014 strategic vision was to extend our programme of high quality applied social research, with emphasis on contemporary change in policy and practice, by:

1. Identifying areas of current policy and practice in need of **better evidence** to which our research could be applied.
2. Strengthening **research outputs**, recognising that our powerful and innovative research methods needed to become more prominent in academic literature, enabling the academic community to draw more easily on these methods to extend their impact.
3. Extending our **international reach**, realising more fully the potential for our knowledge and methodological expertise to be taken up by academics, policy makers, practitioners and stakeholders in other countries.

This strategic vision has been executed through agile responses to new challenges and opportunities. Specifically:

In further developing its work on the adequacy of incomes, **CRSP** has:

- Sought **better evidence** in partnership with the public and charitable bodies that fund its research – extending core work on the MIS funded by Joseph Rowntree Foundation, by investigating high London living costs (funder: Trust for London); fuel poverty in remote areas of Scotland (Scottish Government); the additional cost of disability (Thomas Pocklington Trust) and pensioners' aspirations for a decent retirement (Pensions and Lifetime Savings Association). These extensions of the core research are underpinned by our openness to interdisciplinarity, for example collaborating with economists both at our own University (SEHS) and externally (e.g. University of Lisbon), and with housing specialists at the University of York.
- Strengthened academic **research outputs**: alongside over 60 reports published since 2014, detailing findings of grant-funded research, CRSP published articles in leading journals establishing MIS and related research in the literature, enabled by strategic allocation of QR funding to give CRSP researchers ring-fenced writing time. Articles include collaborations with international co-authors making international comparisons using the MIS metric.
- **International reach**: Davis and Padley worked with partners in eight countries to apply the MIS method, training researchers to carry out parallel studies, including in Mexico, Singapore, South Africa and Thailand who have newly engaged in this research since 2014. An active international network, led from the Unit, now applies the MIS approach to policy challenges in different parts of the world.

The **young people and families** theme built on its work on the once hidden community of young carers, providing deeper understanding of this large group among policy makers and practitioners in health and social care. Specifically, it:

- Developed **better evidence** through crucial new research to inform policy, commissioned by (i) the Department for Education (DfE), producing the first ever national study of young carers in England, including 'hidden' young carers; and (ii) the Department for Health and Social Care, researching the potential efficacy of a nationwide recognition system for young carers.
- Extended its **international reach**, through first-time studies identifying young carers' needs in Belgium and Tonga, and in schools across Japan. YCRG built networks of researchers and practitioners in these countries, developing screening tools that can transform lives by recognising hitherto hidden needs of young carers, building on its UK evidence of how this can be effective.

ACJ focused on creating powerful evidence in areas where research is needed to support policy change. This involved building a strong team of applied researchers with good links to policy

makers and practitioners working in key areas of growing policy importance, where **better evidence** is needed, notably:

- *Youth Justice*: Case's research in collaboration with policymakers has produced the leading evidence base to support a national 'Child First' strategy for youth justice in England, Wales and Northern Ireland;
- *Victims and survivors*: Smith's research on victim experiences plays a leading role informing policy and practice of the Crown Prosecution Service and other legal agencies. Nicholas's research on preventing repeat burglary victimisation through enhanced security measures (2019 ONS Research Excellence Award winner) known as the 'WIDE' model (Window, Internal, Doors, and External locks) has been adopted by several police forces.;
- *Promoting non-criminal identities*: Kay's research on 'Desistance in transition' and 'Narratives of desistance and recovery' highlights the importance of working relationships between probation officers and offender clients.

As also planned in REF2014, the Centre for Child and Family Research extended its influential work on safeguarding, at Loughborough, before moving to the University of Oxford in 2017. Concentrating our resources on those areas where staff are national and international research leaders, the Unit responded to their departure with strategic investment in new appointments in CRSP and in the emerging ACJ theme.

1.3. Enabling and facilitating impact

Our REF2014 strategy relied, above all, on creating close *partnerships with stakeholders*. This goes well beyond dissemination of research findings. In many cases, these partners underpin the production of the research itself. Moreover, by involving decision makers and interested organisations in the specification of research and related analysis, we have built a community of stakeholders with a deep commitment to following the research through with action. The character of these partnerships, built on trust, and in some cases developed over many years (JRF partnership since 2006) is therefore at the heart of our strategy to produce impact.

We are active and agile in exploring new routes to influence, rather than relying only on planned impact activity under research grants. Social policy is a moving picture, requiring imagination and responsiveness to achieve impact. The School and the Unit give strong support for academics to engage in enterprise (impact), guided by the School's ADE and a proactive Partnership Development Manager from the Research and Enterprise Office (REO), and supported by Enterprise Projects Group (EPG) funding for promising initiatives.

During the assessment period, eight EPG grants totalling £300k have supported policy impact, including dissemination of best practice for children with ADHD, developing models for local policing and victim support, and promoting prisoner rehabilitation through sport in partnership with the Ministry of Justice and Premier League football clubs. CRSP also uses consultancy revenues to fund the staff and travel costs of external engagement. For example, Padley and Valadez visited Mexico to engage with organisations interested in applying MIS there, leading later to a pilot project funded by EPG. Furthermore, the School supports impact activity through workload adjustments, allocating up to 15% of time to work on Impact Case Studies (ICS).

1.3.1 How the selected impact case studies relate to achieving impact

Both case studies submitted are models of the important partnerships described above, of our active and strategic approach to developing these and of the dynamic and imaginative ways in which we work to achieve impact when opportunities arise.

The first case study is based on MIS, whose core funder, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, structures its support around a 'partnership agreement' covering research, ongoing dissemination and impact activity. This enables flexible responses to new opportunities for impact, resourcing the time required and incentivising influencing activities, about which the team report back regularly to the funder. In some cases, this involves long-term networking and evidence-building. For example, since 2012 CRSP had been working with stakeholders in rural

Scotland to quantify additional costs in remote areas, resulting in the Scottish Government asking CRSP to apply its fuel poverty measures to remote areas in 2019. Other cases involve instant responses to impact opportunities. When the Law Society wanted a living-costs benchmark to provide evidence to a public review of legal aid, Hirsch recognised the potential for high impact and prioritised the production of an analytical report within a month of being requested to do so.

For the second case study, the original young carers research has been followed up with central government and research council (ESRC) funding, creating strong, effective partnership working across health, social work/care and education e.g. with 'Lives of Young Carers England'. The case study demonstrates how important these partnerships have been in getting young carers and their families noticed when decisions are made about health and social care policy and welfare provision for children and families in the UK.

1.4 Research and Impact Objectives and Plans for the Next Five Years

Our strategic vision over the next five years is to:

- Contribute high quality and high impact research and thought leadership to influence social policy and criminal justice agendas and global societal challenges, aligning with the University's interdisciplinary Global Challenges in 'Health and Wellbeing' and 'Secure and Resilient Societies';
- Apply the rigorous methodologies that we have developed to new research on how vulnerable and marginalised groups (e.g. low-income households, vulnerable young people, victims/survivors) are faring in the post-Covid 19 world, and on what interventions can best support them;
- Extend and deepen our international research and networking, with the aim of supporting routes to impact in other countries comparable with those we have deployed in the UK;
- Develop our next generation of research leaders – we have 6 excellent early career staff whose development over the next 5 years will extend our global influence in our themes and position LU as a destination of choice for the best early career talent;

Specific examples of how our Unit will pursue this strategy include:

- Using CRSP's work on income adequacy to identify Covid-related changes in social norms and household capabilities, to produce a new picture of where needs are not being met, informing future policy and updating understanding of what comprises a living wage.
- Being ambitious in extending the reach of the MIS into new areas of policy. For example, a Ministry of Justice review of the legal aid means test, due to report in 2021, is likely to give explicit recognition to MIS as a benchmark against which the outcomes of policy can be tested. This offers the opportunity to be proactive in enhancing its status elsewhere in Whitehall, for example as a standard against which affordable housing and adequate pensions can be assessed in policy impact assessments.
- Extending the application of MIS in other countries and starting to use this to develop an alternative to conventional income benchmarks, particularly in Mexico and other Latin American countries where current measures are considered inadequate and there is an appetite for evidence-based standards that challenge existing wage norms.
- Increasing the scope, reach and impact of our ACJ research and expertise: (i) using realist synthesis to evaluate current youth justice interventions through contextualised understandings of their outcomes, (ii) pursuing positive identity change among vulnerable groups through inclusive and 'Child First' methodologies in research and practice, (iii) catalysing evidence-based policy change through official (funded, accredited) research partnerships with stakeholders, and (iv) examining intersecting vulnerabilities in rape trials through an innovative focus on using digital evidence in sexual violence investigations, prosecutions and trial arbitration.

1.5 Open Research Environment

The University has been a pioneer of the 'Open Agenda', actively supporting Repositories for text-based outputs (since 2005) and data (since 2015), working beyond funder (including

REF2021) open access requirements. Our landmark Open Research Position Statement committed to depositing the full-text of 100% of our primary research outputs in our now unified (2019) Research Repository (including on closed access where unavoidable) from 2020. In line with this commitment, we have deposited the full text of 100% of our 2020 journal articles. Last year, our downloads from the Repository totalled 132,000.

1.6 A Culture of Research Integrity

Our research actively promotes a culture of research integrity, which is not only supported by LU's Ethical Policy Framework but also helps shape it. Our constructive contribution to developing research integrity is based on the expertise of staff in participatory, inclusive and reflexive research methods.

For example, Aldridge, working with researchers in a variety of disciplines (health, social work, sociology) has contributed to the development and introduction of the international Charter and Guidelines on Ethical Research Involving Children (<https://childethics.com>), and speaks at events internationally on her Participatory Model for working with vulnerable or marginalised groups. In ACJ, Case's participatory 'Child First' research with practitioners has underpinned new National Standards for youth justice delivery in England and Wales, whilst Smith's collaborations with court officials have influenced national domestic violence and rape legislation and review methodologies. Davis and Padley pioneered deliberative focus groups as a method for privileging the voices of members of the public in setting public standards in relation to minimum household income requirements. This included methods to capture the perspectives of visually impaired and profoundly deaf participants, and the voices of autistic children alongside those of their parents.

2. People

2.1 Staffing and Recruitment Policy

All academic staff are active across research, teaching and enterprise (RTE), including supervising PhD students, generating funding, publishing, and engaging with academic and non-academic partners. We expect and incentivise collegiality from the earliest career stages and, as careers develop, we expect broader leadership contributions within the Unit and School, and across the institution. All Unit academic staff and senior CRSP research staff have open-ended contracts, while other research staff have fixed-term contracts in line with sector norms. Part-time working is welcome.

Since REF2014, the approach to recruiting excellent staff at all career stages has radically changed, driven by the University Strategy. Under 'Excellence100', recruitment shifted to an institution-wide campaign focussed unequivocally on excellence, rather than piecemeal replacement hires. This principle is now embedded in our biannual recruitment rounds, managed centrally but with significant School input, which deliver better international recruitment and improved diversity.

The Unit regularly assesses its succession needs and uses new appointments strategically to ensure critical mass and leadership in the six research themes. To meet our strategic objectives, we prioritised recruitment of staff with expertise, established or emerging, in generating impactful evidence in our thematic areas alongside strong academic outputs. Since 2016, we have made seven open-ended appointments: earlier career research leaders (Smith, Stone), talented ECRs (Kay, Azpitarte, Valadez, Coveney) and a senior lead for ACJ (Case). Seven new recruits in a Unit of 12 underlines the extent of the renewal of the Unit and our commitment to enhancing the application of evidence in policy and practice. In particular, investment in our ACJ research theme (Case, Kay, Smith) emphasises vitality in our strategic ambition to apply our expertise to new research foci. New staff were recruited from across the UK but also internationally (Azpitarte from University of Melbourne) and from our home-grown talent (Valadez was previously a Research Associate in CRSP).

Succession planning in a small but nationally significant centre like CRSP, is vital. Padley and Davis are identified as future centre directors and, after Hirsch became School ADE (2019), they were appointed Associate Directors in order to support their career progression and ensure continuity in CRSP's leadership.

2.2 Staff development strategy

Loughborough's Organisational Development offers a wide spectrum of **training opportunities and support** for staff at all career stages. Courses range from earliest stages (Welcome to Loughborough) through essential training (Information Security, Unconscious Bias) to training for staff becoming senior managers (Coaching conversations for managers, Recruitment and selection).

All academics are expected to obtain **Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy**. For new lecturers, this is integral to their dedicated development programme. More experienced colleagues are supported through our 'Recognition of Experienced Practitioners' scheme which requires preparation of a dossier of evidence to support their application.

To meet our strategic objective to strengthen the quality of research outputs, we introduced internal peer review of draft publications with particular emphasis on output visibility through use of the Research Repository and choice of journal. We incentivised conference attendance and networking through a £750/yr personal allowance and, with so many new and early career staff, we held research-focused away days each semester. These supported the development of new funding strategies, with funding also incentivised by increased personal research allowance for staff with active grants. Competitive seedcorn funding is available with priority given to ECRs. For example, Kay received £950 for a small study on narratives of desistance and recovery, which he used to shape a BA Small Grant application. Staff can apply for **research and impact leave** under University or School Fellowship schemes, which allow focus on exceptional activities for a fixed-term.

Following the principles of the *Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers*, the University provides structured **support to postdoctoral researchers** (CRSP has four, including a senior research associate) for career progression and development, including preparation of applications for funding. Our postdoctoral researchers have a 6-month induction process with monthly mentoring meetings, clear project and developmental objectives, and training.

Under the **New Lecturers' Programme (NLP)**, all new lecturers are guided by experienced and trained academic colleagues from the Unit acting as Advisers. NLP (formerly academic probation) was substantially revised in 2017 and includes the full spectrum of research and impact activity (publication, funding applications, collaboration, public engagement, non-academic partnerships). New lecturers have a reduced workload in teaching and administration (33, 50 and 67% of departmental norms in consecutive years), which enables the establishment of a full academic profile in research, teaching and impact at a manageable pace. Kay's 'Twinning Project' collaboration with the Football Association and the Prison Service shows how ECRs are supported and enabled to develop partnerships. In addition to an extensive training programme leading to FHEA, the New Lecturer meets four times annually with their Adviser. SSH commits to providing a PhD studentship, with support provided by an experienced co-supervisor. Supervision is a requirement to pass the programme, alongside a minimum expectation on research output production, and the submission of at least one substantial grant application.

All members of post-probationary staff in the Unit have an **annual Performance Development Review (PDR)**. This University scheme was totally updated in 2017. A supportive one-to-one discussion between the reviewee and a trained reviewer agrees positive developmental objectives across the full range of activities including CALIBRE-aligned goals for research and impact activity.

New PDR is a transparent way to recognise performance exceeding expectations with additional financial **reward** and allows much fairer identification of candidates for promotion. The new scheme has particularly benefitted our research staff for whom a rigorous developmental discussion was previously sporadic and consideration for reward a rarity.

The University has revised the criteria for **academic promotion** (Senior Lecturer and Reader/Professor), to ensure that the research components align with the University Strategy and CALIBRE. Evidence for cases can be based on research, teaching, enterprise (impact) or any combination to encourage balanced portfolios of work. We judge 'Excellence and International Reputation' and 'Academic Leadership and Influence' rather than traditional metrics based on quantity rather than quality. Hirsch's promotion to professor (2015) with a profile based on excellence in enterprise (impact) exemplifies the value of the new criteria. Complementing revised promotion criteria, the University introduced a process (2015) to redesignate research staff to Research Fellow to recognise research independence, followed by a process to promote to Senior Research Fellow. Padley and Davis have both since benefitted from redesignation and promotion.

2.3 Research students

A growing postgraduate research student (PGR) community is an essential part of our active research culture. Numbers have grown dramatically in our Unit, with 7 completions in the assessment period (63% identifying as female), compared to just 1 in the previous REF cycle, and a current PhD intake of 6 students.

Funding to maintain our PGR population comes through the Midlands Graduate School ESRC Doctoral Training Programme studentships, internal scholarships, international government scholarships and self-funding. **Recruitment** reflects our commitment to equality and diversity. Studentships are advertised via jobs.ac.uk and FindAPhd.com. In addition to a good first degree in a relevant discipline, offers are driven by the quality of research ideas, fit with staff expertise and alignment with our research strategy. The international profile and expertise of our staff group attracts a steady flow of interest. Decisions are taken by two colleagues after a rigorous review and interview.

The Doctoral College runs an induction event for all new starters, complemented by a School induction. Our **monitoring and support** provision includes assigning each PhD student two internal supervisors, with monthly meetings recorded via the University's online Co-Tutor tool. Progress Review Boards meet every 6 months over the course of their PhD studies and progression is decided at annual reviews, based on a report and viva with an independent examiner. PGRs are given their own desk and computer on campus, and an annual research allowances. Further specialist **support** is available from the Mathematics Learning Support Centre, the English Language Support Unit, the Student Advice Centre, the Careers Network, and the Student Wellbeing and Inclusivity Service.

Extensive skills development opportunities include 200 events annually from the Doctoral College, from induction and international orientations to major events such as Annual Conference, Summer Showcase and the Three Minute Thesis competition. Our Unit provides research internships/placements (e.g. with Family Fund through CRSP, Youth Justice Board through ACJ). PGRs are encouraged to publish papers (e.g. Brett 2019 in the Howard League's 'Early Career Academic Network' bulletin) and co-author with supervisors (e.g. Mughal, Aldridge and Monaghan 2019).

Our graduates move into high-quality academic and professional posts, notably Munro becoming a lecturer and subsequently Director of the Institute of Applied Social Research at Bedfordshire University, now a Professor. Others have moved into lecturer posts (e.g. Garius - Nottingham Trent; Quinn – Royal Holloway; Mughal - East London). Beyond academia, Mughal also runs an NGO (Irshad Welfare Trust) helping disadvantaged students in rural Pakistan.

2.4. Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)

Alongside institutional engagement with nationally recognised schemes (Athena Swan, Race Equality Charter, Stonewall Diversity Champion), our commitment to supporting EDI is widely recognised: Aldridge was appointed as an Athena SWAN panellist and advisor to the Fawcett Society (the UK's leading gender equality charity) on equal pay issues; Davis and Padley led (invited by the PVCRC) an evaluation of how Covid-19 impacted staff differentially, with particular attention on protected characteristics and reported as "Same Storm Different Boats". SSH was awarded a Bronze Athena SWAN award (2019). Two Unit members sit on the school EDI Committee (Coveney, Davis). Best EDI practice embedded in University processes has enabled diversity in the balance of our newly recruited staff: four women and three men, including two BAME staff.

Flexible working arrangements range from compressed hours to specific working days/hours, and fractional contracts. Remote working is facilitated through the remote working portal and choice between desktop computer or laptop. One female Senior Lecturer works part-time.

Conference attendance and other necessary travel to support research is facilitated for **staff with caring responsibilities, ill health or disabilities** by a contribution of up to £200/yr towards caring costs from the School Carers Fund.

Unit-level data on **funding applications and awards** analysed by protected characteristic is reviewed quarterly by SREC, which includes the School EDI lead, with any concerns addressed via the School Research Action Plan.

Staff returning from periods of leave are supported by the Head of Unit and receive a reduced teaching load in the first semester back (e.g. Nicholas's supported returns following her two periods of maternity leave). Research students are similarly supported.

Support for staff with protected characteristics is now embedded in many processes. Workload is reviewed annually with respect to protected characteristics by the Unit lead (Case) and Occupational Health make recommendations for staff with disabilities. Individual circumstances, including caring responsibilities, are formally considered in promotion criteria and performance assessments.

Support for the wellbeing of staff and research students has been strengthened with four new School-level roles: Director of Academic Staffing, professional Wellbeing Advisor, dedicated HR partner and Doctoral Research Culture Champion. We have one qualified mental health first aider (Smith) and Loughborough offers support services including Counselling, Occupational Health and an Employee Assistance Programme (also available to PGRs).

2.5 EDI issues in the construction the REF submission

This submission complied fully with Loughborough's REF Code of Practice and supported its commitment to complete equity of treatment of eligible staff with respect to all relevant protected characteristics. All staff involved in preparing the submission attended a dedicated EDI and unconscious bias course. A five-member, mixed-gender team coordinated by the Unit lead (Case) constructed the submission and selected the outputs and ICSs. A consensus-building meeting of this group drew on peer review to make selections based solely on excellence. An extensive Equality Impact Assessment programme analysed the Unit's output selection, attribution of co-authored outputs and characteristics of threshold-spanning outputs by gender, maternity leave, ethnicity and ECR status and found no evidence of bias.

A confidential University-wide procedure allowed staff to report circumstances that may have affected their ability to research productively throughout the REF period through a secure online form. A small group, chaired by the PVCRC, reviewed cases, deciding whether circumstances described merited reduced expectations according to REF guidance. Reasons behind such reductions were not shared but checks were made to ensure adequate support was in place. A

request for reduction was subsequently agreed by Research England for our Unit. We have attributed 48% of our 25 submitted outputs to female staff, which broadly reflects the Unit's overall composition of 56% female.

3. Income, infrastructure and facilities

3.1 Research funding and strategies

Our research strategy seeks to provide better evidence, shaping policy and practice to transform the lives of vulnerable and marginalised groups. Research income is essential, building staff capacity to increase the breadth and scope of projects (e.g. facilitating travel, research assistance, attendance at vital training, networking and enterprise events). Accordingly, staff work closely with the Research and Enterprise Office (REO) and support one another (e.g. senior staff mentors) to attract income across our themes and to develop high-quality outputs and impacts associated with this funding. A mandatory peer review process, integrated into the University's on-line grant application management system, iteratively reviews, responds and re-reviews until ADR approval.

Our team adopts tailored funding approaches for key funders. For instance, our recurrent Joseph Rowntree Foundation funding has grown incrementally from 2014 (£130,000 annually) to 2020 (£170,000 annually), underpinned by a strategy of partnership working and relationship-building to establish common goals through regular research updates sensitive to the funder's own priorities. This approach complements CRSP's unique funding model, using a steady flow of research grants, several recurring, to fund directly a strong team of six research staff on open-ended contracts. We also have a tailored approach to ESRC DTP studentship acquisition, establishing a DTP lead (Azpitarte) to stimulate and coordinate bids through writing collaborations (typically between senior staff and ECRs/probationers) and internal peer review.

Our awards have increased over the REF cycle to £3.5M – a 50% increase in income/FTE to rank in the top quartile of the appropriate HESA cost-centre (131 - social work and social policy). This growth reflects our focused research strategy that concentrates on identified research themes. For example, research on the agenda-setting Minimum Income Standards (MIS) programme has generated over £1.75 million from 15 funders/18 projects, leading to a range of high-quality outputs in high ranking journals (e.g. Journal of Social Policy, Critical Social Policy) and impacts (see MIS Impact Case Study).

The Young People and Families theme attracted income from a variety of international organisations to support young carers and families (e.g. Department for Education, £270k, 2014-2017; Department of Health and Social Care, £120k, 2019-2020) and children in Tonga (European Research Council, €17k, 2015-2018), producing collaborative research evidence that has improved child protection policies for vulnerable populations.

ACJ attracted funding to deliver policy-relevant criminal justice research with vulnerable groups. Funded projects have addressed: 'Child First' youth justice strategies (Leverhulme Trust, £85.5k, 2017-19, Case; Nuffield Foundation £268k, 2019-22, Monaghan); custodial and rehabilitative experiences of prisoners (British Academy/Leverhulme, £10k, 2019-21, Kay); victims' interactions within the Criminal Justice System (Northumbria Police Crime Commissioner £28k, 2019-21, Smith); and vulnerable groups subject to repeat victimisation and burglary (ESRC £190k, 2015, Nicholas). High quality outputs from this funding include forthcoming publications in the European Journal of Criminology (Kay - from the BA project; Case - from Leverhulme) and Sustainability Journal (Case and Monaghan - from Nuffield).

3.2 Organisational infrastructure supporting research and impact

The Unit benefits from a comprehensive organisational infrastructure supporting research and impact for RTE staff, research staff and PGRs. Our research activities are supported at School-level through a research and enterprise administration team (2.5 FTE) focused on REF, PGR recruitment and progression, and support for the ADR; and a HR and finance administration

team (4.0 FTE) to provide support for grant applications and post-award activities. Within our team, there are four central administrators.

School support teams work closely with University HR, finance and the REO, which includes:

- **Research Development Team:** to help researchers identify the most appropriate sources of research funding, build research networks and collaborations, draft/develop funding applications and cost submissions. For example, our staff have worked closely with this team to generate successful applications to Leverhulme and Nuffield (Case) and BA/Leverhulme (Kay). The Team also support CALIBRE's Beacons and Global Challenges.
- **Partnership Development Team:** to support REF impact case studies, assist development of non-academic networks, broker and manage external relationships, scope partner requirements and identify the appropriate partner mechanisms. This team's support has been crucial in negotiating a distinctive collaboration agreement model governing CRSP's relationship with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

3.3 Operational and scholarly infrastructure supporting research and impact

Our annual library allocation of £36k ensures that research staff and PGRs can purchase published research materials such as books, journals and electronic resources (also available to students), complementing our research and research-informed teaching.

Research and impact activity is supported by the 'Institute of Advanced Studies' (IAS), an interdisciplinary research entity promoting and funding collaboration between Loughborough staff (and PGRs) and influential scholars from around the world. Collaborative activities include international fellowships, symposia, conferences, webinars and informal gatherings. PGRs are further supported by the LU 'Graduate House', which provides workspace, a training suite and training courses.

4. Collaboration and contribution to the research base, economy and society

Collaboration with partners and selection of research agendas that contribute to the economy and society are central to our applied research strategy. As set out in Section 1, research and promoting social impact interlock closely rather than being two separate activities.

This strategy is realised through:

- **Links with individual and organisational stakeholders:** including through funding relationships.
- **Public engagement:** ranging from media work to staff giving evidence at parliamentary committees.
- **Academic engagement:** including delivering conference keynotes and contributing to leading journals to push forward new ideas and concepts related to social policy.
- **International thought leadership:** developed by applying new techniques and disseminating knowledge beyond the UK, through international networks.

This section describes how an environment is created in which these activities thrive.

4.1. Research collaborations, networks and partnerships

4.1.1. Collaboration with academic partners

Several elements of our research infrastructure (e.g. REO, internal funding, mentoring) support our network-building activities and strategic objectives. The effectiveness of this support is illustrated especially by the growth in our **interdisciplinary** and **international networks and collaborations**.

Nationally, we collaborate to build **interdisciplinary applied research evidence**, supported by external funding. For example, Case is PI on a Nuffield-funded project examining effective responses to criminogenic influences on children's lives (2019-22) – a collaboration with

criminology, information specialist and social research colleagues at Birmingham and Leeds. Across ACJ, active collaboration extends our international reach in our specialist areas of heritage crime (Nicholas with Professor Thomas, Helsinki University) and victimisation (Smith with Professor Burman, Glasgow University; Dr Skinner, Bath University; Professor Doak, Nottingham Trent University; Dr Illiadis, Deakin University, Australia).

International partnerships underpin interdisciplinary research activities. Azpitarte (economics/social policy) conducts research on affordable retrofit housing funded by the Australian Research Council, conducted with an international group of architects, geographers and economists at Australian (Melbourne, RMIT) and Spanish (Vigo) universities. Nicholas collaborates with archaeologists (e.g. Dr Suzie Thomas, University of Helsinki) to progress her research on heritage crime, Coveney collaborates with medical sociologists and health professionals internationally from the UK Centre for Reproduction Research (Professors Hudson and Culley, Dr Herbrand), the Belgium Bioethics Institute Ghent (Professors Pennings and Provoost) and the Spanish Consejo Superior Investigaciones Científicas (Drs Pavone and Funes) on an ESRC project 'Egg Donation in the UK, Belgium and Spain: an Interdisciplinary Study'.

CRSP (led by Padley and Davis) has rolled-out findings from its MIS research through extensive knowledge exchange activities with **international collaborators**, supporting the application of this research method in France, Ireland, Japan, Mexico, Portugal, Singapore, South Africa and Thailand. Since 2018, an international network holding biennial symposia has been developing this approach, now informing and shaping policy and practice across the globe. This network includes leading academics in the field, including Professors Wright (University of South Africa), Noble (University of Oxford), Pereirinha (University of Lisbon), Abe (Tokyo Metropolitan University) and a team from the National University of Singapore.

4.1.2. Collaboration with non-academic research users and beneficiaries

Our unique relationships with partners help us leverage social impact and identify where research can support evidence-based policy. The key to our strategy of engaging with non-academic research users lies in forging relationships with stakeholders who work closely with us over multiple projects because we are the leaders in our fields, having developed unrivalled knowledge and expertise in particular research areas, combined with a strong record of external engagement.

Our partnerships with **non-governmental stakeholders** (e.g. charitable bodies, third sector organisations) often build on prior links with stakeholders to whom research findings are disseminated. For example, the YCRG works regularly with Carers' Trust alongside other bodies, such as the Children's Society on their national Making A Step Change (MASC) programme, a DfE-funded project aimed at supporting the effective implementation of statutory duties. CRSP has a unique ongoing partnership with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation social change organisation, collaborating to research and apply the Minimum Income Standard. This relationship is distinctive by (i) being organized through a partnership agreement rather than a project agreement and (ii) having resources allocated for analysis, stakeholder engagement and dissemination, not just research. This gives space for researchers to follow through findings to support their application wherever opportunities arise, allowing secondary partnerships, for example with the Living Wage Foundation.

Our outward-facing social policy work is further enhanced through **collaborations with government and public agencies**, including in the Departments for Education and Health and Social Care (YCRG - surveying young carers); the Scottish Government (CRSP – researching additional cost of living in remote rural Scotland, supporting its new fuel poverty indicator); and the Youth Justice Board (ACJ - to produce the evidence-base for their 'Child First' national strategic objective).

Distinctively, these examples are a product not of competitive bidding to fulfil pre-defined research needs, but of bespoke funded opportunities deploying our key expertise, working with funding partners to define and address knowledge gaps, aligned with our strategic priorities. For example, evidence collated on young carers in the UK by the YCRG was used by the Department for Education to set the parameters for their Invitation to Tender for the Lives of Young Carers in England research. From 2015-16, working closely with local authorities to help them meet their duties under the Care Act 2014, the YCRG promoted and developed assessment tools and support services for young carers and their families. These collaborations are strengthened by one-to-one contacts with senior officials in those bodies – in 2015, Aldridge worked with council leaders, project staff and the MP in Norfolk to support and promote the County Council's young carers strategy.

In ACJ, Kay has collaborated (since 2019) with the 'Twinning Project' (a charity that twins Premier League and English Football League clubs with local prisons) and Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) to deliver a football-based offender rehabilitation and reintegration programme in prisons through interdisciplinary collaboration with LU Sports Science, resulting in a bespoke knowledge exchange conference at Loughborough in 2019.

CRSP has enriched international contacts not just with academics, but also with users of MIS, forming alliances with NGOs and policy makers in Thailand, South Africa and Mexico, and in the public sector with the Australian Fair Work Commission. These alliances have been strengthened by in-person visits by Padley and Davis supporting knowledge transfer and by symposia, organised by Padley, bringing together the network, including at Loughborough's London campus.

4.1.3. Wider contributions to the economy and society

Our wider contributions delivering economic and social benefits are illustrated in two key areas:

Measurement advances in poverty and low income: Building on MIS research, we have published ground-breaking, agenda-setting articles in international journals showing how monitoring of low income can draw more credibly on empirical evidence rather than abstract indicators such as relative income. Work by Hirsch, Padley and Davis suggests how a 'low income gap' can better articulate the aspirations of societies to achieve decent living standards for citizens, making the discipline more relevant to current policy concerns. Reflecting this, the UK's Social Metrics Commission in the UK draws heavily on evidence from MIS. While MIS is best known for providing evidence for the Living Wage, increasing pay for over 250,000 workers of over 7,000 employers, this benchmark of a decent income is applied more widely across policy and practice, as the first evidence-based metric for measuring sufficiency of income to survive *and* participate in society. It is used in the legal system, by charities, by public bodies helping low income families improve home energy efficiency and by some social housing bodies in setting rents. Its status as a public standard grows through precedent: the very fact of its widespread use adds to its authority. Internationally, MIS is being applied to influence debates on various issues of particular concern. For example, in Singapore, research focused on people near or beyond retirement reflects issues for an ageing population, whilst the research in Thailand examined the needs of three-generation rural families with a young child, informing government policy thinking about Child Support Grant payments.

Evolving applied criminal justice policy and practice: Our high impact research and scholarship have driven thought leadership and progressive policy and practice, contributing to new paradigms in applied criminal justice. Smith's research on rape trials is transforming victims' experiences in court through a right to representation being introduced in the Victims' Bill, directly informed by this evidence. Kay's Twinning Project research collaboration is transforming approaches to and the experiences of prisoners in custody through sporting opportunities, with plans for a research centre set to further develop this trajectory.

4.1.4 Engaging with diverse communities and publics

Our research objectives cohere around collaboration with **diverse research users and beneficiaries**. Our ACJ work has collaborated with vulnerable and marginalised groups such as prisoners, young offenders, young carers, repeat victims of burglary and rape victims. On the last of these, Smith's victim experiences research has helped give voice to this often unheard group, and has been cited in third sector reviews (e.g. [Shadow Rape Review](#)). The End Violence Against Women (EVAW) Coalition's Rape Justice Fail campaign cited Smith's observational research as enabling 'clearly refined messages....critical to campaigning' and central to a major Guardian newspaper campaign (Sept/Oct 2018 – present), reaching millions of readers on- and off-line. Similarly, the YCRG works closely with another often-invisible group, young carers, and helps give them voice. The MIS work is designed to enable the views of members of the public to be heard, and some of its studies have focused particularly on listening to what vulnerable groups such as visually impaired and profoundly deaf adults, and autistic children with their parents, consider to be their essential needs.

The **socially transformative** role of our research and impact is supported by strong public visibility. For example, Coveney produced a series of short films, raising awareness of women's experiences, from her egg donation research. Blogging for high-profile sites includes over 20 articles for The Conversation since 2015. Case has attracted over 45,000 reads in four blogs on criminal justice topics, with 50,000 views of his TEDx talk on 'Solving the Youth Crime Problem'. Hirsch, Davis and Padley make regular appearances on the radio, such as Radio 4's Moneybox, You and Yours and More or Less, as well as on BBC and Sky News. Aldridge is a regular contributor to Carers World Radio.

4.2. Contribution to the sustainability of the discipline

We make targeted contributions to areas of our discipline where we operate as thought leaders:

- **Progressing critical social policy debates:** Our key publications in leading social policy journals on care/caring and domestic violence/abuse highlighted the gendered dimensions of both unpaid care and domestic violence and abuse victimisation.
- **Developing rural criminology:** Nicholas is at the forefront of this evolving global agenda as a founder of the 'International Society for Rural Crime', an editor of 'Rurality, Crime and Society' Journal and an honorary researcher at University of New England, Australia. These linked initiatives facilitate worldwide participation in exploring rural crime (society membership includes the UK, North America, South Africa, Slovenia) through biannual AGMs, annual conference, mentoring schemes and a bespoke award for ECRs.
- **Learned contributions:** staff sustain their academic discipline through membership of learned societies and professional bodies and thought leadership in research and research-led teaching. Case's founder membership of the BSC Learning and Teaching Network (current membership over 100 from an original 3) underpins and informed the QAA subject benchmark statement for undergraduate criminology programmes. Coveney co-convenes the BSA Medical Sociology Study Group, one of the largest and most active BSA groups whose annual conference attracts over 350 international attendees.

4.3. Indicators of wider influence

During this REF cycle, our influence beyond the academy has grown exponentially inter/nationally. Our researchers **collaborate with stakeholder beneficiaries** as expert consultants in policy and practice development processes, providing thought leadership and empirical evidence to improve the lives of vulnerable and marginalised groups. Case has provided expert policy guidance to state governments in England (e.g. Youth Justice Board Academic Advisory Network), Wales (Youth Justice Advisory Panel), Scotland (Centre for Youth and Criminal Justice), Northern Ireland (Youth Justice Agency) and Ireland (Youth Justice Service) to influence the shape, content and implementation of child-friendly national strategies of youth justice. Additionally, Case is a steering group member/trustee for several applied youth justice campaigning organisations (e.g. Standing Committee for Youth Justice), collaborating with third sector organisations to develop evidence-based, child-friendly practice with children in conflict with the law.

One indicator of our recognition is frequent approaches by stakeholders to request new research. The Pensions and Lifetime Savings Association approached Padley at CRSP to research retirement income standards, and high-profile benchmarks resulted from the ensuing research. After Hirsch gave evidence on high rural costs to the Scottish Parliament reviewing legislation introducing a new fuel poverty measure, the Scottish Government approached CRSP to commission the measurement work that resulted. International esteem is underlined by the teams in eight countries who have approached CRSP with an interest in its MIS work, resulting in training in the MIS method in those countries, delivered by Davis and Padley.

External engagement to deliver thought leadership and inform and shape policy and practice is demonstrated through **appointment to esteemed national institutes, committees and networks**. Aldridge was appointed a National Institute for Health and Care Excellence Fellow (2015-2018) and elected to the Academy of Social Sciences in 2018. Hirsch has been a member of various commissions, including two separate groups convened by Shadow Cabinet members to develop future benefits policy and the Extra Costs Commission convened by the charity Scope to develop a strategy for tackling the cost of disability. Our ECRs have also been appointed to such bodies, demonstrating that the potential of our next generation is already evident. Kay sits on the 'Parliamentary Knowledge Exchange Unit' supporting the exchange of information and expertise between researchers and UK Parliament. Smith leads the BSC 'Victims' Network', where her role includes drafting responses to government consultations and planning multi-disciplinary, collaborative events. She is one of only two academics on the 'Victims Commissioner Advisory Board' and sits on the 'End Violence Against Women Coalition' strategic group.

In line with our strategic intention, over the current REF period, to be more prominent in academic communities, staff are newly involved in **journal editorship**, both ongoing (e.g. Nicholas – Rurality, Crime and Society) and as guest editors of special editions (e.g. Coveney - Drugs: Education, Prevention and Policy 2018; Aldridge - Social Inclusion 2018; Case, Youth Justice, International Journal of Educational Development – both 2020, Sustainability 2021;).

Similarly, staff have also delivered over 40 **keynote presentations** to national and international conferences, engaging with academic communities on a completely different scale compared to our 2014 submission and indicative of the growing international influence of our research. For example, Hirsch gave the keynote to the 'Multi-disciplinary research conference on food and poverty' (Kings College London 2018), whilst Padley gave invited lectures to Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey (2015), Duke-National University of Singapore (2017, with Davis) and the University of Santiago (2019, with Davis).

These indicators of influence show the esteem in which we are now held in both academic and user communities, not just for taking forward ideas and extending knowledge, but in particular for bringing this to bear on the real-life challenges faced by those engaged in social policy and criminal justice.