

# Doctoral Fellowship Award 2024 Chair's Report

## Chairs:

Chair:

Dr Emily Holmes, Senior Research Fellow in Health Economics, Bangor University

Deputy Chair:

Professor Deb Fitzsimmons, Professor of Health Economics and Outcomes Research, Swansea University, and Co-Director, Health and Care Economics Cymru

## Panel:

Nicola Evans, Reader, Cardiff University

Claudia Metzler-Baddeley, Reader & Research Fellow, Cardiff University

Diane Seddon, Reader in Social Care, Bangor University

Ashley Akbari, Professor Population Data Science Research, Swansea University Medical School

Delyth James, Professor of Health Psychology in Pharmacy Practice, Cardiff Metropolitan University

Victoria Shepherd, Senior Research Fellow (Nurse), Cardiff University

Nathan Davies, Public Member

## 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 **Doctoral Fellowship Award** aims to support talented individuals to undertake research leading to the completion of a PhD and to support capacity building in health or social care research in Wales.

The Fellowship offers funding for directly incurred salary costs (no overheads or indirect costs allowable) for three years full-time funding, or four- or five-years part-

time funding, PhD tuition fees, and the costs of an appropriate research project and training and development programme.

The number of applications received and awards made for the 2024 competition were:

**Applied:** 6

**Eligible:** 5

**Awarded:** 1

## Doctoral Fellowship Awards

The scheme launched on 19 October 2023 and closed on 17 January 2024.

### 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 that future applicants should consider to strengthen their application. These are summarised below.

Research ambition

Confirmation of access to facilities and data

Public Involvement

Methodology

Research expertise and infrastructure in Wales

### Research Ambition

The panel were pleased to see high levels of motivation and ambition to pursue research projects in Wales. Applicants who demonstrated their ambition for a research career, clearly outlining their trajectory, were commended. The panel would like to remind all applicants that statements of ambition, should be accompanied by evidence of commitment from their supporting organisation and a well justified research proposal that will support your pathway to independent research.

### Confirmation of access to facilities and data, if successful

The feasibility of conducting the proposed research is an important consideration in mitigating risk. Applicants should seek letters of support from all organisations cited in the research proposal detailing their commitment to support the research, if funded. The panel were disappointed by a lack of supporting evidence and the level of detail contained in these letters, when supplied. We encourage all applicants to discuss your proposed research with supporting organisations and to provide a formal and detailed signed letter of support from each organisation.

## Public Involvement (PI)

Embedding the PI element of proposed research continues to be a top priority for Health and Care Research Wales. Whilst we are seeing increased awareness of the importance of PI the panel were disappointed to observe very poor PI costing in a number of applications. Applicants are reminded that Health and Care Research Wales takes PI very seriously and expect early PI in the development of your research proposal. PI is one of the assessment criteria used by the panel when reviewing all applications and PI members sit on the interview panels.

## Methodology

The methodological approach needs to be very carefully considered and should be appropriate for the research being undertaken. It is vital that the research proposed is backed up by sound research methods, that the applicant can independently justify. The panel would like to see applicants proposing innovative methodological approaches to their research. If an applicant doesn't have the required expertise in the research methods they are proposing in their application, the panel will expect to see specific training as part of the training and development programme, and relevant support in the form of a suitable supervisor or mentor.

## Research expertise and infrastructure in Wales

The context of the proposed research within existing research infrastructure in Wales should be considered. Applicants should have an awareness of existing research groups and infrastructure that aligns with their research and be able to envisage the positioning of their contribution, should the project be funded.

## Useful resources for prospective applicants

Scheme Guidance is available [on the website](#). This 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 with the launch of each call and applicants must ensure that they are referring to the most recent Scheme Guidance.

Current and previous Health and Care Research Wales award holders are listed on the [website](#) and may be a useful resource.

There are also a range of resources available on our website including upcoming and recorded health and social care [webinars](#).