



Ymchwil Iechyd
a Gofal **Cymru**
Health and Care
Research **Wales**

ANNUAL REPORT 2020/2021




Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg

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FOREWORD

I am so proud of our research teams, patients, service users and members of the public for their incredible efforts in responding to the challenges of the pandemic and I am delighted to recognise their contribution in the 2020/21 annual report of Health and Care Research Wales.

Together, they have helped identify treatments to improve the outcomes of the sickest patients and led to the discovery of the effective vaccines that are saving lives today, and I would like to say 'Diolch o galon' to them all.

Wales has played a key role in the UK-wide research effort at a pace and scale that has never been seen before. It's important to recognise how far we've come, and it could not have been done without the commitment and skills of our research community, and the people who stepped forward to contribute to the studies and make the research possible.

Through Health and Care Research Wales, Welsh Government promotes and supports health and care research to ensure it is of the highest international scientific quality, is relevant to the needs and challenges of health and social care in Wales, and improves the lives of patients, people and communities.

Therefore the use of the research evidence base in health and social care will be as crucial as ever as the Welsh Government now delivers on its ambitious commitments outlined in its 5-year Programme for Government.

I look forward to continue working with our research community to build on what we have learned through the pandemic, bringing the benefits of research to all.

Eluned Morgan



Eluned Morgan MS
Minister for Health and Social Services,
Welsh Government

INTRODUCTION

Learning and looking forward

Each year, this annual report is an opportunity to review what we have achieved in health and social care research in Wales, and to look forward to future opportunities and developments. But this past year has been extraordinary, unprecedented and hugely important. This was the year of the global COVID-19 pandemic, when health and care research across the UK and the world was central to all our lives – finding treatments, developing vaccines, using data to guide policy and practice, and undoubtedly saving many, many lives.

In this report I am very proud to showcase some of the efforts of the Welsh research community including the partnerships involved in multiple vaccine trials and research studies for new treatments. Welsh Government invested £3m to establish the Wales COVID-19 Evidence Centre which has enabled rapid access to key international research findings and evidence to inform Welsh Government and NHS Wales decision-making. Now we are tackling the future research agenda, including long COVID, the recovery of health and care services and learning from many innovations developed during the pandemic.

Amid all these challenges, the wider research endeavour has continued apace. For example funding calls that ran between April 2020 and March 2021 resulted in Health and Care Research Wales funding 29 new awards amounting to a value of £6.83m, and we were pleased to see the Wales Cancer Bank, funded by Health and Care Research Wales, named as the 2020 UK Biobank of the Year by the UK Clinical Research Collaboration (UKCRC) Tissue Directory and Coordination Centre.

Moreover [Professor David Ford](#), co-director of the Secure Anonymised Information Linkage (SAIL) Databank, funded by Health and Care Research Wales, was recognised as one of the most influential people in data in the 2021 edition of [the DataIQ 100](#). Great progress has been made in implementing the Welsh Government's [Discover Your Role](#) strategy which aims to encourage more people from right across Wales to get involved in research, from design to delivery. Our action plan which was published in January is making progress in addressing barriers to public involvement and how to reach out to more diverse communities to ensure research is more reflective of the needs of the wider Welsh population.

And I am delighted to report that almost 500 delegates attended our first ever online conference on 7 October 2020 - making it our biggest and best national conference yet – something we plan to replicate in 2021 and for other events.

There is a great deal to learn from the last 12 months as we look to the future – and you will find our thinking about future developments at the end of this annual report in our forward look.

Kieran Walshe



Professor Kieran Walshe
Director of Health and Care Research Wales

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

How the pandemic shone a light on health and care research in Wales

Collaboration and commitment: how the Wales research community played a vital role in tackling COVID-19

On 28 February 2020, it was confirmed that the first person in Wales had tested positive for a virus called coronavirus. Just a few weeks later, the first urgent public health COVID-19 study opened in Wales, which enabled the scientific community to understand more about the spread of this deadly infection. The following day on 11 March the World Health Organisation confirmed we were in a pandemic.

Since then, the Welsh research community has played a key role in not only supporting the development of multiple vaccines, but also looking at new treatments, diagnoses and tests. This research effort has brought together the NHS, academia, research staff, volunteers as well as patients and their families.

Wales has been involved in 38 urgent public health research studies, which were identified through a UK prioritisation panel, including vaccine trials, which as we now know, have provided a critical route out of the pandemic.

[Nearly 50,000 people in Wales have been recruited into 110 COVID-19 research studies under the leadership of Health and Care Research Wales.](#)

Dr Nicola Williams, Director of Support and Delivery at Health and Care Research Wales said: "What we have achieved during the last 18 months in Wales is remarkable. The NHS and academia have come together as a community and we've been able to put Wales on the map in terms of its ability to be responsive, to set up studies really quickly and then really deliver, in terms of recruiting successfully to those studies.

"We also wouldn't be where we are today without the outstanding efforts from the delivery staff, volunteers, patient families and carers who have all been fundamental in our research efforts."

During the course of 2020 and well into 2021 COVID-19 research has made a huge difference to all of our lives. Most notably is the Welsh contribution to the national vaccine trials. With leadership from Public Health Wales and Health and Care Research Wales in 2020 we have recruited volunteers at [Aneurin Bevan University Health Board for the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine](#), at [Betsi](#)

[Cadwaladr University Health Board for the Novavax vaccine](#) and at [Cardiff's University Hospital of Wales for the Janssen vaccine](#).

More recently there have been trials at Swansea University Health Board for the Medicago vaccine, at Cardiff's Bayside mass vaccination centre to understand the impact of giving the annual flu vaccine at the same time as the COVID-19 vaccine, and at Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board for a booster vaccine trial – all these studies impact directly on the population vaccination programme in the UK and globally.

Brian Begg, a 39-year-old cardiac rehabilitation exercise practitioner who works at Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr in Caerphilly, was one of the hundreds of participants who registered to take part in the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine trial. Brian, who lives in Newport with his partner Ellie and three children, first got invited to take part in the trial in May 2020. [Read his Q&A here about his experience of taking part in a global vaccine trial.](#)

**figures are accurate as at September 2021 when this report went for publication*



Brian Begg, one of the many volunteers who took part in the trial for the Oxford/Astrazeneca vaccine

As well as the vaccine trials, Wales has also been part of key research into treatments including the [RECOVERY](#) trial which to date has seen more than 1,279 Welsh participants treated within the study across seven NHS organisations in Wales.

The study helps identify treatments for people hospitalised with suspected or confirmed COVID-19. The trial has shown a low-cost steroid (dexamethasone) reduces death by up to one third in those with severe respiratory complications and arthritis drug, tocilizumab could save 1 in 25 people who are severely ill with coronavirus. The study has also been valuable in showing that other treatments show no clinical benefit (the antibiotic azithromycin, convalescent plasma therapy, hydroxychloroquine).

Over the past year, all health boards with intensive care provision in Wales have recruited to the [REMAP-CAP](#) trial which aims to identify treatments that may be beneficial for people who are severely ill with COVID-19 and require intensive care. The trial has shown two rheumatoid arthritis drugs (tocilizumab and sarilumab) reduce risk of death by nearly 10%.

In the community setting, the [PRINCIPLE](#) study is aiming to find treatments for people who have milder COVID-19 infection and do not need to go to hospital. Those with coronavirus symptoms, or a confirmed COVID-19 infection, can be a part of this trial from anywhere in Wales. Most recently, it was found that two commonly prescribed antibiotics, azithromycin and doxycycline, provide no benefit to patients who are more than 50 years old and being treated for COVID-19 at home, which is just as important to give clinicians valuable evidence to inform their treatment of patients with COVID-19 in the community.

All global and national research is being brought together at the new [Wales COVID-19 Evidence Centre](#) which is analysing the impact and use research-based evidence to address new challenges as a result of the global pandemic.

The £3 million centre, [announced in December 2020](#) and led by [Professor Adrian Edwards](#) was established by Welsh Government to bring together UK-wide and international research findings to help address the long-term effects of the pandemic as well as investigate challenges such as infection control and social distancing, the consequences of isolation and the health effects of the economic disruption.

Gwawr Evans, who took part in the Oxford/AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine trial, said:

"I volunteered to take part in this trial mainly because this vaccine, and others, are what's going to get us out of the pandemic.

"It makes me feel proud to have taken part in this trial so when I hear about it on the news I feel like I have a personal connection to it. It's something that I've been a part of and in a small way contributed to.

"Our world would be so different without research, it's critical to us all. It's great to see [...] that many people feel the same way about research and I would encourage them to ask their doctor or nurse how they can take part in research in the future."

Visit the [Be Part of Research](#) website to find out more about how you can be a part of COVID-19 and other vital health and social care research in Wales.

For more information on all related research studies that are active, or in set up, in Wales visit [COVID-19 research in Wales](#).

OUR RESEARCH CENTRES IN NUMBERS



£9.4m

Direct funding awarded



Tissue samples issued



£37m

Value of grants won*



Jobs funded



Number of grants won*



169

Jobs created



819

Research publications

**Grants won by lead applicants from the Centres*

OUR FUNDING SCHEMES

Total **£6.83m**

3 Social Care PhD Studentships

£196,256

4 Social Care Research Fellowships

£1,331,321

3 Health and Care Research Wales /
National Institute of Health Research Fellowships

£2,022,245

9 Research Funding Scheme: Health Research Grants

£1,907,026

4 Research for Patient and Public Benefit (RfPPB)
Wales Awards

£874,823

6 NHS Research Time Awards (NHS RTA)

£498,878

SUPPORT & DELIVERY 2020/21



43,118

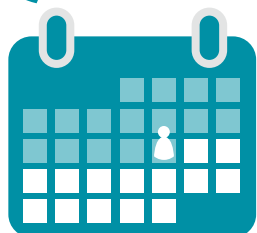
Participants recruited into
high-quality research studies



528

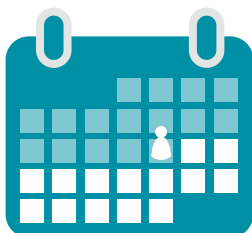
Active non-commercial
high-quality research studies

76%



of studies recruited first
participant within 30
days of site activation
(commercial)

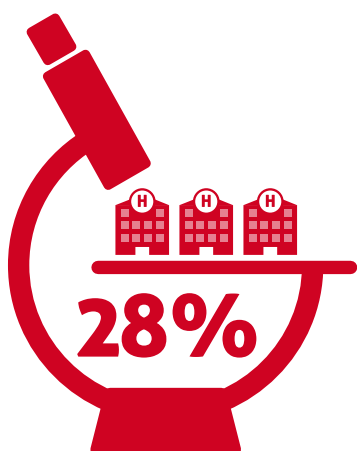
88%



of studies recruited first
participant within 30
days of site activation
(non-commercial)



Active commercially
sponsored studies



studies open across more
than one organisation
(% of all studies)



per 1,000 population recruited
per annum (5 year average)

OUR RESEARCH GRANTS AND AWARDS

Health and Care Research Wales grant schemes fund projects with public, practice and policy relevance while supporting the development of researchers across Wales.

Funding calls that ran between April 2020 and March 2021 resulted in Health and Care Research Wales funding 29 new awards amounting to a value of £6.83m.

This included Health Research Grants, Research for Patient and Public Benefit (RfPPB) Wales projects, Social Care Fellowships, Social Care PhD Studentships, along with NHS Research Time Awards (NHS RTAs). All awards are expected to be active by 1 October 2021. We were pleased to fund three Health and Care Research Wales/National Institute of Health Research Fellowships, two of which were Advanced Fellowships, awarded to Victoria Shepherd and Claudia Metzler-Baddeley, both of Cardiff University.

SOCIAL CARE RESEARCH FELLOWSHIPS

- **Dr Helen Hodges, Cardiff University**
Linking survey and administrative data to enhance understandings of risky behaviours and potential protective factors in children receiving social care: A feasibility study
- **Dr Simon Read, Swansea University**
Determining Best Preventative Social Care Practice in the Contexts of Older People Receiving Care and Support at Home and Those Living with Dementia
- **Dr Phillip Smith, Cardiff University**
Leaving a pupil referral unit: Exploring the transitions and post-16 destinations of care experienced young people across Wales
- **Dr Sarah Thompson, Cardiff University**
How can we improve the experiences and outcomes of autistic children in care? A mixed methods study of needs, services, and good practice

RESEARCH FOR PATIENT AND PUBLIC BENEFIT (RFPPB) WALES

- **Ceri Battle, Swansea Bay University Health Board**
Clinical and cost effectiveness of an early exercise programme on chronic pain and health-related quality of life following blunt chest wall trauma: A parallel, randomised controlled trial (ELECT2 trial)
- **Kate Button, Cardiff & Vale University Health Board**
A randomised controlled feasibility study of TRAK musculoskeletal digital self-management physio-therapy intervention for individuals with musculoskeletal pain
- **Simon Noble, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board**
Hospital Deep Vein Thrombosis Detection Study in Cancer Patients Receiving Palliative Care (HIDDEN 2)
- **Dr Gareth Roberts, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board**
Protocol for a Realist and Social Return on Investment evaluation of the use of Patient Reported Outcomes in Value Based Healthcare

RESEARCH FUNDING SCHEME: HEALTH RESEARCH GRANTS

- **Mark Davies, Swansea Bay University Health Board**
Using machine learning to predict subclone evolution and response during chemotherapy
- **Rachel Errington, Cardiff University**
Precision Oncology: A novel approach to modelling neuroblastoma and specific treatment as its underlying genetic abnormalities changes during a patient's treatment
- **Richard Fry, Swansea University**
Mapping service cold spots from COVID-19 lockdowns
- **Lim Jones, Public Health Wales**
The epidemiology and impact of bacterial secondary infections and antimicrobial resistance on Intensive Care during the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic
- **Mari Jones, Swansea University**
Learning from the national management of the pandemic: The health economic impact of COVID-19 on care and support for people over 65 years old
- **Julie Peconi, Swansea University**
Sunproofed: A mixed methods evaluation of sun safety policies in primary schools in Wales
- **William Pickrell, Swansea University**
The impact of COVID-19 on health equality and mortality in people with epilepsy in Wales
- **Rebecca Thomas, Swansea University**
The impact of cessation of screening for diabetic eye disease on people with diabetes during the COVID-19 pandemic
- **Joanna Zabkiewicz, Cardiff University**
Investigating Immune cell fitness to determine patient response to Chimeric Antigen Receptor (CAR) T-Cell therapy

NHS RESEARCH TIME AWARDS

- **Rachel Abbott,**
Cardiff & Vale University Health Board
- **Sarah Gwynne,**
Swansea Bay University Health Board
- **Sadie Jones,**
Cardiff & Vale University Health Board
- **Jane Nicholls,**
Cardiff & Vale University Health Board
- **Jonathan Philips,**
Swansea Bay University Health Board
- **Summia Zaher,**
Cardiff & Vale University Health Board

SOCIAL CARE PHD STUDENTSHIPS

- **Mark Davies / Carolyn Wallace, University of South Wales**
Developing a Training Pack-age for Link Workers in Wales using a Realist Approach
- **Rachel Rahman, Aberystwyth University**
How living in rural areas contributes to feelings of loneliness in diverse rural communities, and the role communities play in addressing social inequality
- **Fiona Wood, Cardiff University**
Engaging care home residents in research: identification of barriers and facilitators and the development of an intervention to support residents in decision-making and advance planning for research (EN-GAGE Study)

HEALTH AND CARE RESEARCH WALES / NIHR FELLOWSHIP

Supporting individuals on their trajectory to becoming future leaders in research. Health and Care Research Wales takes on the funding and management of successful applications to the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Fellowship Programme.

FELLOWSHIP:

Leigh Sanyaolu, Cardiff University

Improving Prophylactic Antibiotic use for Recurrent urinary Tract infection (IMPART): mixed-methods study to address evidence gaps and develop a decision aid

ADVANCED FELLOWSHIP:

• **Victoria Shepherd, Cardiff University**

Deciding about research for others: a feasibility study and effectiveness trial of a novel decision support intervention for consultees and legal representatives of adults lacking capacity to consent (CONSULT)

• **Claudia Metzler-Baddeley, Cardiff University**

Development and feasibility randomised controlled pilot study of HD-DRUM - a novel motor sequence training app for people with Huntington's disease

BUILDING RESEARCH CAPACITY IN WALES

The Research Capacity Building Collaboration (RCBC) Wales aims to increase research capacity and capability in nursing, midwifery, pharmacy and allied health professions, and to contribute to the development of clinical academic roles. As part of the latest call Pharmacy Research UK joint funded a First into Research Fellowship which began in April 2021.

RCBCWales comprises six university nursing and allied health departments/schools in Wales, (namely at the universities of South Wales, Swansea, Cardiff, Cardiff Metropolitan, Wrexham Glyndwr and Bangor) and engages with the NHS, industry, charities and policy makers.

Over the last year, fellows have started projects covering a variety of topics including analysis of genome sequencing data to improve diagnostic yields, systems supporting hearing families with d/Deaf children, and end of life care for people with dementia.

The collaborative ethos is exemplified by the RCBCWales Community of Scholars, which creates an inclusive, collegiate and nurturing environment, providing mentorship and master classes in research methods and research leadership. For more information and details of funding calls, please visit www.rcbcwales.org.uk and on Twitter [@RCBCWales](https://twitter.com/RCBCWales).

SOCIAL CARE RESEARCH

Health and Care Research Wales has continued to invest in initiatives that strengthen the capacity and capability of social care research in Wales. Over and above supporting social care through other infrastructure developments, resources has been dedicated to the initiatives below:

Research Capacity Building Initiative encourages people into the field of academic research covering all aspects of social care and supports those already working in the field to develop their careers. The programme has three key stages to take practitioners through PhD study, post-doctoral research/first academic appointment, and then research leaders.

Developing Evidence Enriched Practice – DEEP is a co-production approach using different types of knowledge and evidence, and making it meaningful and effective in social care settings including within workforce

development. This initiative aims to highlight the impact of this approach and embed DEEP within partner organisation's policies and work programmes.

ExChange is an all-Wales research dissemination and engagement programme bringing leading researchers together with practitioners and service users to share expertise, research evidence and care experiences. Exchange provides free, high-quality training to support the ongoing development of social care professionals.

Enabling Research in Care Homes - ENRICH supports the growth of health and social care research in care homes across Wales, by developing and facilitating a network of 'research ready' care homes, promoting the exchange of research ideas and knowledge, and fostering the co-creation of research relevant to the current issues in the care home sector.

OUR RESEARCH CENTRES AND THEIR IMPACT

April 2020 saw the start of a new funding period with a refreshed research development infrastructure bringing exciting possibilities for the next five years. It came at the outset of the pandemic that presented a whole new set of challenges for the research community. Despite this, the research centres have responded positively to these challenges, demonstrating strength and resilience to tackling COVID-19 whilst finding ways to continue delivering non-COVID activities, resulting in 147 successful grants led by our centres totalling £37m.

The new funding period sees renewed investments for existing areas of strength in mental health (National Centre for Mental Health), primary care (Wales Centre for Primary and Emergency Care Research), cancer and rare disease (Wales Cancer Research Centre; Wales Cancer Bank; Wales Gene Park; Brain Repair and Intracranial Neurotherapeutics Unit), kidney disease and diabetes (Wales Kidney Research Unit; Diabetes Research Group Swansea), health informatics (Secure Anonymised Information Linkage databank), population health (National Centre for Population Health and Wellbeing Research), ageing and dementia (Centre for Ageing and Dementia Research), health economics (Health and Care Economics Cymru) and clinical trials units (Swansea Trials Unit; North Wales Organisation for Randomised Trials in Health & Social Care; Centre for Trials Research), as well as welcoming the following new groups:

Centre for the Development and Evaluation of Complex Interventions for Public Health Improvement (DECIPHer)

Led by Professor Simon Murphy and based at Cardiff University, DECIPHer brings together experts from a range of disciplines to tackle public health issues such as diet and nutrition, physical activity, tobacco, alcohol and drugs, with a particular focus on developing and evaluating multi-level interventions that will have an impact on the health and wellbeing of children and young people.

This year DECIPHer, in partnership with National Centre for Mental Health (NCMH) and Secure Anonymised Information Linkage (SAIL) databank, begun work on the new £10m Wolfson Centre for Adolescent Mental Health (Cardiff University), an interdisciplinary research centre focusing on reducing anxiety and depression in young people. In addition, they joined the Welsh Government Technical Advisory Cell for Children and Education, supporting COVID-19 policy development and evaluation, highlighting the increased relevance of their work in responding to the emerging population health challenges in Wales and beyond.

Children's Social Care Research and Development Centre Partnership (CASCADE-Partnership)

Led by Professor Donald Forrester the partnership brings together the Children's Social Care Research and Development Centre (CASCADE) in the School of Social Sciences, the Centre for Human Development Science in the School of Psychology, the Centre for Trials Research (Cardiff University) and Secure Anonymised Information Linkage (SAIL) databank (Swansea University). The partnership has the aim of improving the wellbeing,

safety and rights of children and their families. It is concerned with all aspects of community responses to social need in children and families, including family support services, children in need services, child protection, looked after children and adoption.

A highlight from their first year of funding includes the social workers in schools randomised controlled trial (RCT) – the biggest RCT in children's social care ever undertaken in the UK (Social works in schools [SWIS] trial).

In addition, this year we have made two smaller investments to develop capacity in niche areas where Wales can lead the way:

Gambling Research, Evaluation and Treatment Wales Network (GREAT Network)

Led by Professor Simon Dymond and based at the Swansea University, the GREAT Network was established in April 2020 and will develop research capacity and capability for the prevention and reduction of gambling-related harm in Wales through collaborative engagement with related domains such as addiction services and health and wellbeing.

Wales School for Social Prescribing Research (WSSPR)

Led by Professor Carolyn Wallace and based at both the University of South Wales and Cardiff University, WSSPR was established in April 2020 and aims to build research capacity and a critical evidence base for evaluating social prescribing in Wales and internationally. WSSPR is hosted within the Wales Centre for Primary and Emergency Care Research (PRIME Centre Wales).

For more information about all our research centres please [click here](#).

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Why we're encouraging more people to discover their role in research

Throughout the pandemic we have seen people from all ages, backgrounds and parts of Wales come forward to help with the COVID-19 research effort. Be it one of the UK-wide vaccine trials or the multiple research studies to find treatments for the illness, the sense of being valued for their contribution and that they are making a difference to a wider cause have been palpable.

At the same time, the past year has been an opportunity for the research community to learn from people's motivations to volunteer and how to capitalise on the public's increased understanding of the importance of health and social care research. Whilst COVID-19 has been largely about participation, we now have an opportunity to ensure more people view public involvement in the whole research design and delivery process as a vital public service.

On 26 January 2021 Health and Care Research Wales published an action plan which sets out tangible actions for increasing public involvement in research by addressing barriers and widening engagement with more diverse communities. [Discover Your Role in Health and Social Care Research](#) was developed in partnership with the public and research community during a series of five community of practice events in 2019 and includes seven focus areas.

The first focus area outlines the need for a more coherent Welsh network for public involvement discussions where people can share good practice and get support. From this, a public engagement and involvement forum for Wales was developed with its inaugural meeting held in January 2021 involving almost 100 people.

Work is well underway on the immediate priorities in the action plan via small working groups, including addressing administrative barriers for the payment of public contributors, and the development of a purposeful public engagement strategy to build on the profile that research has gained in the last 12 months.

Members of the public are essential to the research process. Our Discover Your Role strategy, aligned to UK-wide public engagement initiatives such as Be Part of Research aims to encourage more people from across Wales to help shape all research studies that deliver better care for the future.

Over the next year we will work on how to reach out to more members of the public with lived experience in areas we're researching. We will also support our research community and public involvement and engagement professionals by sharing what works well, and ensuring the contributions of patients and the public are recognised for the difference they make to improving care for everyone.

Keep up to date with public involvement opportunities and events in Wales by [signing up to our weekly 'Your involvement matters' email](#).

Want to learn more about public involvement?

Find out [how you can help with research](#). Work in research? [Read our support and guidance](#).



LOOKING FORWARD: PLANS FOR THE FUTURE OF HEALTH AND CARE RESEARCH

There is much we should learn from the COVID-19 pandemic, about how we organise, fund, deliver and use health and care research in ways that really makes a difference.

We have had more engagement in research – from ordinary people taking part in clinical trials of vaccines, to people using the results of research to shape their own personal behaviours and actions to reduce disease exposure and transmission – than ever before. Research has featured in politics, the media, and in everyday conversations more than ever before. We must not waste the opportunity to build on this foundation.

Health and Care Research Wales is now turning to planning for the future – and at the centre of our efforts in the coming year will be a concern to support and develop the capacity and capability for research in Wales – ensuring that research is of the highest quality; is internationally competitive in its science and relevance; is used to help shape health and care services in Wales and brings about improvements for patients and communities.

We will publish a three-year costed plan for the future covering 2022 to 2025, and setting out our agenda for action. But we can already be clear about a number of key priorities.



Sudipta Bandyopadhyay took part in Talking Trials run by the Centre for Trials Research

First, we will play our full part in UK-wide developments, and be bold and robust in seeking a full and fair investment in Wales from UK wide funders and initiatives.

The UK Government and devolved administrations have set out a vision for the future of clinical research delivery. 'Saving and Improving Lives: The Future of UK Clinical Research Delivery' which lays out our shared ambition to create a world-leading UK clinical research environment with research delivery fully embedded within the NHS.

The UK Government's Life Sciences Vision sets out the ambitions of the UK to be a life sciences superpower – and the need for investment from both government and industry in some key domains such as dementia, cancer vaccines and mental health. The UK Government's White Paper The R&D Roadmap provides a key context for these developments, recognises the highly unequal distribution of R&D resources across the UK and the need for "levelling up".

Second, we will ensure our research programmes address the Programme for Government published by the Welsh Government and the eight Ministerial priorities set out by the Minister for Health and Social Services.

These recognise that we are still in the midst of a pandemic response, but we must also re-activate services and the recovery in tandem. The priorities focus on improving population health and reducing health inequalities, with a concerted shift to wellness, outcomes and ensuring equity of access. Research will play a vital role in achieving these priorities.

Third, we will publish a report undertaken with Health Education and Improvement Wales on research career pathways and opportunities in Wales, and begin to implement its recommendations.

This means investing in ensuring that universities and NHS boards and trusts in Wales can attract the brightest and the best researchers to pursue careers here, and have both the opportunities and the support they need. We will also be working closely with Social Care Wales and local authorities to facilitate the enhancement of opportunities and support for research careers in social care. These programmes will produce the future research leaders in Wales and across the UK.

Fourth, we will build on the work of the Wales COVID-19 Evidence Centre and our work on providing rapid evaluations of service innovations to create a sustained, productive partnership between researchers on the one hand and policymakers and health and social care system leaders on the other.

Our aim is to co-produce great research, targeted on real needs, which will inform decisions and plans for health and social care.

It is an exciting time to be working in health and care research – and we look forward to seeing these endeavours help to build a vibrant and expanding research community delivering research which is both rigorous and relevant to the needs of the people of Wales.

Professor Kieran Walshe

“At the centre of our efforts in the coming year will be a concern to support and develop the capacity and capability for research in Wales.”



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Today's research; tomorrow's care.



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