**Introducing SHAPE:**

**How the Social Sciences, Humanities & Arts are**

**Shaping Covid Responses**

SHAPE is a new collective name for the Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts. Developed by the British Academy and UKRI, it champions the fundamental role of AHSS disciplines in understanding our world, and making it a better place. SHAPE will be deployed as a shorthand for promoting the value and importance of research in these disciplines across different audiences: policy-makers, industry, funders, employers, and the wider public.

The term SHAPE is intended to convey dynamism and impact – and a key part of this initiative showcases the key role of AHSS in addressing major societal challenges. Within CAHSS, this contribution is captured under our College [themes](https://www.ed.ac.uk/arts-humanities-soc-sci/research-ke/our-research/research-themes): Data & Digital, Energy & Sustainability, Future Cities, Governance & Democracy, Health & Wellbeing, Childhood & Youth, Inequalities & Identities, Cultural Heritage, and our newly launched Work & the Economy.

We are marking the launch of SHAPE by celebrating the ways in which AHSS research is contributing to address our most pressing societal challenge: responding to Covid-19 and its impacts. Research in our College engages with diverse aspects of the pandemic – straddling effects on business, work and the economy; care, inequalities and well-being; and governance, trust and the role of expertise. Our research and knowledge exchange on Covid-19 exemplifies the crucial role of SHAPE in addressing the major problems of our age.

**Business, Finance & the Economy**

Robert Zymek and colleagues (Economics) have used **economic models to analyse the spread of epidemics**, to develop a clear mapping of the spread of a disease in the UK, and make it possible to evaluate the welfare impact of mobility restrictions in the face of a deadly epidemic. Dr Jan Grobovšek, also from Economics, analyses **who can work from home around the world**. He shows that the share of employment that can work from home changes with country income levels, mainly because of the higher proportion of self-employed workers, as well as the share of agricultural employment.

Researchers in the Business School are analysing the **impact of Covid on SMEs in the Edinburgh City Region**, in comparison to Scotland and the rest of the UK. With support from a DDI award, Alessandro Rosiello and Francis Green have refocused an existing ESRC-funded study of high-growth firms in the UK periphery to capture the impact of Covid. They have developed a novel survey instrument, which they will now apply more broadly to examining the Edinburgh City region and compare data with rUK. Ben Spigel and Fumi Kitagawa (Business School) have secured one of the UKRI Urgency grants for COVID for the project **Entrepreneurial resiliency, innovation and change during the COVID-19 Crisis** to investigate how entrepreneurs across the country are reacting to the crisis. They will identify the immediate strategies entrepreneurs use to limit the damage done to their firms, and show how these strategies evolve from damage control to planning how to redeploy their existing resources and create new capabilities to take advantage of new market niches created by the pandemic.

Galina Andreeva (Business School), working with the fintech company Wiserfunding, is applying **lessons from the past crises for the Scottish hospitality sector**. The project develops data-driven models that will predict the insolvency/ financial distress of tourism and hospitality companies caused by previous epidemics and generate forecast scenarios for the recovery of the Scottish hospitality sector. Complementing this work is a study on how the **tourism industry can recover from Covid**, carried out by Ewelina Lacka (Business School). The project will work with the Edinburgh Tourism Action Group to assist Edinburgh-based tourism businesses to recover from the impact of Covid-19 by analysing data to support targeted marketing once measures are gradually lifted.

A project led by Raffaella Calabrese and colleagues (Business School) will develop a credit application check designed to **support vulnerable people to identify which benefits they are entitled to** and provide short-term lending to bridge the gap until benefits are transferred. This will enable lenders to make short-term lending decisions for individuals who otherwise may fail to meet the standard credit risk models. A further project on finance will analyse the **impact of coronavirus on personal expenditures and income.** Led by Jonathan Crook in collaboration with Galina Andreeva, the study will examine the effectsof the pandemic on different types of expenditure and sources of income in the immediate period of the lockdown and in the longer term.

Creative Informatics is conducting a **Sector Survey Review** of impacts on these industries, and has funded a series of small AHRC-funded projects to look at, among others, the impact on the film distribution market, and how freelance creatives mobilise online communities in response to the pandemic. Arno Verhoeven, Craig Martin and Chris Speed (ECA) led two postgraduate student teams from ECA/Design Programmes in **Design Informatics and Design for Change** as part of a UNA Europa initiative, to tackle innovation challenges resulting from the pandemic. Partnerships were formed with key stakeholders including Talbot Rice Gallery, Posifest, Edinburgh Festivals, and the Edinburgh Fringe, to develop design-led frameworks and collaborative online practices using a combination of digital design tools, leading to virtual prototypes presented as design fictions and narratives.

Dave O’Brien (ECA) has explored the impact of Covid-19 on **inequality in the arts**, charting how the impacts of the virus will be differentially distributed across arts and cultural organisations, businesses, and individual creatives. Morgan Currie (SSPS) has been awarded DDI funding for a project on **Artists in Lockdown: Virtual Tours of Edinburgh Artists’ Studies**, whichexplores how virtual tour services can support the cultural sector. While ECA researchers Beverley Hood and Lucy Weir (RA) are conducting a scoping study on the role of **performance during Covid-19**, providing a snapshot of who is getting to see digital performance, what they are watching, and what they are making at this extraordinary time.

**Care, Well-being & Inequalities**

Kaveri Qureshi, Nasar Meer, Sarah Hill and Emma Hill (SPS) have teamed up to apply research on public health and ethnicity/race to inform debate on disproportionate **infection and mortality rates for BAME groups**. They challenge biological and genetic ‘explanations’ that have emerged, showing how these approaches ignore the overwhelming evidence that ethnic inequalities in health are driven by social, economic and political divisions. Agomoni Gangui Mitra (Law) has analysed how pandemics **increase existing inequalities in societies**, and how this may result in even more victims than those from the disease itself.

David Cabrelli, also in Law, is looking at the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, with a focus on the effect of furlough on **common law rights of employees and workers**. Karen Gregory (SPS) is working with STUC to examine how to provide precarious workers with the opportunity to better **present collective concerns to employers** with union support, including how best to ensure **workers’ access to information**.

Tina Harrison (Business School) is collaborating with Sopra Steria on the **Covid-19 Support Finder**, a tool for vulnerable citizens to help them find the most suitable financial and emotional support. In a DDI funded project led by Stuart Mercer (Usher Institute) and involving Stella Chan (HiSS), colleagues have teamed up with social tech start-up CogniHealth to **support families and carers affected by dementia**. The project will introduce images from [Project Soothe](http://www.projectsoothe.com), which has collected >800 soothing images from members of the public from >30 countries. Project Soothe shows that viewing a random selection of 25 images is sufficient to lead to immediate positive mood change. George Palattiyil(SPS) and colleagues have been funded by the Chief Scientist Office to conduct research to understand and reduce thepsychosocial **impact of Coronavirus social distancing and behavioural changes on families of care home residents in Scotland**.

A new collaboration across multiple schools led by Lauren Hall-Lew in PPLS is investigating questions of public health, media and communication among residents of Edinburgh and the Lothians in relation to COVID-19. This project, **Recording Life during a Pandemic: The Lothian Diary Project**, is funded by an ESRC Impact Acceleration Award and includes researchers with political science, linguistics, data science and psychotherapy expertise.

Gillean McCluskey and colleagues in Moray House School of Education are analysing the **impacts of isolation, school closure and exam cancellations on the mental health and wellbeing of young people** in Scotland. This is a partnership with UNICEF UK and Scottish Government, funded by the Chief Scientific Office. The Observatory of Children’s Human Rights Scotland, also based in Moray House, is a key participant in an alternative **Children’s Rights Impact Assessment** looking at the Scottish response to COVID-19 and its implications on children’s rights. This covers all children’s rights, including topics such as education, nutrition, healthcare, child protection.

Colleagues from the Physical Activity for Health Research Centre (Moray House) are drawing on extensive research to show how the lockdown may affect **children’s physical activity**, and the consequences for their health and well-being. While Clara Calia (HiSS) is examining the capacity of **home exercise to reduce stress, anxiety, and depression** during lockdown across the world. Given the recommendation to exercise regularly during this epidemic to combat stress, anxiety, and depression, this study looks at the possibility for individuals to achieve physical activity recommendations and resulting positive mental health outcomes through exercise in small, live, online groups with a qualified trainer. The Eating Disorders and Behaviours Research Group, also in HiSS, are conducting a longitudinal survey to explore the **impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on body image and disordered eating.** Through a series of interviews with adults with eating disorders, they are examining how social distancing measures might be changing our body image and eating habits.

Catharine Ward Thompson and colleagues from OPENspace and Landscape Architecture (ECA) are contributing to a project on **Edinburgh’s green spaces**, led by the City of Edinburgh Council funded by National Trust and Lottery Fund. The project will develop a 30-year vision and plan to enhance Edinburgh’s green spaces for all, co-produced with local communities and other stakeholders to enhance quality of life in a time of economic downturn and provide environments that support physical, mental and social wellbeing post-COVID.

Colleagues in LLC have been reflecting on Covid through **poetry and creative writing**. The poet and novelist Robert Alan Jamieson has produced a volume of poems, *Plague Clothes*, charting his experience of sickness and recovery during lockdown, which will be published later this year. In his essay in [*Emergence* Magazine](https://emergencemagazine.org/story/desire-paths/), David Farrier offers a personal reflection on the dilemmas created by living in lockdown, uncertain of whether one is sick or healthy.

Another focus is on the provision of social and medical care during the pandemic. Beatrice Alex (LLC) and Benjamin Bach (Informatics), the EFI Language Technology Group and Visual+Interactive Data Group are developing the **COVID-19 Clinical Guideline Browser**, a user interface for clinicians to assist them in accessing, sharing, comparing and writing hospital guidelines. Siobhan O'Connor (HiSS) and colleagues at the University of Wolverhampton are working on Twitter data to examine **nursing during Covid**. They are exploring public perceptions of nurses during this global pandemic to better understand how social media might affect recruitment and retention to the health workforce.

A project carried out by Bonnie Auyeung and Louise Marryat (PPLS) explores the **impact of COVID-19 on pregnancy** to allow health services to make informed decisions on where to target resource and how to inform women and their families accurately. The project will conduct an early analysis of pregnancy and birth outcomes, and feed these results directly back to the NHS, Scottish Government, midwives and health visitors.

Much of our research explores issues of care and well-being in low-income countries. One theme here is the stigma attached to Covid. Sudeepa Abeysinghe (SPS) has examined **experiences of stigma among Nepalese migrants in Japan amid COVID-19.** Through a multi-country project led by the University of Tokyo, she is linking the community to more appropriate support services and making community voices better heard in the context of Japan’s response to COVID-19. Jeevan Sharma (SPS) is leading an SFC/GCRF funded project on documentation of **Nepali migrant workers’ death**, injury and ill-treatment that is looking at the impact of the pandemic and the lockdown on migrant workers in key labour destinations (India, Malaysia and the Gulf States).

Sudeepa Abeysinghe and Emily Adrion are also launching a new project in the **Asia-Pacific region**. They will expose how COVID-19 patients, their families, and healthcare workers have faced stigma especially in many urban areas, resulting in housing losses, abuse, and discrimination, and heightening the risks for health workers. Jeevan Sharma’s ESRC/ICSSR-funded project on **low-income migrant workers’ access to basic services and protection in urban India** aims to generate evidence to advance the rights and protection mechanisms that must be planned and provided for low-income urban migrants.

Kathi Kaesaehage (Business School), Soledad Garcia Ferrari (ECA) and Kirsteen Shields (Law) have been working with communities in **Latin America** to map how they have **organised collectively to respond to Covid-19 risk**. Focused on Medellin, Puebla and Galapagos, the research aims to reveal how mitigation and adaptation practices shape up in the extreme conditions of Latin American vulnerable and informal communities, and how such systems and practices might promote more sustainable social and economic models.

**Governance and Trust**

Alice Street (SPS) and her ERC project team have received CSO funding to investigate public understandings, expectations and experiences of Covid-19 testing in Scotland and **how testing strategies influence public trust** in health services and government response. Dave Murray-Rust (ECA) in collaboration with Northumbria University has received DDI funding to analyse the **acceptability of digital contact tracing applications.** The project will explore which characteristics are important to end users’ choice of whether to install and keep a digital contact tracing app and create design guidelines. Ruth Jepson (HiSS) is working with colleagues in Southampton on a range of projects to understand the experiences of young people during Coronavirus and lockdown, in order to develop **better messaging to young people and encourage more successful compliance** with the restrictions.

Susan McVie (Law) is part of an Independent Advisory Group advising the Scottish Government on **Police Scotland’s use of the lockdown emergency powers**. Stephen Tierney (Law) and Jeff King (UCL) have offered critical analysis of the **UK Coronavirus legislation**, arguing for robust parliamentary scrutiny of the powers and adequate judicial oversight in order to avoid excessive executive power. While Christina Boswell (SPS) has questioned the government’s **use of targets** in codifying testing goals and communicating its approach. Edward Dove (Law) in collaboration with Bristol is analysing the **legal and ethical implications of public health guidance around the world.** Youngmi Kim (LLC) has written about the planning and sanitary measures put in place for the **South Korean election** in April 2020, to enable citizens to vote.

Christine Bell (Law) and the Peace Settlements Research Programme are examining the consequences of the Covid outbreak on **peace processes and armed conflict** in more than 20 countries across four continents. The study also plans to assess the reaction to the UN’s call for a global ceasefire in support of the fight against coronavirus. The team will investigate whether the pandemic has changed the behaviour of armed non-state groups, the composition of countries’ governments and security forces, and the funding and international support for peace processes.

Sarah Jane Cooper-Knock (SPS) is building on research on disaster response in informal settlements, to examine the **impact and governance of Covid-19 lockdown in Cape Town.** Funded by an ESRC Impact Acceleration grant and a GCRF SFC grant, the project is running a series of WhatsApp diaries amongst four different groups of South African residents in Cape Town to show the ways in which the Covid-19 Lockdown is being observed, enforced and contested on the ground in Cape Town. Clara Calia (HiSS) has teamed up with colleagues across the University to understand the impact of Covid-19 on vulnerable people living in conditions of protracted conflict, focusing on **health and food distribution and access in Syria and Turkey**.

Jean-Benoît Falisse (SPS) is conducting the Covid-19 Governance Response Mapping project, which looks at the **governance and accountability of Covid-19 response in Africa** and seeks to produce an interactive public dataset that explores which measures are introduced, by whom, and in which socio-political environment (e.g. state of emergency). Alice Street and colleagues have also drawn lessons from the Ebola outbreak to examine **how prepared African countries are for Covid pandemic**. Larissa Pschetz, Jonathan Rankin and Evan Morgan (ECA) have partnered with colleagues in Geosciences to investigate the potential for digital tools to help **mitigate the spread of Covid in Jamaica** and other countries with similar socio-economic and socio-technical characteristics, with support from the SFC Global Challenges scheme.

Researchers in the Global Public Health Unit, as part of a the UK-wide SPECTRUM network, have been exploring how **businesses around the world may be seeking to influence or benefit from the crisis**, particularly those whose products or activities can be characterised as ‘unhealthy commodities’ (such as tobacco, alcohol, ultra-processed foods, gambling, or fossil fuels). Mark Hellowell (SPS) is working with the WHO to examine how **private health services** can be mobilised to help address the pandemic. Together with WHO colleagues, he has advised that governments should fully integrate private health sector capacity into their national responses, and ensure effective alignment of public and private sectors.