

Strategic Review

Evidence to improve lives
in a changing world

Introduction

Established amid the turmoil of the Second World War, when the outcome was still uncertain, the Nuffield Foundation was born with the conviction that its work could inform post-war reconstruction. Our task today is just as vital – to forge social advancement, in frighteningly uncertain times.

We use our resources to generate evidence, convene debate, and promote innovation on some of the most pressing questions facing our society. The results can reframe arguments, bring clarity out of complexity, and inform policymakers and practitioners on how to effect lasting change that improves people's lives.

More than five years on from our last strategic review, our work today proceeds amid a world in tumult. War in Europe, the fraying of long-standing alliances, the rise of protectionism, and the spread of populism have all upended long-settled assumptions and changed the political landscape.

The current generation of leaders now face starker dilemmas than most, if not all, of their post-war predecessors. New technologies are being rapidly adopted despite sketchy understanding of their benefits and risks. Sharp inequalities have been revealed and compounded by repeated economic shocks that have rocked our societies. Those same inequalities complicate and impede hopes of arresting and managing dangerous climate change. And beliefs that many assumed had triumphed in the battle

of ideas – respect for scientific inquiry, the imperative to decarbonise, and a broad commitment to social equality – are under direct threat in some nations and need bolstering in others.

The UK is not immune to these pressures. As a diverse society and open economy deeply embedded in global systems of production, trade, research, governance, and culture, these shifts impact us directly and indirectly. They come on top of almost two decades of economic stagnation that has placed households, public services, and communities under unprecedented pressure; and four decades of high inequality that has strained the social fabric.

Rapidly changing demography and migration patterns have both enriched our society and brought to the fore new social and intergenerational questions and tensions. There is widespread belief that the rising generation will fare worse than their parents, and confidence in key governing institutions is low. Amid all this, there are gnawing doubts about whether our existing systems of governance are up to the task.

The Nuffield Foundation must confront the scale and urgency of all these challenges – and should do so with the confidence and imagination that can inspire fresh solutions. Our heritage stands us in good stead here. Our underlying goal of advancing social well-being in a more inclusive and just society feels freshly relevant.

Our long-standing commitment to bring rigour, sound evidence and nuance to bear on social problems is sorely needed to meet the complexity of today's challenges. And our independence is more precious than ever: permitting us the freedom to take the long view, examining slow-burn trends that play out over decades, as well as new issues emerging over the horizon. In short, we are well placed to combine an underlying steadiness of purpose with the agility necessary to respond to a fast-shifting landscape.

The work we fund and do will prioritise prosperity, inclusiveness, and fairness. There will be a guiding thread of concern about inequalities, disadvantage, and vulnerability for individuals, families and communities – and a focus on how to address them. Newer themes will include the implications of actions to tackle climate change for different groups, and the ways in which rapid developments in science and technology can best work for people and society.

We will also revisit a core Nuffield theme – institution building. This was a hallmark of our past work: from the 1970s, when we funded early neighbourhood law centres; to the 1980s when we backed cross-community schools in Northern Ireland; and through to our involvement in supporting landmark work on constitutional reform in the 1990s. As some public bodies battle to hold on to trust, we will examine what makes for an effective institution, explore how legitimacy can be nurtured and identify areas where greater institutional capacity is needed.

We will also continue directly providing that capacity in particular sectors, through our expert Centres. The Ada Lovelace Institute and the Nuffield Council on Bioethics are prominent voices on the social and ethical questions arising at the forefront of data and artificial intelligence, and health and biosciences. The Nuffield Family Justice Observatory has become a respected point of authority – as well as a trusted champion of all those, including young children, for whom Family Court decisions are so fateful.

In seeking to bring about change we will become more intentional: seizing opportunities to use evidence to influence policy; pioneering new approaches to improve practice; foregrounding fresh insight that can shift the terms of public debate; and identifying institutional gaps and building the capabilities needed to fill them.

A strong, diverse, and engaged research sector is the best way to advance knowledge and foster innovation. We will strive to be an ever more inclusive organisation in the work we do, and those we work with.

Our purpose

The Nuffield Foundation is independent, and our founding purpose is to advance social well-being. We achieve this by funding and undertaking rigorous research, encouraging innovation, and supporting the use of sound evidence to improve people's lives.

We tackle pressing, complex questions. Our aim is to open up opportunities and to improve lives for individuals, families and communities, within a just and inclusive society.

Our work addresses the inequalities, disadvantage, discrimination and vulnerabilities that people face, and considers the social and ethical implications of scientific and technological advances.

Our values

Our values define the kind of organisation we strive to be. They establish what we expect of ourselves and how we aim to make a difference, drive our decision-making, and guide how we work with our partners and each other.

Our five values are:



Independence

Our financial and political independence gives us the freedom to be open and objective in our approach, and to focus on the power of evidence.



Collaboration

We convene and connect with individuals and organisations to maximise our collective impact, recognising that we will not bring about change on our own.



Rigour

We have high standards in all that we do, achieving a quality that gives us influence and impact.



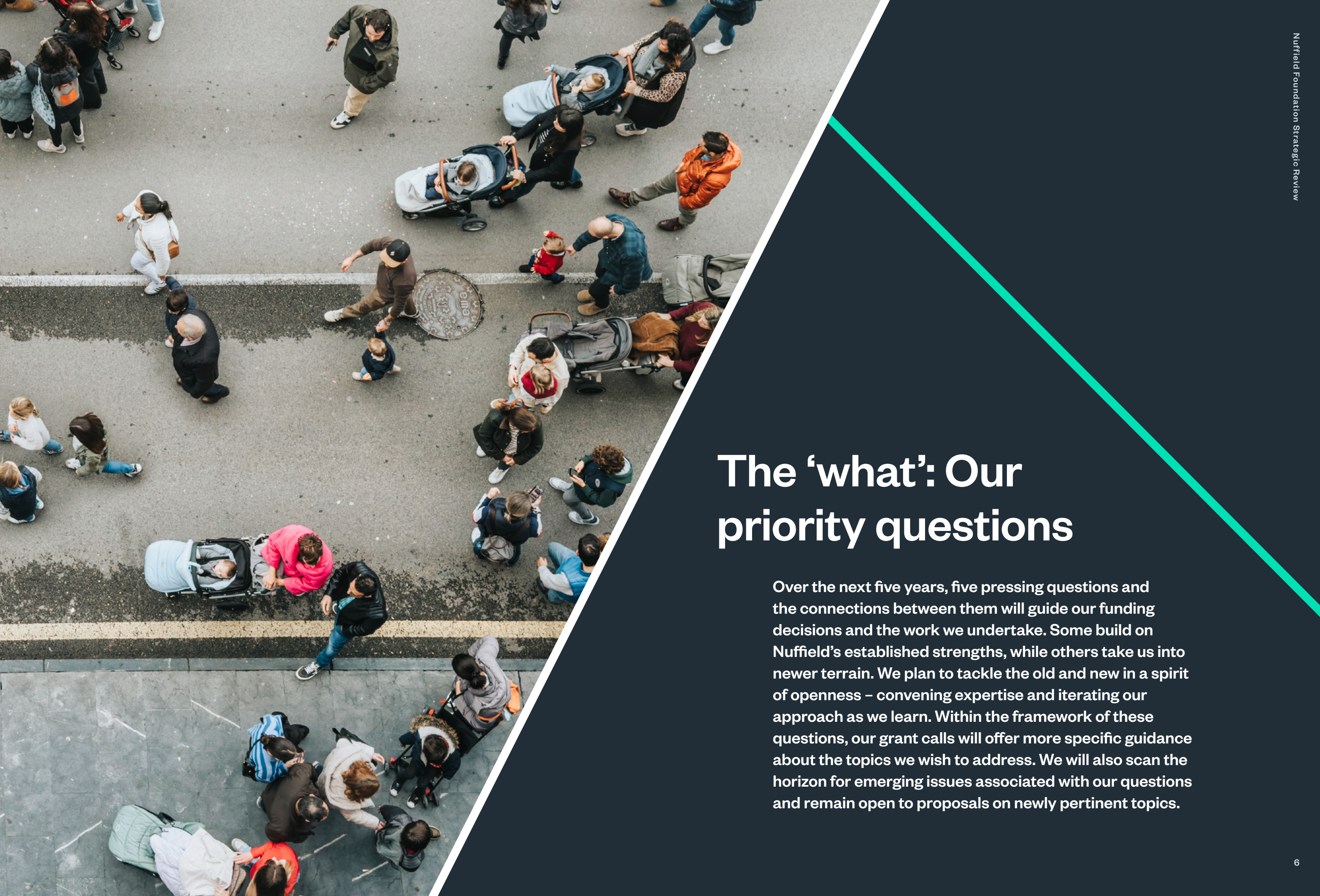
Curiosity

We foster a spirit of exploration, encouraging our staff and those we fund to pursue new ideas and challenge old assumptions.



Inclusivity

We will further diversity, and work to ensure that everyone feels valued, respected, and empowered.



The ‘what’: Our priority questions

Over the next five years, five pressing questions and the connections between them will guide our funding decisions and the work we undertake. Some build on Nuffield’s established strengths, while others take us into newer terrain. We plan to tackle the old and new in a spirit of openness – convening expertise and iterating our approach as we learn. Within the framework of these questions, our grant calls will offer more specific guidance about the topics we wish to address. We will also scan the horizon for emerging issues associated with our questions and remain open to proposals on newly pertinent topics.

A prosperous and fair society

How can we build a prosperous and fair society, where people are secure and can fulfil their potential?

Despite its underlying strengths, the UK economy is mired in unprecedented stagnation which has undermined living standards and entrenched inequalities. Many acute societal challenges flow from, or are accentuated by, sustained economic underperformance.

The Nuffield Foundation will continue to pursue questions of fairness, opportunity and human potential in our funded work. Building on Strategic Fund projects, including *The IFS Deaton Review of Inequalities* and *The Economy 2030 Inquiry*, we want to deepen understanding of the interaction between economic and social problems.



This relationship runs in both directions. We are interested in identifying the routes through which improved economic performance – such as increased investment, productivity or employment – could alleviate social challenges such as poverty, insecurity and inactivity. This could mean examining how specific tax, industrial, trade, and competition policies might contribute towards this. Equally, we want to identify the routes through which effective and life-improving social policies (such as training, support for those with health conditions, or adequate income insurance) could themselves foster growth and shared prosperity. Education, a foundational interest for Nuffield, will be crucial here.

Particular questions we would like to consider include:

1. How does economic policy and performance shape outcomes – including on living standards, poverty, social mobility, and the distribution of wealth for different people, groups and places?
2. What are the sharpest insecurities that particular groups face in the labour market, housing, and their interactions with the welfare state; how do these insecurities compound; and how might they be addressed?
3. How can our education and care systems best equip children and young people to thrive and reach their potential; and what support does the current generation of young people need to make the transition to adulthood?
4. How can employers and public services better support the rising numbers of people with significant health conditions or disabilities to undertake fulfilling work and secure a decent standard of living?
5. What trade-offs arise in the dual pursuit of rising prosperity and greater equality, and how can they best be managed?

An inclusive society

How can we build an inclusive society, where people thrive and feel they belong, in the context of changing demography and ways of life?

The make-up of UK society is changing rapidly. The number of over-85s is set to nearly double by 2045, while fertility rates across Britain are at their lowest since records began. The UK has become more diverse in a variety of ways, including race, religion, and family structures. These trends are evolving in different ways in different

places. They affect not only material and financial circumstances, but also people's sense of belonging, psychological well-being and relationships. Successful policies for a more inclusive society – and decisions on public services such as education, justice, healthcare and welfare – must be built on a clear understanding of all these dynamics.

We want to explore the drivers of this demographic change, as well as the resulting pressures on, and implications for, state and society. We want to ask how the UK can adjust to an ageing society (as we have done in the project *Living Well in Later Life in Bradford*) – with the need for more care and more support to work longer, alongside a fairer settlement between generations.

Building on our *Understanding Communities* programme, we will renew our focus on what makes for successful communities in this shifting context, including factors affecting social cohesion; the housing market; and the local environment. We wish to develop our interest in the role of place in shaping opportunities, identities, and belonging. And we are keen to explore the role of differences in the composition of places – such as population, social infrastructures, and economic inheritance – in shaping their futures.

There is a strong Nuffield tradition of funding and leading research about children, families, communities, and societal inequalities. We want to understand what an inclusive society looks like from different people's perspectives; and will continue to consider how intersecting characteristics – such as race and ethnicity, gender, disability, and social class – reflect the multiplicity of experiences that shape people's identities and outcomes.

Particular questions we would like to consider include:

1. What does the changing age structure of the UK mean for society, public services, taxation and government; how are changes in fertility, migration, and other factors driving this; and what role, if any, should policy play in changing these trends?
2. Given these trends and changes within the UK, what are the barriers and pathways to a racially just and inclusive society in the decades ahead?
3. What are the direct and indirect impacts of the UK's current housing market on individuals, communities, and the economy; what scale of change is required; and what sorts of policies might deliver it?
4. What levels of care are needed for an ageing UK population and how should it be provided and funded? Is there scope for greater technological and/or social innovation to lead to new care models, and what ethical issues may arise from this?
5. How should the provision of public goods and services interact with and take account of local communities, including local identities and social ties?



Science, technology and society

How can we ensure that developments in science and technology work for people and society?

The rapid development and deployment of new technologies is unfolding faster than our collective ability to understand their societal impacts, benefits, and harms. There are lags in understanding as policymakers, businesses, and individuals look to identify advances, verify the claims made about them, and grapple with potential uses and limitations.

We want to help develop effective and agile models of governance capable of securing trust and maximising societal benefits. This includes regulation and regulators that can keep pace with developments. We are resolved to build evidence about how, and whether, key technologies work, as well as how they are being used, and what impact they have on people.



Our work will examine the choices facing policymakers and practitioners particularly in areas such as education, justice, welfare, health, and social care. These include specific concerns about access to technologies and those who may miss out on them; and more general inequalities that could arise from rapid adoption, and how we might mitigate these.

More broadly, we follow in the strong Nuffield Foundation tradition of concern with the interplay between science, technology, and social change, as well as their relational and social impacts. We will continue to build on the expertise of the Nuffield Council on Bioethics and the Ada Lovelace Institute, as well as funding wider research in these areas.

Particular questions we would like to consider include:

1. How can we identify, foster, and support regulatory frameworks to be based upon ethical principles, so that they both encompass rapidly developing science and reflect changing societal values?
2. How are evolving technologies reshaping the nature of work; and what can we learn from how the use of data and AI technologies is affecting the workforce in different parts of the public sector?
3. How can new science and technology be adopted in an equitable way, with a clear understanding of its impact on different groups in society?
4. How are technologies affecting people's sense of identity and agency, and the ways they communicate and relate to one another?
5. How can futures, foresight, and horizon-scanning tools be deployed to improve policies and systems?

Climate change

How can policies to address climate change be developed in a way that promotes a prosperous, fair and inclusive society?

The world is significantly off-track to limit global warming to 1.5°C. This demands urgent global action and a credible domestic plan for the UK to reach its net zero commitment by 2050. Yet just as the need to confront difficult choices presses harder, the domestic and international consensus on climate action is fraying.

Climate policies represent a new focus for the Nuffield Foundation: we have not previously funded a body of research on their implications. Our interest here is distinct. Others fund research into specific mitigation or adaptation approaches, whether scientific, regulatory, engineering, or commercial. Our natural focus is instead the distributional consequences of climate strategies.



This might cover the implications of net zero for different groups in society as housing, energy, and transport are decarbonised; and what needs to be done to secure a transition that is both equitable and capable of commanding public support. We also want to explore the risks and opportunities that climate change poses for our economy and jobs market, as well as their implications for public services. And we are interested in more local and regional environmental issues, such as air and water quality, and the ways in which they affect different groups and communities.

Particular questions we would like to consider include:

1. Where might mitigation and adaptation actions risk deepening existing inequalities or create new vulnerabilities, and how can this be mitigated?
2. How should we prepare for the societal and economic stresses arising from changes to the climate, and what reforms to our systems of social protection are needed to increase resilience and ensure equity?
3. How will climate change policies affect investment levels and employment in the future?
4. What are the social and distributional implications of more localised environmental issues such as air and water quality – and of policies to address them?
5. How can education ensure that future generations are equipped with the right knowledge and skills on climate and environment issues?

Trustworthy and effective institutions

How can we build and maintain the effective, accountable and trustworthy institutions that our society and democracy need?

Effective institutions underpin cohesive societies but public trust in key governing authorities in the UK is severely strained. Misinformation, an increasingly polarised public discourse, and rising signs of reduced state capacity all add to the challenge.

More broadly, there is a pressing need for insight on how to foster effective institutions that can anchor local communities, improve decision-making, and bolster trust in our systems of governance.



The Foundation has a history of funding research into different types of institutions, as well as directly incubating and building new capability. We want to renew and redouble this endeavour. We want to learn from past experience, identify factors that can nurture trust in institutions, explore the scope for improving systems, and consider building new institutional capacity.

Within this, we have a longstanding focus on justice as a pillar of a fair society. The justice system is a cornerstone of public trust in the state and rule of law. It underpins everyday social and economic life by protecting people's rights, resolving disputes, and providing redress.

Particular questions we would like to consider include:

1. What factors shape levels of trust in institutions, especially those whose decisions shape people's lives?
2. How can national and local institutions best combine the need for technical expertise with accessibility, legitimacy, and accountability in decision-making?
3. What are the most effective and appropriate ways of enabling the public to have meaningful engagement and voice in different institutional settings?
4. How can new and traditional sources of data best be harnessed by public institutions to achieve better outcomes for citizens?
5. What should the role of the justice system be in ensuring the quality, accountability, and legality of institutions and their decision-making?

The 'how': Our ways of working

Our priority questions will shape our thinking as an organisation. We will work to answer them in five ways:

1. By awarding grants

These include our main research grants; our larger, more transformational Strategic Fund grants; and our targeted grants for work on racial diversity and ill health / disability.

2. By funding innovative interventions

This includes testing and piloting new practices, as well as rigorous evaluation of different approaches.

3. By conducting our own research and synthesis

Bringing together existing research – and producing our own – in key areas where we are well placed to generate new insight. Our three expert Centres each produce research in their respective areas.

4. By creating new institutional capability

We sometimes support new or emerging institutions where we wish to build stronger capacity to address a strategic issue that aligns with our purpose.

5. By funding the development and evaluation of student programmes

These are aimed at directly supporting students' pathways.

In each case, our goal is to generate, marshal and deploy evidence to have impact: that is, to inform, advance, and sometimes redirect debate, as well as to shape policy and frontline practice. We are open to experimenting with new approaches to achieving these ends, especially where this allows us to be agile in response to unfolding events.

Grant funding

Research grants

In the years ahead, we will broaden our interests and develop our networks, capacity, and expertise to enable us to address our five priority questions. In doing this we will also build on established areas of strength. **Education** research will remain a priority. On the **economy, work and welfare**, we will build on previous flagship projects to address questions of economic performance, inequality, and

insecurity, as well as the changing nature of work. On **justice**, we will continue to focus principally on family, administrative, and civil justice, not least through the Nuffield Family Justice Observatory and our *Public Right to Justice* programme.

We make awards of up to £500,000 through our biannual main grants rounds. In special cases, and with prior agreement, we occasionally accept applications for up to £750,000.

Focus on education

Our work in education underpins many of our priority question interests. It covers the full life span, from the earliest years of learning and development, through school, into the opportunities and choices in education and training faced by young people and adults. We are interested in: people's journeys and life chances and how these vary by individual characteristics and circumstances; policies affecting these journeys, and how these might be improved; and educational practice in all settings as well as more informal learning environments, including the home, wider family, and community.

Capabilities

Work we fund explores skills and capabilities that equip people for living and working well. We will continue to focus on oral language, literacy, and wider communication skills; and on numeracy, quantitative, digital, and data skills. We will build on the work of *The Skills Imperative 2035* Strategic Fund project, which has identified essential skills for future employment (for example, problem-solving and creativity). We are interested in social and emotional qualities, such as resilience, self-regulation, and empathy, and the role that parents, families and others play in fostering them.

Educational disadvantage: causes, consequences, and solutions

Our work investigates various forms of educational disadvantage and vulnerability, particularly for those locked into trajectories of low achievement or facing particular barriers. These include socio-economic or geographical factors, special educational needs and disabilities, issues relating to mental health or neurodiversity, being in or leaving care, and experiences of discrimination.

Young people's pathways

We want to improve the evidence base on young people's opportunities, choices, and aspirations at key points. These include pre-16 subject and course choices; the post-16 tertiary landscape, particularly technical and vocational routes; career preparation; and the role of employers.

Teaching and learning

Our work aims to improve understanding of – and access to – high-quality teaching and learning, by focusing on workforce supply, conditions, and professional development; effective practice, pedagogy, and assessment; the role of AI and other digital technologies; approaches to engagement and inclusion (including behaviour and absence); and organisational issues, such as funding, accountability, regulation, and admissions.

Strategic Fund grants

We will focus our strategic funding on projects that address one or more of our five priority questions. These are major grants – reserved for ambitious, cross-

cutting projects – in the range of £1m–£3m. We are looking for projects that anticipate the future, advance scholarship, and reshape how policymakers think about the areas in which they work.

Strategic Fund examples

The IFS Deaton Review of Inequalities

This was our first Strategic Fund grant. The review unearthed the nature and evolution of different dimensions of inequality – including in income, health, wealth, political participation, and opportunity – and examined them through a range of lenses, including social class, gender, ethnicity, geography, age, and education. It wrestled with philosophical questions about why inequality matters and provided an accessible and definitive trove of data and analysis. The final volume will distil the lessons and set out principles for how policymakers should think about and address inequalities.

The Economy 2030 Inquiry

This Resolution Foundation and London School of Economics project shone a spotlight on the UK's stagnant and unequal economy, and set out a viable path to shared prosperity, by leveraging the nation's strong exportable services, increasing public and private investment, and improving job quality.

The research also examined how to unlock the potential of Britain's second cities. The project gripped politicians and officials alike, secured huge coverage, and helped inform the economic debate in the run-up to the 2024 election. Regional media and events widened the audience. Traces of its influence can be seen in various government proposals, including on planning, pro-investment pension reform, workers' rights, and a modest but important move to increase the basic rate of Universal Credit.

The Skills Imperative 2035

Outcomes from this National Foundation for Educational Research grant reveal how the labour market is changing, and the essential skills – including socio-emotional skills, cognitive skills and self-management skills – that will be vital in the future. Finding that deficiencies in these skills are widespread and, without action, likely to grow, the project is identifying factors associated with better skills outcomes, and engaging government, industry, and the education system in the implications for policy and practice.

Targeted grants

In addition to our main and strategic grants, we also have ringfenced funding for research into issues of racial diversity, and ill-health and disability:

1. The Racial Diversity UK programme enables work taking a fresh look at how patterns of racial diversity and disparity develop and shape society – both now and in the coming decades. It aims to improve understanding of the barriers and pathways to a racially just and inclusive society.

2. The Oliver Bird Fund supports initiatives that improve the social and economic well-being of people living with musculoskeletal conditions. We are exploring broadening the fund's focus to also include other disabilities and health conditions, including mental health, that are increasing in prevalence and significantly affecting people's lives. In line with our overall focus on shared prosperity, our aim is to boost employment, tackle poverty, and widen access to support.

Methodologies and approaches

We take pride in the analytical rigour of the work we support, funding research that uses a wide range of methodologies: quantitative evidence and analysis; well-designed and insightful qualitative research; mixed methods; reviews; synthesis; data collection; and evaluations. The key test is that the method is credible, rigorous, and appropriate for the question being addressed.

Across our funded work, we are keen to support cross-disciplinary research, as well as experimental and innovative approaches. We always seek to ensure active engagement with the complexity of people's lives. We are interested in funding more research that

examines intersectional effects, recognising the ways in which people are shaped by multiple societal factors. And like *Safety Nets: Social Security in a Devolved UK*, we support work which draws on the diverse realities of place across the UK – whether at the national, regional or city level; as well as work using international comparison to set UK policy and practice in a wider context, and to illuminate promising alternative approaches.

As we did during the Covid-19 pandemic, we will respond to emerging events and trends and sometimes run specific calls or commissions on important topics. These will better equip us to shape change and influence policy and practice.

Interventions and evaluation

The Nuffield Foundation has a history of funding the development of evidence-based interventions and research-informed experimentation – 'prudent pioneering' in the words of the first Trustees' annual

report. In this next phase, we would like to see more proposals that test or trial novel approaches, and bring research and evaluation closer to the frontier of practice.

Nuffield Early Language Intervention

The Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI) is a 20-week oral language programme for reception-age children developed by researchers at the Universities of Oxford, Sheffield and York, initially funded by the Nuffield Foundation. An Education Endowment Fund evaluation found that it boosted language skills by four months on average. Children receiving free school meals benefitted the most, with a seven-month boost.

During and since the Covid-19 pandemic, the Department for Education has funded the rollout of NELI to two-thirds of English primary schools. Reception-age children benefit from intensive and targeted support for their development of skills in speech, language and communication.

In the NELI Preschool trial, children in 65 nurseries made the equivalent of three months' additional progress in their language development. The 20-week programme was delivered by teaching assistants to nursery classes in deprived areas, with additional targeted support for children with the weakest oral skills.

We are committed to rigorous and sustained evaluation of research, interventions, and policy initiatives, and have seen the difference this can make. Nuffield-funded research has highlighted that some initiatives showing early promise, such as the Education Maintenance Allowance,

have subsequently faltered. Conversely, other Nuffield-backed work shows that policies that initially yielded limited results have later delivered long-term gains: Sure Start being a case in point. Only with a long-term view, and by embracing an element of risk, can we find the routes to lasting change.

Our own research and synthesis

We synthesise existing research – and generate our own – to focus attention on areas of strategic importance to us, where new issues are emerging, thinking is siloed, or there is a need to stimulate significant

new research capacity. In doing this, we seek to generate new insights and to propose changes in policy and professional practice that align with our purpose.

Grown Up? Journeys to Adulthood

This programme responds to the urgent challenges young people face in navigating transitions to adulthood in the UK today, capturing common experiences and issues, as well as delving into differences between groups and places. It builds on the Nuffield Foundation's long-standing interest in young people's development, funding over 100 grants over the last 10 years in this area. Our aim is two-fold: to influence public policy and practice, and to inform the Foundation's grant programme.

Grown Up? is focused on the current generation of 14- to 24-year-olds, prioritising four interconnecting themes: pathways to independence; education to work; digital lives; and mental health and well-being.

Issues are being illuminated via data commentaries, a programme of youth engagement, and a series of expert features which pose challenges for policy, practice, and research.

We are experimenting with new methods and collaborative approaches to working with young people, foregrounding their perspectives throughout. Insight from young people across the UK from diverse backgrounds is being gathered, helping us understand the experience of growing up today. The approach is intersectional: young people reflect on how different aspects of their identity and place shape their pathways to adulthood. This is a cross-Nuffield project, with close involvement from the Nuffield Family Justice Observatory, and the Ada Lovelace Institute.

Public Right to Justice

An effective, fair, and accessible justice system is fundamental to social and indeed economic well-being. Our *Public Right to Justice* programme underlines that while the public have the notional right to such a system, this is often compromised in practice.

The programme confronts the challenges and explores possible solutions. It principally focuses on administrative, civil, and family justice (though considers other areas when instructive). We are concentrating attention on the circumstances of disadvantaged people and the points where they encounter the justice system.

We are particularly considering:

- The extent to which people's legal needs are being met
- Experiences of contacts with the justice system, and how to improve these
- Potential reforms to make the system more user-focused, open, and representative
- How governance and resourcing might be improved
- Lessons from previous attempts to review and improve these areas

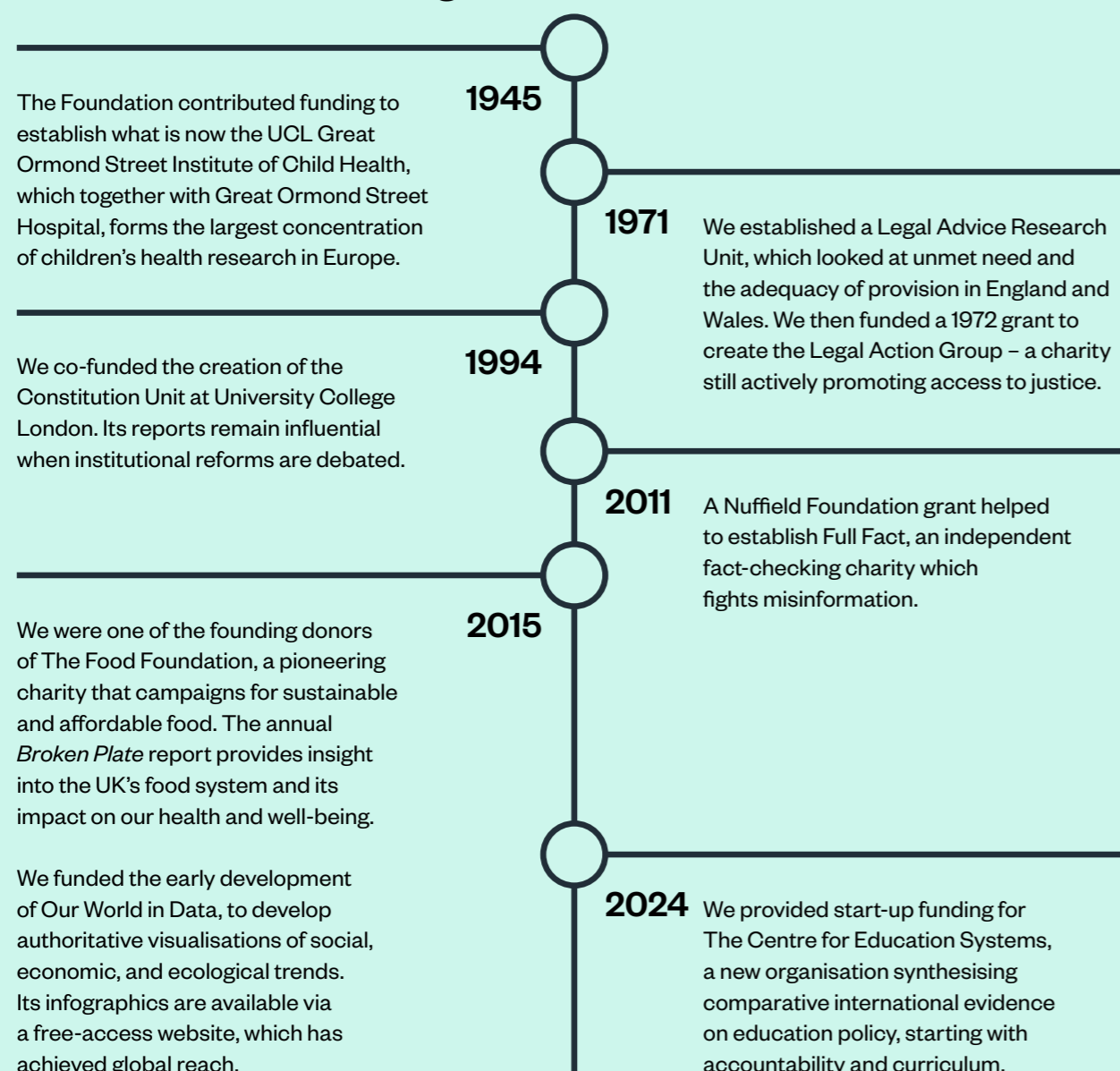
While the work is centred on the needs and experiences of citizens, we also examine how structures of the system affect those experiences and broader effectiveness. This is a cross-Nuffield project, with close involvement from the Nuffield Family Justice Observatory, and the Ada Lovelace Institute.

New institutional capability

In addition to funding research, we sometimes support new or emerging institutions where we wish to build stronger capacity to address a strategic issue. This can take the form of hosting or incubating a new body or backing an external organisation.

Our expert Centres are a core part of the Nuffield family, but we also have a proud tradition of backing others. We are open to providing funding to new or existing organisations, not necessarily academic institutions, looking to fill a significant evidence gap in one of our focus areas, and then deploy that insight to innovate and improve policy, practice, and public understanding.

Our history of backing organisations that use evidence to advance social well-being



Student programmes

The Foundation has long supported students across the UK to develop research skills. We co-funded the creation of Q Step Centres to deliver quantitative skills training in 17 universities in response to a shortage of quantitatively-skilled social science graduates. In addition, Nuffield Research Placements provided opportunities for year 12 (or equivalent) students from disadvantaged backgrounds to take

part in real-world science, technology, engineering, and maths placements. Working with experienced researchers, students acquired project skills and other employability-boosting attributes. We will continue to seek ways of supporting the development and evaluation of student-oriented programmes that can help young people's education pathways.



A closer look: Our expert Centres

Ada Lovelace Institute

Rapid developments in AI and data-driven technologies are disrupting social and economic norms. There has already been a huge impact on the way people work, learn, and socialise. But these sweeping changes are being substantially driven by a very small number of powerful (and mostly private) entities, taking critical decisions on how technologies are designed, governed, and deployed.

There are various obstacles to making sense of these changes, including the tight private control of much of the resources and infrastructure for modern AI development; the complex nature of people's interactions with technology; and the sheer pace of change. Major shifts in recent years – from the increased use of predictive policing and facial recognition, to the explosion of generative AI – have raised questions about how the impact of these technologies can be understood, evaluated and governed, especially when turbulent global politics can quickly change policy, regulation and industry priorities. And all the while, AI tools are increasingly being used to make consequential decisions for everyday life, including benefit eligibility, healthcare access, and job recruitment. The use of such technologies can sometimes disproportionately affect people who are already marginalised.

The Ada Lovelace Institute (Ada) was established by the Nuffield Foundation in 2018. Our mission is to ensure that data and AI work for people and society, and that the opportunities, benefits and privileges generated by data and AI are justly and equitably distributed and experienced. We do this by convening diverse voices, building evidence on social impacts, and influencing policy and practice.

In the years ahead Ada will:

- **Explore the 'public' in 'public interest AI'**, by building a positive vision for AI that is informed by public views; drawing out the gap between people's experiences of technologies and what public interest AI could mean to different communities.
- **Build evidence on and shape the use of AI in public services**, through evidence-based assessment of AI technologies where they impact people and society, and with a particular focus on AI in the public sector.
- **Evaluate and inform incentives for managing AI risks**, particularly through AI governance, to ensure policy proposals in the UK, EU, and internationally are effective in minimising harm to people and society.
- **Expose power imbalances and work to reduce societal harms**, by developing credible proposals to support alternative political and economic options for AI development and use, and to better reflect the public's vision for AI.

We will continually evolve our approach to ensure our work meets the most important needs and priorities in our fast-changing field.



Nuffield Council on Bioethics

Developments in biomedical technologies, and how to respond to pressing societal challenges in health and well-being, raise profound questions for people, communities, and populations. Ethical analysis can imbue policy with public values, and ensure that regulation is proportionate, and diverse interests are balanced. It can also inform multidisciplinary solutions, and build trust in public policy and institutions.

The Nuffield Council on Bioethics (NCOB) was founded by the Nuffield Foundation in 1991 to address these challenges and drive outcomes that will benefit people and society. Since 1994 we have been jointly and equally funded by the Nuffield Foundation, the Medical Research Council and Wellcome. We have four goals:

- 1. Enhancing our capability to anticipate scientific developments and health trends that pose fundamental ethical questions to society.**
- 2. Undertaking and communicating rigorous ethical analysis in a way that is clear and relevant to decision makers and to the public.**
- 3. Demonstrating the value of ethics to society and decision makers, with a view to embedding them in policymaking.**
- 4. Building greater connections across bioethics networks to strengthen the voice of bioethics in policy and public debate.**

NCOB deliberately focuses on the most urgent and important developments in biomedicine and health, which include: reproduction; parenthood and families; the mind and brain; and the environment and health.

We are:

- Undertaking a major review of the 14-day rule for human embryo research. This will tackle important questions on the status of the embryo and people's reproductive rights, and advise government on how policy and regulation in this ethically sensitive area can keep pace with scientific development.
- Bringing ethical clarity to dilemmas and disputes that flow from expanding research into the human brain and its capabilities. We will assess options for future regulation and guidance in areas such as neurotechnology and neural organoids.
- Demonstrating how ethical analysis can support decision-making processes. For example, our work on environment and health includes evaluating the ethical issues associated with geoengineering, and an international collaboration to explore climate change guidance for ethics committees, based on duties to future generations.
- Developing further practical tools to embed ethical considerations at an earlier stage in making policy. As part of this we are expanding our horizon-scanning and foresight programme.
- Contributing to the national conversation on assisted dying, having commissioned England's first Citizens' Jury on this important and timely issue.
- Leading a new network to develop ethical and regulatory standards for the UK's genomic healthcare and research sectors.

Through all our work we will continue to show how ethics can support trustworthy innovation that benefits us all.

Nuffield Family Justice Observatory

The family courts in England and Wales make life-changing decisions about children who are not able to live with one or both parents, because of concerns about their safety, or due to family breakdown. The Nuffield Family Justice Observatory (Nuffield FJO) seeks to improve children's and families' lives by holding up a mirror to the way the family justice system works.

The Foundation has a history of supporting research and services relating to family justice stretching back to its funding of the first ever family mediation service nearly half a century ago. The establishment of the Nuffield FJO in 2019 has enabled a deeper impact, building a bridge between research evidence and frontline practice. The team works side-by-side with people across that system – including judges, lawyers, local authorities, health services, and children and their families – to turn research, connections and new ideas into better experiences for children and families.



While Nuffield FJO's most particular focus is on the family court, our interests extend far beyond this to understand the support that children and families need before the court intervenes, as well as the long-term impact of decisions that are made about their lives. We have five goals:

- 1. For children and families to receive the right support, at the right time.**
- 2. For there to be a stronger focus on problem-solving in the family court, rather than an adversarial approach.**
- 3. To ensure that children, parents and families are active participants in the family justice system.**
- 4. To ensure that inequalities in experiences of the family court are recognised and responded to.**
- 5. To encourage greater collaboration across the system, between different groups of professionals.**

Nuffield FJO's work to advance these goals is dynamic. We keep an opportunistic eye on chances for research that can make a positive difference, but also recognise that there are areas in need of deeper change, requiring a more sustained focus. One such area is covered by our work to reduce the number of babies subject to care proceedings, and to improve the process of removal where it is necessary to take an infant into care. Another relates to our efforts to improve children's experience of the family justice system.

Because our focus is on some of the most vulnerable children and families in our society, there are many points of connection between the Nuffield FJO's work in family justice and the wider Foundation. Nuffield FJO identifies and advises on important evidence gaps that could be filled by future research funded by the Foundation. We also enhance the impact of the wider Foundation's work by ensuring that research informs front-line practice.

Across the Foundation: Using evidence to achieve change

In addressing our five priority questions, we want to become more intentional in seeking to bring about change: seizing opportunities to work in different ways across our whole organisation to build evidence that changes the terms of debates, to innovate, increase capacity, and to influence policy and practice.

For example, our work on emerging regulatory frameworks will draw on learning and horizon scanning from our expert Centres, Ada and NCOB, and could include elements of grant funding and the evaluation of pilot approaches.

On an issue like the future of social care, we might combine grant funding on the systemic policy issues, with network-building, and

some practical testing of approaches – drawing on the Nuffield FJO's tested approach to practice improvement.

The context in which we and our grant-holders work, and the factors affecting social well-being, are complex and dynamic. We can usually make a bigger difference when we partner with organisations and individuals who share our aims.

For funded research, the timescales we work with are frequently long. We recognise that advancements often come about because of the accumulation of evidence over time, and we know that one research finding can be a building block for others.

In recognition of these multiple routes and timetables for change, we articulate **five dimensions in which our work can have impact:**

- 1. Informing change to policies, systems or legislation:** helping to shape and evaluate instrumental changes.
- 2. Informing practice change:** designing and evaluating interventions and proposing or supporting new approaches based on our evidence.
- 3. Advancing understanding and awareness:** encouraging new perspectives to help inform policy and practice, uncover evidence gaps, or identify future societal concerns.
- 4. Changing attitudes or perceptions:** using evidence to alter the way social problems are thought about.
- 5. Providing opportunity and building capability:** strengthening research communities in our areas of interest.

For our funded work, we focus on the impact of individual grants, from application stage, right through the project, on to its closure and beyond, asking applicants to think hard about their audiences, the outputs that best serve research objectives, and routes to impact.

The question 'how will this research be used' is a key consideration in our funding decisions. Our team then works closely with grant-holders, using our networks to ensure outputs are seen by the right people. The impact of each grant is reviewed after one year and – in light of our determination to take a long view – also three years after completion.

We hold ourselves and our own work to account in the same spirit, and view engaging, convening, and influencing as central to our role as a purposeful funder, producer of research, and catalyst for innovation.



Equity, diversity and inclusion

To achieve our purpose, we need to embed equity, diversity and inclusion into everything we do.

Understanding and highlighting the inequalities, disadvantage, discrimination and vulnerabilities that people face, how they intersect, and what should be done about them will remain a major part of our work. We want to develop an inclusive organisational culture, welcoming new perspectives, and valuing different experiences.

Our focus is on groups defined according to legally protected characteristics as well as others such as socio-economic background, neurodiversity, migration status, and care experience.

We recognise that our organisation is part of a wider system that needs to be more representative of UK society, and more inclusive in how research is funded and designed. We will work with others to build our understanding, make improvements, and play our part in addressing structural inequalities in our sector. There is more to do, and we are committed to pursuing meaningful, lasting change.

After engaging our staff, we have set out three areas of focus in our action plan. We will:

- Ensure that understanding and addressing inequalities, disadvantage, and discrimination remains central to the work we fund and do. We will embed equity, diversity and inclusion in our work, including in the ways we consider our five priority questions. We will ensure a diverse range of people and perspectives can actively participate in our discussions, meetings, and events.
- Increase the diversity of those we fund and work with. We will continue to monitor the diversity of our grant-holders and will actively engage with under-represented groups. We will diversify our partners and provide inclusive and accessible support for early-career researchers we fund.
- Employ staff from diverse backgrounds and ensure an inclusive workplace culture, which respects and celebrates differences, with policies and practices that support the well-being of all our staff. Our leadership team will be accountable for embedding this approach, and our governance arrangements will support it.

We will work in an evidence-led way, using internal and external data and insights to monitor our progress and inform priorities, being ready to experiment and learn.

Supporting our research community

We want to play our part in identifying new talent wherever it may be, including nurturing researchers in social science and related fields, and supporting them to flourish in their careers.

We do this in a variety of ways, for example:

- **Our outreach activity** – including online seminars, visits and informal conversations – engages with groups and institutions to forge new relationships and foster awareness of the opportunities we offer, particularly among those with aligned interests who have not previously worked with us.
- We offer a three-month fellowship at the **Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST)** for PhD students studying a natural or social science or relevant humanity, in line with Nuffield's interests. Based in Parliament, POST Fellows provide briefings on science topics and support a range of activities in both Houses. We stay closely in touch and include them in our convening activities.

- **The Nuffield Foundation Emerging Researchers Network** facilitates skills development, networking, and knowledge exchange (for example, on achieving different dimensions of impact) for early-career researchers from a range of disciplines and institutions, working on Nuffield-funded projects. We will grow this network, partner with other organisations, and encourage our grant-holders to prioritise developing their early-career team members.



Where next?

This strategic review identifies some of the big social challenges we face as we look towards the mid-21st century. It requires us to channel our resources, people, networks, and approaches in new ways to address them.

As a Foundation we expect to spend over £30 million per year across all our activities, over the next five years. This review sets out a framework and direction for the years ahead but deliberately does not confirm a detailed work programme, because we know that the best ideas arise from discussion, collaboration, and innovation.

We consulted with a wide range of partners in putting together this document. Now, we want to work further with our research, and policy and practice communities, and listen carefully to the voices of those most affected by the questions we have set out, as we chart specific next steps.

In parallel, in order to address the questions we have set out in this strategy review, we will make changes to our organisation – refining our decision-making processes and building new capability, expertise, and partnerships.

As we enter this new phase, we will draw on the Nuffield Foundation's 80-year history while always looking ahead and thinking afresh. In a volatile global context, it is more important than ever to remain curious and ready to adapt our work in response to the changes shaping the lives of individuals, families, and communities across the UK.

We look forward to working with others to turn this agenda into action – guided by evidence, rooted in our values, and driven by a shared ambition to improve lives.





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