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Name of Meeting
Knowledge, Research and
Information Committee
Date of Meeting
16 June 2022
Agenda item:
5.1

Research and Evaluation Strategy Update

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Approval/Scrutiny route:	Iain Bell, Director of Public Health Data, Knowledge and Research, Knowledge Directorate
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Purpose

The report provides an overview of Research and Evaluation work to date (2017-2022) and an update to the Knowledge, Research, and Information Committee of the work so far to develop a refreshed Public Health Wales (PHW) Research Strategy.

Recommendation:

APPROVE <input type="checkbox"/>	CONSIDER <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	RECOMMEND <input type="checkbox"/>	ADOPT <input type="checkbox"/>	ASSURANCE <input type="checkbox"/>
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The Committee is asked to:

- **Receive and consider** this paper on progress to date, in regards, to a review of PHW Research Strategy.
- **Note** the work carried out to date and some of the emerging themes and provide comments.

Link to Public Health Wales [Strategic Plan](#)

Public Health Wales has an agreed strategic plan, which has identified seven strategic priorities and well-being objectives.

This report contributes to the following:

Strategic Priority/Well-being Objective	All Strategic Priorities/Well-being Objectives
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Summary impact analysis

Equality and Health Impact Assessment	No Equality and Health Impact Assessment has been undertaken as a decision is not required by the Committee.
Risk and Assurance	Not identified as a risk on the Corporate Risk Register or Board Assurance Framework
Health and Care Standards	This report supports and takes into account the Health and Care Standards for NHS Wales Quality Themes All themes
Financial implications	The report will be published bilingually with the cost of translation met from the Research and Evaluation Division budget.
People implications	The process applies to all staff undertaking research.

Update on Research Strategy

Since the Knowledge, Research and Information Committee (KRIC) meeting of 10 March 2022, we have been progressing three pieces of work:

1. The research mapping exercise of current Public Health Wales (PHW) research activities.
2. User research into the value users place on our current research, knowledge, analysis, and statistical products and how we can improve their impact.
3. Research by the James Lind Alliance into the research needs of our stakeholders.

The work by the James Lind Alliance is ongoing and so this update focuses on the first two pieces of work.

1. Research Mapping Exercise

The initial findings are attached at Annex 1. These findings will be validated with Directorates over the coming weeks. However, the initial headline findings show the following:

- a. Over the period 2017/18 to 2021/22, PHW received £6million in research income and invested approximately £0.75million in research directly.
- b. There have been many areas of significant value for PHW over this period. This includes:
 - i. Evaluation of Adverse Child Experiences Programme
 - ii. Research into cryptosporidiosis
 - iii. Covid-19 vaccine and anti-viral trials
- c. The scope of our research goes beyond public health and medical research and spans work that could potentially be funded from other research councils. For example, the Economic and Social Research Council, Biotechnology and Biological Sciences and Natural Environment Research Councils.
- d. Currently, there is no coherent overview of programmes of research and research gaps that are aimed to be filled.
- e. There is more of a focus on research than evaluation or operational improvement.

There are several considerations identified from this work that we will need to consider as we develop our strategy further.

Gap Analysis

At present, we do not systematically look at our key evidence gaps and prioritise resource accordingly. In developing our research governance, we will need to look at how the Executive can take a stronger role in:

- Ensuring strategic evidence gaps are identified,
- Aligning resources and funding bids to ensure these gaps are prioritised,
- Consider how to better align our research governance with the scope of activity and our strategy.

Influencing the funders

It would take a considerable shift to move from the existing model of mainly externally funded research. This seems both unpractical and undesirable. However, at present, we do not make sufficient efforts to influence Welsh Government and funders to invest more in systematic evaluations of programmes they are developing or could fund evaluation of.

If we are to enact a shift to evaluation, then this influencing work needs to be a core part of the strategy.

Innovation

We need to ensure that the system developed enables innovation and can be rapidly evaluated for quick spreading of 'what works' messages and that innovative research proposals have the ability to surface and be championed effectively.

Internal Analysis

With our growing data science capability, we need to look at how we best use this resource to maximise our understanding of public health, utilising these findings to ensure we can get rapid insights and analysis.

We will continue to analyse the research mapping and update once we have validated the results.

2. User Research Findings

In March 2022, we commissioned User Vision to undertake research with our users. 222 stakeholders completed an online survey with respondents including Welsh Government, academia, Local Authorities, internal users

within PHW. There were then 28 in-depth follow-up interviews to provide more insight.

The first and most notable finding was how much our stakeholders welcomed the fact we were doing this and would like us to do more.

The headline findings are:

- PHW is a trustworthy, reputable organisation that audiences respect and wish to have a closer partnership with.
- The outputs are considered to be of high-quality, robust, and professional.
- However, in many respects we hide our 'light under a bushel'. For impact, engagement, and outreach to be greater and serve its audiences better, PHW should focus on the following tasks/issues:
 - Improving the website – drawing from best practices, that allow engagement with materials in one space, as well as enabling insights by filtering, cross/intersectional data manipulation, comparing and contrasting, observations of trends.
 - Introducing more consistency across similar products/outputs, whereby the same key components would be included.
 - Providing clear signposting, summaries, indexing, table of contents.
 - Increasing facilitation of local health data and relevant intersectional (ideally to the cluster level); as well as data enabling measurement of impact of local actions and interventions.
 - Continuing to equip users with relevant data manipulation tools and functions (filters, maps, cross-tabulations, comparisons, trends).
 - Providing timely, regularly updated health intelligence.
 - Creating products (and versions of products) by not only having key audiences in mind, but also taking into consideration the audiences they serve and interact with (concise, synthesised, simpler-language, easy to print pass on to digitally poor versions).
 - Continuing to have available raw data and complex documents, as well as build visually striking products that together meet the needs of a range of audiences.

- Being more transparent around how PHW is organised, what the organisation is working on, who the key contact points by topics/areas are.
- Initiating more conversations about priority topics and partnerships pertaining to data exchange.
- Supporting those influencing change by producing content that facilitates storytelling (contextualisation, qualitative data, basic interpretations).
- Supporting decision making by providing evidence / research-based actionable and operational insights and 'so-what' conclusions to aid future forecasting.

The full report is attached at Annex 2. This provides us with a rich source of material to build on. The key next steps for us are:

- a. In partnership with Communications, we are developing a programme of work to improve the accessibility of our public health research and intelligence.
- b. Develop common templates for products to initiate a house-style for our work.
- c. To build these templates around the user personas for our audience that have been created from this work so that we maximise reach and impact.

3. Emerging implications for our Research and Evaluation Strategy

While there is still work to be done on validating the research mapping and receiving the information from James Lind Alliance on our research priorities, the material already provides several useful themes for our strategy to build on. This includes:

- a. **Open-ness** - our stakeholders really welcomed the fact we were talking and listening to them and wanted this to continue. There was also open-ness of our data, methods, and ways of working. There is a potential to develop this as a key theme for the research and evaluation strategy.
- b. **Impact** – ensure we develop communications that work for multiple audiences not just a single audience to maximise the impact.

- c. **Greater strategic alignment and partnerships** - our research mapping has shown the need for an improved strategic look at our evidence gaps and how we will either fill them or work with others to ensure they are filled. Demonstrating a recognition of the other organisations in the system who develop evidence/research, such as, HEIs, other NHS bodies/health boards, private research companies and collaborating with them to fund, deliver and disseminate research.

- d. **Influence** - the need to influence funders and policy makers to ensure PHW can continue to invest in high quality research and infrastructure to support research programmes.

4. Next steps

In September 2022, we will bring to KRIC a draft of the strategy. At this point, all the work would have been completed and we will continue to develop this in line with the Long-Term Strategy.

KRIC are asked to note the work carried out to date and some of the emerging themes and provide comments.

5. Recommendation

The Committee is asked to:

- **Receive and consider** this paper on progress to date, in regards, to a review of PHW Research Strategy.
- **Note** the work carried out to date and some of the emerging themes and provide comments.