

Researcher Development Award 2023 Chairs' report

Chairs:

Chair: Professor Yvonne Wren, Professor of Speech and Language Therapy, Cardiff Metropolitan University

Deputy Chair: Dr Adam Mackridge, Strategic Lead for Community Pharmacy, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board

Panel:

Adele Battaglia, Public member

Edmund Brooks, Public member

Dr Kate Button, Reader, Cardiff University

Dr Sue Channon, Senior Research Fellow, Cardiff University

Dr Gary Christopher, Senior Lecturer, Swansea University

Dr Jamie Duckers, Consultant Respiratory Consultant, Cardiff and Vale University Health Board

Professor Adrian Edwards, Director, PRIME Centre Wales

Professor Deya Gonzalez, Professor, Swansea University

Lynne Grundy, Associate Director Research and Development, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board

Professor Kerry Hood, Dean of Research and Innovation, Cardiff University

Eleanor Johnson, Social Care Wales

Nina Maxwell, Principal Research Fellow, Cardiff University

Dr Leah McLaughlin, Healthcare and Health Services Scientist, Bangor University

Leighton Phillips, Director of Research, Innovation and Value, Hywel Dda University Health Board

Professor Carolyn Wallace, Professor Community Health and Care Services, University of South Wales

Introduction

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 social care in Wales, and makes a difference to policy and practice in ways that improve the lives of patients, people and communities in Wales.

The **Emerging Researcher Award** is designed to support individuals who are looking to take their first steps into a research career with the intention of putting the foundations in place for long term clinical and/or practice based academic research career (including PhDs by published works). The Emerging Researcher Scheme is open to individuals employed by either NHS or social care organisations in Wales.

The **Advancing Researcher Award** has been developed to facilitate the progression of early to mid-career researchers as they transition to the next phase of their health and social care research career. The Advancing Researcher Scheme is open to early and mid-career researchers employed by Higher Education Institutes (HEI) or research active staff employed by NHS or social care organisations in Wales.

The **Personal Award Accelerator** is a cohort-based programme which will run twice a year and support a small group of researchers to develop competitive personal award applications at both doctoral and advanced stages to relevant UK funders including the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), the Medical Research Council (MRC), the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) as well as major charitable funders like Wellcome Trust, Cancer Research UK and British Heart Foundation. This award will provide opportunities for networking and internships that will enhance the likelihood of success in the proposed funding scheme. Award holders will be able to access methodological support aligned to progressing these applications.

The number of applications received and awards made for the 2023 competition were:

Applied:	39
Eligible:	38
Awarded:	9

Researcher Development Award Scheme

The scheme launched on 14 September 2023 and closed on 26 October 2023.

Observations and advice for prospective applicants

The Chair and Deputy Chair of the panel have made observations of the general strengths and weaknesses of the eligible applications and discussed areas future applicants should consider to strengthen their applications. These are summarised below.

Applicant and their development

The strongest applications made a clear case for how the award would provide a step-change in the individual's career progression and had a CV which reflected their readiness for the scheme they were applying for.

Some of the low scoring applications did not link the proposed work to the development of the applicant, or did not give a clear sense of how the award would help the applicant along their trajectory towards an appropriate goal. In particular, lower scoring applications frequently lacked detail on developmental activities that would be undertaken, or did not articulate a clear goal and how the proposed programme of work would help the applicant to reach this.

Project methodology

Those applications which scored highest had clearly articulated the aim of their proposed project. The methods were well-described and detail was provided on the plans, such that the reader had a clear idea of what was being proposed. The plans were also proportionate to the scheme and were ambitious but achievable within the timescale allowed.

Those applications which scored lower did not describe how their plans would build on previous work or were not clear about what was new in the work proposed when considering the existing evidence.

Public involvement (PI)

The public member representatives on the panel praised those applications which were focused on an under researched area or population. They were also keen to highlight those which described ways in which groups which are often under-represented in research could be included. PI was strongest when it was embedded throughout the application and where input to the development of the application from a range of PI representatives was evident.

Applications which scored lower for PI had limited detail regarding their plans for how they would carry out PI or did not demonstrate that PI considerations were part of the developmental work for the proposal. It is not sufficient simply to state that patients and the public will be involved; it is important that the application describes how individuals will be reached and supported to provide effective PI and this is reflected in costings.

Support/supervision

Those applications which included a clear statement from the host organisation of what support would be offered to the application and how it would contribute to their plans and development scored higher. It was important the information was personalised to the individual applicant. It was also evident in some applications that those named as supporting the application had not had a significant role in contributing to the development of the proposal. If supervisors are not able to provide individualised support, we would recommend applicants identify alternative individuals to help support their application and future research career.

The choice of supervisors was important and in lower scoring applications, the description of the supervisors suggested a lack of experience relevant to the applicant and the project, or there were clear gaps in the nature of support that would be available to deliver the proposed programme of work.

Useful resources for prospective applicants

[Scheme guidance](#) provides details of the eligibility and assessment criteria and should be read in full before starting an application.

Note that updated Scheme guidance will be published on the [Health and Care Research Wales website](#) with the launch of each call and applicants must ensure they are referring to the most recent Scheme guidance.

Current and previous Health and Care Research Wales award holders are listed on [Our funded projects and awards](#).

The [Faculty website](#) also provides further resources including a range of [webinars](#).