

## **Manchester Health and Wellbeing Board Report for Resolution**

**Report to:** Health and Wellbeing Board – 2 July 2014

**Subject:** Manchester Institute for Collaboration for Research on Ageing (MICRA)

**Report of:** Mike Houghton-Evans, Strategic Director, Families, Health and Wellbeing  
Chris Phillipson, Institute Executive Director, MICRA, Professor of Sociology and Social Gerontology, University of Manchester

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### **Summary**

This paper reviews the development of the Manchester Institute for Collaboration for Research on Ageing (MICRA) with particular reference to its work with and support from the City Council and other Manchester agencies. MICRA promotes interdisciplinary and innovative research on ageing and the life course, working across all faculties within the University of Manchester. MICRA has built a substantial partnership with the City Council, built through shared working on a range of research projects, support for Manchester's leadership in the area of age-friendly cities, joint seminars, and presentations to international policy networks. The paper identifies mutual benefits arising from this work in respect of economic advantages, sharing of resources, partnership working, work with older people, and enhancing the reputation of the city. The paper outlines a strategy for MICRA through to 2020, with extending collaboration between the Institute and the City Council a central part of future activity.

### **Recommendations**

The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to support further collaboration between the City Council, NHS and other partners organisations, and the Institute in research, policy and practice aimed at improving the lives of older people living in Manchester, through the Age-friendly Manchester partnership.

The Health and Wellbeing Board partners are asked to disseminate the work of MICRA through relevant groups and organisations within Manchester.

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### **Board Priority(s) Addressed:**

This report addresses Strategic Priority 8; Enabling Older People to Keep Well and Live Independently in Their Community.

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**Background Documents**

None

## 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Population ageing is now recognised as a global challenge, illustrated by the priority given to research in this area by major funders, international governmental organisations, third sector bodies, and national governments. Funding for research on ageing has been strong in a number of European countries and in the USA. In the UK, research councils have targeted around £200 million for strategic ageing-related research investments, supported by a larger portfolio of research funded by individual research councils. The Centre for Ageing Better will be launched in 2015 with an endowment of £50 million from the Big Lottery Fund. At a European-level, the rollout of Horizon 2020 is providing significant opportunities for age-related research in particular disciplinary areas.

1.2 This paper sets out the background to the development of the Manchester Institute for Collaboration for Research on Ageing (MICRA), the scope of its activities, current engagement with the City, the strategy of the Institute going forward to 2020, and the potential for developing Manchester as a world-class centre for research, policy and practice in the field of ageing.

## 2 THE DEVELOPMENT OF MICRA

2.1 MICRA was established as the Manchester Interdisciplinary Collaboration for Research on Ageing in April 2010, gaining University research institute status in July 2013 when it became the Manchester Institute for Collaboration Research on Ageing. The aim of MICRA has been to promote interdisciplinary and innovative research on ageing and the life course, working across all faculties within the University of Manchester. In March 2013 MICRA was given approval to become a University research institute of ageing. MICRA has identified five main objectives:

- To establish the University as the leading UK interdisciplinary centre for research into ageing and one of the leading centres in the world
- To develop a global presence in working with national and international partners in seeking solutions to the economic, health and social challenges associated with population ageing
- To advance knowledge about ageing through the pursuit of high quality research
- To transform public and professional perceptions of ageing
- To engage with older people and organisations working on their behalf.

2.2 MICRA is led by eight co-directors representing the four University faculties, Humanities, Medical and Human Sciences, Life Sciences and Engineering and Physical Sciences. The leadership team comprises: Professor Chris Phillipson (Institute Executive Director, Sociology and Social Gerontology), Professor James Nazroo (Sociology), Dr Neil Pendleton (Geriatric Medicine), Professor Alistair Burns (Old Age Psychiatry), Professor Ken Rockwood (Geriatric Medicine), Professor Dean Jackson (Cell Biology), Professor Cay Kielty (Medical Biochemistry) and Dr Partha Mandal (Engineering).

The MICRA Co-Directors are accountable to the Vice-President Research through the University of Manchester Research Institute (UMRI). MICRA is governed by a

Management Board chaired by the Deputy Dean for Humanities which includes representatives from all faculties as well as key stakeholders in the field of ageing from the public and voluntary sectors in Greater Manchester, including older people linked with the Manchester City Council Age-friendly Manchester team.

2.3 The ambition of the Institute is to be the main UK interdisciplinary institute for research into ageing and one of the leading institutes in the world. This follows from the range of research on ageing carried out across all faculties of the University, collaborative work across a variety of disciplines, work with the NHS and local authorities, and support from third sector organisations. Central to the activity of the Institute is the advancement of knowledge about ageing through the pursuit of high quality research and the transformation of public and professional perceptions about ageing. The Institute provides an essential focus for answering key priorities in research into older adults, and providing support for major multi-disciplinary research applications. MICRA provides the external face of ageing research at Manchester to funders, policy-makers, older people and organisations working on their behalf.

2.4 MICRA organises work around eight main research themes:

- social and cultural change in later life
- later life working, retirement and pensions
- frailty, cognition and dementia
- physical decline and tissue regeneration
- biology of ageing and the life span
- inequalities, health and well-being
- engineering, environment and technology
- public policy and care provision

### 3 STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT OF MICRA TO 2020

3.1 MICRA has identified a number of developments through to 2020:

- **Extending work with the City Council and Greater Manchester**

MICRA will extend its partnership with the City Council and Great Manchester bringing together the different strands of research with the aim of developing the City/GM as an environment which maximises ageing well through the interaction between research, policy and practice-based interventions. MICRA will explore opportunities for posts which support the work of the Council/GM in addressing health and social inequalities within a context where later life is shaped by high levels of (lifelong) economic and social deprivation.

- **Developing multi-disciplinary grant applications**

MICRA has developed a successful track record of supporting large-scale, multi-disciplinary grant applications, illustrated by the fRail programme (£1.777m) exploring the impact of social inequalities on well-being in later life, and the (Manchester-led) Neighbourhoods and Dementia study (£4.9m), exploring the role of neighbourhoods and social networks in the everyday life of people of people diagnosed with dementia. MICRA is involved in outline submissions for substantial grants to BBSRC, for EU funding under Horizon 2020, in addition to further grant applications in preparation with a broad range of funders. Expanding this work must be a key part of the future development of MICRA, supported through a combination of securing core administrative and academic appointments. MICRA also has an

important role monitoring strategic initiatives on ageing on the part of research councils and other funding organisations.

- **Developing key research themes**

MICRA will play a role in strengthening work around particular research themes which reflect clear research strengths and which respond to European and UKRC priorities in the field of ageing. Existing work on frailty – which cuts across all faculties and a wide range of disciplines – is one area already under discussion; dementia – which is the subject of a significant number of groups across the University – is another. Other topics where there are substantial research interests include: work, retirement and pensions (a key area given the policy move to extend working life); and health and social inequalities in later life.

Supporting these clusters of interest and identifying which have sufficient breadth and depth of research quality to develop as centres and networks in their own right will be an important area of activity for MICRA.

- **Building research capacity**

MICRA will develop a leadership role with other mainland European gerontology institutes in building research capacity in the field of ageing. The need for this has been identified in the strategic documents cited earlier and there are potential funding streams available through Horizon 2020 and national research councils.

A start will be made on this in 2015 when the Institute is proposing to organise a joint Ph.D researcher conference with the Amsterdam Research Centre on Ageing (VU University and VU Medical Centre). This should be used as a platform for developing stronger ties with European research centres

- **Building on the existing programme of activities**

MICRA has already achieved national and international recognition through its existing programme of high profile events, seminars, public engagement and research dissemination. These have been influential in contributing to the debate around the global challenge of ageing societies. This work should be expanded over the next five years, focused around a programme of core events. These might include new areas for development, such as an International Summer School in Gerontology which would provide a platform for the further dissemination of world-class research into ageing across the University.

MICRA should build upon the wide-ranging programme of events organised since its inception in 2010. These provide a showcase for research into ageing at Manchester, drawing together academics, policy-makers, practitioners, as well as older people. They provide an important forum for shaping debates about the cultural, economic, medical and social implications of ageing societies.

### **3.2 Key milestones**

- Expanding work with Manchester City Council and Greater Manchester
- Identifying key themes around which research on ageing in Manchester is seen as world leading
- Securing appropriate roles with and influencing major funders for ageing research (e.g. research councils, NIHR, leading charities)

- Leading and expanding activities of the Greater Manchester Clinical Research Network (CRN) for Age and Ageing
- Building European collaborations and related research funding (e.g. through Horizon 2020)
- Development of Manchester as a test-bed for initiatives in the field of ageing
- Building on collaborations with the NHS, Manchester Academic Health Science Centre (MAHSC), local authorities and leading charities on issues relating to achieving healthy ageing in a regional context of high economic and social deprivation
- Developing activities of co-production with older people and carers in the development of high quality research and knowledge translation
- Expanding administrative support for the work of MICRA
- Expanding the programme of seminars and public engagement
- Developing new collaborations
- Building partnerships with world-class centres of ageing

#### 4 PARTNERSHIP WITH THE CITY

4.1 The Council supports a number of MICRA research projects, including work in the field of dementia, frailty, and urbanization and ageing. The Council supports a full-time post – supervised through MICRA – to evaluate progress on work to develop Manchester as an ‘age-friendly city’. The Council has also seconded a staff member to assist work in connection with the Manchester Ageing Survey (see below), led by a University Marie Curie Fellow linked with the Institute. MICRA and the City Council was successful in a bid for funding in 2014 from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) (in association with Age UK and the Royal Institute of British Architects) for a project examining urban design issues and older people.

4.2 The Council has also supported successful grant applications through 2013/2014 to the ESRC and Medical Research Council (MRC). The Institute is supporting a consortium bid from Greater Manchester (including the City Council) for substantial funding under the Big Lottery Fund’s *Fulfilling Lives: Ageing Better Programme*.

4.3 MICRA has worked closely with the Council’s Age-Friendly team in preparing responses to the work of the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in their research on population ageing and sustainable urban development. MICRA is represented on the Council’s Senior Strategy group for ageing where it provides regular reports on research on ageing across the University.

4.4 The programme of work shared between MICRA and the City Council has resulted in a number of benefits, including:

- **Economic** – The University in partnership with the City Council can attract significant research income in applications to research councils, European funding agencies, the National Institutes for Health and Social Care Research, industrial partners, for grants relating to ageing populations.
- **Sharing of resources** – MICRA working with AFM can benefit from sharing specialist skills, knowledge and expertise within the Council and University.

- **Partnership working** – MICRA and AFM are working together with a range of regional, national and international partners to seek solutions to the challenges of ageing populations.
- **Work with older people** – MICRA and AFM have developed a programme of highly innovative work seeking to empower older people in transforming urban environments.
- **City reputation** – developing regional, national and international partnerships which enhance the reputation of Manchester as an age-friendly city.

4.5 The partnership between MICRA and the City is supporting a substantial programme of research studies, which are described in detail in appendix 1. Below in Table 1 is a summary of a selection of these activities in relation to the city’s public service reform (PSR) priorities and transformational programmes.

<b>PSR/Health and Well being Priorities</b>	<b>MICRA Priorities</b>	<b>MICRA projects</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health and social care integration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• frailty, cognition and dementia</li> <li>• public policy and care provision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neighbourhoods and Dementia</li> <li>• Dementia research development</li> <li>• Frailty, Resilience And Inequality in Later Life</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reducing issues of complex dependency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• social and cultural change in later life</li> <li>• biology of ageing and the life span</li> <li>• inequalities, health and well-being</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manchester Ageing Survey into age-friendly communities</li> <li>• Lifecourse and skin ageing</li> <li>• Urban design issue and older people</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work and Skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• later life working, retirement and pensions</li> <li>• engineering, environment and technology</li> <li>• leading UK interdisciplinary centre for research into ageing and one of the leading centres in the world</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Managing Late Career Transitions and Extended Working Life</li> </ul>

## 5 INTERNATIONAL LINKS

5.1 MICRA is at the centre of major national and international research networks. The Institute has substantial links with: University College London in relation to support for the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA) and Whitehall II study, and involvement in the ESRC funded Centre for Lifecourse Studies, Edinburgh (as

collaborators in the Cognitive Ageing Genetics in England and Scotland (CAGES) consortium), and Kings College London (contributions to AS/ARUK Brains for Dementia Research programme and the MRC Social Genetic and Developmental Psychiatry Centre). In addition, through the University of Manchester fRail programme of research (frailty, resilience and inequality in later life), links are being developed with Cambridge, Newcastle, Oxford and Trinity College Dublin. Involvement in ELSA and related analytical research projects places us within several international research networks that allow staff to connect with North America, mainland Europe, Australia and Asia. Substantial European links have also developed around programmes of research in areas such as falls prevention, ageing and urbanisation, skin ageing, and regenerative medicine.

5.2 Members of MICRA play an influential role shaping debates on different aspects of population ageing, with strong links to government, leading NGOs/IGOs (e.g. the WHO, OECD, EU), local government, research councils and national charities. Researchers linked with MICRA are playing a significant role in discussions around the impact of social and health inequalities across the life course, the global impact of dementia, and issues relating to the biological and social determinants of frailty.

### **Public engagement and knowledge exchange activities**

5.3 The Institute works in partnership with voluntary and public sectors organisations to share expertise and experience and to raise the profile of research on ageing. Official partnerships have been established between MICRA, Age Friendly Manchester, Age UK and the International Longevity Centre-UK (ILC-UK). MICRA places a high priority on increasing the impact of research into ageing undertaken within the University. An electronic newsletter is produced more than 12 times a year promoting ageing research related events, activities and news. This reaches over 1,200 academics, practitioners, policy makers and older people with information cascaded further through partner organizations.

5.4 Since April 2010, MICRA has held 27 seminars at the University for audiences of academics, practitioners and older people. These events typically attract an audience of 60-80 and are often organized jointly with other University research centres or external organizations. Topics covered include: ageing and loneliness; ageing, transport and mobility; new approaches to housing in later life; ageing, dementia and promoting access to care; ageing and palliative care; and hearing loss in later life.

5.5 The 2014 MICRA Annual Lecture was given in May by Peter Whitehouse, Professor of Neuroscience at Case Western Reserve University (Ohio, USA). This year's lecture was run in association with Manchester City Council and Manchester Museum and took as its theme new approaches to understanding the nature of Alzheimer's disease. The lecture was introduced by Councillor Sue Cooley, Mayor-elect for the City and was chaired by Professor Alistair Burns, National Clinical Director for Dementia in England. In a separate event, to an invited audience of educators and those involved with the arts, Peter and Cathy Whitehouse talked about their work developing inter-generational schools in Cleveland, Ohio. Their talk focused on the benefits of inter-generational learning for children and older people,



with emphasis on the benefits for developing language skills and literacy. A visit to St Mary's School in Moss Side was part of their itinerary.

5.6 MICRA organises an annual PhD Student Conference, which attracts upwards of 70 delegates from around the UK. This event emphasizes the interdisciplinary character of research in the field of ageing with the last two conferences drawing on epidemiology, genetics, dermatology and sociology. MICRA organized an event in 2013 attended by representatives from 35 local authorities examining research on the impact of the built environment on older people, an area of specialist interest within MICRA. Other conferences organised by MICRA have included events showcasing major research in Manchester in the field of skin ageing, and an interdisciplinary event examining changing perceptions of the body in old age.

5.7 The Manchester Institute for Collaborative Research on Ageing is active in engagement beyond the University campus, seeking both to share research and knowledge and to work with older people and supporting organizations in developing research. The Institute hosts dinner debates at political party conferences in Manchester with partner organizations such as the International Longevity Centre – UK and Age UK. Additionally, the Institute supports activities with local housing trusts, Manchester City Council, and Clinical Commissioning Groups.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

This paper has reviewed the development of MICRA, with particular reference to its work with and support from the City Council. Older people living in Manchester experience a number of barriers to achieving a good quality of life, notably in terms of the impact of long-term poverty, poor health and high levels of disability. This context underlines the importance of collaboration between the University and the City Council in ensuring the development of Manchester as world-class centre for research, policy and practice relating to ageing populations. The paper identifies mutual benefits in respect of economic advantages, sharing of resources, partnership working, and developing innovations in work with older people. The paper outlines a strategy for MICRA through to 2020, with extending work between the Institute and the City Council a central part of this activity.

## **APPENDIX 1: CASE STUDIES OF RESEARCH INVOLVING MICRA AND MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL**

The partnership between MICRA and the City Council is supporting a substantial programme of research studies, the following of which are illustrative:

### **RESEARCH ON FRAILITY IN LATER LIFE (Lead researcher: Professor James Nazroo)**

The ageing of the UK population poses a variety of challenges and opportunities. The importance of minimising dependency and maximizing social engagement to address these challenges is well recognised. Less discussed is how underlying processes are influenced by social and economic inequalities, and that addressing inequalities in later life is important to meeting the issues raised by ageing populations. The Frailty, Resilience And Inequality in Later Life (fRaill) research project is directly concerned with providing an integrated understanding of processes leading to positive and negative outcomes in later life in the context of social inequalities. It takes an interdisciplinary approach to examine the causal processes relating to frailty and wellbeing at older ages. It examines factors operating at particular points of the life-course, genetic, metabolic, psychological and social processes, resilience and vulnerability and how these are framed by socioeconomic inequalities.

The fRaill project makes use of data provided by the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA) to develop measures of frailty and wellbeing, model life-course trajectories, including life events, examine relationships with socioeconomic position, examine genetic influences and their relationship with markers of metabolic processes, test gene-environment interactions, and identify characteristics related to resilience and vulnerability in the face of adverse events. The research is part of the MRC-led Life Long Health and Well-being programme and is supported with a grant of £1.777 million.

### **RESEARCH ON SKIN AGEING (Lead researcher: Professor Chris Griffiths)**

Changes to population demographics have resulted in raising the profile of biogerontology research. The University of Manchester has a long-standing research relationship with Alliance Boots (since 2002) and in 2009 secured 5-yr programme funding to interrogate the mechanisms which underlie cutaneous ageing (relating to the skin). Key findings have been the identification of novel targets for repair of photoaged skin; an appreciation of structural differences in the dermal extracellular matrix (ECM) of skin from diverse ethnic backgrounds, and a growing understanding of why some dermal ECM molecules are highly susceptible to degradation by ultraviolet radiation (UVR; sunlight) and reactive oxygen species. In 2014, the research programme was renewed to the level of £4m over 5-yrs. The overarching aim of this new programme is to gain further insight into mechanisms of skin ageing, with particular emphasis placed on ethnic skin, immunosenescence and the repair of age- and oxidation/UVR-induced cutaneous changes. Collaborations with industrial partners provides a vital platform for new investment and creates new possibilities for innovation in dermatology. Moreover, the results from the programme on ageing and skin health may inform the understanding of ageing in other less accessible tissues, with the potential to deliver these findings to a wider clinical community.

## **RESEARCH ON URBAN AGEING (Lead researcher: Dr. Tine Buffel)**

The City Council is working with MICRA on the development of the Manchester Ageing Survey (MAS). The MAS is led by a European Union-funded Marie Curie Research Fellow (Dr. Tine Buffel) based with MICRA. The overarching aim of this research is to: explore older people's experiences of daily life in their neighbourhood; (b) assess the impact of neighbourhood characteristics on aspects of active ageing; (c) measure the extent to which urban contexts are experienced as 'age-friendly'; (d) identify the issues older residents view as important regarding developing the age-friendliness of their neighbourhood; (e) develop participatory methods involving older people in all aspects of the research process. The research is seen as a pilot study in a wider partnership strategy for researching, engaging and acting with older people in neighbourhoods across Manchester, to improve their experience of living in the city. The research is being conducted in partnership with Age-Friendly Manchester, with the secondment of a staff member from the Age-Friendly team.

The MAS is currently in the fieldwork phase of the research with expert interviews, focus groups and individual interviews with older people. The main locations for the work are Whalley Range, Chorlton and Chorlton Park. An important element of the work is the recruitment of older people as co-researchers, with a dedicated programme of training in research skills. This aspect of the research is now underway with the first of the training events held on May 29.

## **RESEARCH ON CHANGING TRANSITIONS FROM WORK TO RETIREMENT (Lead researcher: Professor Chris Phillipson)**

The research is part of a Medical Research Council (MRC) -led programme responding to the challenge for employers, employees and policy-makers of extending working lives. The MRC (under its Lifelong Health and Wellbeing programme) issued a call for groups of universities and public and private sector organizations to bid for funding to study the determinants of working later in life and the relationship between work, health and wellbeing of older workers. A successful bid under the call was made by a group of universities, including Manchester, Kent, Bath, Edinburgh, Queen Mary (London), and Brighton. The bid was accompanied with letters of support from a variety of organizations, including: Age UK, Manchester City Council, LloydsTSB, Airbus UK, the Institute of Occupational Health, and the International Longevity Centre-UK.

The project - **Uncertain Futures: Managing Late Career Transitions and Extended Working Life** - aims: (1) explore changes in transitions from work to retirement; (2) examine how the idea of extended working life is being constructed in the workplace; (3) consider the impact of changing transitions on workplace practices, training, human resources and occupational health. The research will be conducted through a mixture of work on large-scale data sets to map existing and emerging work and retirement transitions; and case studies of organizations across a range of public and private sector organisations. The research covers a range of case study organisations including local authorities, manufacturing industry, retail and transport.

**RESEARCH ON DEMENTIA (Lead researcher: Professor John Keady)**

A European team of experts led by the University of Manchester is starting a new project to investigate and evaluate the role of the neighbourhood in the everyday lives of people with dementia and their families. The project was announced during the G8 dementia summit held in December 2013. The 'Neighbourhoods and Dementia' study was one of six research projects announced by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) along with the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), as part of a £20 million funding boost which will significantly add to the understanding of dementia. The Manchester-led project will be the first large-scale research programme to work alongside people with dementia and their families in a variety of roles from advisers to co-researchers. As one of its four work programmes, the research team will develop Neighbourhood Profiles using existing longitudinal databases to provide more accurate estimates of geographical variation in cognitive ageing and service use to inform policy, commissioning and practice. As part of the intervention work programme, researchers will develop the first digitalised life story tool for deaf people (BSL users) who live with dementia.

The research team involves seven universities (Manchester, Stirling, Liverpool, UCL, Salford, Lancaster, and Linköping in Sweden) and four user groups: EDUCATE and Open Doors (Greater Manchester, England); The ACE Club (Rhyl, North Wales) and the Scottish Dementia Working Group (Glasgow, Scotland).