

 <p> <b>GIG</b>        CYMRU  <b>NHS</b>        WALES     </p> <p>       Iechyd Cyhoeddus        Cymru        Public Health        Wales     </p>	<b>Name of Meeting</b> Knowledge, Research and Information Committee
	<b>Date of Meeting</b> 9 December 2025
	<b>Agenda item:</b> 2.1

## Update on the Implementation of the Research and Evaluation Strategy

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<b>Approval/Scrutiny route:</b>	KRIC

**Purpose**

The purpose of the paper is to provide an update to KRIC on the progress and implementation of the PHW Research and Evaluation Strategy, 2023-2026.

**Recommendation:**

APPROVE	CONSIDER	RECOMMEND	ADOPT	ASSURANCE
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

The Committee is asked to:

- Note the contents of this paper and **receive assurance** on progress on the implementation of the organisational Research and Evaluation Strategy.

**Link to PHW [Strategic Plan](#)**

PHW has an agreed strategic plan, which has identified six strategic priorities and well-being objectives.

This report contributes to the following:

<b>Strategic Priority/Well-being Objective</b>	All Strategic Priorities/Well-being Objectives
<b>Equality and Health Impact Assessment</b>	No Equality and Health Impact Assessment has been undertaken as a decision is not required by the Committee.
<b>Risk and Assurance</b>	Not identified as a risk on the Corporate Risk Register or Board Assurance Framework.
<b>Health and Care Standards</b>	This report supports and/or takes into account the <a href="#">Health and Care Standards for NHS Wales</a> Quality Themes
	All themes
<b>Financial implications</b>	None



<b>People implications</b>	The process applies to all staff undertaking research and evaluation.
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## 1. Purpose / situation

The [Research and Evaluation \(R&E\) Strategy \(2023-2026\)](#), ensures that PHW is building and strengthening R&E excellence across the organisation and in collaboration with partners. To support the implementation and oversight of the strategy, the R&E Strategic Oversight Group (RESOG) meets monthly to coordinate work aligned to a co-produced implementation plan. RESOG is the cross-organisational senior leadership group responsible for developing and supporting R&E in line with Public Health Wales priorities and the organisational R&E Strategy.

The R&E Strategy is focused on four key pillars:



Reports on Public Health Wales progress in the implementation of the strategy, including monitoring and assurance of delivery, are provided to the Knowledge, Research and Information Board Committee on a bi-annual basis.

This report provides an update on progress over the period June to December 2025.

## 2. Description/Assessment

An implementation plan for the R&E Strategy agreed by RESOG, focuses on the following key areas:

- Developing and implementing R&E standards** to strengthen and support the development and production of R&E by the organisation.
- Developing R&E capacity and capability** to support staff to develop and apply R&E specialist skills to increase workforce capacity and capability and contribute towards creating a learning organisation.
- Developing and establishing effective strategic research partnerships** with higher educational institutes, health boards, local authorities and others to support the development and delivery of public health R&E.

d. **Developing effective communications and engagement** for R&E across the organisation and externally.

Progress against these four areas of focus over the last six months (June - November 2025) is provided below.

## **2.1 Developing and implementing R&E standards**

We have collated and developed standards for research and evaluation, ensuring they are openly accessible to all across PHW on SharePoint and the PHW intranet. Efforts to ensure staff are aware of these standards continues through outreach including the monthly R&D Office drop-in clinics, the RESOG group members, and Evaluation Community of Practice (further detail below). Standards developed to date include strengthening governance through a checklist which is a requirement through submission to the R&E Office, alongside scoping for a PHW Ethics Committee to oversee PHW-led research activity.

In addition to this activity, we have been developing standards for additional areas of need.

### **2.1.1 Governance framework for AI in research in PHW**

As part of strengthening research governance for AI across the organisation we are integrating into both the existing governance frameworks for research, and AI. This approach ensures that relevant projects are appropriately captured within established research registers and will also be reflected in the AI register. By aligning with these existing mechanisms, we aim to streamline oversight while maintaining robust ethical and governance standards.

## 2.2 Developing Research Capacity and Capability

We want to build an organisational culture, which values R&E activities and supports staff to develop and apply research and evaluation skills to increase workforce capacity and capability, strengthen evidence-based practice and contribute towards creating a learning organisation.

Over the past six months we have made considerable progress in this area. Highlights are provided below:

### 2.2.1 Research Mentorship Programme towards Health and Care Research Wales Faculty Awards

Through a cross-organisational Expression of Interest exercise, we have brought together a cohort of 8 PHW researchers to apply to the Health and Care Research Wales (HCRW) Faculty personal development awards scheme for 2025-26.

We have provided wraparound support and mentoring and a programme of opportunities for this cohort to encourage and increase the level of high-quality applications. This has included monthly webinars on areas such as developing networks, writing a successful application, Patient Participation Involvement and Engagement (PPIE) and talks from HCRW.

We are expecting 6 of the 8 to submit grant applications for personal awards this year. An increase from 3 in 2025/25.

### 2.2.2 Increasing research capacity in Climate Change (PHW Strategic Priority 6).

The Research Coordinator for Climate Change and Health (a role spanning the R&E Division and Policy and International Health Directorate) continues to support cross-organisational working and with partners to develop research capacity and capability in this area.

Key achievements to date include:

- Development of a report identifying PHWs' top 10 priorities for climate change and health research – this has been shared with the PHW climate change board and partners and will be shared externally to relevant funders (e.g. NIHR).
- Collaboration with Welsh Higher Education Institutions (WHEIs) and other partners to support six research funding applications, one of which is being led by PHW (Health Protection and Prevention Services Directorate) to a NIHR funded call on climate change and health inequalities (submission deadline: 4 December)
- Planned launch of a Climate Change and Public Health Research and Evidence Network (November 2025), bringing together academics, Welsh Government, PHW, and other stakeholders to work collaboratively across research for policy and practice impact.

- Understanding policy research gaps and needs through engagement with the Welsh Government Health & Social Care Climate Emergency National Programme – Adaptation Board (working with the PHW Consultant Lead for Climate (Policy and International Directorate)).

### **2.2.3 Increasing research capacity in Gambling Prevention (PHW Strategic Priority 3).**

In November 2025, a Research Coordinator for Gambling Prevention joined PHW to provide dedicated capacity to maximise PHW opportunities to develop a research programme in this area.

The role sits across the R&D Office and the Health Improvement division, supporting cross-organisational working and will:

- Map internal and external research strengths on gambling and related harms
- Develop PHW R&E Priorities on gambling prevention and harm
- Commission out research work with an identified need
- Develop collaborative research bids linked to external funding opportunities
- Develop PHWs capability and capacity in this space through building academic partnerships and collaborative research bids within HEIWs and UK partners.

This represents an opportunity to demonstrate the value of dedicated capacity, to build research capacity and capability with others and to support PHW in this area.

### **2.2.4 Responsive research in pandemic response**

The RESOG has worked with the Emergency Planning and Response Team through the Pegasus simulated tactical response to inform the organisational Pandemic Response plan.

We will now draw on experience during COVID-19 and the three phases of Pegasus, to integrate research and evaluation capacity and capability into future pandemic response through the organisational Emergency Planning Programme, and effective routes to engaging with the UK Research Scientific and Evidence (RSE) Cell, Strategic Funders Forum, and links into Welsh Government.

### **2.2.5 Impact: bid applications and personal awards**

Over the last 6 months, PHW has developed its capacity and capability through securing successful research bids. These include - **two** personal awards and **8 bids and grants**.



## Progress against KPIs: FYs 2023 - 2026

Financial Year	Total Successful Awards (n)	PHW CI/PI (n)	Different Funders (n)	Income to PHW (£)	Total value to Wales (£)
2023/24	29	3	10	485,000	1,964,368
2024/25	21	4	17	849,989	8,406,370
Apr-Nov 2025/26	8	6	6	666,317	2,645,077

Personal staff awards include:

- Alisha Davies & Tom Connor appointed as joint Specialty Leads for Wales in Public Health (HCRW funding)

Research funding bids include:

- UKRI-funded Reducing Inequalities in School Food Environments (RISE): Supporting Provision, Uptake and Consumption of Free School Meals in Primary Schools.  
**Lead:** Cardiff University (DECIPHer) in partnership with the Health Improvement Division, PHW  
**Total Funding:** £251,660  
**Funding to PHW:** £65,382

## 2.3 Developing Evaluation Capacity and Capability

### 2.3.1 Evaluation Clinics

The Evaluation Drop-in Clinics help support consistent application and implementation of PHW Evaluation Standards and improve evaluation capability across the organisation. The Drop-in Clinics have supported 49 evaluation discussions across the following teams:

- Health and Wellbeing: 7
- Health Protection & Screening Services: 22
- Nursing, Quality & Integrated Governance: 7
- Operations & Finance: 3
- Policy & International Health WHO CC: 7
- Other: National Safeguarding Team (1), NHS Wales Performance & Improvement (1), Swansea Bay UHB (1)

### 2.3.2 Evaluation Community of Practice

The Evaluation Community of Practice (ECoP) aims to bring together all staff in PHW who are conducting, commissioning or using evaluation findings. Since launching in 2023, ECoP now has 527 members and has covered a range of topics including:

- Using Theory of Change to guide evaluations
- Behaviour change framework
- Ripple Effects Mapping
- Evaluability Assessment
- Rapid Service Evaluations
- Using Artificial Intelligence in Public Health Evaluation
- Realist Evaluation
- Patient and Public representative inclusion and engagement
- Evaluation in Health Protection (held jointly with the UKHSA).

### 2.3.3 Evaluation Champions

In Jan 2026, the Central Evaluation Team will commence a pilot of evaluation champions across the organisation (n=7) to support knowledge and capability for evaluation within PHW.

Their role is to:

- Raise awareness about embedding robust and proportionate evaluation in all programmes delivered by PHW.
- Support the organisation to implement agreed PHW Evaluation Standards.
- Be a point of contact in their respective divisions for information on evaluation opportunities and linking with the central Evaluation Team as needed.

- Proactively distribute evaluation-related information from the central Evaluation team.
- Actively seeking out opportunities for their divisions to embed robust evaluations.
- Attend the Evaluation Community of Practice (ECoP) meetings and share good practice.

Learning from the pilot will be captured and the value reviewed after 12 months.

### 2.3.4 Evaluation Delivery

The Central Evaluation Team are leading the development and implementation of robust evaluations across PHW in line with the Measurement Framework for PHW, improving our understanding of which interventions work, for who and why in Wales.

In the past 6 months, 5 evaluations have been reported, informing programme development and investment in prevention:

- All Wales Diabetes Prevention Programme outcome evaluation, informing funding to support prevention.
- Evaluation of the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board Prehab to Rehab study, informing funding to support prevention.
- Evaluation of the 2021/22 Flu/Covid vaccine using a controlled interrupted series design.
- Baseline evaluation of the Hapus National Conversation and Hapus Strategic Partnership, informing programme development.
- Every Child Health Information Resource, which found barriers among families with learning difficulties and non-English speakers

In addition, a further 7 evaluations are currently underway:

- Mid-point evaluation of the Hapus National Conversation and the Strategic Partnership
- Outcome evaluation of the cell free DNA testing
- Evaluation of the Test and Post and Community Testing Sexual Health Service
- Evaluation of the Welsh Network for Health Promoting Schools
- Process and outcome evaluation of Warm Wales support to families experiencing fuel poverty.
- Supporting Tackling Diabetes Together
  - Diabetic Eye Screening service change
  - Impact of a Behaviourally Informed Invitation Letter to Increase urine Albumin-Creatinine Ratio (ACR) Testing.

## 2.4 Developing and Establishing Effective Strategic Partnerships for R&E

## Partnerships

We are developing our approach to strengthen the development of effective strategic partnerships for public health research. Over the past 6 months there has been progress across two key areas of focus:

#### **2.4.1 Developing a Strategy for Academic Public Health Research in Wales – 2025**

As part of the development of a strategy for Academic Public Health Research in Wales we brought together a Task and Finish group with membership from WHEIs, Directors of Public Health, Health Determinants of Research Collaborations, Third sector and other partners across the system. We have also engaged Pro Vice Chancellors of Research in this work through the Wales Innovation Network Board.

Following excellent engagement, we have co-produced a joint system vision statement and core principles and are developing a strategy to be published later this year.

The strategy aims to promote and develop the nation's strengths in public health research and the next generation of public health researchers for Wales.

#### **2.4.2 Developing effective partnerships with Academia**

In line with our strategy, PHW is open to the development of strategic partnerships with academia in areas of mutual benefit to develop a long-term, ambitious, multidisciplinary relationship, focused on co-creation, with defined and shared strategic priorities across research, innovation, education and skills, and other agendas.

As part of the development of the strategic partnership with Cardiff University, we have developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with a focus on five key themes and ways of working to ensure an agile approach. The Terms of Reference to oversee the partnership is being developed, as well as identifying an action plan to take forward the partnership.

#### **2.4.3. Developing effective partnership with significant Research Programmes**

PHW is also exploring opportunities to build effective relationships, and potentially to work in partnership, with the wider UK strategic research investments.

PHW has met with [Our Future Health](#), to explore common areas of interest and value, and opportunities to work together. Building on these discussions we are developing a proposed MoU around themes which include gene expression, environment and the potential for intervention and prevention and deeper understanding of the drivers of healthy life expectancy and levers for improvement.

## 2.5 Communications and engagement for R&E.

A core aim of the R&E Strategy is to develop and communicate research priorities, which will lead to greater engagement across the organisation and wider research system.

### 2.5.1. External communication

As part of the development of the new PHW website, we are working to ensure a programme of research activity is coordinated and promoted to highlight the extensive remit of the organisation.

The annual PHW R&E Conference on the 3<sup>rd</sup> December has engagement from across the organisation and external partners and will showcase research linked to PHW strategic priorities and partnerships.

## 3. Monitoring and Assurance

Monitoring and assurance of the R&E Strategy is captured through:

- Quarterly reporting to PHW Executive Team on key indicators through the Research, Data and Digital Directorate report.
- Biannual reporting to KRIC on progress against the R&E strategy implementation
- Annual reporting to Health and Care Research Wales.

The R&D Office produces an annual highlights report which showcases research from across the organisation and with partners [Research Highlights 2024\\_2025 ENGLISH.pptx](#)

Through RESOG, a coproduced implementation plan has been developed with all parts of the strategy monitored including collaborative bids, strategic partnerships, R&E priorities and communication and engagement of R&E across the organisation.

## 4. Recommendation

**The Committee is asked to:**

- Note the contents of this paper and **receive assurance** on progress on the implementation of the organisational Research and Evaluation Strategy.