

SCOTS-AGE: The Scottish Coalition to ensure Thriving, Accessible, Sustainable Places and Environments that support Healthy Ageing

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Scottish Partners	Disciplines
University of Stirling (lead) <i>Centre for Environment, Dementia and Ageing Research</i> <i>Dementia Services Development Centre</i>	Sociology, Social Policy, Housing Studies, Social Work, Gerontology, Dementia Studies, Psychology; Sports Science, Computer science, Environmental Science, Economics, Business and Management, Architecture, Design
University of Edinburgh <i>Edinburgh Centre for Research on the Experience of Dementia</i> <i>Advanced Care Research Centre</i>	Organisation Studies, Healthcare, Social Care, Nursing, Dementia Studies, Social Prescribing, Policy, Anthropology, Sociology, Geography, Health Inequalities, Engineering
University of Dundee <i>People Health and Communities Research Group</i> <i>Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design</i>	Health Sciences, Environmental Gerontology, Healthcare Design
Heriot Watt University <i>The Urban Institute</i>	Built Environmental Planning, Engineering
University of St Andrews <i>School of Geography & Sustainable Development</i>	Geography, Technology
Age Scotland	Ageing, Dementia, Social Care, Healthcare, Policy
Digital Health & Care Innovation Centre	Technology, Service Design, Industry, Co-production
Scottish Care	Social Care, Social Policy
Stirling and Clackmannanshire City Region Deal	Includes the establishment of the Intergenerational Living Innovation Hub, a centre of excellence in relation to innovation within the built environment.
Wider Partners	
Centre for Ageing and Dementia Research (CADR) all Wales and Awen Institute, Swansea University	
International Longevity Centre-UK	
Centre for Research on Ageing and Connecting Generations Centre, Southampton University	
Centre for Ageing and Inequalities, Newcastle University	
CASE Centre for Ageing and Supportive Environments, Lund University, Sweden	
Department of Gerontology and STAR (Science and Technology for Aging Research) Institute, Simon Fraser University, Canada.	

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Expression of interest

1. The research challenge

Scotland's population is ageing, and by 2043 it is projected that 22.9% of the population will be of pensionable age¹. However, opportunities for healthy ageing are unequally distributed across Scotland, with healthy life expectancy varying by over 24 years between the most and least deprived areas of the country². The social determinants of inequalities in healthy ageing are related not only to individual-level characteristics such as education and income, but also to contextual features of the environments in which people live, work and play. Older people living in deprived areas are particularly vulnerable to experiencing poor housing, barriers to participation in the labour market, ageism, disability, and loneliness – all of which contribute to poor health outcomes in later life³. As such, addressing inequalities in healthy ageing is a complex and multifactorial social issue that requires urgent collaborative action across a broad range of social, political, economic and cultural domains within Scottish society. The research challenge is to address inequalities in healthy ageing by ensuring accessible, sustainable places and environments to support healthy ageing for everyone in Scotland.

SCOTS-AGE will address this complex challenge through collaboration and co-production across a range of stakeholders, leveraging funding with a mission to **deliver impactful and innovative solutions, for thriving, accessible, sustainable (both eco and ageing) places that support healthy ageing for everyone living and working in Scotland**. Through SCOTS-AGE we will build stronger social connections, improve wellbeing, community cohesion and empowerment, tackle stigma, and explore the opportunities and infrastructure that enables healthy ageing and support the creation of a wellbeing economy in Scotland. The main themes to structure the Coalition to meet this challenge include a cross-disciplinary focus on: **Place and environment, Health and wellbeing and Ageing at work**.

Working in partnership with Clackmannanshire and Stirling Councils as part of the City Region Deal projects, including Scotland's International Environment Centre (SIEC) and the Intergenerational Living Innovation Hub (ILIH), the Coalition has a unique opportunity to translate research into meaningful impact. The innovation hubs created through the Deal projects will drive job and company creation, enhanced skills opportunities, and positive change in health and social care and community wellbeing. The Deal projects include specific targeting on areas with the highest indicators of deprivation, and groups where exclusion and inequality is greatest. Our team is well positioned for further local impact across Scotland, e.g., Heriot-Watt University are working in partnership with NHS Lothian and the Scottish Older People's Assembly to develop a network of age-friendly communities and cities.

a. SCOTS-AGE and Scottish Government priorities

SCOTS-AGE will directly address Scottish Government priorities to improve the health and wellbeing of those living and working in Scotland. Deep-rooted and complex barriers to healthy ageing are not unique to Scotland, and this work will have an international reach to place Scotland as a leading nation in tackling this challenge. By engaging with complexity and working collaboratively across sectors and disciplines SCOTS-AGE will significantly contribute to economic, social, wellbeing and environmental aims of the Scottish Government. The mission addresses key Scottish Government **economic policy** priorities, including the *National Strategy for Economic Transformation* (2022) and its vision of a wellbeing economy and aims to address inequality alongside a drive for innovation leading to a Scotland that is *fairer, wealthier and greener*.

A **place-based approach** to tackling barriers to healthy ageing recognises **housing and communities** as social determinants of health and wellbeing⁴. The Government Office for Science notes that accessibility and social cohesion are two of the most significant factors that affect how older people experience their neighbourhood, and inadequate homes and neighbourhoods have a

¹ Scottish Government (2021a) A Scotland for the future: opportunities and challenges of Scotland's changing population, <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotland-future-opportunities-challenges-scotlands-changing-population/pages/6/>

² National Records of Scotland (2022) Healthy Life Expectancy 2018-2020, <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files/statistics/healthy-life-expectancy/18-20/healthy-life-expectancy-18-20-report.pdf>

³ Barrett, G. & McGoldrick, C. (2013) 'Narratives of (in)active ageing in poor deprived areas of Liverpool, UK', *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 33(5/6): 347-366; Equality and Human Rights Commission 2018; Scottish Government (2020) The Impacts of COVID-19 on Equality in Scotland, Edinburgh: Scottish Government

⁴ Public Health Scotland (2020) Place Standard Tool, <https://www.placestandard.scot/guide/quick>

detrimental impact on quality of life⁵. Consequences include fragmented service delivery, restricted resources, complex service pathways, and inequalities in the provision of support⁶. Housing is an under-supported area of delivery that can ensure positive outcomes for older people⁷. *Housing to 2040* notes that future-proofing of homes for our ageing population should be prioritised. The Scottish Government aims to develop sustainable communities supported by the principle that housing should be provided in the right places to create and sustain thriving local communities and ensure access to green spaces. By working alongside industry, the Coalition can also contribute to Scotland's **transition to net zero** and support innovation in the development of housing and sustainable communities with environmental solutions for Scotland, also aligning with priorities set out in the *Digital Strategy for Scotland* and the **potential of technology to transform** ageing.

The Coalition recognises the unique situation following the COVID-19 pandemic to do things differently. The proposed work will focus on the integrated nature of **health and wellbeing** adopting the framework provided by the *National Health and Wellbeing Outcomes* to ensure all people in Scotland are able to live, as far as reasonably practicable, independently and at home or in a homely setting in their community. By taking an integrated approach to ageing the work of the Coalition will feed into the National Care Service for adult **social care**. Audit Scotland⁸ have called for urgent action around social care services that are precarious, lacking choice and subject to a critical skills and workforce shortages. The Coalition's focus on wellbeing and communities will contribute to the Scottish Government's drive to reduce **loneliness and social isolation**.

The Coalition's focus on **ageing and work** aligns with priorities to promote accessible and sustainable workplaces and recognition of the role of secure, good quality employment in supporting healthy ageing (especially for people experiencing cognitive decline and disabilities) as set out in *Scotland for the Future: The opportunities and challenges of Scotland's changing population* (2021) and *A Fairer Scotland for Older People: A Framework for Action* (2019). Further, the focus on addressing inequalities links to the aims of *A Fairer Scotland for Women: Gender Pay Gap Action Plan* (2019) to support older women in work. A focus on ageing well at work also addresses UK priorities, including the aim to extend healthy working lives by 5 years by 2035. The Coalition recognises that work and caring roles are not always paid and that opportunities for **volunteering** underpinned by *Volunteering for All* will be a focus.

b. Taking a multidisciplinary response to research excellence and quality

SCOTS-AGE will be driven by a focus on place and the environment in the widest sense, including the natural, digital, built, social, sociocultural and the physical (external and internal) environments and places in which people live, work and play. The consortium will bring together significant research strengths across a range of discipline areas to work together to tackle this challenge. The mission is to deliver impactful and innovative solutions, for thriving, accessible, sustainable places that address inequalities faced by people ageing in Scotland. Reflecting the policy priorities outlined above the Coalition brings expertise and current research projects and programmes that reflect our focus on healthy ageing and the lens of place and environment.

The Centre for Environment, Dementia and Ageing Research (CEDAR) at the University of Stirling leads the consortium. CEDAR conducts interdisciplinary, environmental gerontological research in social, built, natural and care environments for older people including those living with dementia. The benefit of having a strong social science core to the network lies in the ability of social sciences to engage with the complexity that these challenging and interwoven social issues present. Collectively University of Stirling Social Scientists have attracted more than £43 million in research grant funding in the last 5 years, with £15.8 million from the ESRC. The University of Stirling is also leading the development and delivery of the Intergenerational Living Innovation Hub and Scotland's International Environment Centre projects through the Stirling & Clackmannanshire City Region Deal. These projects combine to provide a national centre of excellence focused on sustainable, resilient, inclusive communities and places which has international reach. The partnerships between businesses, public sector bodies, third sector organisations, policymakers, citizens, and academic researchers that are embodied in the Deal projects create a wide range of

⁵ Agile Ageing Alliance. (2019) Neighbourhoods of the Future, Better homes for older adults: Improving construction, health, care, design, technology & finance, Agile Ageing Alliance. <https://www.agileageing.org/page/neighbourhoods-future/>; Anderson, I. Theakstone, D. Lawrence, J. & Pemble, C. (2019) Match Me – what works for adapted social housing lettings? Action research to enhance independent living for disabled people. Edinburgh: Housing Options Scotland; McCall, V. (2022). 'Inclusive Living: ageing, adaptations and future-proofing homes.' *Buildings and Cities*, 3(1), 250–264. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.5334/bc.173>

⁶ Mackintosh, S. (2020) Putting Home Adaptations on the Policy Agenda in England, *Journal of Aging and Environment*, 34:2, 126-140, DOI: 10.1080/26892618.2020.1743511

⁷ McCall, V. Hoyle, L., Gunasinghe, S., O'Connor, S. (2020) 'A new era of social policy integration? Looking at the case of health, social care and housing', *Journal of Social Policy*, Firstview: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279420000525>

⁸ Audit Scotland (2022) Urgent action needed to address critical issues in delivery of social care services, <https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/news/urgent-action-needed-to-address-critical-issues-in-delivery-of-social-care-services>

exciting opportunities for positive and impactful innovations driven by research insights within Scotland and beyond. A particular strength of the Coalition is the inclusion of four projects funded within the UKRI Healthy Ageing Challenge Social, Behavioural and Design Research Programme, exploring healthy ageing, environments and design:

- Generating Older Active Lives Digitally (GOALD, led by University of Stirling)
- Healthier working lives for the care workforce. Developing careers. Promoting wellbeing (led by University of Edinburgh).
- Supporting Healthy Ageing at Work (SHAW, led by University of Edinburgh)
- Designing homes for healthy cognitive ageing (DesHCA, led by University of Stirling).

These research projects are part of the HAC investment in UK wide innovation and research which aims to support both our ageing society and the economy through the delivery of market innovations within the growing healthy ageing domain, while also addressing inequalities in healthy life expectancy.

All core partners in the coalition bring significant multidisciplinary expertise; large-scale research programmes; international recognition and reach; and wide-ranging networks in academia, practice and policy providing a solid foundation from which to develop innovative solutions that address the stated mission and that are grouped under the key themes.

Place and environment:

University of Stirling: design for dementia, neighbourhoods, housing studies, inclusive living, place standards, environmental science, computing science, co-design, assistive technology.

Heriot Watt University: planning, urban design, outdoor spaces, neighbourhoods, age friendly cities, housing, engineering.

University of Dundee: design, digital interaction, design ethnography, neighbourhoods, urban spaces, rural districts, design for health care, co-creating place-based health and care settings.

University of St Andrews: geography, technology.

Digital Health and Care Innovation Centre: service design, technology, digital inclusion.

Health and wellbeing:

University of Stirling: dementia studies, gerontology, social policy, healthy ageing, co-production with people with dementia, social care, healthcare.

University of Dundee: health sciences, public health, addictions, participation and rehabilitation and mental health, 'people, health and communities,' marginalisation, social and health inequities, healthy ageing, digital health.

University of Edinburgh: dementia studies, health and social care, advanced care, co-production with people with dementia.

Age Scotland/Scottish Care/ILC-UK: social care, health care, service design, assistive and health technology.

Ageing well at work:

University of Edinburgh: healthy ageing at work, healthier working lives, health and social care workforce, coproduction with industry.

Digital Health & Care Innovation Centre: informal carers, sandwich generation, health and social care workforce, technology at work.

UK and International partners provide enhanced expertise in ageing and inequalities (University of Newcastle); intergenerationality (University of Southampton); creative industries (Awen Institute); technology and gerontology (Simon Fraser University, Canada); and supportive environments for ageing (Lund University, Sweden).

c. Balancing breadth and specificity

The interdisciplinary lens of place and the environment adopted in this proposal will create meaningful impact. while enabling engagement with research across a wide range of disciplines. The mission for healthy ageing for everyone and the importance of place and environments in achieving this is recognised globally⁹ and as highlighted in this application, this is echoed strongly

⁹ World health Organisations (2020) United Nations Decade of Health Ageing 2021 - 2030

in policy across the UK. Achieving the goal of healthy ageing has positive impact across society in terms of health and wellbeing across the generations as well as on wider social and economic structures. The life course approach taken in this proposal will seek to understand experiences across the lifecourse and their impact on ageing alongside work to support intergenerationality. Thus, we believe a focus on ageing has broad and current relevance for everyone in Scotland.

2. Future or current defined funding opportunities

UKRI recognises the importance of ageing as a focus for research with impact reflected in consistent funding with an ageing focus since the 1980s and more recently in its ISCF Healthy Ageing Challenge. Taking ageing as our focus within the Coalition will enable access to funding across a wide range of funding streams and calls from all Research Councils and Charities.

Horizon Europe offers potential funding via Pillar 2 and 4 Clusters focused on improving health and well-being of citizens of all ages including through the development of health technology and innovative solutions to support both individuals and public health systems with opportunities related to the development of health and wellbeing technologies.

SCOTS-AGE is well positioned to leverage funding has already demonstrated significant success to date across the partnership. The platform that the Stirling & Clackmannanshire City Region Deal brings, with a total of £29.5m capital investment from the Scottish and UK Governments in the SIEC and ILIH projects, is already leveraging significant research and innovation grant funding and SCOTS-AGE will accelerate the growth of this funding programme.

3. The SCOTS-AGE Coalition

The coalition will be led by the University of Stirling, who will work closely with the Scottish, UK and International partners, listed on the cover page of this proposal. Working together we can place Scotland as a leader in providing thriving, accessible, sustainable places and environments that support healthy ageing. The coalition is distinctive in the unique opportunities offered for novel trans- and interdisciplinary work, for example, by bringing together social scientists, engineers and environmental scientists to find sustainable solutions for ageing populations. The City Region Deal and links with policy, practice and industry within the coalition will ensure outcomes are meaningful and have real impact for Scotland as well as providing internationally recognised exemplars. Working with wider networks in the UK and internationally further add value to the coalition, supporting its reach beyond Scotland and bringing specific expertise that enhances the coalition.

4. The added value of SCOTS-AGE working with the SFC funding

SFC funding will enable the Coalition as a whole to be 'greater than the sum of the parts' through a range of activities, including the establishment of:

1. Coalition infrastructure in the form of a core team and digital platform to coordinate and support the work of member
2. Co-production hub at the Intergenerational Living Innovation Hub, University of Stirling
3. Crucible and sandpit events to support early career researchers and encourage innovation
4. Annual conferences, interdisciplinary and cross-sector workshops and sandpits
5. Seed corn funding to develop initial ideas into larger proposals for external funding
6. A seminar series and workshops to build capacity, knowledge, expertise and skills.

CADR, a Welsh government funded network covering the whole of Wales for research on ageing and dementia will provide an exemplar for collaboration and network activities.

These activities will support:

- i. Creation of new interdisciplinary partnerships and collaborations
- ii. Meaningful work with local and national governments to address policy priorities
- iii. Development and attraction of new 'rising stars' in ageing research
- iv. Co-production work to place the voices of older people at the centre of the Coalition
- v. Creation of a sustainable network of multi-sector, multidisciplinary collaborators that works together in meaningful way and is ready to respond to new opportunities
- vi. Horizon scanning for funding
- vii. Leverage of significant funding from Scottish, UK, European and International bodies for research and innovation with an emphasis on partnership funding.