

Institution: The Open University
Unit of Assessment: C20: Social Work & Social Policy
<p>1. Unit context and structure, research and impact strategy</p> <p>1.1 Description of the Unit</p> <p>This Unit pursues internationally excellent, impactful and engaged research that transforms lives and promotes educational opportunities and social justice. We adopt a broad view of social work and social policy research as being policy relevant, capable of speaking to some of the most pressing social problems and challenges of contemporary life and of transforming and improving organisational practices.</p> <p>The Unit combines a wide range of disciplines and research topics which cohere around four signature areas of research: health, care and social welfare (HC&SW), crime and social harm (CSH), migration, borders and rights (MBR) and gender, intimacy and sexualities (GIS). There are two noteworthy synergies between each of these signature areas: an interest in marginalisation and disadvantage and an interest in gender, sex and sexualities. Researchers across the unit also share a commitment to public engagement and connectivity with research communities. We have substantial expertise in a wide range of qualitative methodological expertise – narrative analysis, life history analysis, discourse analysis, content analysis, thematic and grounded analysis – and a strong commitment to interdisciplinarity and participative and innovative methodologies.</p> <p>1.2 Research and Impact Aims since REF2014</p> <p>We explore the intended and unintended consequences of social policies as well as the lived experiences of individuals within social and public policy domains, nationally (within the UK) and internationally. We analyse the economic, social, political and ideological contexts of policies and social issues and how these contexts shape the lives of individuals or the experiences of communities or groups. Our research spans theoretical, theoretically informed, empirical and applied social science research that has relevance to matters of social work and social policy. Our aim is to produce research of the highest quality where public engagement and impact is embedded within the research process itself.</p> <p>We achieve these aims by having a wide disciplinary base (including social policy, criminology and zemiology, psychology, economics, and sociology), a commitment to interdisciplinarity and collaborative approaches and research structures that emphasize openness and porosity. Hence, the analysis of gender, whilst a cohering principle for the GIS signature area, nevertheless is a key component of research in CSH as well as HC&SW. Likewise, an interest in analysing sex and relationships in domains of health policy is fundamental to HC&SW and is also a key interest in the CSH & MBR research group. Moreover, regardless of the signature area, most of our research is interested in exploring the relevance of various aspects of social differentiation, inequalities, marginalisation, disadvantage, exclusion and poverty as they pertain to the topic of investigation.</p> <p>Our approach to public engagement, impact and connectivity with research communities, policy makers, government, international bodies, reform groups, service users and people with lived experience is distinctive among universities in the UK. We not only embed engagement, impact and connectivity into our research processes, we utilise the advantage of the institution's unique digitally networked capacities (particularly through its partnership with the BBC and online learning</p>

platforms like Open Learn) and its physical national presences in Belfast, Cardiff, Edinburgh and Milton Keynes (see Section 4 for more details).

Assessment of achievement since REF2014

Since REF2014, individuals in this unit have published: nearly 100 monographs and edited collections, more than 400 peer reviewed articles, 200+ research, government and policy reports and more than 300 chapters. In addition to the voluminous blogs our researchers have posted or hosted, we have also published more than 150 Open Learn courses, articles or modules underpinned by our expertise and research. This unit has also produced 5 ICS relating to youth violence, policing, sexualities and intimacy, migration and abortion in the UK context with a further 17 in development.

This submission is significantly different than previous submissions. The period since REF2014 has been a time of energetic and strategic expansion of social policy research at the OU, with the effect that the unit is now three times the size of the REF2014 submission (57 FTE compared with REF2014 18.6 FTE). Researchers come from 6 departments located across three Schools and spanning two Faculties.

Three factors produced step-change for this Unit:

- Firstly, the University made significant investments in research-led criminology curriculum (i.e., new single and joint honours UG programmes and PGT modules) which supported the appointment of 12 new criminology FTE).
- Secondly, an institutional level strategy to increase the number of UOA submissions to REF2021 became a driver for exploring new commonalities of interest in policy-relevant research with researchers who previously faced other UOAs (such as sociology).
- Finally, national government-driven changes to social work education and training had a significant impact on the OU and on social work staffing. This created new possibilities for rethinking the social policy research landscape at the OU.

In 2016, the University agreed to a 'broad church' approach in defining social work and social policy research and as a result, the following were identified as aims specific for the enhancement and development of this Unit:

- To be proactive and interdisciplinary in our approach to impact and engagement. Detailed below, the success of these initiatives is evidenced by the breadth of subjects covered in our submitted ICS and in the range and diversity of engagement activities.
- To increase the quality of research outputs. To this end, University investment was provided for writing retreats and writing mentoring schemes were established across the unit for all members.

Other generic research aims (such as increasing the level and diversity of research grant income and PGR numbers) were addressed through University level infrastructures (such as the Strategic Research Areas) and/or faculty, school and department level research, impact and engagement infrastructures (described in Section 2 and 3).

Evaluation of strategies

The stated aim in REF2014 was to build on the signature areas identified within Health, Care and Social Welfare and this aim was mostly met.

Health, Care and Social Welfare: Multidisciplinary research within this area builds on and expands the innovative and high-quality research submitted to REF2014. An emphasis on examining non-normative trajectories across the life-course continues to be a significant theme, underpinned by innovative methodologies with so-called 'vulnerable' or 'hard-to-reach' populations. Researchers in this area investigate a range of issues including: ageing and later life (**Deepak-Gopinath, Jones R., Vseteckova**), care and caring (**Copperman, De-Henau, Larkin, Samra**) death, dying and end-of-life care (**Borgstrom, Jordan, Jones K., Watts**), spirituality and wellbeing (**Mackian**), reproductive loss (**Murphy**), suicide (**Mallon**) HIV, biomedicine and care (**Keogh**) sexual and reproductive health (**Earle S., Waterhouse**) contraception and abortion (**Hoggart, Newton**) learning disabilities and inclusion (**Tilley**), masculinities, youth and wellbeing (**Robb**), black women's health and activism (**Douglas**), mental health (**Rixon, Vicary**), autism, ADHD and childhoods (**O'Dell**), teaching and learning in social work and social care (**Leverett, Gray**), global social policy and governance (**Yeates**) and youth social welfare and unemployment internationally (**Fergusson, Yeates**). Ongoing interdisciplinary research is being carried out on: menstruation and vernacular knowledge, bringing together sociology, social policy, folklore studies and ELT (**Newton**) as well as on ageing, inclusion and loneliness where gerontology and technology studies intersect (**Marston**), along with research that brings together psychology and health studies to explore stress/ burn out amongst health professionals (**Samra**), social care policy and heritage studies in an examination of mental capacity legislation in relation to public archives (**Tilley**), geography, theology and health studies to explore the role of spirituality in wellbeing (**MacKian**). Inclusive and participatory research with service users and people with lived experience underpins our impact and engagement work. One of the impact case studies submitted for REF2021 comes from work in this area (**Hoggart, Newton**).

New to the Unit for REF2021 are the following signature research areas:

Crime and Social Harm: The Open University is now home to several leading researchers working in the areas of social harm, zemiology and at the cross-roads between this and studies of justice, punishment and criminalisation. Research here represents the most significant critical mass of zemiological and (broadly) critical criminological work in the country. We explore a variety of social harms and justice related issues including: gendered and sex-based harms and justice (**Canning, Downes, Boukli, Phoenix, Rowe, Westmarland**), workplace, food safety and state and corporate harms more generally (**Tombs**), institutional violence (**Cooper, Tombs**), harms of housing policies, poverty, criminalisation and homelessness (**Cooper, McCulloch**), harm to non-human animals (**Cole**), youth violence, youth custody and youth justice (**Fergusson, Irwin-Rogers, Earle R., Phoenix**), prison and other forms of detention and punishment (**Drake, Rowe, Scott, Speed**), policing (**Irwin-Rogers, Westmarland**) and theoretical explorations of utopia, zemiology, abolitionism and convict criminology (**Copson, Earle R., Scott**). Interdisciplinary explorations have been conducted on post-conflict societies (**Kent**), social welfare and urban studies (**Mooney**), and connect criminal justice with cultural studies (**Dimou**). Methodologically, there is a strong emphasis on co-production and innovative and participatory research methodologies (**Downes, McCulloch**). Two of the five impact case studies submitted (ICS-4 and 5) arise from work associated with this research area (**Irwin-Rogers, Westmarland**).

Migration, Borders and Rights: There is a concentration of interdisciplinary research that explores, theorises and analyses borders, migration, conflict and global inequalities. Here research work focuses on various aspects of the race and migration nexus (**Erel**), refugees' solidarity structures (**Dimou**), experiences of refugees and technology (**Gillespie**), development and use of internal border control as racialised governance (**Medien**), healthcare worker

recruitment and migration within and across 'rich' and 'poor' worlds (**Yeates**) and the reconfiguration of global social governance of borders and rights in international development contexts (**Yeates**). ICS-2 emerges from work in this area (**Gillespie, Erel**).

Gender, Intimacies and Sexualities: There is a concentration of research interest related to matters of gender, sexualities, relationships and intimacy. We explore gender, intimacies and sexualities across a range of different empirical settings including family lives and personal relationships (**Gabb, Erel, Deepak-Gopinath, Keogh**), the gendering of care among migrant mothers (**Erel**), in the labour market and in relation to fiscal and social policies (**De-Haneu**), the interconnectedness of humans and non-humans in new societies (**Watson, Cole**), gendered subjectivities of contemporary creative work and creativity (**Taylor**), and feminist theorizing of power, surveillance and governance (**Medien**). There are synergies with HC&SW that has produced gendered analyses of ageing (**Deepak-Gopinath**), sexuality in later life (**Jones R.**), how gay men manage their sexual, intimate and social lives (**Keogh**), analyses of social constructions of bisexuality (**Jones R.**), changing legislation and socio-cultural norms of lesbian and gay parenthood (**Gabb**), and the impact of families on the mental health and wellbeing of LGBTQ+ young people (**Gabb**). Via the synergies with CSH researchers also theorise the links between discourses of sex, gender and sexualities and regulation and control (**Phoenix, Boukli, Copson**) and in specific criminal justice contexts, including sex trafficking (**Boukli**), prostitution and child sexual exploitation (**Phoenix**), prisons (**Rowe**), victimisation and victim services (**Boukli**), and in relation to welfare reforms (**Cooper, McCulloch**). ICS-1 emerged from work in this area (**Gabb**).

1.3 Main Objectives Looking Forward

Our main objectives are to consolidate and strengthen the new unit, its research and its engagement activities. We will continue carrying out high-quality, robust research that increases knowledge, transforms lives and promotes educational opportunities and social justice. Our agenda is driven by theoretical, methodological and substantive research questions. As Section 3 describes, the unit operates within a polyvalent research infrastructure that facilitates organic as well as strategic growth. Our four signature areas are, and will continue to be, supported by the appropriate SRA and/or research collaborative (see Section 3). The main future objectives of each signature area are:

- **Health, Care & Social Welfare** – to investigate the intersections between theory, practice and lived experience in health and social care combined with an enduring commitment to innovative participative and inclusive research methodologies. Research here will continue to build on areas of established and extant expertise and do so in a way that is responsive to changing policies and social circumstances, taking account of the multiple scales of policy, practice and governance.
- **Crime & Social Harm** – to continue to expand our rigorous, critical, inter-disciplinary-based research on and around evidence, harm and crime, processes of non/criminalisation and alternatives; to further develop the emergent area of zemiology and zemiological approaches to social problems; to explore alternatives to criminal justice, to prioritise public engagement and knowledge transfer.
- **Migration, Borders & Rights** – to deepen understanding of the socio-cultural, technological, geographical and political ways that borders and boundaries are constructed between and within nation-state, ethnic and racialised groups and gendered groups of migrants and non-migrants, globally; to continue to combine academic rigour and dialogue with communities of practice and policy, as well as the communities affected; to establish further knowledge exchange, often through arts.

- **Gender, Intimacies and Sexuality** – to probe the public/private & macro/micro dimensions of citizenship and governance, illustrating how the personal is profoundly political; to bring together empirical investigation, methodological innovation and theorizing on intimate and sexual citizenship; to examine the intersections of sex, gender, sexuality and power.

The Open University's research strategy is scheduled for renewal in 2021. The identification of our priority developmental areas will necessarily be shaped by that renewal. However, the unit has already identified the following as key strategic priorities to feed into the institutional consultation:

- expanding PGR numbers through securing internal and external funding for studentships
- securing national and international funding for research and PGRs with the support of SRAs (see Section 3)
- strengthening and deepening our expertise in the areas identified above
- continuing to build research capacity across the unit through research-led appointments, especially where new curriculum is being developed
- continuing to prioritize impact and engagement work with ring-fenced budget to support that work and through the Faculty Impact Co-ordinators.

1.4 An Open Research Environment

We are committed to the University's well-known mission to be 'open to people, places, methods, and ideas' and enact that accordingly. Many of our research projects – based on collaborative engagement with our communities and publics – are underpinned by the principle of shared knowledge production. Two examples here include: the co-production of *Time to Think* a unique oral archive which documents OU study in British and Irish prisons during the conflict in and about Northern Ireland (**Kent**); and the co-production of *The Inclusive Archive of Learning Disability History* (**Tilley**). Further examples are listed in Section 4 where we also provide information about how our research is disseminated at very large scale, both formally (through OU teaching), and informally, through the production of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCS), Badged Open Courses (BOCS) and Open Learn (the University's award-winning and *free* global learning platform), as well as through far-reaching public engagement in collaboration with the BBC and others. More practically, our research publications are available through the OU publications repository Open Research Online (ORO) and research data are made available through Open Research Data Online (ORDO).

1.5 Research Integrity and Ethics

The University is a member of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity and its Code of Practice is underpinned by the ethical principles of inclusion and of respecting the diversity and values of individuals, groups and communities. We implement these principles within the Unit in a range of ways. For example, all new staff and research students receive briefings on good research practice and complete online training on research integrity and ethics. Mandatory training on issues relating to equality, diversity and inclusion is undertaken by all staff and post-graduate students, including Visiting Researchers and is refreshed periodically. All research projects undergo scrutiny by the University's Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). **Westmarland** was deputy chair then chair of HREC between 2014-2019. Some projects are also subject to Health Research Authority Research Ethics Service scrutiny including NHS and Social Care REC and Hospital R&D approvals.

2. People

2.1 Staffing Strategy and Staff Development

The OU's staffing strategy is to employ the best person for a role, providing development opportunities to enable them to develop within that role. Academic staff at the OU are appointed principally to contribute to departmental priorities in curriculum development, in addition to contributing to research. In the case of the latter, staff are encouraged to participate in the Unit's rich research environment and substantial complementary programmes of research support are provided to enable all staff to contribute and achieve professional fulfilment.

This submission consists of 58 Category A staff including 14 Lecturers; 30 Senior Lecturers; 11 Professors; and 3 Research staff (Research Fellow/Senior Research Fellow) totalling 57 FTE. Included are five ECRs. This compares with a substantially smaller submission of 18.6 FTE in REF2014, when no ECRs were submitted.

Twenty-five new academics have been appointed during this REF period reflecting considerable change within the University, particularly in relation to new curriculum. As such, this has enabled us to further enhance existing research, while bringing fresh expertise: **Borgstrom** (end-of-life), **Deepak-Gopinath** (later life), **Jones K.** (bereavement) **Jordan** (end-of-life), **Keogh** (sexualities), **Larkin** (care and caring), **Marston** (gerontechnology), **Newton** (reproduction), **Samra** (occupational health), **Vseteckova** (later life) and **Waterhouse** (health demography) in health and wellbeing; **Downes** (gender and sexuality); **Boukli** (victimology), **Canning** (border criminology), **Cole** (critical animal studies) **Cooper** (homelessness), **Copson** (utopianism), **Dimou** (decoloniality), **Irwin-Rogers** (youth justice), **Kent** (education and conflict transformation), **McCulloch** (homelessness), **Median** (power, surveillance and governance), **Phoenix** (criminal and social justice), **Scott** (penal abolitionism) and **Speed** (death and psychiatric detention) in crime and social harm. Eight people have also been promoted internally to Professor and seven to Senior Lecturer.

In each Faculty, the Associate Deans for Research (ADR) have overall responsibility for research strategy including researcher development. Strategy is implemented at School and Department levels by the Associate Heads of School (AHoS). Annually all employees of the university take part in the University's Career Development and Staff Appraisal (CDSA) process and have contractual entitlement to research and study leave (described in REF5a). As part of their CDSA academics complete a Research Development Plan (RDP). The RDP is developed and agreed in consultation with a senior researcher in the Faculty who acts as a critical friend, supporting the academic to reflect on what they want to achieve, and what development they might need to accomplish this.

FASS and WELS provide researcher development programmes which complement the training and development provided by the University; some events are organised cross-Faculty (for example, writing retreats). Faculty development opportunities are tailored to the needs of individual academics and have included training on coaching and mentoring for researchers and impact training. Academics have access to a research mentoring programme which is organised within Schools and all academics are allocated a mentor on induction: the mentoring programme is suitable for all levels. Senior academics in the Unit support more junior colleagues in a range of ways and particularly through collaboration in the various research groups. Senior colleagues are expected to read the outputs of more junior researchers and joint authorship is also used as a means to support junior colleagues and research students. In addition, academics have opportunities to access both internal and external training opportunities; individuals and/or

research groups can access 'research support' funding for this purpose. Other funding to support research activities is also available including funding for conferences and in FASS, academics have an annual personal research allowance of £500. We have paid particular attention to supporting academics that were not previously research active, particularly in WELS (where many staff have strong practice backgrounds) or are new to the academy (for example, the majority of new appointees in Criminology). We also focus on the career development needs of early career researchers and contract researchers (e.g., through more intensive mentoring); and, applications for bridging funding are usually supported institutionally.

Academics within the Unit have participated in various leadership development programmes including AURORA (Advance HE's women-only leadership development programme), as well as in the ASPIRE programme for people who self-identify as BAME or disabled.

2.2 Support, Training and Supervision of PGR Students

Our thriving multi-disciplinary research student cohort embodies our commitment to inclusion and diversity; they both enrich our research environment and benefit from it. Thirty-three students completed their doctoral studies in the submission period. In 2014 16.17 FTE research degrees were awarded and the REF sub-panel judged that one of the strongest aspects of our research environment related to PhD provision. We have continued to maintain the excellence of our provision in this regard and have made additional positive enhancements effective now and for the future.

We now have three main routes into postgraduate research within the Unit and only the first of these was in place during the last assessment period.

(a) A **PhD programme**, which is offered within both Faculties as either a 3-4-year on-campus route, or a 6–8-year part-time route.

(b) Two **Research Council Doctoral Training Programmes (DTP)**, the 'Grand Union' ESRC DTP in partnership with Brunel University London and Oxford University, and the 'OOC' AHRC DTP, in collaboration with the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge.

(c) A new **Professional Doctorate in Health and Social Care (DHSC)** offered as a part-time (4-8 year) blended learning research degree in WELS.

In both Faculties a Director of Postgraduate Studies (DPS) has overall responsibility and oversight for PGR students. They are line managed by the ADR in each Faculty and are members of the University's Research Degrees Committee. Postgraduate Convenors (PGC) (**Gillespie, Waterhouse, Yeates**) also provide students with more localised and discipline-based support. In collaboration with the University's Graduate School, the respective DPS and PGCs manage the whole PGR student journey from recruitment through to completion, and beyond. They are also responsible for the training and support of research supervisors, in collaboration with the Graduate School Director (**O'Dell**).

An annual Open Day is held each year in October, providing potential applicants with information and support on studying for a postgraduate degree. Further information is available online to support candidates with their application for study. We recruit students within our areas of research excellence in line with Faculty and School research strategies.

All research students are supervised by two supervisors (occasionally three) to ensure that they have tailored supervision which provides appropriate substantive, disciplinary and methodological support in compliance with the University's regulations and QAA expectations. Research supervisors are also required to complete the University's online learning module 'Introduction to Research Degrees Supervision' (IRDS), while ongoing supervisor training and development is undertaken both at University and Faculty levels as part of continuous professional development. For example, Research Supervisor Practice Sharing Forums are organised by Faculties to enable a focus on discipline or practice-specific issues, complementing the more generic University training.

Full-time PGRs have access to computers and office space and all students have access to annual research training allowances and an excellent online infrastructure including ICT support and our world-class library resources.

(a) The PhD programme

Each year, the WELS Faculty funds between 1-3 full-time PhD studentships as part of our established **PhD programme**. Students also join the programme on a self-funded basis including funding by employers (in both Faculties). All research students take part in a comprehensive induction at the start of their studies. The Graduate School provides core and mandatory training and Faculties provide discipline-based induction as well as pastoral support and training. Students also have access to further pastoral support via the University's Employee Assistance Programme. There is an established and robust system of progress reporting and monitoring as described in REF5a.

Ongoing training is provided by Faculties and the University: some training is unique to the programme, but other training is provided cross-programme or cross-University. Through the University's Graduate School Network, all students have access to online and campus-based training modules benchmarked against research council expectations for PGR training, in addition to comprehensive research career development framed within Vitae's Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. Students within the Unit also make regular use of the University-led Professional and Academic Communication in English (PACE) training and writing circles; this training is available to all but provides additional support for individuals whose first language is not English. Each full-time PGR student has a Research Training Support Grant (RTSG) of £1000 per year for three years to support any additional training needs (PT students £500 per year). Students are supported to develop a wide range of skills throughout their studies (for example, media training). Both Faculties have a recently introduced teaching scheme whereby PGRs can contribute to teaching and the development of formal and informal learning. They can also take part in tutoring with The Brilliant Club, which supports local pupils from under-represented backgrounds to access University. The OU also has a new commercial 3-month internship programme (co-funded by Santander Universities) available to students who are in the middle of their studies or near to completion.

All research students take an active role within their Departments, Schools and Faculties, for example through participation in research seminars, competitions and through membership of research groups. These activities support student development and training as well as contributing to the overall research environment (students are required to give an oral presentation as part of the upgrade process). Students are also encouraged to organise their own student-led seminars and workshops and have often been successful in securing funding for such activities (e.g., from the BSA Support Fund).

(b) Research Council DTPs

The Open University is also part of two Research Council DTPs. The **'Grand Union' ESRC DTP** unites the OU with Brunel University London and the University of Oxford, providing 35 ESRC studentships per year between 2017 and 2022. Staff within the Unit are involved in two of the five DTP clusters: Society and Wellbeing, and Rights and Freedoms. Within these clusters, we are involved in two of the nine pathways: Citizenship Studies (led by the OU) and Health & Wellbeing (led by Brunel). Both of these pathways have successfully recruited between two-three students per year since 2017. Going forward these will contribute four PGR completions per year from 2020-21 onwards. The **'OOC' AHRC DTP** which unites the OU with the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge registered its first students in 2019.

DTP students are able to access a rich programme of activities which supplement that which is available to OU students on the already established PhD programme, including an annual DTP induction programme and an end-of-year conference. Within both DTPs OU students are able to access all of the Research Council DTP training at Brunel University London and the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Training days that are hosted at the OU are opened up to other non-DTP OU research students thus also enriching their experience. DTP students have access to the same RTSG but can also access other funding such as overseas fieldwork expenses, an incubator fund and funding to undertake knowledge exchange placements or internships.

(c) Professional doctorate programme

The **DHSC** is a new programme of study with a focus on valuing professional practice and engaging in applied research. It is designed to enable students to make a unique and original contribution to their profession, while continuing to work and progress professionally. It is a flexible part-time degree, recruiting 20 students per year to four pathways: Care & Advocacy, Nursing, Leadership in Health & Social Care, and Social Work & Social Care.

The DHSC is an innovative programme designed both for health and social care professionals (including registrants) that work in public, voluntary and private sectors but it is also open to people who work as either formal or informal carers including 'experts by experience', 'expert patients' and advocates. Students on the DHSC programme study together with students who are enrolled in other Professional Doctorates and are supported via a blended programme of online supported distance learning, in combination with compulsory intensive residential weekends. Students have access to a wide range of stimulating teaching and learning opportunities including online materials, guided discussions with research experts in their field and advanced research methods workshops. Applicants can register for the DHSC from anywhere in the world although supervision is UK-based. The first cohort of students on this programme will graduate in 2022/23, contributing very positively to our future PGR environment.

2.3 Supporting and Promoting Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

A commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion is central to the University's mission to be open to people, places, methods and ideas and is core to our academic endeavour. An Equality Scheme was introduced in 2018 and since then every Faculty has appointed an Equalities Lead (**Downes** and **Samra**) who is responsible for coordinating an annual Equality Action Plan. These plans set out annual objectives which are regularly monitored; they encompass a range of measures but include staff and student recruitment, staff development, and academic promotion.

Our commitment to the principles of equality begins with the recruitment process for all academic and research staff and research students which, through interview and selection procedures, establishes the commitment of candidates to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion.

Recruitment panel chairs and panel members are all required to undertake equality and diversity training which is available through the University's state-of-the-art online learning centre. In the event of long-term absence from work or study due to reasons such as sickness absence or parental leave, staff and research students are able to use 'Keeping in Touch' (KIT) days and, following their return, would have a 'return to work/study' interview which is a supportive conversation to make sure that the right support is in place. Staff and students would also commonly have a 'phased' return.

The diversity of our postgraduate student community also strongly reflects our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. In comparison to sector norms, we have proportionately higher numbers of PGRs who study part time (39%), are over the age of 25 (97%) or have a declared disability (15%). Students with additional needs have access to extra support including the University's Mental Health and Disability Processes Adviser. This diverse population is not only a testament to our strong inclusive culture and our reputation for openness and equality but reflects our commitment to investment in capacity building for students with lived experience to become the social researchers of the future.

Our processes for staff development and support exemplify our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. The University is genuinely supportive of flexible and remote working. Given the nature of OU teaching, the majority of staff within the Unit work flexibly but there are also formal systems in place whereby staff can request to change their work mode (e.g. part-time working, job sharing and compressed hours) on either a temporary or fixed-term basis. Staff are also encouraged to take part in a variety of leadership mentoring programmes. For example, approximately 20% of staff within the Unit have participated in AURORA as both mentors and mentees, as well as in the ASPIRE programme. In this assessment period, all of the staff promoted to Professor have been women.

The University has a vibrant community of self-organised staff diversity networks. The networks assist staff with career development but also play a role in providing subject-matter expertise for consultation on equality, diversity and inclusion issues. Staff within the Unit play a very active role in these, especially in the Care and Caring, BAME and LGBT+ networks. The Care and Caring Network @ OU is a staff network which promotes carers' rights and offers advice and guidance in carer-related development. This network was a finalist in the Staff Experience category of the Guardian University Awards 2020. It was established by **Larkin**, drawing on her research expertise in caring and supported by an NIHR SSCR grant (2016-17) awarded to establish a carer-related knowledge exchange network (CAREN). **Douglas** is a leading member of the BAME network which has strong links to the Black Women's Health & Wellbeing Research Network hosted in WELS. The BAME network has been instrumental in establishing the Race and Ethnicity Hub on The Open University's free learning site, Open Learn. Inspired by the debates and actions of BLM, it was launched in 2020, to offer insight, thought-leadership and up-to-date reactions to current affairs. **Boukli** and **Gabb** are active members of the LGBT+ network and have been responsible for the development of a gender and sexualities hub on Open Learn. Looking forward, a LGBT hub is being developed for an anticipated launch in 2021. **Gillespie** also leads the University's application to become a recognised University of Sanctuary, securing a sustainable commitment to funding scholarships and to producing free online, open access resources for asylum-seekers and refugees.

The University has a strong commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion but this is further enhanced by bespoke programmes of activity within the Faculties. For example, the 'Wellbeing@WELS'/'Wellbeing@FASS' programmes raise awareness of mental health issues

within Faculties, complementing University-led initiatives that promote wellbeing, such as the Wellbeing+ service (an employee assistance programme). These bespoke Faculty programmes are open to all staff and students. In FASS a new initiative on identifying and reducing barriers to BAME participation in research has also been adopted. The initiative provides guidance to researchers on how to avoid barriers to participation for marginalised ethnicities and other disadvantaged groups. It focuses on consideration of both majority and minority ethnicities, intersectional inequalities, as well as the different contexts of research (UK, Europe, Global South) in response to the Rethinking Research Collaborative's recommendations to the UKRI, which focuses on fair and equitable research partnerships.

3. Income, infrastructure and facilities

3.1 Income

Our strategy for securing research income is guided by a commitment to research that is multi-disciplinary, theoretical, theoretically informed, empirical and applied. We maintain a balanced portfolio of research funding that reflects these aims. Our approach is also driven by a strong, long-term commitment to research that addresses the everyday lives of communities and individuals that experience intersecting and cumulative disadvantage, marginalisation and exclusion. As detailed in REF5a, the University, through its Research, Enterprise and Scholarship Unit (RES), has a robust infrastructure for supporting research and research impact activities.

In this REF period, total grant income was c. £4.5 million. Research funding came from: UKRI (65%), UK-based charities (6%), UK central government (9%), UK central government NIHR (8%), UK industry (3%), EU government (6%), EU-based charities/other (2%) and non-EU-based charities/other (1%). Of note is a proportionate increase in UK government funding, particularly NIHR. This compares to income of just over £1m in REF 2014. Between 2008 and 2014 there had been a decline in research income within the Unit which, by 2013/14 had already shown signs of recovery. This positive trend has continued, reflecting our success in implementing our research strategy.

We have sought to maximise external funding within the PhD and DTP programmes, and this has been effective although challenging in a period of austerity. We have secured co-funding from Relate (2012-15), Willen Hospice (2017-21), Public Health England (2018-22), Western Sussex Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (2020-24) and income in-kind from Beyond Words (2019-22).

3.2 Organisation and Support for Research

The University has made significant investment in research during this assessment period, particularly in initiatives that support collaboration across the University and externally and especially in interdisciplinary research. Investment has been made in five University Strategic Research Areas (SRA), two of which contribute to this Unit: the *Citizenship & Governance* and *Health & Wellbeing* SRAs. The *Citizenship & Governance* SRA is led by an SRA Director, an Associate Director (**Gabb**) who spend 20% of her time in this role and several research leads (**Boukli, Erel, Gabb**). The *Health & Wellbeing* SRA is led by the SRA Director (**Earle S.**) who spends 40% of her time on this, supported by additional investment of one Research Fellow (**Marston**) and a University Research Board with cross-discipline representation. Both SRAs have received additional investment for research administrator posts. The SRAs support several pan-University Special Interest Groups the majority of which contribute to this submission. The SRAs use strategic investment to create a collaborative interdisciplinary research environment within the University facilitating external grant income through initiatives such as 'Research Sandpits' 'Bidding for Funding Factories' and networking events with key stakeholders. The *Harm & Evidence Research Collaborative* (HERC), located in FASS, is a multidisciplinary cross-Faculty

initiative currently led by **McCulloch**. HERC is a unique initiative that seeks to unite contemporary practice-based research with critical policy analysis. It runs an interdisciplinary programme of events, hosts seminars and runs conferences, and has a vibrant blog series.

Faculties receive an allocation of QR funding from the University to support research. This is used to manage the cost of Faculty and School research infrastructures, including administrative support, researcher development and pump-priming. In this assessment period the Faculties have invested in two new full-time Senior/Research Fellows (**Newton** (permanent), **Jordan** (fixed term)). Each Faculty has a research support team (RST), led by the ADR, which co-ordinates research within Faculties and across Schools and Departments but providing more localised and discipline-based support. RSTs provide administrative support to academic and research staff, providing a range of pre- and post-award services including targeted horizon scanning, support with pricing and costing of grants, budget management and monitoring. RSTs are also responsible for organising the peer-review of research grant applications prior to submission; each grant is reviewed by one or two reviewers (depending on the size and complexity of the grant) providing either substantive and/or methodological, or funder expertise.

Under the leadership of the ADRs and AHoS, Faculties each provide a comprehensive programme of research activities that support external grant income capture (and research impact). Within Schools, the AHoS organise activities such as research proposal clinics and bidding workshops that complement other staff development activities. Unsuccessful grants are reviewed by RSTs with a view to supporting the applicant with potential resubmission. Regular 'Bidding for Funding' workshops are held and designed, in particular, to support more junior staff. Each School also has a ring-fenced budget specifically available to support activities that help generate external research income. The type of activities supported include seed-funding to develop small projects that enable staff to leverage larger grants and (in HC&SW) the funding of proof-of-concept studies. Research bidding is also included in individual RDPs and is discussed with line managers as part of CDSA.

These formal activities are in addition to the more informal day-to-day mentoring, support and collegiality that is found within research groups where more senior colleagues work alongside junior colleagues in the development of research proposals.

3.3 Supporting Research Impact

The approach we take to generating research income is directly entwined with our strategy for research impact. We highly value research that promotes social justice through critical enquiry and engagement with the lived experiences of individuals and communities. We have a robust infrastructure to support and develop research impact at Faculty level, which complements the support provided by the University. We have made significant investments and support research impact within the Unit in three key ways.

(1) Our preparations for REF2014 promoted **a more pro-active and interdisciplinary approach to impact** activities than had previously been the case and we have continued to develop this. Two strategic initiatives, in particular, have strengthened our ability to be more pro-active.

First, the reconfiguration of research with social work and social policy within the University. As part of this change, we appointed two academic Impact Co-ordinators (one in each Faculty) who work collaboratively within the Unit; each Impact Co-ordinator spends 20% of their time on this. The Impact Co-ordinators work with staff on a 1:1 basis to develop research impact but also regularly organise cross-Faculty research impact workshops to support the development of impact

through the research life cycle, from proposal stage through to the generation of impact based on existing research findings and recommendations.

Second, the establishment of the SRAs. The Health & Wellbeing SRA, for example, has established an 'impact buddying' system which encourages collaboration between researchers across the OU particularly in relation to strengthening stakeholder engagement with patients, service users, carers and other publics including policy makers, professionals and practitioners. The SRAs have also organised impact workshops and other activities within their substantive interdisciplinary areas of interest.

The Impact Co-ordinators drive our research impact agenda, supported by the provision of a ring-fenced budget for impact and public engagement activities and staff development. Within the SRAs budget is also set aside for activities that develop and support impact. Further pump-priming funding is also periodically made available via central institutional budgets for additional impact work or special projects.

(2) We continue to **support inclusive and participatory forms of research** that enable key stakeholders to contribute to and inform our research agenda. We have a long history of this within the Unit as showcased in REF2014 and RAE2008 submissions. Selected examples within this submission include: (i) The 'Salvage Research Project' (**Downes**), which created knowledge about the lived experience of harm, violence and abuse in radical activist communities in the United Kingdom using participatory action research; (ii) **McCulloch's** work on visual methodologies and 'marginalised' populations; (iii) The establishment of an inclusive UK/Japan network on learning disability and belonging involving teams of academics, people with learning disabilities and family carers (**Tilley**); (iv) **Yeates'** PRARI project where academics work with civil society groups, government departments and regional secretariat across 15 countries in southern Africa. (See ICS-2 on migrants' rights).

(3) We seek to **build long-term strategic partnerships** that facilitate research impact especially through the fostering of cross-sector alliances and research hubs. Examples of these include: (i) the *Black Women's Health & Wellbeing Research Network* (**Douglas**) (see Section 2.3) (ii) the *Carer Research and Knowledge Exchange Network* (CAREN) (**Larkin**), (see Section 2.3) (iii) the *Harm and Evidence Research Collaborative* (HERC) (**McCulloch**), which has advanced public understanding crime and criminal justice through a partnership with the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies (2010-2020).

3.4 Research Infrastructure

The strategic research areas and research collaborative form a key component of our research infrastructure allowing both discipline-based, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research to thrive. Participation in these groups is fluid and staff are often aligned to one (or more) of these groups. They also form a vital part of our infrastructure for income-generation, as detailed below.

Citizenship & Governance SRA

The *Citizenship & Governance* SRA provides the framework for research that focuses on the changing relationships between governance, institutions and citizens. Our research excellence in globalist social policy conceptions of Migration, Borders and Rights has been further developed by **Yeates** through a Canadian Institutes for Health Research grant on health worker migration and recruitment (2012-13) and an ESRC/DfID Joint Fund grant on world-regional governance of health-related poverty reduction (2014-15). **Erel's** work centres on how gender, migration and ethnicity inform practices of citizenship, funded by AHRC (2013-15) and ESRC (2016-18).

Gillespie has secured numerous research grants to continue her work in the areas of migration and media, cultures of diplomacy, and security and citizenship. Collaborative research on Syrian refugees and smartphones has supported the creation of a new digital service for refugees by international broadcasters (European Commission 2016-18). **Gillespie** has also secured several other grants to develop innovative methods for cultural research in partnership with the British Council (for example, AHRC, 2013-14; British Council, 2016-19). This research by **Erel** and **Gillespie** underpins the case study on research with refugees. **Watson's** long-standing expertise in markets as sites of public space and social interaction has been extended through a HERA-funded international project on moving marketplaces (2018-20). She has also continued to develop her expertise in the relationship between individuals and their environment and the governmental and regulatory practices that surround them through a research project on city water (Thames Water, 2014-15).

Emphasis on issues relating to intimacy and relationships have extended the research within the SRA. Building on her research (ESRC, 2011-2014) on adult couple relationships **Gabb** continues to explore the application of this to the development of sex and relationship tools. The findings from this work inform ICS-1 on couple relationships and a new project on sex and relationship tools will extend this work in the future (Wellcome, 2020-22).

Harm and Evidence Research Collaborative (HERC)

The signature theme of crime and social harm is focused on the research of the multi-disciplinary and cross-Faculty research group, the *Harm and Evidence Research Collaborative* (HERC). **Tombs'** Leverhulme Leadership Fellowship (2013-14) explored social protection through exploring the dynamics of local authority enforcement against business. **Canning** secured an ESRC Future Research Leaders award (2016-18) on gendered experiences of social harm in asylum. Contributing to the theme of gendered harms, **Downes** has also contributed to the expertise in this area through a participatory action research project funded by the Feminist Review Trust (2016-17) on lived experiences of harm, violence and abuse in radical activist communities in the UK. In addition to his work on homelessness and crime, **McCulloch's** research also contributes to the Unit's expertise on innovative research methods. His ESRC NCRM award (2017-19) on participatory visual methods focuses on the concept of 'giving voice' and the understandings of these 'voices' by various audiences, including advocacy groups and practitioners. Participatory methods were also used by **Earle R.** in his evaluation project on the development of services for young people in custody (Howard League Youth Participation, 2016-18). He has also received funding for an ethnographic study on the perspectives of men defined as convict criminologists (ISRF, 2016-17).

A new project 'What worked? Policy Mobility and the Public Health Approach to Youth Violence' awarded to **Irwin-Rogers** in collaboration with The London School of Economics and The University of Edinburgh will continue to extend research within HERC (ESRC, 2020-22).

Health & Wellbeing SRA

Research within this SRA focuses on (non)normative trajectories across the lifecourse underpinned by the innovative and participative research methodologies highlighted in the REF2014 submission. Our agenda-setting research on age and ageing continues to be extended by new staff including **Deepak-Gopinath** who has been awarded a British Academy grant on 'coupledom' and the impact of separate living in later life (2017-19). **O'Dell** has received funding to support her research on children and families who are in some way 'different' including a British Academy (2017) grant on young women and girls with ADHD. She was also funded by Leverhulme (2014-2017) for an international interdisciplinary critical autism network and by the Family Rights

Group to explore the impact of child protection on families (2014-15). **Robb** collaborated with the charity Action for Children on a project exploring the role of male role models in the lives of young men who use welfare services (ESRC, 2013-15). He was also funded by the charity Promundo to explore young men's views of masculinity and wellbeing (2016-17). Participatory and collaborative research with people with learning disabilities continues to be a central feature of research on health and wellbeing. **Earle S.** and **Tilley** received funding from Open Society Foundations (2014-15) for inclusive research on contraceptive decision-making by women with learning disabilities. They have also carried out research on service delivery and commissioning including projects funded by MacIntyre Care (2013-14; 2014-15) and The Home Farm Trust (2014). **Tilley** was funded by AHRC (2014-17) to develop a co-produced, inclusive archive of learning disability history in collaboration with the Rix Centre at the University of East London and the University of Leeds. **Tilley** has also been involved in leading a number of ESRC-funded research networks and seminars including a research seminar series on the methodological challenges of inclusive research (2013-14) and a UK/Japan inclusive network on 'belonging' and intellectual disability (2019-20). Research on death, dying and bereavement continues to examine the intersection between theory and practice. **Borgstrom** collaborates with LSHTM on the 'forms of care' project, a three-year ethnographic study on palliative care (ESRC, 2017-21). **Mackian's** SpELS project, funded by AHRC (2014-2016) has extended our work beyond the focus on end-of-life and palliative care with its focus on spirit and spiritual awareness. Research on reproductive and sexual health has especially flourished within the submission period. **Earle S.** received the unit's first NIHR award (2014-2016) for her research on women's experiences of pre-conception care policy and practice. She also received funding from Together for Short Lives (2018-2020) to develop evidence-based, inclusive open educational resources on sex and intimacy for young people with life-limiting conditions. Research on sexualities has been extended by **Keogh** who has received NIHR funding (2018-2020) on the integration of health care for adults who identify as trans. **Hoggart** and **Newton** have been funded for their work on abortion policy and politics (Bayer, 2014-16; 2017-18 and Marie-Stopes International, 2014-2016). In collaboration with the University of Oxford, they have also received funding from the ESRC for a programme of knowledge exchange activities which extend this work further. **Hoggart** has secured funding from DfID (2019-23) for a project using participatory, people-centred approaches to respond to international sexual and reproductive health and rights priorities. **Newton** has also recently received an AHRC early career grant (2020-21) which adopts innovative participatory research on the role of vernacular knowledge in women's' contraceptive decision-making in partnership with Public Health England and The Folklore Society. The research by **Hoggart** and **Newton** underpin ICS-3 on abortion stories.

New projects in health and wellbeing include a NIHR-funded grant with University of Oxford on 'Improving the support for older people with learning disabilities and behaviours that challenge' (**Tilley, Larkin, Vseteckova**, 2020-22); a Wellcome Trust award on experiences of abortion during COVID-19 (**Newton**, 2020-21); and a collaborative project on the impact of participation in the arts for families with disabled children with Milton Keynes Gallery (**O'Dell, Rixon**, 2020-21).

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

Forging collaborations, networks and partnerships with a diverse range of publics, stakeholders and constituencies has been central to our research and impact strategies and will remain so in the future. Our collaborations are framed within The Open University's social justice and public education missions, the breadth of our global reach and the networks facilitated through the national centres.

4.1 National and International Collaborations

Our collaborations are research and engagement driven and supported through departmental and Faculty policies, strategic investment, as well as the University's mission. This open environment has proved effective in that researchers within the Unit are partners in a wide range of national and international, academic and non-academic collaborations. Selected formal collaborations (i.e. visiting positions and/or work on collaborative funded projects) are detailed below. Our unit also has other informal collaborations with 90+ leading UK and international universities.

Selected formal International and National Academic Collaborations:

Visiting Positions – University of Glasgow (**Borgstrom**); Teesside University, King's College London, Oxford Brookes (**Boukli**); Auckland University of Technology, Law School, New Zealand (**Boukli**); Academic Advisory Group, Social and Policy Sciences, University of Bristol (**Fergusson**); Flinders University (**Gabb**); Örebro University, Sweden (**Gabb**); University of Verona, Italy (**Gabb**); Cardiff University and Glyndwr University (**Green**); Public Health England (**Hoggart, Newton**); London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (**Keogh**); Centre for British Studies, Humboldt University Berlin (**Mooney**); Queensland University of Technology (**Phoenix**); University of Toronto, (**Phoenix, Scott**); University of Padua, Italy (**Scott**); University of Turku (**Tombs**); Monash University, Australia (**Tombs**); Max Planck Institute, Germany (**Watson**); Centro de Estudios Nacionles de Desarrollo Alternativo, Santiago, Chile (**Yeates**).

Funded Collaborations – Greenwich University and UCC Ireland (**Erel**); collaborative research centre Global Dynamics of Social Policy, University of Bremen (**Fergusson, Yeates**); UCL and Cardiff Universities (**Gabb**); Flinders University, Boise University and Florida State University (**Gabb**); Universities of Uppsala, Virginia Tech, Polish Academy Sciences (**Gabb**); University of Southern Queensland Australia, Rosqvist Umea University Sweden, University of Ottawa Canada, State University of Rio de Janeiro Brazil (**O'Dell**); Memorial University Newfoundland, Canada (**Phoenix**), University of Toronto (**Phoenix**), Istituto Affari Internazionali, Napoli, Italy, Durham University and Teesside University (**Phoenix**); Tenri University Japan, University of Oxford (**Tilley**); University of Adelaide (**Taylor**), University of Lingnan, Hong Kong, Balsillie School of International Affairs, Waterloo, Ontario, University of Johannesburg, South Africa and University College Cork (**Yeates**).

Researchers in the Unit collaborate with a tremendous variety of non-academic bodies, as the five ICS bear witness. Below is a selected list of the more significant formal collaborations.

Selected formal non-academic collaborations

Consortium with International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), International HIV/AIDS Alliance (Alliance), Women's Refugee Commission (WRC), and Internews Europe (Internews) (**Hoggart**, Academic Director), Howard League for Penal Reform, Research Advisory Group (**Irwin-Rogers, Phoenix**), STAGE Women Influencers Group (**Phoenix**), Wellcome Trust, Relate, Brook, One Plus One (**Gabb**), International Conference on Penal Abolition (**Scott**), Reclaim Justice / Abolitionist Futures (**Scott**), Youth Violence Commission (**Irwin-Rogers**, Academic Lead); Victim Support Scotland, Aberdeen, Liverpool, HESTIA (**Boukli**), Welsh Government (**Green**), Career Wales (**Green**), Carers Wales (**Fergusson**); FLACSO (Argentina), SAIIA (South Africa), UNU-CRIS (Belgium), SADC (Botswana), Health Systems Trust (South Africa), UNRISD (Geneva), WHO, People's Health Movement, ILO, UN Women, OECD + 15 governments worldwide and the World Bank (**Yeates**), Centre for Crime and Justice Studies (**Phoenix**, Trustee); Griffins Society (**Phoenix**); INQUEST (**Tombs**, Trustee), Hazards and Institute of Employment Rights (**Tombs**), NICE (Vice Chair for

committee transitions between hospital and community care (**Vicary**), the International Stillbirth Alliance Bereavement Working Group (**Jones, K.**) **Larkin** is the carer research and evidence lead on numerous government committees including the Ministerial COVID-19 Adult Social Care Taskforce (2020), the NHS England Commitment to Carers Oversight Group (2017-), the NICE Guideline Committee on provision of support for adult carers (2017-), and the cross-Government Independent Advisory Group on Carers (2016-17), Dementia Voices (**Tilley**).

4.2 Collaborations with the BBC and Open Learn

The research and expertise of many of the academics in this unit have underpinned a range of public engagement activities including documentaries, podcasts and Open Learn materials. Selected highlights include:

- *Exodus: Our Journey to Europe* (**Gillespie, Erel**, winner of 8 awards, including BAFTA best factual series)
- *Psychosis and Me* (**Vicary**, winner of Mind Media Awards, Speaking Out Category (2019) and nominated for Learning on Screen, Educational Film)
- *Drugland* (**Earle, R.** nominated for BAFTA Television Awards, Best Factual Series and Best Director, 2018)
- *Hospital, Series 1 & 2* (**Samra**, winner of 4 awards and shortlisted for 2 more including a BAFTA, Best Factual Series in 2018)
- *The Fires That Foretold Grenfell* (**Tombs**, winner of Learning on Screen Broadcast 2019 and Royal Television Society Journalism, Current Affairs (Home) 2019)
- *Why Slavery?* (**Boukli**, nominated for two awards)

Selected other collaborations with the BBC include:

- Documentaries: *Ed Balls: Travel in Euroland* (**Phoenix**); *Child of Our Time* (**Gray**), *A Time to Live* (**Jones K.**), *Protecting Our Parents* (**Vicary**), *People's History of LGBTQ+ Britain* (**Gabb**)
- BBC Ideas: *Alternatives to Nature* (**Dimou**), *What would a world without prisons be like?* (**Scott and Drake**) *How I went from prisoner to PhD* (**McCulloch**)
- Regular appearances of our academics on Radio 4 *Thinking Allowed* (**Westmarland, Watson** are the academic consultants for this programme) and *All in the Mind* (**Vseteckova**)
- Open Learn: of the 184 currently available courses, MOOCs and BOCs on Open Learn, researchers in this unit are responsible for in excess of 40 of them, including two social work courses that between them had in excess of 50K visits in 2019-2020 alone.

4.3 Engaged Research and Enterprise

University and Faculty strategies for impact, engagement and enterprise stress the interconnectedness of these activities with research. To that end, the approach we take to generating research income is directly entwined with our strategy for research impact. We have a robust infrastructure to support and develop research impact at Faculty level, which complements the support provided by the University (see Section 3). We have made significant investments and support research impact within the Unit through: **a pro-active and interdisciplinary approach to impact** activities facilitated by academic Impact Co-ordinators and through support from SRAs (see Section 3); supporting **inclusive and participatory forms of research** that enable key stakeholders to contribute to and set our research agenda; and **building long-term strategic**

partnerships that facilitate research impact especially through the fostering of cross-sector alliances and research hubs.

Selected evidence demonstrating success of this approach:

- *Social History of Learning Disabilities Group (Tilley)*, established in 1994, is well known for its inclusive conferences and co-publishing with people with lived experience and service users. Its highly participatory approach is exemplified by the employment of the first learning disabled person on an RA contract as part of an AHRC-funded (2014-17) project on inclusive archives.
- The establishment of an inclusive UK/Japan network on learning disability and belonging involving teams of academics, people with learning disabilities and family carers, funded by ESRC (2019-20).
- The *Sexuality Alliance (Earle S.)*, established in 2013, which is a multi-sectoral collaboration promoting sexual citizenship and rights for young people with life-limiting or life-threatening conditions (LLTCs).
- The *Black Women's Health & Wellbeing Research Network (Douglas)* which promotes the health and wellbeing of black women through research and knowledge exchange in the UK, North, South, Middle America and Caribbean. Since 2011, annual Network seminars bring together participants from health, local authority and the voluntary sectors with researchers.
- The *Carer Research and Knowledge Exchange Network (CAREN) (Larkin)*, a global initiative which brings together key stakeholders in knowledge exchange and research on care and caring.
- Strategic leverage of Higher Education Innovation Funding (HEIF) has further enabled engaged research within **health and wellbeing**. For example, **Earle S.** established the Sexuality Alliance, a multi-sectoral, multi-professional and inclusive network that has gone on to develop standards and guidance on sex and relationships for the young adult palliative care sector which has changed policy and practice. This led to follow-on work funded by the charity Together for Short Lives (2018-2020). **Newton** has received HEIF and subsequently Wellcome Trust funding to explore 'Experiences of Abortion During Covid-19' (2020).
- The provision of expert reviews, witness statements for national Courts, governmental departments and national reviews as well as specialist advisors on national level committees: for instance **Scott, McCulloch** and **Phoenix** have acted as expert witnesses to the High Court; **Tombs** has provided expert input to Manifesto for Labour Law for McDonnell/Labour Party Regulatory Reform and into the Committee inquiry into the Government's deregulation agenda; **Vicary** sits as specialist advisor on NICE's Quality Advisory Committee; **Tilley** supported the co-production of the DEEP Ethics Gold Standards in dementia research; **Phoenix** provided expert evidence to Danish Parliament, Folketing, Copenhagen and expert report reviewing for the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty, the Home Office; **Erel** and **Gillespie** have given evidence in the House of Commons and worked on arts-based methods with leading UK race equality charities such as Runnymede Trust.
- Collaborations with a diverse range of NGOs and charities in the areas of homeless and housing (**Cooper**), relationships support (**Gabb, Deepak-Gopinath**), relationships and sex education services (**Earle, Gabb, Hoggart, Newton**), and social justice movements (**Downes**), Local Authorities (**Cooper**), LGBTQ+ victim support and criminal justice

networks (**Boukli, Rowe**), Relate, the Tavistock Clinic and Brook (notably with **Hoggart** advising on Brook's own formation of an ethics committee).

- At international/global level, Yeates is an invited expert for the WHO Advisory Group on WHO Code of Practice for the Ethical Recruitment of Health Personnel, is an invited regular collaborator for UN Research Institute for Social Development and ILO on different aspects of global social, health and labour (migration) policy.

Our approach, through ring-fenced budget and Impact Co-ordinators has identified 17 potential future ICS including:

- Improving Contraceptive Knowledge and Understanding (**Hoggart, Newton**)
- Sex and Relationships for People with Life-limiting and/or Life-threatening Conditions (**Earle, S.**)
- Older people's experience of care: informing professional practice and policy development (**Deepak-Gopinath**)
- Changing policy and practice through critical approaches to autism and neurodiversity. (**O'Dell**)
- Improving access to health and inclusive social development in the Southern African Development Community (**Yeates**)

4.4 Responding to National and International Priorities

The openness of the research infrastructure (described in Section 1 and 3) combined with university level investment and research support facilitated rapid turnaround research and engagement activities and has meant that the Unit is well-placed to respond to national and international priorities. The best evidence for this is our response to COVID-19. Through external funding and internal investment, we have examined the challenges of the pandemic and its wide reaching societal impacts across many different social policy and public domains, including health and well-being, criminal and social justice, migration, on-line and distance learning, vulnerable communities and public understanding. Below is a selection of notable responses, including primary research, supporting collaborative explorations, public engagement activities and rapid reviews of evidence:

- *Cov19: Chronicles from the margin* – a participatory project lead by **Gillespie** co-created with researchers based in Swansea, with direct experience of forced migration currently chronicling the experiences of COVID-19 (<https://cov19chronicles.com/>).
- A collaboration with experts by experience, *Together for Short Lives*, *Hospice UK* and the *International Children's Palliative Care Network* to understand the unintended consequences of the pandemic on young adults with life-limiting or life-threatening conditions (**Earle S, Marston, O'Dell**).
- *Health and Social Care in the context of COVID-19: Mobility and enclosed environments* (targeting public health and social care workforce and policy makers in understanding the impact of COVID-19 on the delivery of health and social care services in community and closed settings (**Gray**)).
- *The impact of COVID-9 on the grief of care home staff* (review of care home staff emotions, stressors and coping during the MERS-CoV in the Middle East and SARS in China in order to establish policy recommendations for care home staff during COVID-19 (**Jones, K.**)).
- MyBodyMyLife Covid-19 response (exploring experiences of unintended pregnancy and abortion during COVID-19 crisis (**Newton**)).

- *Impact of COVID 19 on death anxiety in children and young people* (exploring the impact of C19 on children aged 9-11 and young people aged 12-16 in relation to their support needs (**Jones, K.**)).
- *Surviving through Story* (capturing and sharing lockdown narratives amongst people with learning disabilities in order to address concerns about social isolation and lack of voice (**Tilley**)).
- A collaboration between the Open University and Universities SNSPA Romania, University of Malta, Singapore University of Social Science, Universitat Oberta Catalunya Spain, University of Vienna, University of Graz Austria, Medical University Graz Austria, University of Munster Germany, Central University of Punjab India, Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University Turkey, University of Coimbra Portugal on an international survey on social isolation, inclusion and wellbeing during the pandemic (**Marston, Earle, S.**).
- ‘*Socially distanced criminal justice*’ – a collaboration between The Open University (**Phoenix**) and long term collaborative partner, The Centre for Crime and Justice Studies (CCJS) to host three webinars that drew together nearly 20 with over 200 participants across three seminars from seven different countries – including China, Brazil, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, USA and UK (<https://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/tags/socially-distanced-justice>).
- The innovative blogs series devoted to ‘Social Scientific Research in the Time of COVID-19’, with contributions from, inter alia, **Boukli, Carter, Cooper, Dimou, Downes, Erel, Gabb, Gillespie, Kent, Phoenix, Scott, Tombs** and **Watson**.

Many of these COVID-19 responses form part of the necessary background and pilot work for future externally funded grants and for future publications and outputs.

4.5 Contribution to the Research Base

Selected journal editing, editorial board membership and publication reviewing. Journal editorial roles include: **Borgstrom** *Mortality* (2020); **Boukli**, *Journal of Trafficking, Organised Crime and Security* (2014-); **Deepak-Gopinath** *Families, Relationships & Societies* (2020) **Earle** *Human Fertility* (2014-); **Erel** *Sociology*, **Gabb** *Families, Relationships & Societies* (2010-19); **Hoggart** *BMJ Sexual & Reproductive Health* (2020-); **Larkin** – *International Journal of Care & Caring* (2016-); **Phoenix** *The British Journal of Criminology* (2010 – 2016), **O’Dell** *Children & Society* (2011-17); **Scott** *Justice, Power and Resistance* (2015-17); *Howard Journal of Crime and Justice* (2015-16); *Howard Journal of Criminal Justice* (2013-15); **Tilley** *British Journal of Learning Disabilities* (2020-); **Tombs** *White-Collar and Corporate Crime: An International and Multidisciplinary Journal* (2018-); *Justice, Power and Resistance* (2018-20). **Watson**, *Sociology* (2014-2019); **Yeates** *Social Policy and Society* (2013-2018). Our researchers have also guest edited 13 special editions and have been members of +60 editorial boards. They review for over 200 journals and numerous publishers.

Selected participation on national and international grant committees and reviewing. **Borgstrom** (Dutch Cancer Society; ESRC member of peer review college, National Science Foundation Switzerland; Wellcome); **Carter** (Wellcome); **de Henau** (ESRC); **Douglas** (Health Foundation panel member); **Earle S.** (Diabetes UK, NIHR); **Erel** (Czech Science Foundation; FWF Der Wissenschaftsfonds; National Science Centre Poland; Research Foundation Flanders); **Gabb** (Academy of Medical Sciences, ESRC panel member/member of peer review college, Nordic Research Council in the Humanities & Social Sciences); **Hoggart** (British Academy, ESRC); **Jones K.** (Arthritis UK, Bliss, MRC); **Jones R.** (Marie Curie International); **Larkin** (Dunhill Medical

Trust, ESRC member peer review college, Irish Research Council, NIHR, SSCR); **Marston** (ESRC, UKRI ISCF panel member); **Murphy** (NIHR); **Newton** (NIHR); Phoenix (ESRC, Leverhulme, UKRI MRC, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, Canada) **Robb** (ESRC, member peer review college); **Taylor** (ESRC, Swiss National Fund); **Tombs** (Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research, The British Academy, The Leverhulme Trust, The Nuffield Foundation, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Canada); **Watson** (ESRC); **Vicary** (NIHR); **Vsetekova** (ESRC, MRC); **Yeates** (Austrian Council for Research & Technology Development; ESRC member peer review college, European Research Council, Irish Research Council, Swedish Research Council, UN).

Selected invited keynotes and conference chair roles.

Keynotes: **Cooper** *Social Work Action Network*, Liverpool (2019); **Cole** *Nonhuman Animals in Society: Exploring new Pathways for Resistance, Change and Accommodation*, Lund University, Sweden (2017); *Inaugural Conference of International Association of Vegan Sociologists*, (2020); **Copson** *Second Expert Meeting on the Role of Utopia in Contemporary Society*, The Research Institute for Culture, Cognition, History and Heritage, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (2019); **De-Henau** *Policy-Makers' conference of the PSA (Political Association Studies) Care Commission*, London (2016), *EPSU annual conference (European Public Service Unions)*, Prague (2018); **Downes** *International Conference on Lesbian Lives*, Brighton (2018); **Erel** *Migrant Women's Participatory Theatre*, Utrecht, The Netherlands (2017), *NordHome Conference*, University of Turku, Finland (2016), *Contested Terrains*, Women's and Gender Studies section, German Sociological Association (2015), *Migration and Democracy Conference IRM* (2015); **Hoggart** *British Society of Abortion providers Annual Conference*, London (2020); **Scott** *British Society of Criminology Annual Conference* (2019), *Human Rights, Justice and Criminology Conference*, University of Auckland, New Zealand (2017), *Contemporary Slavery, Degradation and Denial Conference*, Leuven, Leuven University, Belgium (2016); **Larkin** *Carers New South Wales Biennial Conference*, Sydney, Australia (2018), *Family Carers Ireland 'Life after caring' Conference*, Dublin (2018); **Marston** *Digital Inclusion and Use of ICT by and for Older People* (2018), *International Child and Information Safety Congress Digital Games*, Turkey (2018); **Mooney** *University of Wisconsin River Falls Summit on International Education*, River Falls, Wisconsin, USA (2019), *Social Work Action Network Conference*, University of the West of Scotland (2015), *Scottish State, UK State or Welfare State? Welfare Futures in Post-Independence Referendum Scotland*, Social Policy Association (2015); **Murphy** *International Stillbirth Alliance Annual Conference*, Madrid (2019); **O'Dell** *British Psychological Society's Psychology of Women annual conference* (2016). **Phoenix** *Queer(y)ing Justice Annual Conference*, University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia (2018); *Penal Boundaries Workshop*, University of Toronto, Canada (2017); **Taylor** *Creativeconf*, Anglia Ruskin (2015); **Tombs** *58th Annual Meeting of the Scandinavian Research Council for Criminology (NSfK) Bifröst*, Iceland (2016); *The 29th National Hazards Conference*, Keele University (2018); **Yeates** *Inaugural International Conference on Global Dynamics of Social Policy*, University of Bremen, Germany, (2018), *Doing comparative social policy in a global context* Lingnan University, Hong Kong (2017), *Launch Conference of the Global Alliance for Educational Change and Social Development*, Hong Kong Institute of Education, Hong Kong (2015).

Conference chair roles: **Borgstrom** *Death, Dying and Disposal Conference*, University of Bath, UK (2019); *BSA Social Aspects of Death, Dying & Bereavement Study Group Conferences* (2012-2017); **Taylor** 'Reconceptualizing Work' stream, WORK 2017 Work and Labour in the Digital Future Conference, University of Turku. Part-funded by WORK2017 (2017); *'Creative Labour in Transition' seminar*, King's College London. Funded by CMCI at KCL and the Centre for German European Studies SPBU-Bielefeld University (2017); **Vicary** *Effective discharge and pathways in*

Unit-level environment template (REF5b)

mental health, London (date); Effective discharge and pathways in mental health, London (date);
Yeates *Southern regionalisms, Global agendas: Innovating inclusive access to health and medicines in a context of social inequity*, Global Research and Policy Conference, ESRC, The Open University, Milton Keynes (2015).