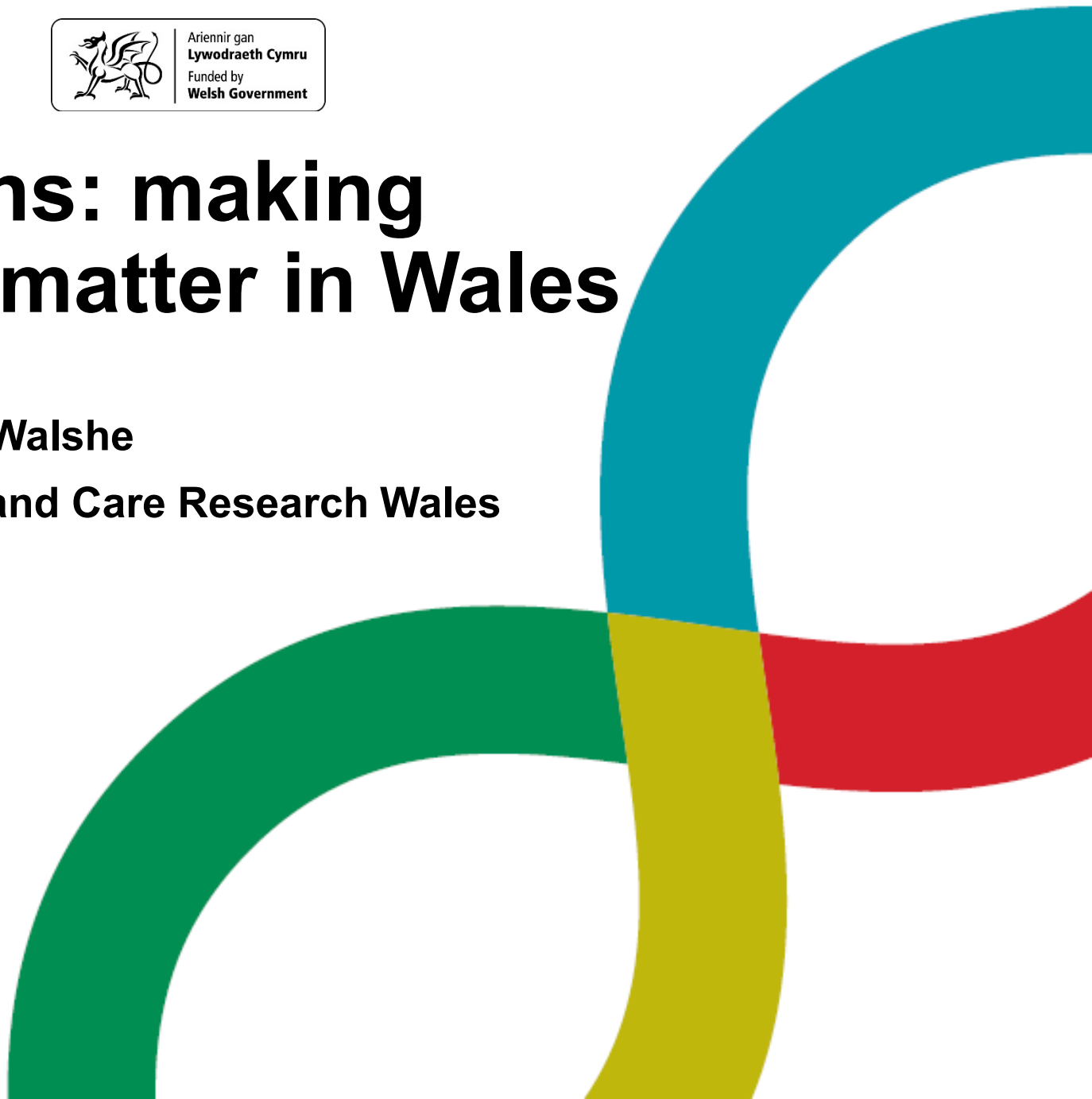


Reflections: making research matter in Wales

Professor Kieran Walshe

Director – Health and Care Research Wales

2019-2024





Remembering the COVID19 pandemic...

- From the outset – a huge, international effort to bring research to bear on key issues – controlling the pandemic, treating COVID, prevention and vaccines
- Research effort in UK led by UK Research and Innovation, and National Institute for Health Research (in England, with devolved partners)
- We were genuinely world leading in research – therapeutics, genomics, vaccines... Less so in other areas like workforce, facemasks, ventilation
- National core studies in seven key areas aimed at being much more closely coupled to policy needs – eg ONS community infection study
- Welsh Government and Welsh NHS involvement – closely tracked, involved and contributing – strong performance

What did we learn, and do we remember?

- Research mattered like never before: central to policy and practice in the pandemic
- From no evidence to too much evidence? Challenges of staying up to date with exponentially expanding field
- Research needs to move at the pace of the pandemic if it is to be useful – old models not fit for purpose
- Increasing need for rapid evidence synthesis and knowledge mobilisation
- Need to localise and contextualise research and evidence to Wales – distinctive issues and priorities

- A plan, not a strategy – clear and concrete actions to improve health and care research
- Candid and honest about the state of play – no gilding the lilly
- Importance of selectivity – need to focus on strengths, areas of competitive advantage
- Setting high expectations of research rigour and quality – UK and international standards
- Raising our game – in HEIs, health boards/trusts, social care organisations, Welsh Government, and Health and Care Research Wales



What have we done?

- NHS R&D Framework – a clear statement of **what research excellence looks like’ within NHS organisations in Wales where research is embraced, integrated into services, and is a core part of the organisation’s culture** coproduced with NHS organisations, now a Welsh Health Circular and being used in annual reviews with health boards and trusts
- Launch of the **Health and Care Research Wales Faculty** – improving careers and opportunities for researchers in Wales, offering researcher development support and wide range of award schemes
- New **adult social care research centre – CARE** – with Cardiff University – building capacity and capability, responding to needs
- **Health and Care Research Wales Evidence Centre** – “good questions answered quickly” – evidence reviews and evaluations programme

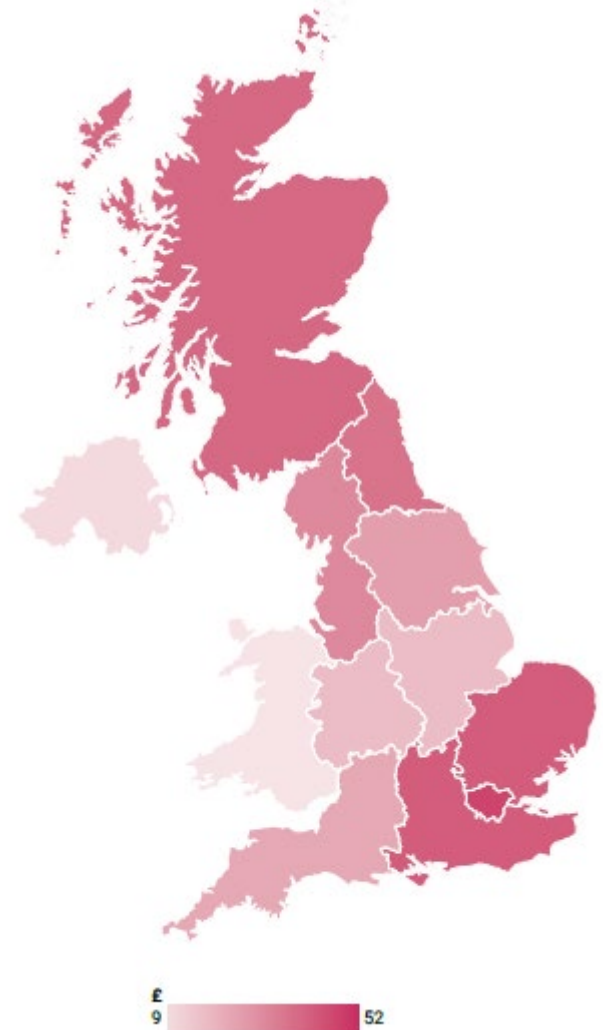
What have we done?

- Improved **Health and Care Research Wales funding schemes** and **extended access to NIHR funding schemes**
- **Clinical research delivery review** – how we can improve efficiency, productivity and impact of clinical research in the NHS
- **Infrastructure funding review** – core funding to research groups and centres with a track record of success at a UK and international level
- **Catalytic investments** – new awards in areas where research groups and centres have a clear trajectory to success and strong institutional support
- **VPAG investment programme** – a £24 million investment from industry in infrastructure for commercial research in Wales over five years – needs to be truly transformative

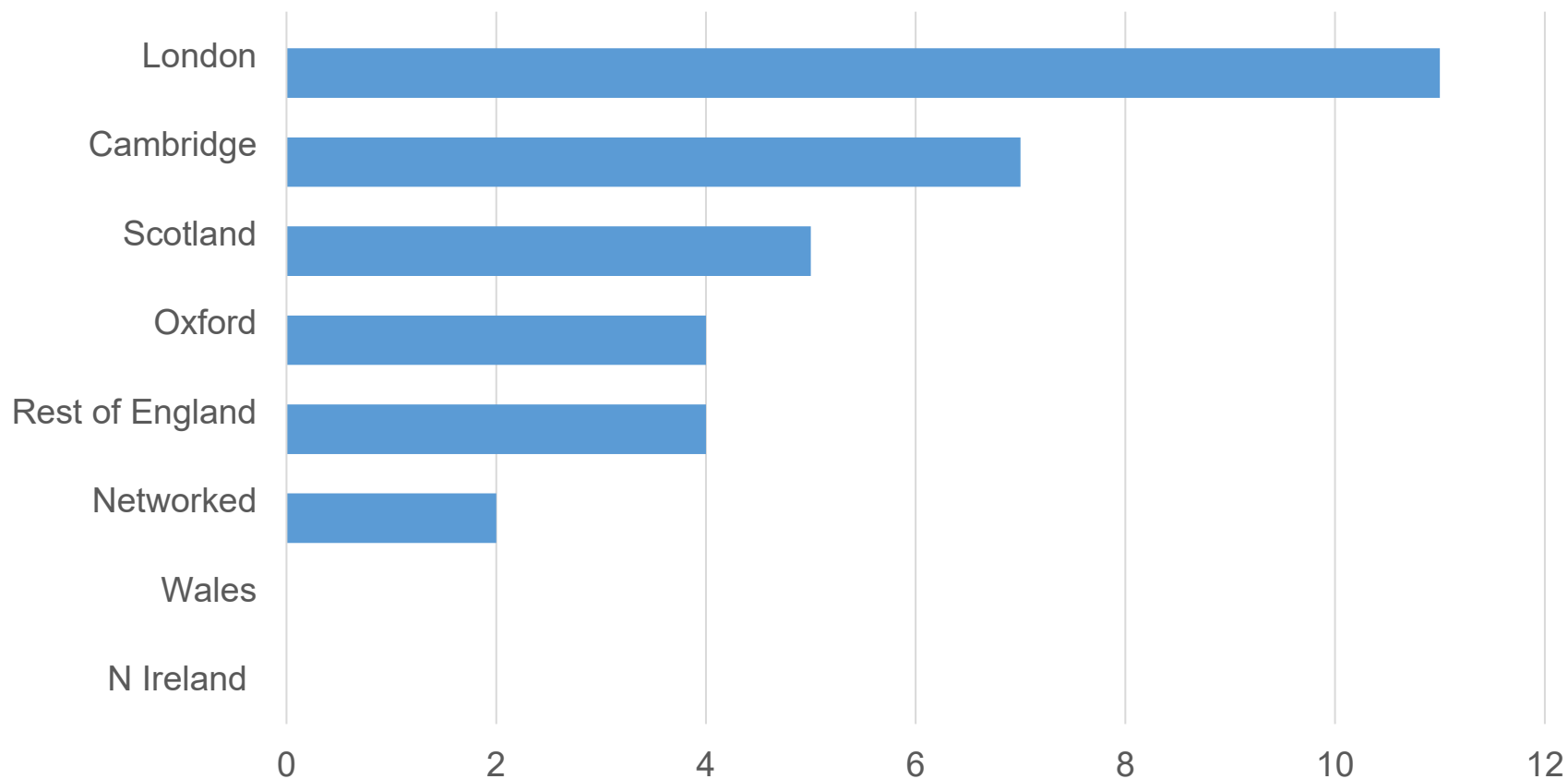
UKRI Research Council spending by nation and region

NUTS1 Region	RC Spend FY 2018-19 £M	RC Funding Spent per Research Organisation £	RC Spend as % of local GVA	RC Spend per capita £
East Midlands	102	387,479	0.10%	21
East of England	277	531,307	0.18%	44
London	469	353,222	0.11%	52
North East	104	623,157	0.20%	39
North West	265	639,642	0.16%	36
Northern Ireland	25	267,378	0.06%	13
Scotland	248	677,505	0.18%	45
South East	407	500,234	0.15%	44
South West	163	386,433	0.12%	29
Wales	29	211,413	0.05%	9
West Midlands	128	410,054	0.10%	22
Yorkshire and the Humber	191	678,916	0.16%	35

Table 1: Research Council Spend NUTS 1 FY2018-19



Medical Research Council funded institutes, units and centres in the UK – where are they?



Unfinished business – advice to my successors

- Much greater assertive engagement with UK funders and institutions to press for a step change in investment in health and social care research in Wales – use the devolved government arrangements
- Support and challenge to our universities and to industry partners – to make hard choices and focus on areas of real competitive advantage – we should do fewer things really well?
- Support and challenge to our NHS boards and to social care organisations – to take research seriously, to commit their own resources to research, to use research in their decision making
- A health and care research system which is “One Wales” – working collaboratively to make shared decisions about research investments, priorities and strengths

