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| Institution: University of Chester |
| Unit of Assessment: 20 Social Work and Social Policy |
| 1. Unit context and structure, research and impact strategy |

Overview:

Social Work and Social Policy (SWSP) research at the University of Chester (UOC) includes an ongoing commitment to further strengthening meaningful group and theme-based collaborations between pedagogues in different Departments and Faculties: including, principally, the Faculties of Social Science (FSS), Health and Social Care (FHSC), and Education and Children Services (FECS). Faculties and Departments are situated across distinct geographical locations, comprising, for example, a base for social science (including sociology, criminology and law) at Chester, social work at University Centre Warrington, and nursing at Riverside. The development of research initiatives, collaborations, impact and dissemination strategies has included work relating to specific Centres and Forums: including, for example, the *Centre for Adoption Support (CAS)*, *Centre for Ageing and Mental Health (CAMH)*, *Centre for Research and Education in Psychological Trauma (CREPT)* and the *Forum for Research into Equality and Diversity (FRED)*.

The research policy since 2014 has included ongoing research group meetings comprised of professionals and pedagogues in disciplines which include social work, criminology, sociology, counselling, and psychotherapy; alongside input from law, education, and nursing. Inter-professional research groups established in 2014 have developed over the past six years around three inter-related themes: social work and integrative care; crime, harm and justice; and sustainable communities. The research strategy continues to strengthen disciplinary links, networks, and forms of collaboration (including externally and internationally) to initiate more funded research projects. A key focus across these strategic themes include a cross-disciplinary commitment to promoting social justice and equity. This incorporates the capacity to support local community-based needs and responsibilities, achieve a better understanding and response to national and international social and political issues, improve methodological rigour, knowledge-based research and exchange, innovation and professional praxis.

Section 1. Unit context and structure, research and impact strategy**Unit Context:**

UOC rigorously selects, educates, and supplies social workers, psychological therapists, psychological trauma practitioners, nurses and teachers to community-based service providers in the North West of England and beyond. This impact includes the promotion of critically appraised and reflexive practices, which influence service delivery within local authorities, the NHS, schools, NGOs and independent or third-sector organisations. We seek also to influence local and national governments and, where possible, related global policy agendas. For example, in 2018, **Carey** was selected externally to become part of an Expert Focus Group, which included research active staff from the *University of Birmingham* and the *British Association of Social Work*, to develop and produce the first *Capabilities Statement for Social Workers in England who Work with Older People*. **Harlow's** involvement with University Centre Warrington-based *CAS*, *Alex Timpson Trust*, and the *Rees Centre* at the *University of Oxford*, has promoted the critically reflexive use of attachment theory by social workers and other welfare professionals involved in child-safeguarding work (case study).

Research strategy and objectives

The research strategy for UoA20 is designed to fit with a wider *UOC REF strategy* (2014-21) dedicated to supporting sustainability and the environment; health and wellbeing; culture and society; and the regional economy. We have sought to strengthen academic coherence to this unit, as well as ensure research vigour and sustainability. In relation, UoA20 reflects an analytical and reflexive social science and professional tradition, which aims to address inequalities and social exclusion,

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while promoting human rights, wellbeing and social justice across the region, nationally, and internationally.

We have sought to meet these broad aims through six core objectives:

1. **Promoting knowledge and evidence-informed research** which is participative and reflects changing social, political, and cultural needs.
2. **Maintaining a staff development programme**, which permits staff at all levels to pursue their research interests and fully realise their capabilities and interests, as well as collaborate with external institutions. This has included maintaining research-friendly workload systems, supportive management, mentoring, and a fair and inclusive promotions system that acknowledges achievements, engagement, and impact.
3. **Creating a recruitment policy**, which privileges research potential, achievements and capabilities for the nurturing of applied expertise.
4. **Provide support for external funding opportunities.**
5. **Provide support for postgraduate students**, including through regular supervision, annual reviews, training, mentoring, and so forth.
6. **Extending public engagement**, including through activities such as public lectures, co-production, and research-informed teaching guided by stakeholders.

Among other achievements, our two impact case studies (**Harlow, Davies**) epitomise our commitment to community-based research with equity and social inclusion as key objectives. We have sought also to increase our external research funding (total of £121,369 external research and consultancy funding), have had a significant increase in the numbers of PGR (including doctoral) students, with 18 doctoral completions, and continue to develop international networks.

We have, for example, increased doctoral completions from 3 in REF2014 to 18 in this REF cycle, representing an increase of 600%. Annual average completion rates have moved from 0.64 to 3. There has been a significant growth in research activity alongside the numbers of research active staff submitted for this unit: moving from 5 to 21 staff in total submitted for SWSP between 2014 and 2021. Contributions to the advancement of practice and policy debates at international, national, and regional levels have grown. For example, collaborations have been established with international Universities (e.g. Pace University; Tsinghua University; McMaster University) and external organisations, service users and professional organisations (e.g. *British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy*; *British Association of Social Work*; *United Nations*).

Research centres have formed and grown as part of the strategy. In 2013, the *Centre for Ageing and Mental Health (CAMH)* was established to respond to the challenges, needs and opportunities of an ageing society. This has since provided funded research, international consultancy and education, with an aim of promoting innovation and effectiveness in health and social care services for older people. **Ridgeway** and **Carey** have been involved in the multi-disciplinary research at CAMH which, with research outputs, has included the teaching of social workers and nurses by centre members. **Reeves** was a member of the steering group for the inter-disciplinary and cross-organisational scope of practice in training and education (SCoPEd) project, which has set out to map training competencies for the psychological therapies and establish new national standards for training. This three-way initiative is led by the *British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy*, The *United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy*, and the *British Psychoanalytic Council*.

Research themes:

Currently, UoA20 coalesces around three cross-cutting themes the development of which have been central to meeting our objectives. Each are represented by a research group:

- (i) **Social Work and Integrative Care:** this groups aims to better understand service user and patient needs, responsibilities, and improve professional praxis within health and social care services; alongside associate professional provision within law and counselling. **Reeves, Harlow, Carey** and **Buck** have drawn from their past experiences as practicing social workers to analyse applied themes, such as professional identity,

ethics, inequality, inclusion, and therapeutic praxis. In the *Journal of Social Work, Journal of Social Work Practice, etc.*, **Harlow** has provided original research around safeguarding that has informed social work practice in relation to the organisation, management, and delivery of services to children and their families. **Carey's** published work in *Ageing and Society, Ethics and Social Welfare*, and so on, focuses on ageing, care giving, disability and ethics, which can include the social and political impact of welfare service marketisation, conditionality and consumer-centred participation. **Reeves** has focused on understanding and preventing suicide for clients during psychological therapy. This has influenced national curriculum developments in collaborating with, and responding to, clients at risk of suicide and self-injury. This also led to the development of core training for all UK Relate counsellors, and influenced the *Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions* (BACP, 2019), and the standards set for members of the *British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy* in the UK.

The international research of **Keeling** has analysed the complex impact of domestic violence upon women and men, while **White** has made an impact with her research on foodbanks when collaborating with local stakeholders to explore social exclusion. By setting up the *West Cheshire Food Bank Research and Advisory Team* with local residents, **White** and others have used their research evidence to campaign and influence local and national policies on food-related needs and poverty.

- (ii) **Crime, Harm and Justice:** This group analyses the impact of crime, its interpretation and criminal justice policy and praxis. **Horsley, Taylor, Buck,** and **White** have sought to co-ordinate a critical discourse around themes, such as risk, agnotology, inequality and identity. For example, **Taylor** has compiled internationally based research on veterans' experiences of the criminal justice system in journals such as *Social Policy and Society*, coupled with original research on intermediate partner violence; **White** has explored the impact of neo-liberalism on the management of crime. **Horsley** has developed ultra-realist theory in his examination of debt, class and crime; **Buck** and **Taylor** have staked out an innovative bridge between criminology and social work, and **Buck's** research interests and collaborations with other Universities (for example, University of Nottingham, Liverpool John Moore's University, University of Toronto) have included an analysis of user-informed criminal justice, social work service provision and the role of the voluntary sector in criminal justice.
- (iii) **Sustainable Communities:** this group examines community, space, and environmental sustainability. **Cox** has cultivated work on mobilities/cycling in different international communities and how this can inform both researchers and policy makers about sustainable transport; **Francis** has engaged in global research including with regard making a difference about transforming war zones into social spaces for peace and reconciliation, thus focusing on cohesion in communities; **Bennett** and **Wood** have analysed belonging and place, in particular relating to spatial, class, race, gender and intergenerational inequalities across communities. **Fernandez** has provided international research on environmental policy and analysed the implications across European member states; **Carey, Powell** and **Taylor** have explored the impact of neoliberal policies on ageing populations in relation to social welfare, identity and belonging.

The three themes reflect current research strengths, collaborations and expertise but are 'live' insofar as they influence recruitment, the setting of research targets, and other strategy such as attempts to secure external funding and engage with stakeholders. Through various mechanisms, groups update one another of ongoing research activities (e.g. newsletter, seminar series, meetings etc.), research opportunities, and endeavour to create spaces for developing collaborations, including externally. Active professoriate groups to support and mentor staff in the FSS and FHSC meet regularly to develop strategy and discuss progress. The UoC has also established a responsible use of metrics, while focusing on the quality of the output rather than the impact factor of the journal. This is replicated in the *UOC Code of Practice* (2019) for equality and transparency and maintains that

outputs are open to all users. All outputs of our research are made available on *ChesterRep* at the University for impact, transparency, and openness.

As part of the strategic goals and infrastructure, regular meetings, and discussions (including online) have led to new directions for research. For example, methodologically **Ridgway** has utilised inventive visual, participative, and arts-based research methods to interpret her research findings into social work students' perceptions of ageing. **Gant** has co-produced and analysed with her former social work students the potential relevance of autoethnography in fields of welfare practice and social care. Critical perspectives have also emerged to analyse largely underexplored topics. **Gubi** has looked at the impact of the turn to atheism for some members of the clergy in London, while **Francis** has examined the costs of human trafficking in South Africa. **Bennett** has challenged the apparent safe, static or essentialist idealism of 'Englishness', while **White** has examined sexuality and identity for young women in Yorkshire, including in relation to neoliberal policy agendas. **Powell** has explored through Foucauldian analysis forms of conflict in Northern Ireland, while **Carey** has looked at the often-corrosive effect of Universal Credit and related conditionality-based welfare reforms upon lone mothers, and how these might be affecting aspects of social work practice with children and families.

Several activities have enabled the research strategy to continue to develop: for example, twice monthly research meetings where research ideas and current projects are shared and potential collaborations identified; research seminars to showcase the work of research active colleagues; the growth of practitioner-focused conferences; public lectures; workshops with external speakers to promote research and publications; research 'away days'; and between 2015 to 2019, QR funding to support research activities has included £40,000 for the Department of Social and Political Science (DPS), and £33,000 for social work staff within the Department of Social Work and Inter-Professional Education (SWIPE).

A funding strategy to guide decision-making about access to internal QR funding gave priority to supporting submittable staff to the REF. However, given our starting point our funding decisions have been influenced by our aspirations to increase research activity in the long term. To this end we have provided funds on a competitive basis. In keeping with the UOC's research strategy, it is also intended that the three research themes will fortify and increase their external funding of research over the next 10 years by a minimum of 20%; to broaden the range and status of external funders sought and to increase the numbers of staff who are successful in applications. To support this, a specific member of staff was appointed in 2020 to support research grant writing, and workshops are held regularly on writing research proposals and funding applications.

Future strategy:

It is intended for the next REF that the numbers of the three theme members of the UoA submitted will increase by at least a third. We plan to expand and consolidate international collaborations, engagement, outputs, post-graduate provision and impact. This will be achieved with our partners through the co-creation of knowledge and collaborative research, whilst engaging meaningfully with marginalised communities and groups for the public good through economic, social, cultural and environmental impact. There are two key issues that we wish to develop in the impact plan:

- i. **Strategic Partnerships** - We will identify and establish critical relationships with external partners in government, the public and third or independent sectors, alongside industry to inform and develop impact and promote innovation from our research. This includes internationally and globally and includes linking and shaping local provisions and needs identified in research to global trends and policy.
- ii. **Public Engagement** - We aim to increase engagement with the public throughout the research process, such as through co-production and especially by gaining insight into user, carer, patient and student needs and disseminating results for the benefit of civic society. A new marketing and communications programme will be delivered to communicate the UoA20 research and impact opportunities and results internally and externally through events, email communications, digital social media and on-line promotion.

In addition, seven further strategic ambitions persist which it is hoped will develop both research capacity and impact further:

- i. **Research clusters** – Although cross-disciplinary research themes and groups have progressed, further thematic alignment work is progressing, especially around essential areas such as equity and sustainability, ageing, at-risk populations and safeguarding. These will further promote inter-professional and participative projects with specific aims that strengthen the University wide evidence-base around social work, health, wellbeing, criminology and policy.
- ii. **Recruitment and staff development** – Alongside focused recruitment in sectors such as counselling and law, we are seeking to concentrate more attention on recruiting research active staff to build capacity while developing staff not engaged in research. For example, staff in social work and social and political science are completing Professional Doctorates or PhDs, while others are involved in research projects elsewhere in the FHSC. Initiatives, such as the increase in the availability of mentoring, training, and regular presentations of research - as well as the organisation of seminars and conferences, have encouraged staff to engage more with research activities. Within Social and Political Science, regular *Research in Practice* workshops are again held for postgraduate students and staff.
- iii. **Targets** – We continue to set research targets for staff, such as relating to publications in journals or grant bids, including through annual reviews and during mentoring. We intend to further build on such collaborations, including cross-disciplinary and Faculty attainments geared to the specific needs of Unit20 for staff.
- iv. **Post-graduate publications and dissemination** – We encourage PG students to publish their research in journals and disseminate in other forms, such as at conferences, to maximise impact. The aim is to support the dissemination of new forms of research and encourage greater impact, collaboration and co-production, such as between supervisors and students or among post-graduate student and research participants.
- v. **Methodological dynamism and rigour** – We aim to further promote methodological dynamism and rigour, including by recognising that the complexity of modern society demands innovation and risk-taking in research. For example, within the HSC Faculty, attempts have been made to increase teaching and use of mixed and quantitative methodologies and expertise. Moreover, new methodological approaches, such as **Ridgeway's** use of drawing and art to collect data have been used, and we will seek to expand such approaches where appropriate. Other staff have co-authored articles with PG students (e.g. **Gant, Carey**)
- vi. **Grant bids** – Further grant applications for each Faculty and department will be made in respective areas of expertise, including in collaboration with other staff across Departments and Faculties. Additional support is now provided for this, such as through the *Chester Grant Support Initiative*.

Teaching-led research – We are strengthening further the links between research, knowledge transfer and teaching. The specific research outcomes of staff remain central to teaching, for example, **Buxton, Gant, Harlow** and **Reeves** have closely linked their learning and teaching strategies with the latest and best evidence for the psychological therapies on the counselling, psychotherapy, psychological trauma and social work programmes.

2. People

Context and change

Research active staff play an active role in research groups that cut across disciplines and closely aligned Departments and Faculties. For example, as a social worker **Buck** has been involved in the Crime and Criminal Justice group, that includes colleagues from Sociology and Criminology. **Carey** (social worker) has previously been involved with the *Centre for Ageing and Mental Health* within allied health and nursing, as well as the Sustainable Communities research group comprising staff such as **Cox**, **Bennett** and **Davies** from sociology, criminology and law. **Reeves** (social worker and counsellor), **Ridgway** (nurse), and previously **Powell** (sociologist) and **Keeling** (nurse), have been part of the Social Work and Integrative Care group. Staff comprise a mix of mostly experienced and mid-career researchers, with some recent early career additions (e.g., **Buck**).

Invariably there have been some changes in staff in Departments such as Social and Political Science (DPS) and SWIPE in the FHSC. Pratesi submitted into REF 2014 has left UOC. **Carey** was appointed as Professor of Adult Social Work in 2014, and **Harlow's** position as full time Professor of Social Work since 2010 became part-time from 2016. **Gubi** and **Cox** have all been promoted to Professor within FSS, while **Ridgway** has been promoted to Associate Professor (and Associate Dean) within the FHSC and **Reeves** to Associate Professor in SPS. We have also been enabled to recruit ECRs on permanent contracts (i.e., **White**).

Staffing strategy and development

In line with UoC policy, Newly Appointed Staff (NAS) are given reduced teaching and administrative loads in their first year and priority with internal research support funds. Institutional and departmental staff induction ensures such NAS, and Early Career Researchers (ECRs), are alerted to any pathway opportunities and support infrastructure available to cement their career progression. NAS and ECRs are also mentored by senior staff and encouraged to participate in collaborative projects. Professional development is built in via research planning and formal and informal structures including, for example, ongoing training, mentoring and regular supervision. For example, ethics, research methodology, PG supervision training sessions are delivered. Departmental or specialist Centre-based staff also provide ongoing advice, support and mentoring on internal and external funding opportunities.

A significant amount of the University's QR funding has been allocated to Unit 20 staff (total £73,000), who have each since published in peer-reviewed journals from related findings. Managed targets for research grant applications and co-ordinated research activity are set each year. Moreover, the University has established a central *Research Development Fund* which has been used to support individual staff and early career researchers who demonstrate research excellence to build capacity. Since the 2014 submission, there has been a more than four-fold increase in staff (from 5 to 21) submitted to UoA20. The University Research Strategy thus reinforces the importance of research and impact and sets out the context in which units such as UoA20 plan their own activities.

Mentorship for NAS and other research staff is provided by senior staff and Professors. Professional development is encouraged through research guidance, planning, training, annual appraisals, and embedded informal mentoring. In the DPS, the weekly research seminar provides opportunities for members to showcase their work, provide good examples of methodological dynamism and impact to colleagues, and discuss work in progress, as well as for external visitors to present on issues pertaining to the interests of the theme. For example, **Emeritus Professor Colin Lago** from the University of Sheffield presented his work around working with inclusion and diversity in the psychological therapies. Workshops have also been held to encourage non-research active colleagues to explore research ideas and develop research proposals, and for everybody to identify and apply for external funding. DPS also runs writing for publication workshops at away days with a Professoriate providing group sessions on academic writing at which postgraduate students are encouraged to attend. The two Professors in the DPS provide informal mentoring for colleagues with less or no research experience. An array of guest speakers presents within the FSS, FHSC and

FECS as part of the same strategy, and a mentoring and writing scheme has also been established. The University supplements any mentoring with its own mentoring training programme.

Additionally, the provision of a new series of public lectures, such as in the psychological therapies that draw on staff expertise and clinical experience, has provided an opportunity for the University to actively engage professional and lay members of the local community in a research culture. These co-produced meetings are held several times throughout the academic year and are committed to a collaborative and inclusive culture. We have planned to extend these further to promote greater impact.

As part of the University research strategy, the Faculty of Social Science (FSS) has a Faculty Research Event which takes place every year and which is led by Prof Ros Bramwell, the Associate Dean of FSS - Research. This brings different staff and PGR researchers from distinct disciplines together to collaborate and provide holistic research to contemporary policy and community issues. An Information and Enhancement Officer facilitates a training and development programme for PGR students, including the organisation of key events such as a PGR symposium and writing retreat. Coupled with this, there is online and face to face supervision and Chairing a Viva examination training, among other examples, that staff are expected to attend.

The FHSC thoroughly reviews the progress of all doctoral and professional doctorate students, and sets clear guidelines, targets, and training alongside meticulous supervisory reviews for students (full-time and part-time). This has proved invaluable for many students to help them to plan, update and focus their research aims and objectives, methodology, and writing skills more adeptly, thus preventing complacency about progress. Moreover, there is now compulsory online training for doctoral supervisors, and update sessions to be completed at least once every three years. There is an increased expectation placed on students to attend taught training sessions on research, and to publish in peer reviewed journals prior to submission of their thesis, ideally with the support of an experienced supervisor. As with FSS, FHSC continues with monthly lunchtime doctoral research seminars throughout semesters, including those from social work, social care, nursing or integrative themes, such as around ageing or safeguarding. We have also introduced monthly lunchtime masterclasses for doctoral students.

In SPS, there is a Research Group meeting on the first Saturday of every month, where all doctoral students across the PhD and Professional Doctorate programmes in the psychological therapies are invited to attend to discuss research development and impact, for peer support and learning. These are facilitated by research-active members of staff. Over the last 4 years the University now has a research community of around 40 doctoral students in the psychological therapies; this is one of the largest groups for the discipline in UK universities.

The FHSC organises a two-day research conference in the Faculty every year, so to present ongoing postgraduate research alongside external speakers from the NHS and Social Work. This is intended to again promote a buoyant research culture within the Faculty. Following these and other reforms, student progress has become more transparent to everyone, allowing faster interventions to support and manage student achievements.

| | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | Total |
|--------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| DProf | 0.1 | | 1 | | | 2.4 | 3.5 |
| PhD | | 1.25 | | 3.1 | 1.6 | 3.6 | 9.55 |
| Total | 0.1 | 1.25 | 1 | 3.1 | 1.6 | 6 | 13.05 |

Equality and diversity

Underpinning the recruitment and staffing strategy are the university's equal opportunities policies which promote fairness in recruitment, career progression and promotion, equality and diversity for staff and students, and works to ensure that all members of the University community treat one another with respect and dignity. UoC maintains coherent and rigorous anti-discriminatory policies including clear departmental and UoC procedures around potential discrimination, harassment and safeguarding. There is an annual *Diversity Festival* each year, a *Race Equality Challenge* and

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Chester Pride group, staff members who act as Equality champions, an Equality forum and co-ordinated minority staff networks. Core programmes, such as social work, sociology, the psychological therapies and law strongly emphasise the importance of diversity and structurally informed inclusion and equity as part of teaching, knowledge transfer activities and research. The University is an *Athena Swan* Bronze award holder and holds the *Navjo Charter* mark and has previously participated in the *Stonewall Equality Index*. All departments are seeking to increase the proportion of staff from minority or disadvantaged groups, whether on the basis of disability, ethnicity, class, gender, age or sexuality.

Numerous unit staff are directly involved in equity-related research. For example, **Davies's** social justice orientated research within the applied discipline of law has focused upon issues of equality and diversity, including around employment, gender segregation, and barriers to engagement with research affecting women, minority ethnic or other disadvantaged or underrepresented groups. **Bennett's** research has centred on inequalities, belonging and place, including around 'contested communities', and the role of communities of place, identity and interest and their impact on everyday life chances. Numerous other staff through their research have drawn attention to and given voice to excluded groups (e.g. **Gant, Reeves, Keeling, Buck, Carey**).

3. Income, infrastructure and facilities

Income generation, research funding and strategy

The UoA and University recognise the importance of external income generation to enhance and support all research. Our total of £121,369 external funding in this window has been received from EU government bodies (6%); UK central government bodies/local authorities/ health and hospital authorities (33%); UK industry, commerce and public corporations (23%); and UK-based charities (open competitive process) (38%). To increase funding our strategy includes offering in-depth personal support; access to regular and focused (internally and externally provided) training and workshops around bid writing; updated knowledge of funding opportunities; improvement of our research infrastructure through the development of research centres; and use of seed-corn income to instigate all researchers' future career trajectories and potential to generate further income. The *Chester Grant Support Initiative* (initially trialled in Unit 31) involves workshops, internal and external peer review and mentoring and will, beyond 2021, be extended to other Units for the next REF. We also effectively manage and strategically target internal funding resources competitively, including with expert panels scrutinising applications so to maximise the impact of any funding. For example, QR seed-corn funding from 2014 onwards has sought to pump prime innovative projects and encourage future team-based research bids, including in association with external researchers. An internal peer review system also considers pre-submitted applications for external funding. Most of the focus of seed-corn funding and wider research income generation has also been to support the initiatives, groups and themes discussed earlier.

University research support regularly provides information on funding bodies whose strategic priorities align with staff expertise areas. Internal resources (e.g. through funding and advice) have been employed to allow researchers to target and move from seeking smaller to larger grants, fuse the generation of income with our wider impact strategy and encourage collaboration, including internationally. Some examples of funded research projects include:

Research funding examples

Harlow (case study) was awarded £18,420 in 2019 by the *Martin James Foundation* to help develop a *Centre for Alternative Care* for children in need. **Harlow** was awarded a further £18,424 by the *Alex Timpson Trust* as part of the 'Looking after looked after children: Attachment and Trauma Project'. Other grants have included £17,600 for the creation and operation of the *Alex Timpson Trust*, and £18,000 as part of an evaluation of the post-placement Adoption Support Service at the *Centre for Adoption Support*. **White** was awarded £13,500 in 2019 from *Feeding Britain* as part of the *Big Lottery Feeding Britain Community Food Hub Evaluation*. This third sector organisation aims 'to prevent or relieve poverty' and helps people to 'alleviate hunger caused by the lack of

opportunities or resources to obtain sufficient food'. This project is analysing two local community food hubs, and among other aims, is seeking to see if these hubs could be replicated in other areas.

Francis was awarded £10,000 through two *Global Challenges Research Fund Grants* of £5,000 each. These relate to Phase 1 and 2 as primary investigator for 'The political economy of conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic: challenges to a sustainable peace'. **Carey** was awarded £11,000 through competitive funding provided by the *Cheshire and Merseyside Social Work Teaching Partnership*. As PI this income is being used alongside two internal seed corn grants of £5,000 each to further examine the potential role of adult social workers in their support of older people experiencing loneliness and isolation in the Cheshire West and Chester region. These projects have led to articles published in journals such as *Ageing and Society* and *International Social Work* as well as influenced conference presentations and other outputs.

Although often small-scale, this UoA has now established a consistent record of securing external funding to support its research activities. We continue to draw upon expertise within and beyond the University to enhance further our portfolio of externally awarded research funds. We recognise the need to look for new and bigger funding opportunities when available, and the focus of our future external funding strategy includes targeting funders who share this aim: for example, the Nuffield Foundation, GRCE, Leverhulme Trust, British Academy and ESRC. To access such funding, the strategic aim is to further strengthen institutional links, as well as making continued attempts to increase specialist training, mentoring, increase other networks, partnerships and collaborations, improve the quality of outputs and efficacy of impact, and so on.

The Research and Knowledge Transfer Office (RKTO), a central University service, contributes to UoA themed workshops on research income generation and REF policy. The University Research Strategy identifies the centrality of a research informed curriculum and locates research as a core activity of Faculties and Departments alongside teaching excellence. This embeds research within the appraisal system which, in turn, facilitates the identification of staffs' research needs and is embedded in the Staff Development Strategy at departmental and university level; this is reflected in work-loading processes called WAMS. Since 2015, the University has made QR funding available through university-wide competitive calls for applications for impact case studies, conference attendance, research team bids, and research dissemination. Unit members have had a measure of success in the university-wide calls which are match-funded alongside staff development resources within departments.

Other facilities:

University Library Services (ULS) has libraries across nine geographical locations with new subject specific libraries for three Faculties. Within FSS and the FHSC, for example, they offer dedicated subject collections and subject specialist library teams, numerous study spaces, including areas for silent, quiet and group study, alongside PCs and Mac work desks. Research is subsequently supported through the provision of high-quality library environments and facilities, appropriate print and electronic information resources, and support from highly qualified and professional staff. As well as a library website for researchers and professional librarians - which includes a Research Support team and Librarian - support is provided to researchers searching and retrieving information from online databases and who use the Internet to communicate ideas and research outputs via social media tools. Alongside books, journals, monographs, e-books and e-journals, the *Broomhead* library at University Centre Warrington offers specialist subject teams, bookable multi-media rooms, and a 24/7 computer study area. Research activities are also supported with latest editions of SPSS and NVivo, and experienced computer support is on offer. University investment in upgrading the computer facilities at the University has resulted in increasingly user-friendly data analysis programmes and user support.

Regards governance and mechanisms for reporting all research there is a Research Ethics Advisory Board and Faculty Research Ethics Committees, alongside bespoke audit processes and regular working groups. In the FHSC, for example, the FREC meets each month to consider all projects and subsequent applications by staff, students and participants, and carefully analyses and offers

support and advice to applicants around key principles including gaining informed consent, minimising risk, and so forth.

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

Research-informed teaching, collaborations, and dissemination

Research-informed or led and co-produced teaching for future and post-qualified social workers, counsellors, teachers, nurses, and other staff remains central to this Unit and is now embedded across Faculties. Enhancing effective research networks, partnerships and collaborations also remains a key ongoing part to promote impact, including internationally. As detailed in sections 1 and 2, there are established and growing inter-Departmental and Faculty research groups, and links with external and international institutions and colleagues continue to strengthen. We are especially keen to strengthen our international influence, including by linking local findings and related provisions to the Global regarding policy development and practice. As example of international networking through dissemination, **Powell** and **Taylor** (2016) presented their research on the extension of working lives and implications of private pension schemes for older people (for example at the *LSE* in October, 2016). They have undertaken additional work on ageing and veterans (for example, for the *International Network for Critical Gerontology*, *McMaster University*, September 2017).

Research impact examples

In fitting with UoA20's aim to provide research which has meaningful benefits for marginalised groups (social, cultural, and economic), a long tradition of participative research with non-academic stakeholders is established. Moreover, symbiotic ties with local communities, local authorities, schools, third and independent sector organisations and health-care trusts continue to strengthen. Examples of research which have sustained impact both locally, nationally and/or globally include **Francis's** research on international relations and sustainability, alongside African politics, including conflict and peace building, and which has been influenced by post-colony and postcolonial theory. **Francis** has worked with the *United Nations*, the *Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA)*, the *African Union*, and the *International Organisation for Migration (IOM)*. For the *UN* and *MINUSCA* this included the making with non-academic participants of a series of documentary films; the organisation of a Symposium in 2019 (which also included involvement of the *African Union* and *IOM*) and capacity building work to construct a 'truth commission'. Further work for the *UN* has included a multi-professional session that mapped conflict in the Central African Republic. **Francis** is Honorary Associate Professor of the *University of*

KwaZulu-Natal, Durban South Africa.

Carey was part of a group of academics and members of the *British Association of Social Work* who in 2018 developed the *Capabilities Statement for Social Workers in England who work with Older People*. This statement, which was widely distributed online and elsewhere to all qualified social workers, includes the key knowledge, values, and skills that gerontological social workers must attain during and after qualification. It includes a clear strategic pathway for post-qualification training that integrates post-qualified research. **Harlow's** success in 2014 and beyond led to the formation of the *Centre for Adoption Support* based at University Centre Warrington. This comprises a partnership between two former charities, *Adoption Matters* and *Caritas Care*, and has maintained the specific aim of seeking 'to develop and reform the care system and speed up the process of adoption' for children in care. **Harlow's** role has included offering expert research-informed guidance and supervision for practice-based staff at the Centre (alongside research active pedagogues from education and health), who chiefly include social workers and 'lay expert' volunteers. In addition to her work with the *Alex Timpson Trust* and supporting often complex adoption processes for children, **Harlow** became a member of a steering group alongside colleagues at *Ofsted* and the *Department*

for Education, as part of an action research project at the *Rees Centre, University of Oxford*. This participative project eventually pioneered recommendations which promoted the application of attachment theory in 150 schools across England. Relating again to inclusion and young people, **Wood** has worked alongside non-academics in Sheffield as part of her research, including the *Relationships and Sex Education Forum* (RSE) and *SAYiT*, a charity for LGBTQ young people. This has included the provision of sex education workshops for young adults and led to the co-produced workshop-orientated conference 'Pleasure revisited – 10 years on' (2017). **Wood's** involvement with colleagues from the *Sheffield Institute for Policy Studies* has included co-produced research and education around sexual health.

Since 2015, **Gubi** has co-examined with members of the clergy and *St Luke's* charity in London the potential efficacy of 'Reflective Practice Groups'. This includes the potential provision internationally of therapeutic and pedagogical support techniques for members of the church. Among other benefits, this research led to modified pastoral techniques for priests which enhanced attempts to improve community-based encounters with church attendees: including through improved communication, tolerance, and trust, as well as helping to overcome pastoral loneliness. **White's** research (Funded, among others, by the *Big Lottery*, *Feeding Britain*, and the *Welcome Network*) has focused on narratives of poverty, resistance, and political consent for homeless people within the city of Chester and beyond. **White's** research into foodbanks, State benefits, exclusion and support has attained greater validity in view of Global pressures such as the Covid 19 pandemic and its highlighting of unequal health consequences for marginalised social classes. Along with other staff including **Francis, Keeling, and Gant, Davies's** legal and social justice orientated research has sought to embed the principles of promoting human rights and social equity for marginalised groups. For example, **Davies** (case study) leads the *Forum for Research into Equality and Diversity* at UOC; and has worked alongside the *Institute for Public Policy Research* on the feasibility of establishing a Fair Employment Commission. **Davies** has also been a member of the *Euroneb Working Group* on strategic enforcement and regularly appears on *Legal Network Television*, including, for example, to critically examine the legal implications of regulations for part-time workers in the UK and parts of Europe as elsewhere. **Davies** has also been involved in several research projects which promote gender equity.

Cox's research has built upon the 'mobilities turn' in the social sciences with the sociology of cycling as central element alongside issues of sustainable international futures. Following his award from the *Leverhulme Trust* for an *International Academic Fellowship* in 2015 - and in collaboration with *Liverpool John Moores University* - **Cox** has worked with the *Rachel Carson Centre for Environment and Society* in Munich. This led to the development of cross-disciplinary research techniques - including the use of video interpretative models - to examine bicycling and the environment so to better understand mobility practices. This research allowed **Cox** to collaborate with a broad range of international scholars - including from China and the Americas - to better understand through innovative methodological approaches what people do, why and when they use bicycles; and how this enables social actors to interact with their built environment and potentially help conserve their environments. **Cox** is also a founder member of the *Cycling and Society Research Group* and is Chair of the *International Scientists for Cycling* network for the *European Cyclists' Federation*. Indeed, **Cox's** research has contributed to numerous international forums and policy documents on sustainable transport.

Conferences can again influence networking and impact. A number of international conferences at Chester have included the first professional identity-focused 5th *International Conference on Sociology and Social Work* during August 2015, the ageing-themed 5th *International PhD Workshop of the European Sociological Association* in April 2016 and, in 2018, the 24th *Annual International Conference in Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, co-hosted in Chester by the *British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy*. In 2018-19, **Harlow** initiated a project team in mounting the *Navigating Adoption Support* national conference in partnership with the CAS, held at the UOC in 2019.

Organising public lectures and seminars remains a crucial part of our strategy to strengthen networks, partnerships and achieve impact. A series of well attended public lectures was organised

Unit-level environment template (REF5b)

at University Centre Warrington throughout 2015, with internationally renowned guest speakers from social work (for example, Professor Tony Evans, University of London, and Professor Stephen Webb, Glasgow Caledonian University) analysing topics relating to social work and care. Through long running initiatives such as the *Social Work History Network* - which is based at Kings College, London, with long standing involvement and support from staff and service users at UoC - nationally and internationally recognised speakers present their research each year to members of the public, welfare professionals, service users, pedagogues, and policy makers across University of Chester locations. In 2014, and then in 2019, public presentations around ageing-based research were presented by **Carey**, Professor Robin Means, University of the West of England, and Professor Mo Ray, Lincoln University, at Riverside. In 2016-17, **Carey** worked alongside colleagues within sociology and nursing to analyse a series of dyad interviews undertaken with carers and older people diagnosed with dementia. This led to ongoing collaborations with co-authors at Staffordshire University and the University of Innsbruck in Austria.

Mid and senior-career researchers continue to play an active role contributing to the research base, economy and society. Developing local networks remain crucial to these principles, and **Gant, Buck, Harlow, White, and Taylor** holding regular critical seminars and research events involving practitioners, researchers and service users around themes such as 'peer mentoring and criminal justice', 'care giving and social work', 'Homelessness and holiday provision', and so on. In fitting with the tradition of critical criminology at UOC and increasing collaborations, **White, Buck and Taylor** remain members of the *European Group for the study of Deviance and Social Control*. This was founded in Florence, Italy in 1973, and now has more than a thousand members across six continents, making the group one of the largest criminology-focused forums in the world. **Buck's** research in the field of (peer) mentoring has led her to advise on national studies (the *Our Voices Too* centre, researching child sexual exploitation, violence and trafficking at the University of Bedfordshire, 2018-2019). **Buck** is co-director of the *Prisons, Health and Societies* group at the University of Nottingham and works as an invited advisory board member for a user-led non-profit organisation *Community Led Initiatives (CLI)*, 2016- present), influencing mentoring practices. **Buck** is also an Associate Director of *CRIMVOL*, the international criminal justice voluntary sector research network and cross-sectoral collective of practitioners, policy makers and academics in criminal justice. She is also a tutor for the national *Learning Together* network, facilitating sessions for criminalised people on mentoring and the penal voluntary sector.

Bennett is currently collaborating with colleagues at Durham University around 'British National Identities' post-Brexit and is also looking at the impact of deindustrialisation on place and local identities. As an economist currently focusing on environmental sustainability post-Brexit, **Fernandez** remains a member of the *European Association of Environmental and Resource Economists (EAERE)* and *UACES* (University Association for Contemporary European Studies). She maintains regular communication and influence within these European Associations including through her long-established networks there and research.

Editorial and some other external influences

Membership of journal editorial roles and editorial boards, alongside any Book series editorials, can help to foster the disciplinary research environment. Membership of journal editorial boards include: **Carey** (*Ethics and Values in Social Work*); **Buck** (*Ethics and Values in Social Work*); **Powell** (Editor-in-Chief of the journal; *Illness, Crisis and Loss*); was Co-Guest Editor of *International Journal of Sociology & Social Policy* on theme of the third sector and the global economic recession in 2017; **Taylor** (Associate Editor of *Illness, Crisis and Loss*); **Francis** (*Journal of African Union Studies*); **Harlow** (*Practice: Social Work in Action*, a journal of the *British Association of Social Workers*); and was Guest editor of a special edition of *Practice* on adoption (with Karen Izod) in 2015; **Reeves** (Book Series Editor for *Essential Issues in Counselling and Psychotherapy*, Sage, 2013 onwards; *Working Together*, Sage since 2020; *Issues in the Social Sciences*, UoC); **Fernandez** is Co-Editor for 'Encyclopaedia of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Decent Work and Economic Growth' (Springer Nature, NY) – current; **Powell** is Book Series Editor of *International Ageing* (Springer Nature, New York), 2014 onwards; and *Social Perspectives in the 21st Century* (Nova Science, New York), since 2014. **Bennett** was Co-Guest Editor of *Journal of Power and Education* on theme of race and education in 2015

Examples of other contributions

In addition to individual social or economic contributions, other examples of more specific research achievements include that members of the three themes of the UoA20 develop research links with colleagues both in other HE institutions and practice/policy settings. **Harlow** has examined three PhD's at viva since 2017 including at the University of Salford; **Powell** collaborated with the Geriatric Care Foundation of Uganda in providing advice and support in the care and treatment of older people 2017-19 and was awarded out of a membership of 500 professionals in the UK, Academician status by The Academy of Urbanism for his work on ageing populations and the global environment; has been Honorary Professor at McMaster University since 2017; and is Distinguished Honorary Professor, Centre for Social, Education and Humanitarian Studies at Moscow State University in 2018.

Reeves was Chair of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy – 2014-2019, and has examined fifteen PhD and Professional Doctorate vivas since 2015, including Trinity College, Dublin, University of Bristol and University of Manchester; he is Director of Colleges and Universities for the Charlie Waller Trust. **Carey** has continued to review articles for the *British Journal of Social Work*, *Ageing and Society*, *Ethics and Social Welfare* and *International Social Work* journals and has examined seven PhD's since 2014 including at St Georges, University of London; University of York and Keele University; Several members have been asked to give key note and/or plenary presentations regionally (**Francis**), nationally (**Fernandez**) and internationally (**Francis**) in their fields of expertise. Contributions made to disciplines and the broader research-base can be evidenced via invitations to review for major funding bodies. For unit staff this has included **Carey** (NIHR, ESRC, Nuffield, and Health and Care Research Wales); **Cox** continues to provide feedback on "Prioritizing Active Mobility" (EU Commission).