Wales COVID-19 Evidence Centre Work Programme January 2022

Purpose of this Document

This document presents the Wales COVID-19 Evidence Centre (WCEC) **work programme** for Winter 2021 - Spring 2022.

We also present a summary of the process to date (from March 2021), including:

1. Our process for **consulting key stakeholders** in health and care to identify the most important COVID-related evidence needs and priorities in Wales – the Stakeholder Research Question Prioritisation Exercise (ScOPE).
2. An outline of our Rapid Evidence Review process.
3. The research questions adopted onto the WCEC work programme including the stage of progress.
4. A timeline for the reviews.

It is important to note that the WCEC work programme is **iterative**, and the research question prioritisation process is ongoing. We will continue to assess and incorporate research needs and priorities as they are submitted by stakeholder groups. The work programme will also be informed by '**horizon scanning'** procedures, so that it is reactive to emerging and changing priorities.

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1. Our Research Question Prioritisation Process

Who have we consulted so far?

To identify the most important current and emerging COVID-19 health and care priorities across Wales, we have reached out to a total of 60 **individual stakeholder groups** involved in health and social care across Wales, within the following broad groups:

- Welsh Government / Policy Groups
- Social Care
- Academy of Medical Royal Colleges (Wales)
- Public and Patient Involvement Organisations
- Health and Care Research Wales Research Infrastructures
- NHS Wales Service Delivery Groups
- NHS Wales University Health Boards / Trusts
- Third Sector Support Wales

What does this involve?

Questions are identified through i) identification of existing priorities, ii) stakeholder consultation and iii) horizon scanning:

i)   Identifying existing priorities for early evidence reviews

Significant evidence-based groundwork has already been undertaken in Wales to identify and explore evidence priorities. We aimed to build upon and complement the priority setting and evidence review work that had already been conducted by Welsh Government's Technical Advisory Cell / Group, and other key groups.

Through discussion with the Welsh Government's Technical Advisory Cell / Group, we identified existing priorities and asked them to agree which of these remain the highest priority, to form the initial WCEC work programme.

Evidence reviews conducted as part of this early pilot work programme provided rapid answers to some of the most important ongoing priorities, and also allowed us to test, refine and improve our processes ahead of the results of the stakeholder research question prioritisation consultation exercise outlined below.

ii)   Stakeholder consultation

Since March 2021, we have identified and invited stakeholders to complete the Stakeholder Research Question Prioritisation Exercise (ScoPE). Stakeholders were invited to provide **up to ten ranked 'top research questions'**, describing the following:

   a) Relevance to the current or future COVID-19 context in Wales

b) Importance of the evidence gap (scale, costs, consequence)
c) Potential benefits
d) Potential for translation into practice
e) Need for timely information

Completed ScoPEs are assessed by the WCEC Core Team against the criteria above and categorised as follows:

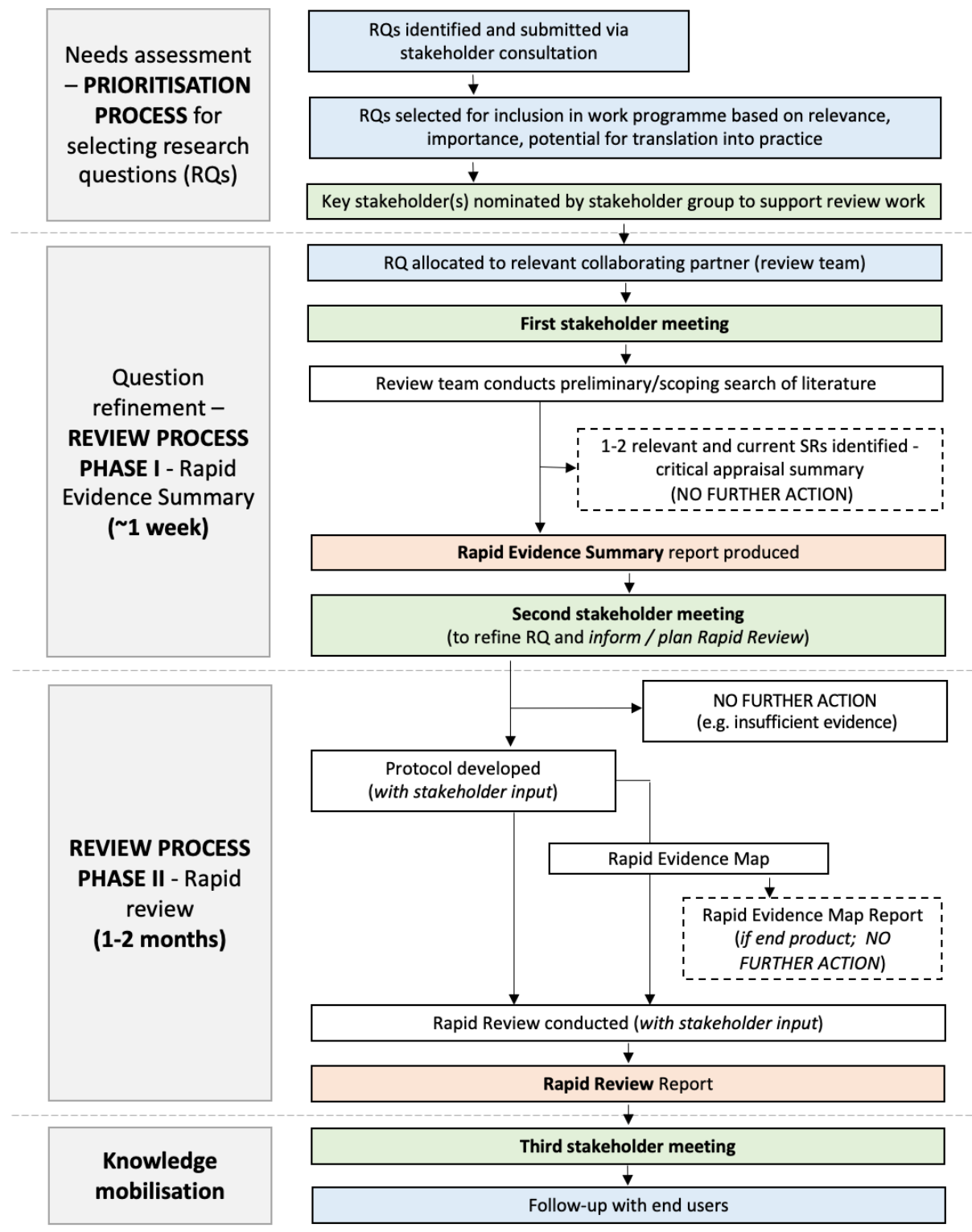| Category 1 *Recommended onto work programme*	Category 2 *Not currently recommended onto work programme*	Category 3 *Not recommended onto work programme*
a) with no significant changes b) with revisions c) as part of another question	Current relevance / importance / applicability limited - monitored during horizon scanning / review processes & considered against changing needs / emerging evidence	Issues with relevance, importance, benefits, translation, remit; Already addressed by ongoing / existing WCEC review OR external study / review; suitable for primary research

iii)   Horizon scanning

As we know, the impact of the pandemic on health and social care needs is continually changing. Questions that have been identified may become more or less important depending on the phase of the pandemic. Therefore, we frequently review our work programme to ensure that our priorities are up-to-date and continue to reflect the greatest need and greatest potential for impact.

In addition, new issues will emerge and become more prominent. Therefore, in addition to reviewing our work programme, we conduct 'horizon scans' in order to proactively identify long-term, recurring and emergent issues that need to be prioritised. Scans of the horizon provide a view of what might be important in future, and it will help us to gain lead time to proactively develop responses.

A number of well-established horizon scanning procedures have been identified (e.g. COVID-END), and we will consult these updates to identify emerging priorities. We will also continue to work closely with the Technical Advisory Cell / Group, who will have a clear understanding to the current COVID-19 context within Wales (e.g. numbers infected, transmission rates etc) and will be able to advise us on emerging issues that might significantly influence current policy, service delivery and practice. Further, we anticipate that new and unanswered issues will arise from the evidence syntheses conducted as part of our work programme, and we will integrate the capture of this information into report templates. Finally, we will re-consult with the key stakeholders (Table 1) at six monthly periods, asking them focus on future rather than immediate needs.

2. Our Rapid Evidence Review Process

The following figure represents our rapid evidence review process including stakeholder consultation.

3. Our Work Programme

Priority Research Questions identified via existing priorities, ScoPE and horizon scanning

Through consultation with stakeholders, we have identified **a number of high priority question topics for inclusion** in the current WCEC Work Programme. The full list of questions for inclusion in our Work Programme for winter/spring 2022 and progress to date is outlined in Table 2 (page 6).

Key priority themes

The question topics proposed for inclusion in the initial work programme cover the following broad themes.

Addressing backlogs effectively	Infection control	COVID-19 Surveillance	Impact on children and young people
Impact on mental health - key workers	Impact on other health outcomes	Behaviour determinants of PPBs	Education – impact & interventions
Inequity (vaccination, PPBs, impact)	Managing & learning from complaints	Effectiveness of new treatment interventions	Financial support for COVID-19 restrictions
Impact on domiciliary & care homes	Inequalities in COVID-19 outcomes	Impact of COVID-related recession (population)	Long COVID-19 research mapping

3.1 WCEC Work Programme (January 2022)

In the Table below, we present the next stage of our work programme, indicating ongoing and completed review work at this time. (Note: Our work programme may be subject to change following discussion with Collaborating Partners and stakeholders, and if new high priority areas arise). For full details of our completed reviews for 2021, please follow the link to our webpage below.

We currently produce three types of reports: a 'Rapid Evidence Summary' (**RES**), which is produced within one week; a 'Rapid Review' (**RR**), which is typically conducted within 1-2 months; and a Rapid Evidence Map (**REM)**, which can be developed as an interim stage prior to the RR in order to identify a focused review question. The aim of the RES is to provide some early information to the stakeholders and inform the next stage of our work. Where there is insufficient research information available for conducting a RR, the RES represents the final product.

Our completed rapid review (RR) reports will be made available for download on our website https://healthandcareresearchwales.org/about-research-community/wales-covid-19-evidence-centre. Where a question is not proceeding to the rapid review, the research evidence summary (RES) or rapid evidence map (REM) will be published.

Table 1. WCEC proposed work programme for winter 2021 / spring 2022

Progression key: Complete In progress Not yet started

Partner group: see Abbreviations Table in Appendix

Document Identifier	Priority question topics proposed during ScoPE consultation (including sub-questions) *Note: Questions are refined upon stakeholder discussion*	Proposer (s)	Partner group conducting review/analysis	Status
RR_00026	**Recruitment/retention social care workers** What is the likely impact of Covid-19 on the future recruitment and retention of social care workers, including the changes in public perceptions about care work?	Social Care Wales	WCEBC	Completed December 2021
RES_00015	**Personal Protective Behaviours in different settings** What are the barriers and facilitators to facilitate uptake of personal protective behaviours including asymptomatic regular testing (lateral flow tests), self-isolation and social distancing?	TAG: Risk Communication & Behavioural Insights Subgroup TAG-E	PHW	Completed December 2021

	Which COVID-19 transmission routes pose increased risk in buses and trains and how can they be mitigated? Risk from aerosols, droplets, physical contact and fomites. Which COVID-19 transmission routes pose increased risk in nightclubs and adult entertainment venues and how can they be mitigated? Risk from aerosols, droplets, physical contact and fomites.			
	Inequalities for disabled people To develop a clear understanding of the extent to which the inherent institutional and systemic inequalities, discrimination and barriers faced by disabled people living in Wales have exacerbated the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on disabled people living in Wales.	WG Equity Branch	SURE	Due to be completed January 2022
	COVID-19 transmission Collaboration work with UK HSA transmission in a vaccinated population: Living review Can we better quantify the relative risk of COVID-19 transmission in enclosed, semi-enclosed and outdoor environments?	HTW TAG-E	HTW	RR completed December 2021, living review ongoing
	Gender inequalities To develop a clear understanding of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and COVID-19 restrictions on women and girls in Wales. Does this impact vary across different areas of life/domains (i.e. Education; Work; Living standards; Health; Justice and personal security; Participation (to include Transport)) and across different groups of people (i.e. in terms of demographics; protected characteristics; socio-economic status; area of residence characteristics)?	WG Equity Branch	BIHMR	Due to be completed January 2022
	Long term conditions How do we address the impact on patients with chronic disease, and any impact on secondary care? (Deteriorating chronic disease as patient not coming	Cwm Taf HB	SAIL	Due to be completed spring/summer 2022

	forward during COVID-19 time periods, or late presentations			
	Non-pharmaceutical interventions Which papers/studies, that consider multiple NPIs and their impact on Rt, are of sufficient quality to be included in the NPI tool* to help determine the optimal selection of non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPI) to apply in a COVID-19 'urgent' situation (as described in the coronavirus control plan).	TAC	HTW	Due to be completed February 2022
	Vaccine uptake What are the predictors of vaccine uptake (first and second dose)? What are the clinical characteristics, outcomes and health care utilisation patterns of vaccinated and unvaccinated patients admitted to critical care?	TAC All Wales Medical Directors	PHW & SAIL	Started

	LGBTQ+ inequalities To develop a clear understanding of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and COVID-19 restrictions on LGBTQ+ communities in Wales, particularly LGBTQ+ children and young people.	WG Equity Branch	SURE	Not started
	Long COVID What are the long-term effects of COVID 19 and the best available treatments for long term symptoms? What is the impact of long COVID-19 on the NHS? (Disability impacts, costs, also costs and benefits from the long covid recovery clinical services) What is the prevalence of long-Covid in the social care workforce and what is the impact on the availability of care workers? What proportion of the population is thought to be experiencing Long Covid symptoms? • 16-18 year olds • 19-25 year olds	SUPER PPI group TAG modelling subgroup Social Care Wales CYP TAG Subgroup	BIHMR	Not started

	• Adults What adaptations and mitigations might help people with Long Covid to manage their symptoms and take part in education and other activities? Is there an association between Covid-19 infections and otological issues? (Hearing loss, tinnitus or balance problems). If so what is the incidence of it? There appears to be an emerging evidence base for this topic.	Audiology Standing Scientific Advisory Group		
	Financial Support for Quarantine A summary of research examining the financial and non-financial supports provided in developed economies to individuals who have been requested or required to quarantine as a consequence of travel from or to Covid-19 affected countries and regions and whether these have been sufficient to mitigate the overall long-term damage.	HTW HTW Socio Economic harms group	HTW	Not started
	Recruitment and retention of NHS workers The NHS workforce shortage is now so acute that the NHS is in danger of collapsing this winter. Given that overseas or training options take too long to be able to help in the immediate short term, how can the NHS get clinicians and other health professionals who have left the medical profession to return to plug gaps?	Royal College of Surgeons Edinburgh	WCEBC	Not started
	Addressing demand for surgical backlog How do we address the backlog of elective care cases and restart services? How do we prioritise cases and are all cases now relevant in new climate? What difference can prehabilitation make to patients who are on long surgical waiting lists? What strategies are in place to ensure the NHS in Wales can cope with Covid and the coming winter pressures without having to pause elective care again?	Cwm Taf All Wales Medical Directors Royal College of Surgeons Edinburgh TAG modelling subgroup	PHW	Not started

	What is the impact on patients of longer waiting times for procedures that were paused during the peak of the pandemic? How can service configuration in Primary Care, for example, through the use of allied health professionals better support patients while they wait for procedures?			
	Cancer services What impact did changes in cancer diagnostic/screening services during the pandemic have on a participant's diagnosis, stage of cancer, burden of disease and overall survival? What has been the impact of reduced cancer treatment services on the development of metastatic disease in all cancer disease sites, especially the burden of disease, recurrence and overall survival. What is the impact of (among COVID-19 infected cancer patients) of the COVID19 pandemic on cancer outcomes/toxicity in relation to decisions relating to radiotherapy, surgical, systemic anti-cancer treatment (SACT), immunotherapy and proton beam therapy treatments in all cancer disease sites, particularly thoracic and upper gastro-intestinal disease? What impact did the COVID19 pandemic and changes in cancer diagnostic/screening services have on urgent cancer referrals for early diagnosis?	Velindre NHS Trust	SURE	Not started
	Telemedicine/remote consultations How many face-to-face consultations in vascular surgery can be safely moved to remote consultations (telemedicine) with minimal risk to patient? What is the clinical effectiveness (quality of life, therapeutic relationship, physical activity, global ratings of change, cost effectiveness, and convenience) of telehealth / video consultations in Musculoskeletal podiatry across Wales?	All Wales Medical Directors Royal College of Podiatry		Not started

	What is the effectiveness, interaction and longitudinal care of patient engagement platforms in podiatry? What is the value of foot and ankle assessment using video assessment?			
	Welsh second language What is known, particularly from countries with a relevant (socio-) linguistic profile to Wales, about the impact upon learners taught in a different language to that spoken at home or where learners speak >1 language?	TAG CYP Subgroup		Not started
	Challenging/risky behaviours amongst learners Has the extent of challenging/risky behaviour amongst learners changed during and since the pandemic began?	TAG CYP Subgroup		Not started
	What impact have COVID-19 induced changes in working practice had on the environment? Quantify the benefits/disbenefits of home working, reduced commuting/movement etc. on: 1. resource use efficiency (e.g. energy, water, paper, food, waste management), 2. climate change mitigation (e.g. GHG emissions), 3. wildlife behaviour (e.g. birds, insects, plants), 4. air, noise & water quality	TAG-E		Not started

4. Next Steps

The WCEC work programme is iterative, and the research question prioritisation process is ongoing. We will continue to assess and incorporate research needs and priorities as they are submitted by stakeholder groups and **we encourage all stakeholders to continue to submit their completed ScoPE proformas, and potential new stakeholders to contact us.**

Please note, timeframes and question prioritisation may change if new high priority areas arise via ScoPE returns, horizon scanning, or ongoing reviews (e.g. pertinent questions in advance of new waves). There is flexibility in the work programme for urgent questions to be prioritised, and for other topics to be deferred until a later date.

5. Appendix

Abbreviations used

Bangor Institute for Health & Medical Research / Health and Care Economics Cymru	**BIHMR/HCEC**	Specialist Unit for Review Evidence	**SURE**
CU	**Cardiff University**	School of Medicine	**SOM**
Health Technology Wales	**HTW**	Technical Advisory Cell	**TAC**
Human papilloma virus	**HPV**	Technical Advisory Group	**TAG**
Personal Protective Behaviours	**PPB**	University Health Board	**UHB**
Public Health Wales	**PHW**	Wales Centre for Evidence Based Care	**WCEBC**
Secure Anonymised Information Linkage	**SAIL Databank**	Wales COVID-19 Evidence Centre	**WCEC**

6. About the Wales COVID-19 Evidence Centre

The WCEC integrates with worldwide efforts to synthesise and mobilise knowledge from research.

We operate with a core team as part of Health and Care Research Wales, are hosted in the Wales Centre for Primary and Emergency Care Research (PRIME), and are led by Professor Adrian Edwards of Cardiff University.

The core team of the centre works closely with collaborating partners in Health Technology Wales, Wales Centre for Evidence-Based Care, Specialist Unit for Review Evidence centre, SAIL Databank, Bangor Institute for Health & Medical Research/ Health and Care Economics Cymru, and the Public Health Wales Observatory.

Together we aim to provide around 50 reviews per year, answering the priority questions for policy and practice in Wales as we meet the demands of the pandemic and its impacts.

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https://healthandcareresearchwales.org/about-research-community/wales-COVID-19-evidence-centre