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With its massive impact on global health, free movement, human well-being and the plight of modern economies, it has been evident that societies cannot confront the challenges presented by the pandemic only with a narrow understanding of the medical research – as vital as this scientific knowledge is proving.

Similarly, the fundamental issues that climate change presents to the environment are rooted in questions about how we change social values, human interactions, cultural practices and behaviours. So too, issues of global security, food production, productivity, justice or mass migration are not simply technical ones that can be solved with better science (narrowly construed) and new inventions or technologies.

They are intrinsically about how societies work; their relations of power and affect, as well as societal beliefs, practices and values and the ways in which these are governed. For instance, progressing the United Nation’s Strategic Development Goals all demand social science understanding and social science-informed responses; from addressing poverty and reducing inequalities to fostering quality education and sustainable cities, social science needs to be at the heart of innovation and informing the research approach.

Moreover, social science can help shape the technologies, infrastructures, interventions and materials that natural scientists, engineers and medics are seeking to forge. Thus conceived, the social sciences must never simply be viewed as an after-thought about how to get people to use a new intervention or technology, once it has been invented or constructed. Rather, social science that is rigorous and relevant can provide the conceptions, methods and wisdom to inform the transdisciplinary co-production and co-design - from the outset - of new knowledge, practices, services and products that help improve human societies.

This is the vision of the social sciences – as central to addressing societal grand challenges – the Leeds Social Sciences Institute (LSSI) is seeking to further.

Central to our philosophy is an understanding that research benefits from combining the strengths of diverse disciplines in close engagement with relevant professional, practitioner and lay communities. To this end, the LSSI is striving to connect our social science research community with policy-makers and professionals to ensure the take up and use of social science in their policies, procedures and practices.

Our Impact Acceleration Account (IAA) is enabling us to support a range of innovative partnerships in research translation and application. Some of this is detailed in the pages that follow, additional information can also be found in our accompanying Report – Maximising Societal Impact for Research or via our website.

Over recent months, we have made great strides in fostering close relations with our external partners, regionally, nationally and globally. Our strategic partnership with sister institutions in Australia and Argentina have proved particularly valuable, opening up new opportunities for international collaborative working. Closer to home, we have forged deeper relations with key national government departments and policy communities and, also, led a major review of collaborative research relations with Leeds City Council. The latter has resulted in an important Report with tangible recommendations and detailed Action Plan, which have been accepted and are being implemented across both institutions.

This Report reflects the range of opportunities and support that the LSSI is providing to enhance the role of the social sciences, as well as the curiosity, engagement and commitment of social scientists at Leeds. It highlights the diverse ways in which – together with others – social scientists are working to shape societal change through research excellence. If you would like to support or assist us in this work, please do not hesitate to contact us (lssi@leeds.ac.uk) and join our network.

Adam Crawford
LSSI Director
Developing interdisciplinary research excellence

Social Sciences in a changing world

In a rapidly changing world with both on-going and rapidly emerging challenges, the social sciences are fundamental to understanding and addressing the big questions challenges society is facing.

Faced with political and economic turbulence, climate emergency, vast inequalities within countries and across the globe, and unprecedented threats to health and wellbeing, the social sciences have never been more important in enabling a full understanding of how we live today, how the world is changing, and what might be done. There is a strong temptation for governments and policy makers to look for solutions to the complex challenges faced by societies across the globe in new technology, engineering, or scientific discoveries. In reality, though, responses to complex and multifaceted challenges require interventions that are grounded, comparative and historical social understanding of economic, political and cultural contexts to be successful, in terms of practices, institutions, values and behaviour.

Leeds Social Sciences Institute is committed to this vision of the social sciences: one that responds to the fundamental societal challenges of the 21st Century. They are key to understanding how research questions are formulated and framed, to the development of new methodologies and modes of evidence, and to beneficial change and innovation in policy, practice and how we live our lives. The complexity of societal challenges require a complex response, bringing together approaches and perspectives from different disciplines and from outside the academy to ensure a practical response driven through policy, practitioners and communities.

We work across three key areas:
• Developing interdisciplinary research collaboration, across the University of Leeds and beyond, including with our key international partners.
• Supporting the development of external collaboration with partners outside of academia, extending the impact of social science research on policy and a wider public.
• Training the next generation of social scientists.
LSSI seeks to support some 650+ Staff and 700+ PGRs at Leeds across the social sciences and via the White Rose DTP across the faculties of Arts, Humanities and Cultures, Environment, Medicine and Health, Leeds University Business School and Social Sciences.

LSSI links the research excellence of our disciplinary Schools with the interdisciplinary span of cross-faculty research networks and platforms, providing vital coordination and oversight of university wide opportunities for collaboration and impact in the social sciences.

Re-thinking the co-production of knowledge

Experimentation with innovative approaches to knowledge generation and supporting the development and uptake of interdisciplinary and impactful research methodologies is an important element of LSSI’s work. One particularly important approach for impactful social science draws on methods and philosophies of co-production and participatory research, which is reflected in a programme of work to build a community of researchers across different disciplines to share best practice and develop a research culture which better supports a co-production approach. Working with colleagues in arts and humanities, we have run a number of events to bring together examples of co-production from different disciplines and with different non-academic partners, to draw lessons from different approaches, tackle barriers to implication and advocate for its wider use.

Co-production and citizen science are increasingly seen as important by funders and in assessment of research quality, but can be confounded by the established conceptions of scientific discovery and how research is designed, conducted and presented as linear, hierarchical and within established disciplinary norms of knowledge production.

Our recent ‘Engaged Research: Rethinking the Co-production of Knowledge’ seminar series brought individuals together from across disciplines and different co-production methods to explore the meaning, purposes and challenges of co-produced research, and provides a forum to share experiences and how to apply co-production and aligned methods in diverse fields of research. The series aimed to bring together a mix of experience, including both those with experience of co-production and those with an interest. It also developed a shared understanding of the principles to guide development of methodologies, and provided a basis on which to develop better processes and systems at the university to encourage and facilitate use of co-production as an important way to value different types of expertise, engage beyond the academy and re-think how knowledge might best be produced to maximise the benefits of research to society.
Internationalisation

Forging strategic research partnerships around the globe.

Just as moving beyond disciplines is important to addressing complex societal challenges, so is looking beyond the UK. Many societal challenges have global reach but, equally, drawing in different perspectives, experiences and understanding context is a fundamental role of the social sciences in addressing such issues. A key part of LSSI’s work is to forge strategic partnerships with similar interdisciplinary social science institutions around the globe to share best practice in supporting interdisciplinary social science research and impact excellence.

Key partners include the Institute for Social Sciences Research at the University of Queensland, Instituto de Investigaciones Gino Germani at the University of Buenos Aires, and Nanjing University, China. Partnerships to date have included reciprocal scholarly visits, PhD placements and an externally funded international workshop.

International Advisory Board

LSSI have established an International Advisory Board, with regional, national and international members to inform our decision making and strategy. With members from both academic and non-academic partners and stakeholder organisations, the Board provides oversight to our activities, but also provides insights into priorities and practice elsewhere to sense check and shape the direction LSSI takes to achieve our aims of positioning the social sciences as an intrinsic part of interdisciplinary research to address societal challenges.
Partnership in focus: Instituto de Investigaciones Gino Germani at the University of Buenos Aires

The Instituto de Investigaciones Gino Germani (IIGG) at the University of Buenos Aires (UBA) was identified as a key strategic partner for LSSI. As an institute supporting interdisciplinary social science within an extremely large Faculty of Social Sciences, IIGG has distinct similarities with LSSI. Links were established through an initial visit by LSSI Director Professor Adam Crawford to IIGG in June 2018, followed by a formal delegation in November 2018.

Professor Higham (leading the delegation) commented: “We were warmly received by our hosts and had a series of productive discussions on our respective research into global societal challenges. It is clear there are several shared research agendas that we will be taking forward.”

As work continues to further establish the links around key shared research priorities in migration, inequalities and security, a key highlight has been a British Council funded workshop in February 2020. The Enhancing Urban Safety and Crime Prevention through Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships workshop brought together colleagues from UBA and Leeds with international expert keynote speakers, exploring the contribution of differing state and non-state actors in the provision of urban safety and how these might best be harnessed in the public interests. With presentations from Argentinian scholars, local civil society actors and PhD researchers, the workshop developed a critical comparative understanding of the complex relations between actors, processes and networks that constitute urban safety, with particular regard to specific neighbourhoods in Buenos Aires and elsewhere around the globe.

Ensuing debates explored the interactions between the various actors and the manner in which they might better be harnessed to the prevention of crime and reduction of victimisation.

Professor Crawford said: “This has been a really productive three days’ work in which we have begun to co-produce collaborative research agendas with our Argentinian academic colleagues that address some of the most pressing social issues relating to urban security. It has been really valuable having input from international practitioners from UN Habitat and the Organisation of American States as well as civil society organisation working at the frontline here in South America. While our political, social and cultural contexts are different, many of the problems of everyday security and crime prevention through multi-sectoral partnerships face similar challenges. We have much to learn from and share with each other.”

Next steps for internationalisation

- Plans are under way to formalise a new international partnership after an initial visit by LSSI Deputy Director Professor Adrian Favell in October 2019 to scope opportunities for partnership with the School of Government and School of Social and Behavioural Sciences at the University of Nanjing.
- Building on concerns about climate emergency and following the impact of COVID-19 on research related travel, LSSI is actively looking at ways to support the development of research collaborations remotely.
Maximising the impact of social science research

Creating new opportunities for research to make a positive contribution to society and the economy

Objectives

The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) awarded the Leeds Social Sciences Institute £1.3m of funding through an Impact Acceleration Account (IAA) in April 2019 – April 2023. IAAs are institutional awards provided by the ESRC to deliver funding mechanisms for Universities to deliver funding mechanisms for social science knowledge exchange and impact activities at a regional, national and international level.

The IAA is a unique funding model that allows us to support Leeds researchers across multiple schools and faculties in the social sciences to maximise the impact and influence of their research.

The IAA has four key aims, for each of these aims we have delivered different mechanisms and funding models to support their delivery.

Our aims

1. Build relationships and networks with potential users of research to facilitate co-production of research and maximise impact.

2. Support researchers to build networks with potential users of the products of their research, and further work to establish proof of concept for their innovations.

3. Improve engagement with the public sector, policy sector, civil society, industry (including SMEs and local business) and the public.

4. To embed the social science IAA within wider interdisciplinary institutional impact activities and programmes, including those aligned to EPSRC/NERC, the University Themes/Platforms and NEXUS Building.
There will be up to four open Calls for Proposals per academic year for the ESRC IAA. Applications will be reviewed by representatives from the 5 social science faculties at the university and the Research Innovation Service as well as representatives from the private, public and third sector partners. The funding that is available via these calls are:

Responsive Mode Impact Fund

Providing flexible funding of up to: £15,000*

The purpose of the fund is to provide flexible funding for cross disciplinary projects that demonstrate strong user engagement with potential to impact on policy and/or practice in the private, public and third sectors.

Knowledge Exchange Fellowships

Providing flexible funding of up to: £10,000

The aim of the Knowledge Exchange Fellowship scheme is to facilitate interactions between external organisations and the University which build and strengthen relationships and facilitate knowledge exchange.

Rapid Action Fund

Providing flexible funding of up to: £2,000

The rapid action fund will allow social scientists to react quickly to influence governmental, national and international debate, or respond to tactical, urgent and pressing opportunities in short timescales.

Public Engagement Fund

Providing flexible funding of up to: £5,000

To stimulate a broad range of suitable approaches to impact, the public engagement fund will seek to support public engagement within the social sciences and promote the public understanding of social science and the impacts of research on cultural life.
Reflections on Year One of the ESRC IAA (2019/2020)
<table>
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| **£360K** | funding awarded |
| **£440K** | external funding leveraged |

| **5** | calls for applications |
| **51** | applications |
| **32** | applications awarded |
| **59%** | success rate |

| **23** | Responsive Mode Projects |
| **3** | Knowledge Exchange Fellowships |
| **1** | Public Engagement award |

| **3** | Rapid Action Funds |
| **2** | Leeds Institute of Data Analytics Data Science Internships |
| **7** | Festival of Social Science events |

| **40** | external partners involved in projects, secondments and events |

<table>
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<th>IMPACT BREAKDOWN</th>
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<tr>
<td>• 53% National</td>
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<tr>
<td>• 10% Regional</td>
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<tr>
<td>• 37% International</td>
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ESRC IAA Case Studies

Responsive Mode Impact Fund

Professor Julia Martin Ortega – Faculty of Environment
Partner – ECOSUR, El Colegio de la Frontera Sur, Mexico

Activating change on environmental governance through performance-based methods (Performing Change)

Value judgements of those involved in environmental governance are rarely discussed and shared amongst those most affected by environmental management decisions.

Performing Change uses Forum Theatre to enable rural communities in Chiapas (Mexico) to engage in deeper reflections on the benefits and risks of using ecosystem services (ES)-based framings in environmental management. Forum Theatre is a performance-based approach to generate public debate about issues that directly affect communities.

By training local collaborators, the forum enables people to identify critical issues and activate different solutions or responses. This cultivates shared value frames and emotions, and creates debate about distribution of power in environmental policy. It transforms academic debates in real community debates. Forum Theatre provides alternative means of communicating which is particularly relevant in the context of marginalised communities, whose active participation in environmental decision-making is hampered by inequalities, powerlessness, illiteracy and poverty.
Improving employment conditions and labour market engagement for people with chronic energy limiting conditions

People with energy limiting chronic illness (ELCI) are a large, but hidden, section of the disabled population in the UK, and make up a significant proportion of the caseload for out-of-work disability benefits. The Chronic Illness Inclusion Project (CIIP) is emancipatory disability research, part of DRILL programme of user-led research funded by National Lottery Community Fund and hosted by the Centre for Welfare Reform.

The aim of the project is to develop advocacy and voice for people with energy limiting chronic illness through combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods. This Knowledge Exchange Fellowship (KEF) will enable Stefanie Benstead and Catherine Hale from the Chronic Illness Inclusion Project (CIIP) to join the University as Fellows, on a job share basis for six months to work with Dr Kate Hardy and Dr Jo Ingold on a project developing impact in relation to the research produced by CIIP on chronic illness and social security.

Through the Fellowship, disabled researchers with lived experience of chronic illness will produce and launch a major policy report; organise a series of impact meetings and events which have the potential to lead to a transformation in social security and labour market policy and bring major positive financial and quality-of-life implications for people with ELCI.
Discarded textiles should be regarded as a resource not as waste. According to WRAP, 47% of discarded textiles is sent to landfill with 93-97% of the textiles waste capable of being reutilised.

The aim of the project is to raise public awareness of the potential uses of discarded textiles and to encourage the public to engage in appropriate divestment practices for unwanted textiles. An open meeting involving industry, academics, city council and the wider public would raise awareness of the issues surrounding textile waste management and highlight public perceptions of textile waste management practices.

An online website would be created with three areas: “technical” – academic abstracts to promote public understanding of social science and to demonstrate the range of technical feasibilities for reutilising textiles; “business” – descriptions and links to publicly available websites to companies involved in textile reprocessing; and “peer to peer” for sharing of knowledge and good ideas/news stories around textile reutilisation. Physical visits to various sites noted on the Leeds City Council waste management website would confirm/update the information and clarify where textiles specifically could be donated, with links to this info on the online website identifying accessible locations to donate “waste” textiles.
Leeds Climate Change Citizens’ Jury: recommendations launch event

The Leeds Climate Change Citizens Jury is a diverse group of 25 randomly selected people from across the Leeds city region, brought together for nearly 30 hours of deliberation, in an attempt to answer the question ‘What should Leeds do about the emergency of climate change?’ This was a specific attempt to support Leeds City Council’s Big Climate Conversation in the wake of its climate emergency declaration.

This diverse group has met over nine sessions (close to 30 hours of deliberation) to share opinions and experiences, hear from a diverse range of outside experts (witnesses) including academics, before writing a set of carefully considered and prioritised recommendations for action.

This group of citizens has produced a carefully thought through set of recommendations. This funding supported a launch event to enable their recommendations to be widely shared with stakeholders and members of the public across the city region. The Leeds Climate Change Citizens Jury launch event brought together public private and voluntary sector representatives to hear and better understand both the process of engagement and the group’s recommendations. This public launch of the jury recommendations will serve to build new and enhanced relationships between the public and agencies involved in addressing the emergency of climate change.

WANT TO FIND OUT MORE?
To see more of our IAA case studies click here
lssi.leeds.ac.uk/esrc-iaa/case-studies
In November 2019, the ESRC IAA supported a series of events as part of the annual Festival of Social Science.

The events in Leeds contributed to the 475 events that took place across the UK. The festival events spanned a wide range of topics engaging diverse audiences and offers an insight into some of the country’s leading social science research and how it can influence our social, economic, and political lives – both now and in the future.

In 2019 the Leeds programme featured 7 events on a variety of themes including sustainable cities, net zero, and people at work, automation, language and recreation. We had presentations, interactive workshops, debates, drop-ins, exhibitions, film screenings, participatory research and story-telling workshops. Our events were attended by over 1200 attendees across the Leeds City Region and contributed to a national festival to which saw over 88,000 attendees across 275 events spread throughout the UK.

This year ESRC is taking a new approach to the Festival. The 2020 Festival of Social Science will be a digital-first event, to be held from 7-15 November. We will once again, through our IAA, be looking to support a number of Public Engagement events for the 2020 digital first programme. However, unlike previous years ESRC have devolved festival organisation to Impact Accelerator Account (IAA) holders and their festival partners. Given that the festival will be largely delivered online, the ESRC have brought together 18 festival delivery partners (of which the University of Leeds is one) with a view to developing a coherent, broad, and diverse programme. This new format has generated great interest already and we look forward to seeing the end product of a national virtual festival and the audiences that this will draw.
Postgraduate Researcher (PGR) Placement Scheme

At LSSI, we facilitate and promote research collaborations and engagement, both across the University of Leeds, and with external partner organisations.

As part of this, our PGR Placement Scheme enables our Postgraduate Researchers (PGRs) to partner and collaborate with non-academic organisations. Through collaboration, both the PGR and the partner organisation can gain expertise, share knowledge, gain appreciation of different professional values and cultures, and explore the application of research in professional practice.

The time commitment for the PGR is estimated at about 130 hours in total, with weekly hours to be agreed with the organisation. Previously, PGRs have phased their projects over a 13-week period at ten hours per week.

The placement can either be led by a student or by an external organisation. Our experience shows that organisations who engage with the scheme report that postgraduate researchers bring new energy and fresh insights to their organisation and produce valuable reports that inform future work. Whilst also providing invaluable experience for PhD students to gain practical work experience outside of academia.

WANT TO FIND OUT MORE?
Please visit lssi.leeds.ac.uk/pgr-placements for all the details.
John Wooldridge –
Faculty of Social Science
Partner – Restore York

An evaluation of the support and outcomes that Restore – York achieve with their tenants.

These are education and training opportunities, work experience, addressing their therapeutic needs, encouraging physical exercise, encouraging social activities, finding them appropriate mentors and befrienders and giving them the opportunity to access support offered.

A vast range of data is collected by staff, support workers administer questionnaires with tenants regularly over the course of a person’s stay with Restore, which means they have several data points about how a person has changed over the time they have been supported. The project sought to analyse these data, with two main objectives;

1. **Understand the difference that Restore has made to tenants.**
2. **Learn lessons about which areas are the hardest to change and therefore what can be done to make the biggest impact in those areas in the future.**

John was able to achieve these objectives and demonstrate the massive impact Restore has made to tenants. Over the last three years Restore have housed 71 tenants, the vast majority of those were supported to enable them to move on to successful, permanent housing. Most of those went on to live independently in their own property, either through the private rented sector, or in social housing.

Only a small proportion of tenants left Restore suddenly or to an unknown destination, which is an incredibly good rate of success, particularly given the difficult circumstances in which people arrive, and the complex set of issues that many tenants have. Restore play a vital role in supporting the City of York Council by providing housing to some of their most vulnerable residents who would otherwise be sleeping on the streets or staying with friends.

Benedetta d’Ettorre –
Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Cultures
Partner – Open Source Arts Programme

Learning from emergency situations: how ecological resilience impacted on the sustainability of a small creative business.

On the 21st December 2015, Open Source Arts opened for the first time as newly set-up business in Kirkstall Road, in Leeds. Open Source Arts was set up as a new spaces for artists, makers and practitioner to fabricate things, work on projects, collaborate and showcase their work as part of a programme of workshops and events. On the 26th December, the River Aire flooded bringing water in 1000 homes and 400 businesses in the city centre, Kirkstall and Otley. If small arts organisations already have specific challenges in generating income and ensuring financial sustainability, the flooding caused an unforeseen a significant loss of money even before opening with £90,000 worth of damage to the equipment. The organisation mobilised a group of volunteers to help them to clean up and support neighbour businesses and homes. This research project investigates how that emergency and the resilient response that followed impacted the sustainability of the business and on the development of the local community’s ecological resilience. By studying and disseminating the learning from this experience, this project aims to generate knowledge that can inform policy and support the economic and social resilience of small business and communities affected by environmental disasters. The project will investigate the forms that resilience can take through specific attitudes and the practical tools and methods to that an arts organisations and communities can adopt to self-organise and respond to emergency situations.
New NPIF Accelerating Business Collaboration Funding

In March 2020, the Universities of Leeds, Sheffield and York were awarded funding from The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) to deliver a range of activities across the White Rose Social Sciences Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP).

The aim was to expand opportunities and build the capacity and capability of social science doctoral students and early career researchers to engage with business.

This funding is specifically for any doctoral researcher or early career researcher, across the White Rose DTP, whose work is at least 51% social science. The support is available to doctoral researchers regardless of funding source (i.e. you do not need to be funded by the ESRC/associated with the WRDTP already to be involved in this initiative).

What Opportunities Are Available?

- Dedicated Business Partnership manager to coordinate opportunities and deliver ongoing brokering and support for business engagement.
- Placements with priority business partners.
- Industry focused workshops and networking activities.
- Two skills and leadership residential to upskill doctoral researchers and early career researchers to find, manage and maintain successful external partnerships.
- A training programme addressing business engagement knowledge and skills gaps for social science doctoral researchers and early career researchers.

A snapshot of what we have done and what is to come:

- Two PGR students are currently undergoing placements with Itecho Health based in Nexus.
- Four week introductory business engagement webinar series attended by 66 doctoral students and ECRs which focused on topics including understanding the business environment and networking and influencing skills.
- Six week masterclass for 30 PGRs/ECRs wishing to learn about how to impact industry and how to apply their research in a commercial setting.
- An In Conversation Series – where businesses such as True North Innovation, Research Toolkit Ltd and Slingshot Simulations provide their hints and tips on how to connect with businesses, advice on how to build a career with their research within the private sector based on their experience and how they can promote themselves and their research to the private sector.
- A workshop for 30 PGR/ECRs around how to communicate with business and bespoke advice on how to create succinct briefs to communicate their research to a non-academic audience.
- Mentoring from an experienced consultant Dr Matthew Donaghy who works with NHS & Deloitte to provide bespoke advice about influencing large organisations, industry know-how and how individual research can influence the private sector.
TO KEEP UP TO DATE WITH UPCOMING EVENTS AND PLACEMENTS

Please visit lssi.leeds.ac.uk/npif-business-collaboration or contact Business Partnership Manager Hannah Crow H.E.Crow@leeds.ac.uk
Fostering relationships across disciplinary and professional boundaries

Engaging Policy with academia

LSSI’s mission to make the University of Leeds a globally renowned power-house for social research is becoming an increasingly important ambition against the backdrop presented by COVID19. The current climate has shown to exacerbate existing societal challenges, bring about new ones and there are of course the ones that we are yet to fully see and appreciate the nuances of. LSSI is uniquely positioned at the University of Leeds to enhance the value and impact of research and policy partnerships and to maximise the benefits of collaborative working in attempt to understand and approach these challenges.

LSSI has demonstrated this commitment was through a workshop in May 2019 entitled ‘Engaging Policy’, hosted at the University of Leeds. There a variety of policy-actors from across the country met with academics at the university from a range of social science disciplines. Academics self-selected which groups they would like to form part of with various policy-partners including, Ministry of Justice, Department for Transport and the Home Office. Discussions were mainly centred around Areas of Research Interest (ARIs) as one way of engaging with the government departments and how academics can engage with the departments and influence agenda-setting.

In January 2019, LSSI organised a ‘DWP Areas of Research Interest (ARI) Workshop’ hosted at the University of Leeds. The ambition of this workshop from LSSI’s perspective was broadly to provide a forum in which academics and policy makers at DWP could consider parallels between their research and the ARIs that the DWP were working within. From the DWP’s perspective, this engagement opportunity would help the government department to draw on a wider range of expertise and evidence, exploit new research methods and develop DWP’s own analytical capability. These discussions unearthed some (perceived) barriers around academic/policy engagement and Linking Leeds

As part of this collaboration with DWP, and with the view of engaging more students as well as academics at the university, the LSSI organised a ‘Linking Leeds DWP Day: life as a DWP analyst ‘reflections, analysis and methodology’. This event aimed to provide an opportunity for researchers at Leeds to hear about topics of interest from a policy perspective and understand more about routes into engagement with the government department.

As part of this collaboration with DWP, LSSI has developed and delivered a new seminar series: Linking Leeds. This seminar series has provided an opportunity to hear from both leading Social Scientists at the University of Leeds as well as prominent analysts, strategists and policy makers from the Department for Work and Pensions. Previous talks have ranged from a gendered view on youth mobility and access to economic opportunities to recognising demographic change, consumption and how this relates to the UK’s energy needs.

Moving into the new academic year, the LSSI is looking to move these seminars online and build upon them in line with the emerging ARIs that are to be published by DWP, with an additional view that these issues may well change and become increasingly nuanced as the situation unfolds.
Research England Quality Related Strategic Priorities Fund

In December 2019, The Leeds Social Sciences Institute (LSSI) was awarded funding via the Research England fund to support us in undertaking work with local, regional, national and international structures (including parliament, central government, devolved administrations, local government, health and education bodies, the justice system and other regulatory organisations). These funds supported an expansion of our engagement with both local and national policy partners (Leeds City Council and Department for Transport) as detailed below.

Engaging with Social Sciences in the Department for Transport workshop

Another way in which LSSI utilised these funds to bring together social science researchers and policy-makers was through an ‘Engaging Social Sciences in Department for Transport’ event which took place in London in March 2020. Our aim for this event was to bring policy makers/area specialists together with academics from the University of Leeds to afford the opportunity to network, share knowledge with the hope of fostering future collaborative partnerships between the two organisations.

The event facilitated discussion with DfT experts to discuss ways forward for future collaborations broadly around the areas of: a) Social Impact Appraisal b) Social Policy and Project Evaluation and c) Social Policy Development. The event saw various presentations including a keynote about the DfT’s social research interests from Jo Bacon, Head of Social and Behavioural Research at the department and various Leeds academics presented on a range of topics from: the benefits of a gendered approach to quantitative analysis of transport data; to the governance of smart mobility services; and a consideration of how inequalities of access for older people as a result of autonomous vehicles.
Fostering relationships across disciplinary and professional boundaries (con’t)

Leeds City Council & University of Leeds Collaborative Review

The University of Leeds and Leeds City Council have a history of fruitful collaborative relationships. On behalf of the University of Leeds, LSSI embarked upon a Review of Collaborations this year, to help enhance the value and impact of the research and policy partnerships and maximise the benefits of collaborative working in responding to social, environmental and economic challenges the city faces, which as aforementioned is of increasing importance during these times.

The aims of this Review were to: map existing research and policy collaborations across the two organisations; consider ways in which connections between research and policymaking might be enhanced; and identify barriers, priorities and opportunities for more effective future knowledge exchange. A Review team within LSSI is working closely to finalise the report containing recommendations for more coordinated and strategic collaboration going forward.

A Reference Group comprising of senior level leaders across both institutions has also been formed through LSSI to provide oversight on, and feedback into the report arising from the Review and to support any actions and plans that arise from it. We feel that now more than ever is a vital time for the university and council to come together as anchor institutions and address the civic need and priorities at this time through research and policy partnerships.

The published Review report entitled *Unlocking the Potential of Civic Collaboration: A review of research-policy engagement between the University of Leeds and Leeds City Council* is available from the LSSI website.
Public engagement activities

Innovation Forum

In July 2020, working with lead academics from the N8 Child of the North partnership and others, we organised an Innovation Forum. The aim of the Forum was to bring together senior academics, with policy-makers, practitioners and businesses to begin to surface challenges facing disadvantaged children and young people as a result of COVID and consider innovative ways to work together to mitigate some of these impacts presented.

The aim was that this would act as the starting point for activity in this area to grow. LSSI’s role in this would be to support the ongoing development of relations and research plans.

The Forum was well attended by a broad range of stakeholders who came from a great range of sectors including Leeds City Council, Department for Education, Batley Girls High School and Northern Powerhouse to name but a few. The delegates navigated through a number of activities which generated very interesting insights into how different stakeholders have seen the issues evolve for children and young people through the pandemic and what they think the solutions could be.

A strong message which permeated discussion throughout the three days was about the importance of children and young people’s voice and ensuring that these experiences were placed at the centre of any next steps that the delegates wished to take forward from the day. We are looking forward to supporting this group to engage their wider networks around this agenda to address this pressing societal challenge.

WANT TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT LSSI POLICY AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES?

Please contact Camilla McCartney C.J.McCartney@leeds.ac.uk
What’s next?

The current pandemic has created new challenges but also opportunities in regards to the ways in which we continue to deliver our strategic aims of LSSI, broadly to support interdisciplinary research and help foster relationships with external partners. This unique situation creates a real opportunity for the social sciences to play their role in addressing the societal challenges we are facing and the ones which will emerge as a result of the current pandemic.

Policy and Public Engagement

From a policy engagement perspective, we are working closely with colleagues at Policy Leeds, Public Affairs and OD P&L to develop a strategy which will afford a more coordinated approach to policy engagement across the social sciences and wider university. This strategy will speak to and sit alongside a mapping exercise which is being undertaken to adequately understand what is already happening in this space, areas of the university that we can learn from and which areas may benefit from further support through training for example or virtual events engaging academics and relevant policy actors in that area. We will also look to our newly formed LSSI Advisory Board containing some key policy actors to help steer our focus over the coming months and years.

Department for Transport

We are also introducing a new seminar series workshop this academic year in collaboration with Department for Transport following up on a suggestion made at the aforementioned DfT event in March 2020. We hope that, as with the highly successful and well-attended DWP Linking Leeds Seminar Series, these virtual workshops will help to foster collaborative relationships between academics and those in the department to help address some of the most pressing societal challenges we face, particularly around transport in the current climate.

Public Engagement

From a public engagement perspective, we are looking to strengthen our relationships with Leeds City Council further through the aforementioned Collaborative Review we are currently undertaking with the local authority. Our ambition is that through the report, action plan and virtual event we are organising over the coming months, we will be able to more effectively and strategically support these ongoing bilateral relationships, particularly at a time when the civic engagement agenda is a pressing issue within the city in light of the pandemic.

Third Sector

Through being part of Leeds Academic Collaboration for the Third Sector (Leeds ACTS) chaired by the DVC, Nick Plant, we, alongside other universities in the city and representatives from the third sector are thinking strategically about how we can bring together the knowledge and expertise of academia and the third sector in a more strategic way to respond to the crisis and challenges ahead brought about by COVID-19. Leeds ACTS has focus areas of: The Leeds £, Housing, Health and Wellbeing, Sustainable Food and Education, Skills and Access. We are currently building an action plan around how best to coordinate our support across the universities with the third sector to support research and activity in these areas.
Business Engagement

Following our successful ESRC Accelerating Business Collaboration project that ends in March 2021, we continue to provide sustainable support for our Postgraduate and Post-Doctoral community to enhance their connections and training with industry. We have worked with Nexus to provide a pilot for PGR students on placements to create a suite of resources and personal development materials to aid that experience and to ensure our students can maximise this experience within their development. We will also be continuing our PGR placement scheme that will continue to provide a unique opportunity for PGRs at Leeds to work with external organisations to enhance their skills and expertise.

Communication and Graduate Coordinator

We recently welcomed Gina Hardcastle to the LSSI team, who will be our Communication and Graduate Coordinator.

You can get in touch with Gina at Gina.Hardcastle@leeds.ac.uk

For further information about the LSSI and the work we do, find us online at www.lssi.leeds.ac.uk

Find us on twitter @UoLSSI

For general enquiries, contact LSSI@leeds.ac.uk

If you would like to join our Network please visit lssi.leeds.ac.uk/join-our-network
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