

**Director of the
Wales COVID19 Evidence Centre**

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS AND GUIDANCE ON HOW TO APPLY

1. Introduction

Health and Care Research Wales is setting up a Wales COVID19 Evidence Centre, with an initial budget of £3m over 24 months from January 2021, to provide research, evidence synthesis and knowledge mobilisation to meet urgent current and future evidence needs arising from the coronavirus pandemic and its consequences for and impact on health and care in Wales. This is a hugely exciting opportunity to contribute to the COVID19 research and evidence agenda and its impact on improving health and care in Wales.

This document provides information for applicants for the position of Director of the **Wales COVID19 Evidence Centre** which we anticipate will be filled through the secondment of the successful candidate from their current employing organisation on a part-time basis.

Please note: the deadline for applications is 17:00 on Monday 21 December 2020, and interviews are scheduled for Thursday 7 January 2021.

2. Background

Health and Care Research Wales is a networked organisation, supported by Welsh Government, which brings together a wide range of partners across the NHS in Wales, universities and research institutions, local authorities, and others. We work in close partnership with other government agencies and research funders (both in Wales and across the UK); industry partners; patients; public and other stakeholders. We work together to promote research into diseases, treatments, services and outcomes that can lead to discoveries and innovations which can improve and even save people's lives.

Health and Care Research Wales' mission is to promote, support and provide collective oversight of health and social care research in Wales to ensure it is of the highest international scientific quality, is relevant to the needs and challenges of health and care in Wales, and makes a difference to policy and practice in ways that improve the lives of patients, people and communities in Wales. Involving patients, service

users, carers and the public is key to our work in order to ensure the research we support is relevant and effectively delivered. Health and Care Research Wales is directed by Professor Kieran Walshe.

The COVID19 pandemic has illustrated vividly the centrality of research and evidence to health and care in Wales, and their importance to decision making at every level in the health and care system. Ending the pandemic relies fundamentally on research delivering solutions to diagnosis, treatment and prevention. Many wider key decisions – such as how and when to deploy social distancing measures, or what advice to give to people on returning to work – need to be informed by robust evidence, though that is not always currently available.

In order to support rapid access to evidence, Health and Care Research Wales will fund a Wales-focused programme of research, evidence synthesis and knowledge mobilisation over the medium term (24 months) to meet urgent current and future evidence needs arising from the coronavirus pandemic and its consequences for and impact on health and care in Wales. In order to achieve this, a Wales COVID19 Evidence Centre is being established with funding of up to £3m over two years, and a director role is being advertised to lead this important initiative.

3. Setting up the Wales COVID19 Evidence Centre

Over the last six months there has been a huge research response to the COVID19 pandemic – in the UK and internationally. Initially the main focus was on testing technologies, effective treatments, and vaccines for disease prevention, but there is now a huge programme of research – commissioned in the UK by a range of funders – and a pressing need for effective research synthesis and knowledge mobilisation.

The COVID19 Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) has been central in seeking to provide the Welsh Government with up to date, accurate and reliable advice based on the best available evidence. Due to the fast moving pace of the pandemic, the role of TAC in advising Welsh Government has rightly been keen to focus on the immediate evidence needs to support daily policy decisions, often working reactively to a timescale of a few days or weeks at most. It has been much more difficult for TAC to look forward and plan for future evidence needs over coming months.

The current ad-hoc arrangements through which TAC has drawn on existing resources in Welsh Government and elsewhere are not capable of keeping up with the demand for evidence. There is a clear risk that without greater and better organised and sustainable capacity particularly in evidence synthesis, knowledge mobilisation, and rapid primary research we will not be able to meet those future research and evidence needs effectively in ways that properly support decision making.

The likely future urgent evidence needs of Welsh Government and NHS Wales fall into three main areas – and in each we need both to be able to respond to evidence requests from government and other stakeholders and to “horizon scan” the research landscape to identify and highlight important research findings and bring them to the attention of policymakers. The three areas are:

- **Using research and evidence in managing the pandemic.** This is where much of the work of TAC has been focused to date, and it includes areas such as: the epidemiology of the disease, the validity/reliability of systems for monitoring its spread/incidence/prevalence/service demands; the effectiveness of non-pharmaceutical measures for prevention; and a host of wider questions about the health/pandemic effects of wider societal and economic issues.
- **The impact of the pandemic on the health of communities and people in Wales.** There is a growing concern about the way the pandemic and the measures which have had to be taken to deal with it impact on the health of people and communities – issues such as the longer term effects post-COVID infection/hospitalisation, mental health consequences of social distancing and isolation, the consequences of delays in seeking health and care or access to services, and the health effects of the economic disruption and reduced GDP caused by the pandemic.
- **The impact of the pandemic on the health and care delivery systems in Wales.** It is clear that the pandemic has had a massive short term effect on health and care delivery systems and organisations, which has constrained service delivery and created a likely backlog of health and care need. But it is also likely that models of service delivery and provision will need to change to take account of the ongoing constraints in areas like infection control and social distancing. More positively, the pandemic has led to the rapid and widespread adoption of a wide range of innovations in service delivery (such as new triage models, and telephone and video consultations).

What is needed is a responsive and flexible evidence and research capability which can work closely with Welsh Government officials and leaders in the NHS and social care in Wales to bring evidence to bear on decision making effectively. Research findings need to be clearly explained, relevant, timely and actionable. There is a need both for rapid evidence synthesis to make use of the huge research base that has now developed and for the capacity to undertake some rapid primary research in Wales targeted on specific and localised research issues or needs.

4. The role of Director of the COVID19 Evidence Centre

Health and Care Research Wales is looking for a motivated, dynamic individual to take lead responsibility for the **Wales COVID19 Evidence Centre** as its Director.

The successful candidate will have experience working at a senior level in and with both academia and government/the NHS – and the ability to establish credibility with both the research community and policy makers and senior leaders in health and social care.

They will be currently working in a senior role in a university, research institute or health/care organisation or equivalent (either in Wales or elsewhere). We anticipate arranging a secondment from their current employer to take up the role, and the terms for this will be agreed with the successful candidate and their organisation.

They will have a track record and expertise in research, evidence synthesis and knowledge mobilisation across the fields of health and care research. They will be expected to work strategically and collaboratively, providing leadership for a programme of work that will involve the needs and expectations of a wide range of stakeholders. and specifically in close liaison with Health and Care Research Wales senior management responsible for the Wales COVID19 evidence centre, by providing leadership for the research programme and key input into related communications.

The Director must have excellent communications skills, with the ability to present complex information to specialist and non-specialist audiences. They must have demonstrable experience and skills in building positive and productive relationships with colleagues and other stakeholders.

The post will be part-time (anticipated to be between 0.5 and 0.8 WTE, to be negotiated by the successful applicant with the Director of Health and Care Research Wales).

5. Director – key responsibilities

The Director will be accountable to the Director of Health and Care Research Wales and will:

- Lead the development, implementation and management of the Wales COVID19 Evidence Centre and its work programme;
- Work collaboratively with Health and Care Research Wales senior management, to provide for the ongoing development and delivery of the Wales COVID19 Evidence Centre, including input into communications and public involvement activities;
- Develop and implement appropriate management structures to enable the effective delivery of the Wales COVID19 Evidence Centre, including delivery of activities through agreements and commissions with a range of organisations with the relevant expertise in primary research and/or research synthesis;
- Effectively manage grant budget and resources to successfully deliver the Wales COVID19 evidence centre;
- Work collaboratively with key stakeholders in Wales to ensure the Wales COVID19 evidence centre focuses on the most urgent evidence needs and research questions;
- Work with key individuals and groups from a wide range of sectors to ensure the evidence outputs will feed into policy and service change;
- Establish relevant governance and advisory groups to achieve the aims of the Wales COVID19 Evidence Centre including setting out the priorities;
- Report progress to and take advice from the Welsh Government COVID Technical Advisory Cell/Group and place a full part in membership of such groups as appropriate;

- Present developments, progress updates and other related activity at a range of public meetings and forums;
- Act as visible, accessible figurehead for the Wales COVID19 evidence centre.

6. Application process

Application for the role of director will be by the submission of a full curriculum vitae and a letter of application (maximum length 4 pages) setting out your vision for what the new Centre should set out to achieve and your suitability for the role.

Applications should be submitted by email to Nick Thomas, Project Manager, Research and Development Division, Welsh Government (nick.thomas@gov.wales) by **17:00 on Monday 21 December 2020**. Receipt of your application will be acknowledged. Any requests for further information or queries about the role or any aspects of the application process should be directed to Nick Thomas in the first instance.

Applications will be considered by a panel convened by Health and Care Research Wales, and we anticipate interviewing shortlisted applicants on **Thursday 7 January 2021**. Feedback will be provided to unsuccessful applicants on request. We will seek to then agree secondment arrangements with the successful candidate to start as soon as possible.