

Institution: Newcastle University
Unit of Assessment: UoA20 – Social Work and Social Policy
<p>1. Unit context and structure, research and impact strategy</p> <p>Social policy research at Newcastle University is motivated by a desire to understand and respond to the ways in which policies, regulatory frameworks, professional practices, and human behaviours influence the equitable distribution of health and welfare across the life course.</p> <p>1.1 Overview: context and structure</p> <p>This is the first REF submission that Newcastle University (NU) has made to the Social Work and Social Policy Unit of Assessment (UoA20), which reflects several strategic developments within the University, in particular an institutional commitment to social justice as a Civic University anchored within the North East of England.</p> <p>The submission involves an ambitious and impactful programme of interdisciplinary research activity relating to the two priority areas of health policy and ageing within the broad field of social policy, with further strengths emerging. Our focus on social policy aligns with NU's commitment to conducting research that contributes to meeting the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, as well as promoting Social Justice principles across its research and education activities.</p> <p>Since REF2014, we have undertaken major organisational change, completed only recently, that was designed specifically to support and catalyse the University's research activity in such interdisciplinary fields as social policy. Social policy research is carried out within the NU Faculty of Medical Sciences (FMS) Population Health Sciences Institute (NUPHSI), which was formed in November 2019 during an extensive restructure, aimed at strengthening the Faculty's vibrant, interdisciplinary research activity. Before the restructure, the research that features in this submission was conducted within the Institute of Health and Society (IHS). Our research has always extended beyond FMS. It is marked by productive collaborations with colleagues in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (HaSS), for example through our role in the pan-University Institute for Social Science. In the Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering (SAGe), our work is informed by and helps to shape the activities of Open Lab, an interaction design research group. The FMS commitment to supporting social policy research has led to seven new appointments since 2016 and one internal promotion. These appointments ensure that we can build on current strengths to increase the unit's critical mass in the years ahead.</p> <p>Our interdisciplinary research and impact activities in social policy seek to understand social problems and their impacts at local, regional, national and international level. We have a strong commitment to developing evidence in partnership with targeted stakeholders, who can influence and change governance and policy-making processes and improve professional practice in relation to our areas of focus. This involves active participation in public debates aimed at challenging both the structures associated with inequalities and the marginalisation of particular social groups and communities. Our commitment to these issues is reflected in the two Impact Case Studies (ICS) associated with our submission (<i>Creating national debate and informing international policy to address geographical and socio-economic inequalities in health</i> and <i>Democratizing water politics, policy, and management to tackle social inequality and injustice</i>). It is also exemplified in major contributions to social policy debate, such as work on</p>

the impact of the “Bedroom Tax”. Research findings from this study received national [media coverage](#) and were used as evidence in a House of Lords [debate](#) on the measure’s health impacts.

As a relatively small submission comprising eight members of staff (7.7FTE), our research is necessarily focused on two related and over-lapping themes – **health policy** and **ageing**. These themes represent significant existing research strengths in IHS/NUPHSI as well as a strategic commitment to build NU’s capacity to undertake applied, policy-relevant research of outstanding quality that has the potential to be impactful at local, national, and global level. Overall, our aim is to develop a unique and internationally distinctive focus orientated towards promoting public good. Key achievements towards accomplishing this aim across the REF2021 period include: the appointment of seven new colleagues to lead on developing strategies to grow the capacity, sustainability, and vitality of the unit; research income of £1.36M; publication of ~120 research outputs; and 14 PGR completions.

1.2 Strategy and achievements

Our overarching goal is to undertake world-class research on major social issues and to translate our findings into changing policy and practice as a means of improving health and wellbeing and reducing inequalities. We achieve this through our active engagement with local, national, and international partners as well as the global academic community.

The health policy and ageing research themes are represented by the 19 outputs submitted under UoA20, the two accompanying ICS, our people, our postgraduate research students, and the broad range of stakeholders we work with.

Research in **health policy** focuses on both traditional themes in social policy, such as the interdisciplinary area of health inequalities, and on new and emerging questions relating to such themes as regulatory science, global health, and global health governance. A hallmark of our research is its engagement with highly topical policy areas, including social prescribing, health-care privatisation, and social security reforms. Key achievements include contributing evidence to public debates on politically sensitive topics, including work on health inequalities (see ICS); the merits of enshrining economic and social rights into UK law as [human rights](#); [sports injuries](#); the management of the COVID-19 [pandemic](#); and the health and social impacts of such policy measures as the [Bedroom Tax](#), [social prescribing](#) and [Universal Credit](#).

Our submission to UoA20 also focuses on inequalities relating to **ageing** and later life, social exclusion of older people, age-friendly cities and communities, and intergenerational relations. Key achievements include [work on inequalities in later life](#) that has helped to shape the Centre for Ageing Better’s strategic planning; outputs that have contributed new knowledge to important topics around multidimensional forms of [social exclusion](#); and notable grant successes. Our work is a key component of the multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research on ageing that is recognised as a major strength of NU as a whole. Ageing research features strongly in submissions to other UoAs in REF2021 (e.g. UoA1, UoA2, UoA13 and UoA21) and has led to NU being chosen to host the National Innovation Centre for Ageing (NIC-A). NIC-A represents a £40M investment by the UK Government’s Department for Business, Enterprise and Industrial Strategy (via a grant administered by the Medical Research Council) and NU, aimed at facilitating the commercialisation of key products, services and technologies that help people live better, longer lives. NIC-A also includes VOICE (Valuing our Intellectual Capital and Experience) – a national and international network of citizens who contribute their insights, experience, ideas and vision to identify unmet needs and opportunities, to drive innovation for ageing and improve

health research. UoA20 colleagues have informed NIC-A's strategic focus on inequalities and have partnered with NIC-A on funding applications, including to UKRI's Strength in Places Fund and its Healthy Ageing, Social, Behavioural and Design Research Programme (as part of the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund's Healthy Ageing Challenge).

Social policy research has benefited considerably from NU's strategic support. The University's Research Strategy was launched in 2018 after extensive consultation (articulated in REF5a). This Strategy seeks to nurture and invest in interdisciplinary, conceptually rich research and innovation activity that is recognised as excellent and internationally leading, with the potential to shape policy and practice in ways that promote health and wellbeing. Reflecting this strategic focus, much of the activity reported here occurs within two recently established Newcastle University Centres of Research Excellence (NUCoREs, REF5a 2.2.1). NUCoREs are tasked with cutting across NU's three faculties to promote interdisciplinary research activity of the highest quality and scientific rigour. Staff returned to UoA20 play a major role in leading these developments, directing or co-directing two NUCoREs: **Regulatory Science** and **Ageing and Inequalities** (Section 3.2). We also play a leading role in cross-faculty initiatives, bringing benefits not only to the unit but also the wider university. For example, we lead the **Cities** NUCoRE's work on inequality and inclusion and the Health, Wellbeing and Society pathway of the ESRC-funded Northern Ireland and North East Doctoral Training Partnership (NINE DTP) (Section 2.2).

Researchers are engaged in a broad range of cross-disciplinary and collaborative research activity. Of our returned publications, 26% have authors from other submitting UoAs at NU, 32% are co-authored by colleagues from NU; 21% involve national and 42% international co-authorship. We have generated £1.36M in external grant income (£176K per head), enabling our research to contribute evidence and insights that inform public debates in health policy and ageing. Our collaborative approach is exemplified by the two ICS that accompany this submission. Colleagues returned to UoA20 are recognised as national and international leaders in their fields of expertise, and have given 17 keynote addresses, been involved in numerous advisory panels, and held major roles in professional subject associations and learned societies, thus contributing to improving the health and wellbeing of our population through social policy.

Social policy colleagues have benefited from a range of NU schemes that support research and engagement activities. These can be accessed by both researchers and PhD students (PGRs) to shape new ideas and ensure that research reaches a wider audience. For example, with funding of £16,979 from NU's Institutes for Ageing and for Social Renewal, we collaborated on a project that explored solidarity between generations within the context of austerity and Brexit (2017-19). Findings were presented at conferences and workshops, and produced a paper submitted to *Ageing & Society*. A grant of £15,000 awarded jointly from NU's Institute for Ageing, Social Renewal and Institute for Sustainability helped us to deepen our links with the [International Longevity Centre-UK](#), the UK's leading think tank on ageing, with whom we had previously collaborated on a major review of inequalities in later life. Two policy-facing events held in central London ensured that research findings could be accessed by an audience of engaged policy stakeholders.

1.2.1 Health Policy Research Achievements

Our research in health policy has focused on issues around quality and equality in health policy and how politics influences that policy. These concerns are augmented with invited commentaries in mainstream medical journals to influence medical decisions directly. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, *Pollock* has been instrumental in shaping

public policy debates, both as a member of [Independent SAGE](#), co-authoring an influential I-SAGE [report](#) on inequality, and as a source of critique of Government [test and trace policy](#). Individual recognition of achievements includes *Schrecker's* Faculty of Public Health Service Award (2019), his role as Visiting Professor in the Public Health Research Institute and Department of Social and Preventive Medicine at the University of Montreal (2018), and as editor of the *Journal of Public Health* (2014-19). *Castelli* was acknowledged by Emerald Publishing Group with a Highly Commended Article in the 2019 Emerald Literati Awards. *Pollock* became Honorary President of the Socialist Health Association pressure group (2017).

1.2.2 Ageing Research Achievements

Our ageing research focuses on the opportunities and challenges associated with demographic change. A key achievement has been participation in the European Co-operation in Science and Technology (COST) Action "Reducing Old-Age Social Exclusion: Collaborations in Research and Policy" ([ROSEnet](#)), a network involving over 180 researchers from 41 countries in Europe and other world regions (2015-20). With *Scharf* as Vice-Chair and *Moffatt* as a Management Committee member, ROSEnet has generated new knowledge on social exclusion in later life through multiple publications and related funding applications (including to the Joint Programming Initiative "More Years, Better Lives"). ROSEnet training schools in Helsinki, Ljubljana and Swansea have supported the development of PGRs from NU. A [scoping review](#) of research on social exclusion in later life, co-authored with colleagues from Ireland and Canada, has been accessed over 11,000 times and cited over 170 times in Google Scholar. *Scharf* is President of the British Society of Gerontology (2019-22), holds visiting Professorships at Keele University (2013 to date) and NUI Galway (2016 to date), and co-edits the *Ageing in a Global Context* book series (Policy Press, 2013 to date).

1.3 Open Access and Research Integrity

Wide dissemination of both research outputs and data is paramount to our aim of evidence-informed policy. Colleagues are supported by Research Data Managers to develop data management plans to ensure timely data sharing, including making use of the NU [Research Data Repository](#). The University's [e-Prints repository](#) ensures research outputs are made Green Open Access, with RCUK/UKRI and COAF funds augmented by Faculty and NUPHSI to increase Gold Open Access.

NU is a signatory of the Concordat for Research Integrity (REF5a 2.3.2), with research activities in UoA20 emphasising the importance of maintaining and deepening public trust in science, especially within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. We benefit from NU's membership of the UK Reproducibility Network; we maintain policies and procedures compliant with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity; we subscribe to UKRIO; and we are members of the Russell Group's Research Integrity Forum. The methodological expertise in NUPHSI, combined with the critical input into study design and statistical rigour provided by the NIHR Research Design Service NENC, contributes to overall research reproducibility and integrity. Our work is aligned to themes of the [Responsible Research and Innovation](#) approach relating to public engagement, open access, gender, ethics, and science education.

1.4 Future strategic aims and goals for research and impact

As an emerging area of research strength at NU, our future strategy for 2021-2026 is to sustain and develop an environment that nurtures research of the highest quality, which has impacts ranging from local to global, and which shapes public and scientific debates relating to the core social policy themes of health policy and ageing.

Objective	Key actions (2021-2026)
Pursue research and increase research capacity in our areas of social policy focus.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Increase our involvement and successes in interdisciplinary collaborative funding calls in the UK and internationally. 2) Appointment of NUAcTs (REF5a 3.2.4) to increase our future research leader capacity and to help progress our contribution to the fields of health policy and ageing. 3) Increase the number of PGRs and early career researchers to build capacity and sustainability in social policy research and increase external grant income. 4) Secure appointment of and ensure personal development of Professional Services staff to build capacity.
Sustain and build on our strong partnerships with policy stakeholders and with community, cultural, public, and private sector organisations at local, regional, national, and international level to ensure that our research continues to be co-designed, co-produced, and of maximum benefit to diverse stakeholders.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Build on, diversify, and deepen our external partnerships directed towards policy and practice. 2) Actively seek out opportunities for secondments with policy partners to ensure that public policy concerns are embedded in our research priorities. 3) Ensure researchers at all career stages are supported and encouraged to embed impact and engagement into all stages of the research lifecycle, including through the Policy, Skills, Enterprise and Global Challenges Academies (see REF5a 2.2.5).
Enhance our internal and external collaborations to support impact development and activity.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Map the current impact activities of colleagues to identify synergies and themes to pursue and support. 2) Create events, opportunities, and dialogue with current and future impact collaborators to facilitate joint working.
Mirror the research values and priorities articulated in the University's Research Strategy 2018.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Colleagues will continue to be involved in leading NUCoRE developments relating to our expertise in health inequalities, social policy innovations, and inequalities and ageing. 2) Draw exceptional early career talent into the subject area via the NUAcT Scheme (REF5a 3.2.4) and ESRC New Investigator Awards.
Health policy research	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Strengthen collaborations with national and international stakeholders to inform debate on major health policy issues. 2) Build the research evidence base to influence health and social policy development in different UK nations.
Ageing research	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Become recognised as national leaders in research on ageing and inequalities. 2) Collaborate with NIC-A and VOICE to ensure that the theme of unequal ageing is prioritised in work on ageing and innovation.

2. People

2.1 People profile

Our unit comprises eight colleagues (7.7FTE) all of whom are on permanent contracts. Reflecting the University's commitment to recruiting staff to build our social policy profile, the staff group includes recognised leaders in the fields of health policy and ageing. Four colleagues are Professors, two are senior lecturers, one is a lecturer, and one a Principal Research Associate. Two of the eight submitted staff (25%) are female, both holding professorships.

During the REF2021 period, two colleagues (*Lingam* and *Rapley*) left the unit to take up senior positions at other institutions. *Rapley* was Senior Lecturer in Medical Sociology (until 2017) and moved to become Professor of Applied Health Care Research, Northumbria University. *Lingam* has progressed from Clinical Senior Lecturer in Epidemiology and Child Health at NU (until 2018) to take up the role of Professor in Paediatric Population Health, University of New South Wales, Australia. Both leavers have retained honorary roles at NU, ensuring that the unit, its PGRs, and early career researchers can continue to benefit from their mentorship and networks.

2.2 Staffing strategy and staff development

Newcastle University's strategic plan aims to provide a research environment that is attractive to new researchers, supports and nurtures researchers at all career stages, creates leaders for the future, and provides strong and effective mentorship. NU's strategic commitment to developing its strengths in social policy, especially in relation to health policy and ageing, is evident in key appointments during the REF2021 period and in investments that support the career development of existing staff.

Seven of the eight members of staff submitted to UoA20 have been appointed since 2014. Three colleagues (*Schrecker*, *Castelli*, *Booth*) joined the University as part of a strategic transfer of the School of Medicine, Pharmacy and Health from Durham University in 2017 (on Transfer of Undertakings [Protection of Employment] terms), with four further external appointments (*Millard*, *Pollock*, *Roderick*, *Scharf*). The staff transferred from Durham University, as well as the new appointments, have substantially strengthened our focus in the areas of **health policy** and **ageing**, with three colleagues having been appointed to professorships since 2016 (*Scharf*, *Pollock*, *Schrecker*). Reflecting the University's commitment to investing in staff based on their performance in research, teaching and citizenship activities, the single member of staff who has been employed by NU for the entire REF2021 period (*Moffatt*) was promoted from Senior Lecturer to Reader (2017) and subsequently to Professor (2020). This promotion acknowledges major achievements in terms of the conduct of impactful research in social policy at the intersection of health policy and ageing. It also reflects the value of a research environment that provides access to peer support and mentorship.

Staff submitted to UoA20 have been recruited to a range of posts over the REF2021 period. Staff recruitment processes concentrate on matching our research priorities, responding to gaps in teaching expertise where appropriate, and ensuring they are EDI appropriate. For all posts, applicants are asked to address how their work would support the FMS areas of research expertise within its Institutes, research themes, and cross-faculty NUCoREs, as well as University-wide areas of research focus. Staff recruited to support NU's investment in social policy research play a key role in promoting interdisciplinary ways of working. Recruitment materials consequently emphasise the importance of collaborations with researchers in HaSS and SAgE. Senior posts in particular have a strong focus on capacity for income generation and research leadership skills. Application information stresses our commitment to EDI and career

progression, for example by use of non-biased language in recruitment information and an emphasis on opportunities to work flexibly. Recruitment committees are always gender- and career-balanced, with all committee members being required to undergo diversity and unconscious bias training before being eligible to join recruitment panels. Shortlisted candidates for chairs provide a presentation to all colleagues, including PGRs, and colleagues' feedback is incorporated into the selection panel's considerations. Newly appointed staff benefit from a tailored induction process and have access to a range of career development supports, including annual progress reviews, training programmes, promotion support, a returners' programme, and flexible retirement opportunities.

With recognised research leaders in place, and support and mentorship provided to scholars at earlier stages of their professional development, we anticipate a growth in NU's position as a site for applied research in social policy. This will occur through the targeted recruitment of NUAcTs linked to the two NUCoREs that act as a central focus for our work (NUCoRE for Regulatory Science and NUCoRE for Ageing and Inequalities). In addition to these core University posts, we plan strategic grant applications to sustain the NUCoREs' work, and to recruit early career researchers who can build our capacity to undertake research and innovation activities in our areas of social policy strength.

Submitted staff are actively involved in supervision of 18 PGRs working in the fields of health policy and ageing. Supervision teams typically involve two or three research-active staff, who have substantive and methodological skills relevant to the programme of research being pursued by PGRs. NU has well-established procedures aimed at supporting the training and development of research supervisors, with designated lead supervisors required to co-supervise at least one PGR to completion before being eligible to take on this role.

Reflecting our focus on interdisciplinarity, submitted staff are also involved in co-supervision of PGRs across the wider University. For example, *Scharf* co-supervises an EPSRC-funded student, based in the School of Computing, whose work is on digital participation of older people; an ESRC-funded student, based in Geography, Politics and Sociology, whose work addresses informal care of persons with dementia in rural areas; and an ESRC-funded student, based in NUPHSI, whose work is on hospital discharge of persons with dementia. We are also involved in co-supervising students across UK universities. For example, *Moffatt* co-supervises with colleagues at Northumbria University a PhD student funded by the NIHR School for Public Health Research whose work explores the impact of Universal Credit on claimants and service providers in a North East local authority.

Staff are also involved in supporting PGRs across the University via progression panel membership and other institutional roles. *Scharf* is NU institutional lead for the Health, Wellbeing and Society pathway of NINE DTP, a role previously held by *Moffatt*. Funded by ESRC, with support from the Department for the Economy Northern Ireland, NINE DTP is a collaboration between seven HEIs across Northern Ireland and the North East of England. It seeks to recruit outstanding students into a programme of doctoral studies, offering multiple opportunities to develop core research skills in a highly supportive research and training environment.

2.3 Research students

Since most staff returned to UoA20 joined NU during the REF2021 period, the number of PGR students associated with this submission is relatively small. However, PGR numbers are growing quickly and there have been notable successes in PGR recruitment and PhD awards. Currently,

18 PGRs are registered and being supervised or co-supervised by staff returned to UoA20. This includes 16 full-time and 2 part-time, 10 home and 8 international students. Over the course of the assessment period, 14 PhDs have been awarded at the intersection of health policy and ageing. PGR students benefit from supervisory teams that have the necessary subject area expertise and methodological skills to support what are often interdisciplinary projects, and which therefore extend beyond UoA20. Most students are funded from individual external studentships, including **UKRI/NIHR** and **Wellcome Trust studentships**, and seven were funded through the **ESRC NINE DTP** and its predecessor, the North East Doctoral Training Centre. We also co-supervise two students within the **EPSRC Digital Civics CDT** located in the School of Computing.

Within the context of research themes and NUCoREs, PGRs are contributing to building and sustaining an active research culture. Levels of student satisfaction are comparable to or higher than those across the whole sector, according to successive Postgraduate Research Experience Surveys (PRES) (REF5a 3.2.2), with an upward trajectory. Levels of agreement among IHS/NUPHSI students with the statement “Overall, I am satisfied with the experience of my research degree” were 80% in 2015, 87% in 2017 and 91% in 2019.

Studentships are advertised widely and awarded in open competition. Candidates are shortlisted against explicit criteria (including academic achievement), with shortlisted individuals being interviewed by a panel of at least two selectors. Speculative applications from candidates meeting academic entry criteria are reviewed by the PGR lead to identify potential supervisors whose research interests match the candidate’s. Where appropriate, including applications submitted through the NINE DTP scheme, we seek to diversify our PGR pool through support for under-represented groups.

Formal supervisory meetings (recorded on the E-Portfolio system) take place at least monthly. Annual Progress Review meetings with two other colleagues from related areas offer independent advice to PGRs. The FMS Graduate School ensures that issues, such as requests for Interruption of Studies, changes in supervision, and personal extenuating circumstances, are dealt with sympathetically and equitably. A dedicated role of Postgraduate Student Coordinator, held by a senior colleague in NUPHSI, ensures a vibrant PGR research community and supports both students and supervisors. PGRs have access to desk space and computer equipment throughout their PhD study period, including write up. In the 2019 PRES, 97% of respondents said their supervisors “have the skills and subject knowledge to support my research” (against 89% for the sector). Ratings for “My supervisors provide feedback that helps me direct my research activity” have consistently exceeded 90% in successive PRESs.

PGRs can access subject-specific and generic skills training through the FMS Postgraduate Training programme, which aligns with the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (REF5a 3.2.3), and can also attend modules from Masters courses. PGRs access training beyond their FMS postgraduate training via the Policy Academy, Media Skills groups and other faculties. PGRs are aligned to research themes, including to themes in other Faculties where this is relevant to their projects, and are encouraged to present their work at monthly research discussion forums, annual research days, and NINE DTP student conferences. An active PGR student support group run by the students meets bi-monthly, with presentations on topics such as Writing Your Thesis, Preparing for Your Viva, and Stress Management. New students are allocated a “buddy”, an established PGR student who can introduce them to colleagues, assist in navigating university systems, and provide general peer support. Final-year PGRs have a

“writing up buddy”, typically a recent NU post-doc colleague, to assist thesis submission and viva preparation.

The **FMS Broadening our Horizons** scheme (Section 2.4) is open to PGRs and shows the importance of research dissemination and the fostering of external collaborations (including with Industry). Our students are heavily involved with both the organisation of and participation in the North East Postgraduate Conference (one of the largest such conferences in the UK with >600 registrants each year), which is largely supported by UKRI DTP sponsorship to allow free participation to all PGR students in the North of England. It was ahead of its time in offering a full-time crèche to participants since 2018. PGRs are eligible for the University-wide student hardship fund (see REF5a). The FMS Graduate School also offers a **post-submission scholarship** which supports talented research students financially with up to three months of additional stipend after the submission of their thesis or final dissertation. Awards are made in the categories of academic development, enterprise, and internships.

2.4 Equality, diversity and inclusion

Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) are central features of the research activity undertaken in UoA20, for example around universal access to health care, welfare entitlements, and age-based inequalities. More importantly, they are a hallmark of the research environment in NUPHSI, the wider Faculty, and NU as a whole. In 2011, IHS was awarded a Silver Athena SWAN award, renewed in 2017 and consolidated in 2019 across FMS. The commitment to EDI is reflected not only in the thematic areas of research submitted to UoA20 but is embedded within the unit’s approach to pursuing social justice in health policy and ageing.

We promote EDI principles in our staffing strategy and development, providing a positive working structure with EDI at its heart. Since 2014, one colleague has been promoted from Senior Lecturer to Reader and subsequently to Chair (*Moffatt*). Individuals wishing to be promoted (and those nominated by line managers) are encouraged to submit their paperwork to an internal panel which provides assistance in framing their applications. This panel does not halt any applications, but rather provides advice and support. Colleagues have also benefited from flexible working arrangements, with one member of staff taking the opportunity to reduce their working hours from full time to 0.8FTE and subsequently 0.7FTE. In this submission, two women and two men hold leadership roles as chairs. Part-time and flexible working during the REF period has been encouraged, including the use of term-time working, compressed working hours and working from home. Meetings are arranged on a flexible calendar around core working hours only. Across FMS we have robust policies to support staff and PGR students to return to work following any period of extended leave (e.g. maternity leave, long-term illness), and personalised measures are in place to support individuals.

Our [Small Grant Scheme](#) and the former IHS support fund provide funding to researchers requiring pump priming in support of a grant application, for which other funds are not available. During this REF period, and in accordance with the focus on career development, most of this funding supported collecting preliminary data for early career researchers, with two researchers benefiting. The [Broadening our Horizons scheme](#) supports and celebrates the contribution of post-doctoral researchers and PGR students by allowing them to present their work at conferences and visit other research groups (or policy makers/industry) nationally and internationally, as well as funding travel, accommodation, and any childcare costs to support attendance. Consequently, students gain new techniques or mentoring and thereby raise their

profile and that of NU internationally. During REF2021, six researchers and PGRs benefited from this scheme.

Excellent performance is formally recognised via our annual promotion round, a fully open process which allows all academics to submit their own case for promotion. In line with the NU commitment to the [Declaration on Research Assessment](#) which we signed in 2018 (described in REF5a), we do not use journal impact factors for promotion or evaluation. Achievements are judged solely according to quality evaluations not traditional journal names or non-contextual citation metrics.

3. Income, infrastructure and facilities

3.1 Research income

Research submitted to UoA20 has been supported by funding awards from numerous bodies, including the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), UKRI (with awards from EPSRC and MRC), Innovate UK and Public Health England. Colleagues have also benefited from access to European funding for research networking over the assessment period, including through COST (Section 1.2). The applied nature of our research in health policy and ageing has opened up additional funding opportunities through government agencies, such as the Cabinet Office, and national and local charities, including the Centre for Ageing Better, Arts Council National Lottery fund, and Age UK County Durham. These awards are indicative of the strategic interest of funding organisations in our areas of research strength at local, national, and global scale.

Reflecting the highly collaborative nature of research conducted across the themes of health policy and ageing, most awards require interdisciplinary research teams. Collaborative awards involve teams based at NU as well as inter-institutional collaborations with colleagues from other organisations in the UK and internationally. Collaborations within NU involve researchers located across all three faculties and, further emphasising the interdisciplinary nature of our research, colleagues returned to other UoAs (e.g. UoA2, UoA11, UoA13, UoA21, and UoA28).

Over the REF2021 period, acting as either Principal Investigators or Co-Investigators, colleagues have generated £1.36M in external grant income (£176K per head) and received £2.07M in new awards spread across 19 grants. Examples of awards led from UoA20 that correspond to our research strengths include: funding under the NIHR Public Health Research Programme to assess the impact of a community social prescribing intervention on people with type 2 diabetes living in an ethnically diverse area of high socio-economic deprivation (£553,858, 2018-21); from the Cabinet Office to evaluate the Ways to Wellness Social Impact Bond (£99,813, 2015-17); and from the Centre for Ageing Better to conduct a scoping review on inequalities in later life (£24,775, 2016-17). As Co-Investigators, colleagues have been involved in awards ranging in value but indicative of our interdisciplinary and applied approach to research in social policy and our wide-ranging methodological skills. Examples include awards from EPSRC for the Centre for Digital Citizens (£3.7M, 2020-25); Innovate UK to support a Knowledge Transfer Partnership with Hanover Housing Association aimed at transforming older people's quality of life through home-based digital innovation (£116,419, 2018-20); Age UK County Durham to evaluate its Come Eat Together programme (£21,627, 2017-19); and the Arts Council National Lottery fund to support a collaboration with the Cap-a-Pie Theatre Company (£14,834 2019-20).

3.2 Infrastructure and facilities

The expanding remit of researchers based in IHS (now NUPHSI) has meant a substantial new investment to repurpose offices in the Sir James Spence Institute. Housing most of the staff submitted to UoA20, this facilitates cross-pollination of ideas, including with collaborators in the nearby HaSS Faculty. Our researchers also benefit from close proximity to the award-winning Helix site, where the [Catalyst Building](#) houses NIC-A, the National Innovation Centre in Data and the NIHR Innovation Observatory, and where the Urban Sciences Building accommodates colleagues in Open Lab's interaction design research group (REF5a 4.2.1). The Catalyst co-locates researchers and industry to enable fast implementation of research into industrial collaborations. It also accommodates VOICE, an NIHR-funded organisation that feeds citizens' knowledge and experiences into research at all levels. Over the REF2021 period, VOICE has expanded from a local organisation to a global entity.

The [NUCoRE in Regulatory Science](#) (approved in June 2019; co-directed by *Pollock*) is the UK's first such centre. The Centre grew out of the shared concern of researchers in NU's three faculties about the societal and public health implications of rapid advances in medical therapies and technologies, and the need to address the associated scientific challenges. To ensure that developments and innovations in medicine, biomedicine, biotechnology, and other biosciences benefit the health and wealth of society, it is vital that they are assessed through the lens of the keenest scientific practice and ethical and critical thinking. Acting as a focal point for regulators, industry, clinicians, patients, academics, students, and the public, and by deepening understanding of safety, effectiveness, and value of medicines and devices, the Centre aims to contribute to the development of regulatory policy in the UK and internationally.

The [NUCoRE in Ageing and Inequalities](#) (approved in April 2020; co-directed by *Scharf*) builds on NU's internationally recognised interdisciplinary strengths in research on ageing to focus on the key challenges associated with unequal ageing. Drawing together researchers from the University's three faculties, including expertise in the social sciences, health and medical sciences, arts and humanities, and human-computer interaction, the Centre seeks to understand, predict and mitigate unequal ageing with the aim of improving the health and wellbeing of older people in the UK and internationally. With growing evidence of widening inequalities in later life, the Centre's focus is on the circumstances of marginalised populations and the impact of inequality on the lives of older individuals who are left behind. The Centre aims to refine the understanding and conceptualisation of inequality in a globalised society to enable and investigate real-world interventions that can be applied, where appropriate, to reduce and eliminate inequalities wherever they occur.

3.2.1 Supporting infrastructure for impact (including cross-HEI infrastructure)

We have a highly successful and dynamic environment to support influencing health policy, interdisciplinary research on ageing, and implementing research with community involvement. NUPHSI academics currently lead various national initiatives with policy makers and other collaborating stakeholders. They provide access to a wide network of colleagues and beneficiaries of our research, and as such inform and support our research. This enables direct links with key health and social policy stakeholders for seamless uptake of research ideas, whilst providing real-life opportunities to inspire and educate our PGRs and therefore enhance their career prospects in a competitive market.

NIHR Applied Research Collaboration North East and North Cumbria ([ARCNEC](#)): this regional research and implementation initiative combines 12 CCGs, 10 acute and three

specialist trusts, one ambulance trust, two medical schools, two pharmacy schools, six HEIs, and 13 local authorities (with UoA20 colleagues involved on health policy and ageing).

NIHR School of Public Health Research (SPHR): is funded to increase the evidence base for cost-effective public health practice. Regionally implemented as **Fuse** (Centre for Translational Research in Public Health, UKCRC-funded 2008-2018) and providing opportunities for researchers to be involved in both health policy and ageing research, the School has shared communication and knowledge exchange functions across five North-East HEIs. Fuse offers Quarterly Research Meetings, seminars and other events, including a biannual international knowledge exchange conference. These are all co-produced with practice and open across the five HEIs through its network of 1,400 members (with UoA20 colleagues involved in health policy and ageing).

NIHR School of Primary Care Research (SPCR): is funded to increase academic primary care research and develop capacity. Its grant scheme has supported interdisciplinary research by staff returned to UoA20 in collaboration with colleagues submitted to other UoAs.

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

Our unit is motivated by a desire to understand and respond to the ways in which policies, regulatory frameworks, professional practices, and human behaviours influence the equitable distribution of health and welfare across the life course. In this context, and as evidenced by our outputs and research income, collaborations with multiple stakeholders drawn from academia, policy, practice, and civil society represent a central feature of the unit's research and impact activity. Such collaborations enable us to make a powerful contribution to the research base, economy, and society.

4.1 Collaborations

Since 2014, we have held interdisciplinary research grants with researchers in all NU faculties and with other UK universities and think tanks. Examples include partnerships with Durham University to explore social prescribing programmes; with Swansea, Northumbria and Bangor Universities to evaluate group-based courses that provide psychological and emotional support for later life transitions; and with the International Longevity Centre-UK to review evidence on inequalities in later life. The extensive nature of our collaborations is further evidenced by joint writing activities. Of the 19 outputs returned to UoA20, 18 involved co-authorship: 10 were co-authored with colleagues from UK universities (six with NU co-authors; four with co-authors from other UK HEIs) and eight with colleagues from beyond the UK.

We have been part of a range of national and international collaborations. In **health policy**, *Castelli* belongs to the European Health Policy Group and is a member of the International Department of the Italian Association of Medical Managers. Reflecting his work in global health, *Millard* is a member of the International Association for the Study of Traditional Asian Medicine, the International Association of Tibetan Studies, and the International Society of Global Health. *Moffatt* was invited to the inaugural meeting of the Health Justice Partnership, involving international experts in evaluation research, to articulate and prioritise the health justice research agenda, and develop innovative, transferable evaluation methods that support rapid translation and policy implementation.

In **ageing**, reflecting a research focus on social exclusion and inclusion in later life, *Scharf* and *Moffatt* were active participants in the ROSEnet COST Action (Section 1.2). ROSEnet has been notable in its engagement with multiple stakeholders, including representatives of AGE Platform Europe, HelpAge International and an Older Adult Reference Group made up of older people recruited to help shape the Action and its outputs. ROSEnet succeeded in engaging researchers, policy makers, and practitioners in debates around social exclusion: the Action's final conference (March 2020), co-organised by the European Committee of the Regions, [published a roadmap](#) for combatting social exclusion in later life. Further collaborations involve major social policy actors, such as national housing providers and age-sector charities. For example, a UKRI-funded Knowledge Transfer Partnership explored home-based digital innovations aimed at enhancing the wellbeing of older people living in Anchor Hanover housing schemes.

4.2 Contributions to the research base, economy and society

Staff submitted to UoA20 have contributed to the field of social policy through their leadership positions in key professional subject associations and learned societies. In the field of **health policy**, *Pollock* was a member of the Council of the British Medical Association (2014-18), the International committee of the British Medical Association (2014-18), the Public Health committee of the British Medical Association (2014-18) and the Epidemiology & Public Health Section of the Royal Society of Medicine. She was also a member of Independent SAGE during the COVID-19 pandemic (May to September 2020). In relation to **ageing**, *Scharf* is President of the British Society of Gerontology (2019-22). *Moffatt* was previously a member of the Executive Committee of the British Society of Gerontology (2009-15). During the REF2021 period, *Scharf* was a member of the National Executive Committee of the Irish Gerontological Society (2013-15) and was Chair of the academic advisory groups of the NIHR/ESRC-funded Neighbourhoods and Dementia [project](#) (2014-19) and the ESRC-funded Diversity In Care Environments [project](#) (2019-22).

Keynote addresses

As recognised leaders in their areas of expertise, staff submitted to UoA20 have given 17 keynote addresses over the REF2021 period. In **health policy**, this includes addresses to the British Maternal & Foetal Medicine Society, The Neonatal Society & The British Association of Perinatal Medicine (Perinatal Medicine Conference, 2014), the Centro Latinoamericano de Administración para el Desarrollo (XX Congreso Internacional, 2015), the British Sociological Association (Annual Cost of Living Symposium address, Medical Sociology Conference, 2016), the Irish Medical Organisation (AGM, Sligo, 2016), the UK Spine Societies Board (BritSpine 2016), the Community Practitioner and Health Visitors Association (Annual Conference 2016), the Centre for Arctic and Global Health and Norwegian Forum for Global Health Research, University of Tromsø (Symposium on Exploring Global Health in the Arctic 2018), Research Network 16 (Sociology of Health and Illness), the European Sociological Association (Mid-term conference 2018), the Association of British Clinical Diabetologists (1st John Wales Memorial lecture 2018), and the UK & Irish Neonatal Society (David Harvey Senior Fellowship Lecture, Dublin, 2018).

In **ageing**, keynote addresses have been given at the Canadian Association on Gerontology (44th Annual Scientific and Educational Meeting, 2015), the German Society for Sociology (Section Ageing and Society, 2016), the Finnish Gerontological Society (Finnish Congress on Gerontology & Geriatrics, 2017), the Irish Gerontological Society (Annual and Scientific Meeting, 2017), EURORURAL 2018 (Mendel University, 2018) and the Research Network on Ageing in Europe (RN01) of the European Sociological Association (4th Midterm Conference, 2018). A

keynote address to the European Geriatric Medicine Society (16th Annual Congress) scheduled for 2020 has been rescheduled to 2021.

Editorial positions and Editorial Board membership

Colleagues have been involved in a range of editorial activities over the REF2021 period. This includes positions relating to 1) health policy: *Schrecker* was co-editor of the *Journal of Public Health* (2014-19), has been Associate Editor [globalisation] of the *Journal of Bioethical Inquiry* since 2014, and is a member of the editorial board of *Critical Public Health*; *Pollock* has been on the editorial board of *BioMedCentral Health Services Research*, *Chronic Illness* and the *Journal of Medical Ethics*; and *Moffatt* has been Book Reviews Editor for the *Journal of Health and Social Theory* since 2013; and 2) to ageing: *Moffatt* was Editorial Board member for *Ageing & Society* 2012-18; and *Scharf* has been a member of the editorial board of the *Journal of Aging and Environment* since 2015.

External examiner roles

Reflecting their status as international leaders in their areas of scientific expertise, staff returned to UoA20 have externally examined 11 PhD theses and one MPhil thesis at universities in the UK and internationally over the REF2021 period. This includes examining PhD theses at the Universities of Alberta, Maynooth, Montreal, Oslo, Sydney, Toronto, and Vienna, as well as the Universities of Sheffield and York (on two occasions) and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

Membership of research council, national or international funding bodies and panels

Over the REF2021 period, our staff have contributed to a range of citizenship activities aimed at supporting social policy research in the UK and internationally. For example, *Scharf* has been a member of the Scientific Board of the German Ageing Survey (2011 to date). *Schrecker* has been a member of the Independent Panel on Global Governance for Health, University of Oslo (2014-18), the Advisory Panel for the Independent Panel on Global Governance for Health, University of Oslo (2018 to date), and the External Advisory Group, Prevention of Disease Using Trade Agreements Network (2020 to date). *Pollock* has been a member of Committee B, NICE Technology Appraisals Committee (2018 to date), and *Moffatt* was a member of the Advisory Board of the Bath University Cremation and Grief Project (2017-20).

Other citizenship roles

Staff returned to UoA20 are engaged in a range of other roles that contribute to the research base, economy, and society. In addition to visiting positions at universities in the UK and internationally, we are active in collaborations that stimulate new ideas and make the most of opportunities to influence public debates on health policy and ageing. Work of national significance includes our collaboration with Gateshead City Council, Citizens Advice Gateshead and the voluntary and community sectors in Gateshead to study the impact of Universal Credit on health and wellbeing (2018-20). This collaboration led to Newcastle's successful bid to host Professor Philip Alston, United Nations Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, during his two-week visit to the UK (2018). Research findings were cited in Professor Alston's [Report to the Human Rights Council](#) of the United Nations General Assembly (2019), leading to wide-ranging [media coverage](#) of the research report. A subsequent award to NU of £42,366 from external and internal sources allowed dissemination of, and engagement with, creative methods to extend debate, understanding, and practice related to roll-out of Universal Credit. The research was used as evidence in a [House of Lords enquiry into the impact of Universal Credit](#). The findings also sparked the creative arts: the Cap-a-Pie Theatre Company

wrote a play based on these findings and although a planned performance of “Credit” was postponed due to COVID-19, rehearsed readings were [live streamed](#) in 2020.

In addition to prominent contributions to national debates, returned staff have also collaborated successfully with local and regional organisations. For example, work with the winners of the Research Ideas in the Third Age (RITA) group led to a co-produced piece of action research into reasons for non-participation in the University of the Third Age (U3A). This work was published in *Ageing & Society*, presented at the British Society of Gerontology annual conference, and informed the re-establishment of research as a core activity on the U3A national executive. Submitted staff also play a role in local organisations, with *Scharf* serving as Chair of the Age Friendly City group in Newcastle, and working with [local charities](#) and CCGs to inform understanding of isolation and loneliness in later life.

Public engagement activities during COVID-19

During the COVID-19 pandemic, colleagues returned to UoA20 have played a lead role in shaping public debates around health policy and ageing. For example, *Pollock* contributed to the work of Independent SAGE (May to September 2020), co-authored numerous editorials to major health journals, and served as a regular contributor to print, radio and television media. In ageing, *Scharf* was involved in challenging age-based stereotypes in policy and media debates, including through a Lancet Voice [podcast](#), an INSIGHTS [public lecture](#) (with over 1,900 views on YouTube), and multiple contributions to the British Society of Gerontology’s activity on [COVID-19](#).