

Sustainable Care: connecting people and systems

A multi-disciplinary ESRC¹-funded programme (2017-2021) within an extensive international research network

Objectives of the research programme

The Sustainable Care Research Programme will explore how care arrangements, currently 'in crisis' in parts of the UK, can be made sustainable and deliver wellbeing outcomes; and support policy / practice actors and scholars to conceptualise sustainability in care as an issue of rights, values, ethics and justice, as well as of resource distribution. Our overarching objective is to advance understanding of sources of economic and social sustainability in care, especially how wellbeing outcomes can be achieved for care users, their families / carers and paid care workers. This will be achieved through interdisciplinary research designed to:

- Improve the quality, availability and utility of UK data on care, using existing datasets innovatively to produce more useful and accurate evidence;
- Contribute a multi-disciplinary theorisation of sustainable care which is evidenced, useful to policymakers / stakeholders, and critically examines the relationship between care and diverse conceptions of wellbeing;
- Improve how care is planned, resourced, organised, delivered and experienced, by providing evidence to inform the decisions, policies and actions of governments, employers, families, older people and care sector stakeholders;
- Build capacity in research and scholarship on care systems, work and relationships.

Project Summary

The programme, based at the University of Sheffield (UK), focuses on the care needs of adults living at home with chronic health problems or disabilities, and seeks sustainable solutions to the UK's contemporary 'crisis of care'. It is distinctive in investigating sustainability and wellbeing in care holistically across care systems, work and relationships; addresses disconnection between theorisations of care in different disciplines; and locates all its research in the context of international scholarship, actively engaging with policy partners.

It will fill knowledge gaps, contribute new theoretical ideas and data analyses and provide useful, accurate evidence to inform care planning, provision and experience. It develops and critically engages with policy and theoretical debates about: *care infrastructure* (systems, networks, partnerships, standards); *divisions of caring labour/the political economy of care* (inequalities, exploitation); *care ethics, rights, recognition and values* (frameworks, standards, entitlements, wellbeing outcomes); *care technologies and human-technological interactions*; and *care relations* in emotional, familial, community & intergenerational /transnational context.

Our team of Co-Investigators comprises 20 scholars in 7 universities, linked to an international network spanning 15 countries. The programme comprises integrative activities, in which the whole team works together to develop a new conceptual framework on sustainable care and wellbeing, and two Work Strands, each with four linked projects, on 'Care Systems' & 'Care Work & Relationships'.

'Care Systems' will: (i) study prospects, developments and differentiation in the four care systems operating in England, N. Ireland, Scotland & Wales, comparing their approaches to markets, privatisation and reliance on unpaid care; (ii) model costs and contributions in care, covering those of carers and employers as well as public spending on care; (iii) assess the potential of emerging technologies to enhance care system

¹ The ESRC is the UK's Economic and Social Research Council.

sustainability; and (iv) analyse, in a dynamic policy context, migrant care workers' role in the sustainability of homecare.

'Care Work & Relationships' will: (i) develop case studies of emerging homecare models, and assess their implications for sustainable wellbeing; (ii) focus on carers who combine employment with unpaid care, filling gaps in knowledge about the effectiveness of workplace support and what care leave and workplace standard schemes can contribute to sustainable care arrangements; (iii) explore how care technologies can be integrated to support working carers, ensuring wellbeing outcomes across caring networks; and (iv) investigate care 'in' and 'out of' place, as systems adapt or come under pressure associated with population diversity and mobility.

Each work package will collaborate with our international partners (see below). These scholars, in 26 collaborating institutions, will ensure we learn from others about ways of understanding, measuring or interpreting developments in how care is organised and experienced, and keep up to date with latest research and scholarship.

The programme's *capacity-building strategy* will build future scholarly expertise in the study of sustainability and wellbeing in care, and ensure its concepts, methods and research findings achieve international standards of excellence. Universities in the Sustainable Care partnership are contributing 5 UK & 12 overseas PhD studentships, enabling the formation of an *international early career scholar network on sustainable care*, supported by the programme's senior team and partners.

The programme's *impact strategy*, led by Carers UK, involves leading UK and international policy partners. Informing policy, practice and debate, the team will co-produce analyses and guidance, enhance data quality, promote good practice and engage decision-makers, policymakers, practitioners in the public, private and voluntary sectors, carers, people with care needs, and the media. A Sustainable Care Advisory Board (comprising leading academics, policy/practice figures and opinion formers) will guide all its work.

Leadership Team

Principal Investigator: Prof S Yeandle (U of Sheffield)

Work Strand co-leaders: (Strand A) Prof J Glasby (U of Birmingham); (Strand B) Prof J Manthorpe (Kings College London)

Director of Impact: M Starr MBE (Director of Business Development & Innovation, Carers UK)

Director of Capacity Building: Prof N Keating (U of Swansea)

Work Package leaders:

- *Sustainable wellbeing: a conceptual and analytical framework for policy and practice in care and caring*, Prof A McGregor (U of Sheffield)
- *Comparing UK care systems: prospects, developments and differentiation in the 4 UK nations*, Dr C Needham (U of Birmingham)
- *Modelling care system costs and contributions: data for a sustainable care and wellbeing strategy*, Dr M Bennett (U of Birmingham) and Prof J Fast (U of Alberta)
- *Achieving sustainability in care systems: the potential of technology*, Prof M Hawley (U of Sheffield)
- *Migrant care workers in the UK: an analysis of sustainability of care at home*, Prof S Hussein (Kings College London)
- *Delivering care at home: emerging models and their implications for sustainable wellbeing*, Dr D Burns (U of Sheffield)
- *Combining work and care: workplace support and its contribution to sustainable care arrangements*, Prof J Heyes (U of Sheffield) & Prof J Fast (U of Alberta)
- *Technologies to support working carers: connecting people and systems*, Prof Luc de Witte (U of Sheffield)

- *Care 'in' and 'out of' place: towards sustainable well-being in mobile and diverse contexts*, Dr M Kilkey (U of Sheffield) & Prof L Ryan (U of Sheffield)

International Partners

Many of our international academic partners will be linking their own PhD students to our research programme, creating an international PhD community of students interested in sustainable care to which our newly appointed PhD students in the UK will also belong. They include:

- *Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for Population Ageing*
- *University of Western Australia*
- *University of Toronto, Canada*
- *Ontario Shores University, Canada*
- *Zhejiang University, China*
- *University of Jyvaskyla, Finland*
- *Zuyd University, the Netherlands*
- *University of Auckland, New Zealand*
- *University of Ljubljana, Slovenia*
- *Linnaeus University, Sweden.*

We also have partners working with us in the following universities and research institutes:

- *University of New South Wales, Australia*
- *Macquarie University, Australia*
- *University of Alberta, Canada*
- *McMaster University, Canada*
- *Zittau-Goerlitz University, Germany*
- *University of Vechta, Germany*
- *Italian National Institute for Health and Ageing*
- *Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training*
- *Japan Lutheran College*
- *Zuyd University, The Netherlands*
- *Bergen University, Norway*
- *Jagiellonian University, Poland*
- *University of Warsaw, Poland*
- *National Research Council, Spain*
- *National Yang Ming University, Taiwan*

Non-academic partners contributing to the Programme, in a variety of different ways, to advise and guide the programme's development, assist with research and data access, and support the research team and partners in achieving impact, include:

UK: Care England; Carers UK; The Carers Resource; CIPD; D Health Europe; Digital Care & Health Alliance; Employers for Carers; Equality and Human Rights Commission; Skills for Care; TSA; TUC; UNISON.

International: Eurocarers; Eurofound; International Alliance of Carer Organizations; World Health Organization.

Overseas: AGE-Well National Centre of Excellence (Canada); Canadian Human Rights Commission; CSA Group (Canada); Employment and Social Development Canada; Swedish Family Care Competency Centre.

Our programme's Advisory Board will be chaired by *Robert Anderson, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions*, and will comprise leading experts in relevant fields from the UK and the international community.