

Institution:	University of East Anglia
Unit of Assessment:	22 Social Work and Social Policy
<p>a. Overview</p> <p>Social work and social policy at the University of East Anglia (UEA) has a long history of research into key policy challenges facing society, especially those affecting more vulnerable members of the community. This submission includes social work and social policy research staff from the School of Social Work, the Norwich Medical School and the Norwich Business School. This reflects UEA's commitment to interdisciplinarity and flexibility in internal structures where this promotes research excellence. The Centre for Research on Children and Families hosts two of our research groups: Child Protection and Family Support and Child Placement. The third research group is Older and Disabled People.</p>	
<p>b. Research strategy</p> <p>i. Evaluation of the RAE 2008 strategy</p> <p>In 2008 we defined our future research strategy as 1) using our expertise to develop specific areas of social work and social policy 2) ensuring the continuing success of the Centre for Research on Children and Families (CRCF) and 3) retaining our strong and interdisciplinary links to policy and practice development nationally and internationally. We also aimed 4) to increase Research Council funding. This has been a successful strategy and we have benefitted from obtaining a continuous flow of significant peer reviewed and competitive research funding in our research areas, including from the ESRC, Government departments, the Office of the Children's Commissioner, the Nuffield Foundation, other charitable sources and local authorities. We have been funded in areas of applied research that have increased the range of our impact (see REF3) and further developed our esteem and reputation for rigour.</p> <p>We have built new areas of research within child protection, family support, fostering, adoption, older people and disabled people. We have in particular targeted research in specific current areas of policy concern, such as reducing offending by children in care; avoiding delay in care proceedings; financing the care of older people; providing community services for older and disabled people. Our work has developed from and influenced areas of new UK legislation and guidance involving vulnerable people e.g. managing the economic implications of an aging population; providing support services for birth parents in adoption; improving practice in cases of child death and serious injury. We have drawn on international comparisons, for example in relation to services for children in care and parental leave.</p> <p>The role of interdisciplinarity in our research teams and our methods has become well-established, often as part of our research networks and collaborations (see below). The work of both the child protection and family support and the child placement research groups, led by Brandon, Dickens, Neil and Schofield has been underpinned by the combination of psychosocial, developmental and socio-legal approaches for which UEA research on vulnerable children and families is best known, but we have also extended into children's participation as a core theme. Connolly has developed our work on gender, parenting and the workplace, but has also contributed her economics expertise to our work on evaluating family support interventions. The recruitment of Hancock (and subsequently Morciano) in 2008 to the Health Economics Group in the Norwich Medical School has considerably strengthened our quantitative social policy research in the area of older people. Combined with the work of Connolly, this represents a substantial increase in economics input to our research profile. The appointment of Shakespeare (2013) brings promising international expertise and networks to support the networks within UEA with an interest in promoting research on the well-being of disabled people across the lifespan.</p> <p>The vitality and sustainability of social work and social policy research at UEA rests on our continuing ability to engage with changing and demanding policy and practice issues and to both build on strengths and create new areas of research excellence. The Centre for Research on Children and Families (CRCF) has built its influence on interdisciplinary collaborations between social work, social policy, law, psychology and economics. Research on policy for older people led by Hancock has identified and developed research in critical areas where Government decisions profoundly affect the well-being of older people, including the most at risk disabled older people.</p>	

ii. Research strategy for five years beyond REF 2014

Our objectives are:

- to achieve excellence in research, building on the national and international work of our research leaders and developing the next generation of research leaders.
- to focus on developing new research areas that are of particular relevance to public policy in relation to children, families, older people and disabled people, especially those which shape financial priorities and professional practice in relation to the well-being of individuals in need or at risk. This approach is already leading to a reshaping of and additions to our research themes e.g. restorative justice, gender and work patterns, disability.
- To support these research developments by continuing to target research funding applications strategically, to include funding from Research Councils and Government departments, charitable trusts and a range of local authority and independent provider agencies.
- to build on existing and build new research collaborations within and outside of UEA and internationally, in order to achieve a wider range of collective expertise and to bid for and deliver larger scale, rigorous research, using innovative and participatory research methods.
- to ensure that our strategies for retaining our high reputation for research and for achieving impact in policy and practice are effective. This will require targeted plans in relation to bidding, staffing, managing research teams, research students, and infrastructure for research and impact.

In the area of child welfare, the Centre for Research on Children and Families (CRCF) will develop new research activity and funding streams, with Brandon becoming the new Director of the CRCF from September 2013. This will be founded on the range from broader social policy work to the specifically targeted work in practice areas such as ‘troubled families’, the mental health of looked after children, child sexual exploitation and the work of the family courts. The CRCF has also been developing its reputation for methodological innovation and so our strategy will include focussing on our strengths in service user participation in research e.g. Neil’s involvement of birth parents of adopted children and Cossar’s involvement of young researchers. The appointment of a dedicated Centre Administrator in 2013 will support the scoping, funding and development of research bids.

Senior research academics will be working both with junior academics and funded research staff to ensure that bidding in 2013-14 will support major projects in relation to children, families, older people and disabled children and adults that will be conducted and then disseminated to achieve impact in the coming five year period. Regular research strategy planning meetings will take a longer term view in developing a coherent research programme that will include government and RCUK funded projects alongside charity and carefully selected local authority/independent agency funded research - a pattern we have established over the last 10-15 years, especially in areas of child protection and family support, child placement, socio-legal studies and (since 2008) older people. Although funding bodies, including local authorities, are facing austerity, the need for evidence in order to achieve better outcomes and value for money provides new opportunities for research, as in recently funded projects in the CRCF on ‘edge of care’ initiatives which will be continuing into the next REF period.

Priority areas for future development

Key to our strategy across social work and social policy research activity will be the role of our research teams and groups who can develop and support a number of linked projects in our priority areas. Some of these groups will involve partnerships for individual projects or a series of projects with research leaders from other universities in the UK and internationally. Each research theme will be part of our research strategy for the next REF period – and each has laid the foundations in this REF period for future development and potential diversification. Our record of funding suggests the potential for a strong and sustainable programme of research success into the future in these areas.

1. Child protection and family support.

Our plan is to continue to develop our work in areas of child protection, such as death and serious injury to children, in particular how messages from Serious Case Reviews can be implemented in practice, while also focussing on developing our work on family support and preventative

community based interventions. This strategy will include the development of further projects in relation to children's experiences of risk, both within the family and the community, building on work for the Office of the Children's Commissioner and on work funded by the British Association for the Study and Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (BASPCAN) on child sexual exploitation. But it will also include work on the various models of support for vulnerable families.

Current work on the interface between children's services and the courts, led by Dickens and funded by the ESRC and local authorities, will provide the basis for the development of new strengths in socio-legal research to investigate the impact of the Family Justice Review (2012).

In relation to family-work balance, Connolly (with O'Brien at Thomas Coram Research Unit) will build on the ESRC funded CRCF/ NatCen partnership project *Fathers, work and families in twenty-first century Britain: beyond the breadwinner model?*, which will provide the first comprehensive profiling of fathers in twenty-first century Britain in terms of paid work and family life (2012-2014). The project will utilize the insights on country, institutions and policy gained through existing ESRC and ERC funded projects and the International Parental Leave Network.

2. Child placement

The CRCF hosts a series of funded child placement projects that continue into and/or develop further in the next REF period. The *Contact after Adoption* longitudinal Nuffield funded study will publish in 2014 and be the basis of bids for researching adoption support interventions. The ESRC-funded *Care Planning and the Role of IRO* study will report its findings in 2014 and will inform further socio-legal work on decision making. The current study funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation to evaluate an innovative *Transitions and Mentoring Service* (2012-15) is building new areas of expertise in residential care in the CRCF, which will be the focus of future research. Further new bids are focussing on fostering and also the identity development of children in care.

3. Older and disabled people

A key focus of Hancock and Morciano's current ESRC Secondary Data Analysis Initiative project is whether the effects on older people's wellbeing of cash disability benefits and social care services differ in ways which suggest a rebalancing of them could be cost-effective. The group's strategy for future research has three strands: (1) to continue to bring advanced quantitative methodological approaches to important policy questions and to make the findings of that research widely accessible; (2) to exploit new data sources, such as *Understanding Society*, the *Cognitive Functioning and Ageing Study* (through renewed collaboration with newly-appointed staff in UEA's School of Nursing Sciences (Antony Arthur and George Savva) and the 1958 National Child Development Study (whose members are now approaching retirement) (3) to extend the scope of work both internationally and in terms of the population of interest (e.g. disability in the pre-retirement age group, where increases in state pension age combined with rising longevity amongst people who have lived with disability from a young age present policy challenges). We will continue existing successful collaborations, for example funding for Hancock is being requested by Essex in their application for renewed funding for the ESRC Research Centre on Micro-social Change. Shakespeare will be developing new areas of research on disability across the life-span, with members of the CRCF.

c. People, including:

i. Staffing strategy and staff development

The staffing strategy has been to retain and support the development of research leaders, for example Brandon, Schofield, Neil, Dickens (all with strengthened profiles since RAE 2008), while ensuring that there is support for staff new to UEA (e.g. Beckett) and junior staff (e.g. Cossar, Morciano) to take up research opportunities and be submitted for this REF. Hancock joined UEA in 2008 and significantly strengthened our work on older people. Thoburn has remained active as a funded researcher and in supporting junior staff. Connolly has contributed economic expertise and an interest in gender and work to diverse aspects of our research on support for parenting. In relation to next generation research active staff, Dickens and Neil are now well established as leaders in their own right and will be in an even stronger position over the next five year period. We have ensured that Cossar and Morciano have had opportunities to work alongside established staff

leading funded projects and then to lead projects themselves. Dodsworth has received funding as a principal investigator for a project on child sexual exploitation and the appointment of Cocker in 2013-14, will allow us to strengthen our work on looked after children in the next period, in particular in relation to mental health. The appointment of Shakespeare (2013), a world-leading expert on disability, will support new studies of disability in children, adults and older people. We have strong research students who add to the range of expertise (e.g. professional social work judgement, children with disability, children in care and social media, insurance solutions for long-term care), and who will join future research teams.

The *staff development* strategy in relation to promoting research activity and excellence has been to offer training and to manage research and teaching workloads to ensure time and support is available for research project bidding, development and impact. This has been supported by the decision within the University to adopt two academic pathways; Teaching and Research (ATR) and Teaching and Scholarship (ATS). Both have equal opportunities for promotion but different expectations of the balance of duties between teaching and research. The system enables ATR staff to focus more time on research and develop as research leaders - and for able social workers from practice to be appointed as ATS with the option of either focusing on teaching or developing a research career and moving to ATR, an important route for maintaining a social work qualified and research active faculty.

We have a core group of skilled and experienced *research associates*, increased since 2008, who have conducted a range of quantitative and qualitative projects in child protection, family support, child placement, older people, and who are now able to help draft bids, prepare reports and advise junior researchers/PhD students. It is the strength of this group that allows our Principal Investigators to develop a range of concurrent projects. In accordance with the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, there is a Research Staff Co-ordinator for each Centre and a University-wide working group chaired by a Pro-Vice Chancellor. In September 2012, UEA was awarded the HR Excellence in Research Award from the European Commission, recognising UEA's commitment to support the personal, professional and career development of research staff.

All new members of staff receive an *induction* and have a *mentor* during their probationary period, with wider peer support available. A *research plan* is an integral part of University's *appraisal* scheme for academic staff, and appraisers act as mentors for junior staff to help determine priorities for the coming year. The UEA online research planning tool, Rplan, enables researchers to collate information about their research activity for Heads of School and Research Directors to use in appraisal, mentoring and workload planning. Strategically planned *study leave* facilitates production of proposals, outputs and impact.

UEA's Single Equality Action Plan identifies policies on equality and diversity issues, which are delivered by the Equality and Diversity Committee. *Equality of opportunity* for staff is promoted through a range of strategies, including *financial support* for pilot projects and conferences.

Standards of research quality and integrity are monitored and maintained through School and University level Research Ethics Committees. There is also peer review and mentoring at all stages in the research process, from preparing proposals and ethics applications to developing research skills, managing research associates, publication and impact.

ii. Research students

The numbers of social work and social policy post-graduate research students have grown during this period (see REF 4), with support from Faculty studentships. The Social Science Graduate School offers students a comprehensive programme of advanced training including: lifelong health and wellbeing; research with children and families; economic performance and sustainable growth; influencing behaviour and informing interventions. The University is committed to funding the Personal and Professional Development (PPD) programme for research students as demonstrated by the appointment of Faculty Training Officers and a dedicated careers adviser for research students. All students are required to undertake training in quantitative and qualitative research methods, as well as attending events in specialist centres outside the University e.g. a UEA funded research student will have placement experience at NatCen Social Research. Capacity building in secondary data analysis skills is supported by training events as part of the UEA provision for post-graduate researchers. Morciano co-organises a regular workshop within the Health Economics Group on econometric techniques aimed at less-experienced researchers and research students.

Environment template (REF5)

Post-doctoral research in the CRCF, e.g. ESRC work on fathers by Philips, and Biggart's ESRC Future Research Leaders study on emotional intelligence and social work, enriches the research environment for our students.

Schools and Centres set up advanced training events, e.g. in 2013 the CRCF attracted 40 research students from across the country to a workshop on *Research with Vulnerable Children*. There is also an open research methods workshop on secondary data analysis. Our students actively participate in the annual UEA PhD Showcase event at the city centre public library.

Fortnightly interdisciplinary research workshops challenge students to define their research, to understand research in other disciplines and to learn how this might inform their own. The research student group discuss wide-ranging topics such as refugee mothers, restorative justice, binge drinking, older people and treatments for anxiety. Co-supervision across Schools and Faculties is available and regular monitoring is conducted at School and Faculty levels.

Research students are also given the opportunity to work on funded projects e.g. for the *Looked after Children and Offending* project two students undertook analysis of interview and survey data and had the opportunity to present findings at the 2011 party conferences and the national launch conferences. A research student is currently employed on the Department for Education/Anna Freud Centre project on introducing mentalisation to social work education. PhD students are thus enabled to develop a wider range of skills than their own projects would provide and to publish at an early stage. Their involvement also supports research development e.g. future international comparative family policy and economic analysis is supported by a funded PhD student (2012-15).

d. Income, infrastructure and facilities

Over the REF period the volume of *external research grants* for social work and social policy research (£6m) has been strong for a small group in an increasingly competitive environment. Grants were secured through competitive tender and peer-review from a wide range of funding bodies, including ESRC (£1.5m), Government bodies (including Office of the Children's Commissioner and local authorities) (£3.3m), UK based charities (£1.1m) including Nuffield Foundation, NSPCC, Esmée Fairbairn. The unit had a strong showing in a recent ESRC national competition, winning two awards from the first call under their secondary data analysis initiative - Hancock and Morciano, and Connolly and O'Brien (now Thomas Coram Research Unit).

Income to support our research environment *at School level* has come both from the overheads we have received from a range of government, local authority and Research Council projects and success in the RAE 2008. The research income has been used to support research in a range of ways, e.g. through a School Research Fund, which supports pilot studies and research networks.

The infrastructure at School level includes the Centre administrator for the CRCF, a School administrator, who manages research associate contracts, and local clerical support. Facilities for research include generous office space in award winning buildings, an observation suite and equipment (with technical support) for academic staff and research teams. The UEA library also provides excellent support and dedicated resources to research staff and students.

Administrative support for research grant activities is provided centrally by the University's Research and Enterprise Service (REN). REN supports the development and submission of funding applications, internal peer review, ethical review, contract negotiation and externally funded staff appointments. Project financial management is undertaken by a Research Finance Office, which has an effective system for processing proposals, partnerships and projects, and will support our future research strategy.

Responsibility for *good research conduct* rests with the Research Executive, chaired by the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research). The University's Good Practice Guidelines for Research, Policy for Dealing with Allegations of Misconduct in Research and the Research Ethics Policy apply to all research undertaken at UEA.

The University supports a suite of *high performance computing (HPC) facilities* for research supported by a team of specialist technicians. This is used in some of the policy simulation work undertaken in our research on the care and support of older people.

e. Collaboration and contribution to the discipline or research base

All of our research operates at the interface between policy, practice and research, which has implications for how we contribute to the separate and linked discipline and research topic bases of social work and social policy, nationally and internationally. Collaboration with other disciplines within UEA and other universities and with a range of statutory and voluntary agencies is an important part of our strategy for generating high quality research, contributing to the discipline and maximising our ability to answer complex research questions.

In child protection, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)/Department for Education (DfE) funded projects on Serious Case Reviews (2005-2011), included a socio-medical partnership with a paediatrician, Sidebotham, at Warwick University. Innovative research with children at risk has also contributed to the research base, with Cossar and Brandon awarded funding by the Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) to undertake a study of children's views of child protection and family support procedures (2010). This resulted in the publication of the report *Don't make assumptions (2011)* and was the foundation for another successful bid led by Cossar *Recognition and telling: routes to help (2011-13)* funded by the OCC on children's perception of risk/willingness to disclose, which included young researchers in the project team.

Our work on family support where children may also be at risk, part of the wider policy agenda on 'Troubled Families', has included a project led by Thoburn, funded by the London Borough of Westminster (2010-11) to conduct an evaluation of their *Family Intervention Project (FIP)*. An economic analysis was conducted by Connolly. Brandon (with Thoburn and Connolly) is currently leading an evaluation of the new Tri-borough Family Coach Service. Linked studies regarding children on the edge of care funded by Norfolk and Westminster will continue into 2014.

A related contribution to the discipline has drawn on our socio-legal expertise in relation to public law children's cases. Dickens, in partnership with Masson, Professor of Law at the University of Bristol, led an ESRC-funded *Investigation of pre-proceedings meetings (2010-2012)*. This study added to the research and policy base in the Ministries of Education and Justice. Dickens (with Beckett, Bailey and Connolly) also won a competitive tender for an evaluation of a care proceedings pilot scheme run by the London Tri-borough authorities. Their report has been commended by the President of the Family Division, Sir James Munby (2013).

In this REF period, as in the previous RAE period, Neil has led the adoption field in the area of research on contact and support for birth parents. Since 2008, she has completed two influential linked DCSF funded studies, *Helping Birth Families* and *Supporting Complex Contact*, part of the *Adoption Research Initiative* (see ARi website: www.adoptionresearchinitiative.or.uk). She also led a team undertaking a Nuffield Foundation funded follow up study of her longitudinal cohort of early adopted children, with significant new data on adolescent outcomes. Foster care research led by Schofield, funded by the Nuffield Foundation and in partnership with BAAF and The Fostering Network (1997-2010) developed the Secure Base model, now part of the training for all new foster carers in the UK (and Norway). An ESRC funded partnership with Norway and Sweden conducted a study of birth parents of children in long-term foster care (2008-9). This study was the first funded UK research study of this group, and informed *Care Planning for Permanence in Foster Care (2008 -10)* funded by the Nuffield Foundation. Dickens took forward this planning agenda with a grant from the ESRC for a two year study (2012-14) (with Schofield and Beckett) of *Care planning and the role of the Independent Reviewing Officer*. Schofield also led the research team for the *Looked after children and offending* project (2010-12), a CRCF partnership with The Adolescent and Children's Trust (TACT), funded by the Big Lottery, and developing our expertise on youth offending.

Connolly's work on part-time employment has contributed to the discipline and the policy debate in two main areas: the impact of the National Minimum Wage and flexible working. Through a series of papers in the *Economic Journal*, *Oxford Bulletin*, *Oxford Economic Papers* and the *Journal of Population Economics*, Connolly has also contributed to the international debate on the extent to which the growth in part-time work for women should be welcomed as a route for mothers to combine work and family responsibilities. Building on this work has been her more recent research on the joint NatCen-UEA ESRC-funded project *Fathers, work and families in twenty-first century Britain: beyond the breadwinner model?* (2012-14). The work has contributed to the research base through presentations at UCL, the Open University, the annual Social Policy Association conference (Sheffield 2013). Her ESRC-funded work on women in science resulted in

presentations to the British Medical Association and the Institute of Physics. Connolly is also an expert member of the European Commission Women in Science and Technology (WiST2) working group, (http://ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/document_library/pdf_06/wist2_sustainable-careers-report_en.pdf).

Hancock's influential body of funded work in the field of older people and disability since 2008 has been achieved through networks and sustained partnerships with key institutions (PSSRU at LSE, Kent, Essex, National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling, Canberra). In addition, she and Morciano were part of a collaboration with PSSRU and NatCen, funded by the Department of Health and the Nuffield Foundation, which developed a new module of survey questions on receipt of and payment for social care services. This module has now been adopted in the *Health Survey for England* and the *English Longitudinal Study of Ageing* and is a candidate for inclusion in future waves of *Understanding Society*. Hancock and Morciano are addressing some of the most pressing policy issues facing societies with ageing populations. Substantial grants from the ESRC (under the New Dynamics of Ageing Programme and more recently the Secondary Data Analysis Initiative), the Nuffield Foundation, Department of Health, AXA Research Fund and others have supported research on long-term care funding, disability benefits for older people and financial provision for old age. Their findings have challenged received wisdom in a number of areas. Using methods which are a considerable advance on previous research they have shown, for example, that the extra personal costs of disability are considerably higher than the value of disability benefits designed to meet those costs, particular at the most severe levels of disability.

Our contribution to the academic community is based also on our role in academic research groups, such as Schofield's role in the British Association for Adoption and Fostering Research Group Advisory Committee and Neil's membership of the Joint Universities Council for Social Work Education Research Committee. Our contribution to the research base is extended by our roles on advisory groups and Government expert working groups e.g. Schofield on DfE foster care research advisory groups and expert working groups. Staff members are also ESRC peer reviewers. Hancock was a member of an ESRC/MRC commissioning panel for two calls in their Lifelong Health and Wellbeing Initiative and is on the advisory group for the English Longitudinal Study on Ageing. Roles on editorial boards include Shakespeare on *Disability and Society*, *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research*, and *African Journal of Disability*. He has also edited special issues for *Disability and Rehabilitation* and *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*.

Internationally we have contributed to the discipline and research base by working with individual partners from other countries and through international networks (e.g. Schofield's partnership work with Bergen and Goteborg; Brandon and Thoburn's membership of International Association for Outcome Based Evaluation and Research), through translation of research based work (e.g. Schofield and Beek's *Attachment Handbook for Foster Care and Adoption* translated into French, 2011; Italian, 2013) and Neil's role on the organising committee/keynote speaker for the Third International Conference on Adoption Research - ICAR3 - in Leiden (2010) and ICAR 4 in Bilbao (2013). Presentations at a range of international conferences, including the European Social Work Research Conference 2011 (Neil, Cossar), 2012 (Schofield), 2013 (Brandon); the first Asia Family Placement Conference 2011 (Beckett, Thoburn); Joint World Conference on Social Work and Social Development, 2012 (Shakespeare). Thoburn has provided consultancy to SOS Kinderdorf policy advisors in developing countries, and to Japanese residential child care organisations. Hancock and Morciano spoke at the International Microsimulation Conference 2012, Hancock at the European Conference on Health Economics 2012. In a project funded by the ERC (ERC-2012-Support 317442-ERCAREER) Connolly is working with colleagues (Vinkenburg (VU Amsterdam) and Fuchs (IAB)) examining the career paths of ERC applicants.

For the **future**, we anticipate building on these existing collaborations and a number of developing new opportunities. UEA is a partner in the Norwich Research Park which is Europe's leading interdisciplinary centre for research in food, health and the environment and received a £26 million Government investment in 2013. Particularly important for this unit of assessment are the opportunities arising from a new partnership (2013) between UEA and the Universities of Essex and Kent, the Eastern Academic Research Consortium (ARC). This partnership will have implications for joint research bids and shared provision for research students, with UEA social work and social policy able to offer our complementary expertise and track record in our main areas of activity in research with vulnerable children, family change and older and disabled people.