



Gofal Cymdeithasol **Cymru**  
Social Care **Wales**



Ymchwil Iechyd  
a Gofal Cymru  
Health and Care  
Research Wales

*Endorsed by Health and  
Care Research Wales*

# Social care research and development strategy for Wales 2018-2023



Ariennir gan  
Llywodraeth Cymru  
Funded by  
Welsh Government

## Contact details

Social Care Wales  
South Gate House  
Wood Street  
Cardiff  
CF10 1EW

Tel: 0300 3033 444  
Minicom: 029 2078 0680  
Email: [info@socialcare.wales](mailto:info@socialcare.wales)

[socialcare.wales](http://socialcare.wales)

Twitter: [@SocialCareWales](https://twitter.com/SocialCareWales)

## Health and Care Research Wales

Tel: 02920 230457  
Email: [healthandcareresearch@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:healthandcareresearch@wales.nhs.uk)

Twitter: [@ResearchWales](https://twitter.com/ResearchWales)

© 2018 Social Care Wales

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means without the prior written permission of Social Care Wales. Enquiries for reproduction outside the scope expressly permitted by law should be sent to the Chief Executive of Social Care Wales at the address given above.

---



# Contents

<b>Foreword</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Executive summary</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2. Partners – Public, practitioners, researchers and policy makers</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>3. The strategic context</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>4. Overview</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>5. Focus area 1 – Involving the public in social care research</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>6. Focus area 2 – Research priorities</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>7. Focus area 3 – Use of existing and routinely collected data</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>8. Focus area 4 – Developing the workforce and organisations</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>9. Focus area 5 – Communicating and using research</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>List of abbreviations</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Appendix 1 - Health and Care Research Wales Guidelines for Social Care Research</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Appendix 2 - Knowledge mobilisation pathway</b>	<b>25</b>

# Foreword

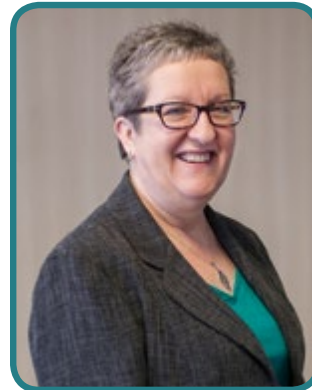
Social Care Wales' research and development strategy for Wales 2018 to 2023 is a collaborative approach, setting out our vision for the next five years. The strategy has been produced in partnership between Social Care Wales, a new national leadership body for the social care sector, and Health and Care Research Wales. We have worked with a range of partners to develop this strategy and it will be a collective effort to realise its ambitions.

The strategy's vision is for Wales to be internationally renowned for its excellent social care research that supports the people of Wales, by informing and improving social care policy and practice.

We want to work with you to provide a coherent approach to improving the research capacity and capability in Wales. We are aiming to support practitioners, employers and researchers to better understand what works to help those who need protection, care and support develop preventative approaches and supportive environments.

Social care research has been identified as a top priority by the Welsh Government and our partners in the social care sector. We hope the research strategy will help speed up the adoption of evidence-enriched practice across Wales.

Citizens have provided a strong voice to steer the development of the strategy and they will help us during its implementation. The consultation on the strategy resulted in positive support about the areas for action and the five focus areas. The views expressed were carefully considered as we developed the strategy's implementation plan, which will be launched in 2018.



Sue Evans, Chief Executive,  
Social Care Wales



Jon Bisson, Director, Health  
and Care Research Wales

We would like to thank all those who have contributed to the development of this strategy, not least the Health and Care Research Wales School for Social Care Research for its leadership role. We would also like to thank everyone who has committed to work with us to implement the focus areas of involving the public, setting research priorities, using data, developing the workforce and communicating the outputs.

Our ambition is to co-produce priorities for research with the public to increase knowledge in the areas that matter most. This will help improve well-being by developing evidence-enriched policy, practice and service models in Wales that focus on prevention, early intervention and sustainability. We know this is an ambitious plan and we will need to prioritise our activities, which are set out in the strategy and implementation plan.

# Executive summary

In Wales, we believe the time is right for:

- a national co-ordinated approach to building social care research and development capacity
- realising the positive impact of research and development on social care policy, practice and improvement
- strengthening the links between social care research, social care policy, practice and improvement.

Wales's legislation places an emphasis on high quality and sustainable social care provision that

puts people's well-being at the centre of their care, and promotes prevention and early intervention. Excellent social care research can support the evidence base for practitioners to do this, as well as inform decision and policy makers.

There are many strengths we can build upon:

- the quality of social care research in Wales
- the strength of the social care improvement agenda
- Welsh Government's commitment to giving people voice and control over the care and support they receive.

The strategy looks at five areas:



By working with the public, people who use care and support, and their carers, we will develop a better understanding of what research needs to be done and how it can have a positive impact where it matters.

This national strategy aims to bring social care practice and research closer together by sharing and agreeing actions, responsibilities and accountability.

Our responsibilities for leading social care regulation, workforce development and service improvement in Wales means we are perfectly placed to take this strategy forward in partnership with Health and Care Research Wales and the organisations it funds, such as the Wales School for Social Care Research.

## Our vision

For Wales to be internationally renowned for its excellent social care research that supports the people of Wales by informing and improving social care policy and practice



## Putting the strategy into practice

Alongside this strategy, there will be an implementation plan that looks at how we put the recommendations into practice. It will also identify the roles and responsibilities of the partners involved, and the impact and outcome measures for the next five years.

### Areas for action

1. Social Care Wales and Health and Care Research Wales will establish a clear governance framework for making decisions about social care research and deciding who is accountable for putting the research strategy into practice.
2. Social Care Wales, Health and Care Research Wales, primarily through the Wales School for Social Care Research, and other research centres will work together to support social care research in Wales, and to make sure we are clear about the roles and responsibilities of the key organisations involved.
3. Develop a plan for funding the first five years of the strategy, which uses the current sources of research funding as effectively as possible.
4. Develop guidance around social care research ethics in Wales.
5. Social Care Wales, working with Health and Care Research Wales, will develop an action plan that involves the public, people who use care and support, and carers in social care research. This will build upon existing best practice.
6. Make sure social care practitioners have access to research findings and evidence in their workplace.
7. Work with the main partners involved in the social care sector in Wales to develop an approach that addresses the main issues in social care practice, by analysing the evidence of good practice and developing associated practice guidance.
8. Develop programmes of research for Social Care Wales's three strategic improvement areas: care and support at home, people with dementia and children who are looked after.
9. Support research activity that explores research questions that affect both social care and health.
10. Carry out a scoping exercise around the potential of making better use of technology to improve the provision of social care.
11. Social Care Wales will develop a data set for social care in Wales that will be used to inform the planning, developing and monitoring of the social care sector.
12. Continue Health and Care Research Wales's current programme of developing research capacity, by funding studentships and fellowships in social care that specifically focus on skills and subject areas considered a national priority.
13. Explore opportunities for undertaking joint appointments between the social care practice and research sectors.
14. Increase awareness of the use of research and research practice in social work and social care training.
15. Identify research champions within social care organisations in Wales and establish a support network for them.
16. Explore the potential for raising awareness of how research contributes to social care practice and policy development, by making use of existing awards for good practice in social care.

## Case study

The Keeping Safe? research project came about following discussions with a local authority about how to respond to child sexual exploitation (CSE). CSE is an emerging and rapidly developing area of social care practice, and there is little evidence for practitioners about 'what works' or 'what doesn't work'.

This research aims to:

- investigate the outcomes for children and young people 'at risk' of sexual exploitation
- explore how to protect young people from experiencing harm because of CSE
- meet gaps in knowledge and inform effective prevention, early intervention and work with young people experiencing CSE.

Contact: This study is funded by Health and Care Research Wales and led by Dr Sophie Hallett at Cardiff University.



# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Background

This strategy sets out a plan to position Wales as a leader in developing, undertaking and implementing excellent social care research.

Recent reports into social care across Wales have highlighted the importance of investment in social care research to advance a responsive and quality social care agenda<sup>1,2</sup>. The case for this emphasis is at many levels. Research can support social care to stay abreast of changing factors (demographic, cultural, technological, social and economic), and meet diverse and changing needs. It provides an evidence base to evaluate service and practice interventions, and policy initiatives; and can identify and develop new approaches to providing care and support.

The development of a significant and new legislative framework in Wales, with a focus on early intervention and sustainability, provides a base for social care in Wales<sup>3</sup>. Effective prevention and early intervention needs to be informed by a better understanding of what helps people and communities achieve well-being, and how different organisations can work together to support this.

It is further recognised that existing approaches to the care and support of children, families and vulnerable people are no longer sustainable<sup>4</sup>. The capacity to respond to such a requirement in Wales is a priority, particularly for local authorities in Wales, in assisting in defining the development of the sector over the next five years, and in ways that are responsive to geographical and population diversity.

Basing social care decisions on evidence about what works well, where, and for whom, allows limited resources to be focused where they will be most effective, and can lead to new ways of working that can improve care, outcomes, and productivity. A dynamic and innovative research and development (R&D) culture can also create a better environment for social care and health professionals to work and develop, with more potential to attract and retain high calibre staff and attract investment from industry.

The scope of this strategy includes research taking place at the interface of social care and health services, an area of particular importance in the context of increasing integration. By building capacity in social care research broadly, the strategy aims to support the development of high quality social care research in Wales and to help build social care research expertise that can be drawn upon to support research carried out in cross-cutting areas.

In summary, research can make a number of direct and indirect contributions to the social care and wider economic landscape:

- provide a strong evidence base for social care practitioners to work with individuals, families and communities
- support policy makers, social care organisations and practitioners to keep up-to-date with wider demographic, economic, technological and social trends
- help ensure policy makers and practitioners are aware of Welsh language linguistic trends
- support the identification of cost effective and quality interventions for service development
- provide a unique vehicle by which members of the public, people who use care and support, carers and professionals can agree service and practice priorities
- develop stimulating and innovative service and academic environments
- explore the development of ethical emerging technologies to adapt to the changing landscape of social care
- contribute to the national economy by bringing new resources into Wales and making sure resources are directed to cost effective and quality services.

Against this backdrop, the *Social care research and development strategy for Wales 2018-2023* is an overarching national strategy designed to formally link social care research and practice through shared and mutually agreed actions, responsibilities and accountability.

This strategy outlines goals and objectives for the next five years to advance the social care research agenda in Wales.

### 1.2. What is social care research?

The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) defines research as “a form of systematic enquiry that contributes to knowledge”<sup>5</sup>. This knowledge can contribute to the development of ideas and theories, formulation of government policy, local decision making and social care practices. Social care research will take different forms, and this will depend on the context of the research, the research questions being investigated, and the perspectives on knowledge. It is informed by the values of human rights, social participation and inclusion, and access.

Research can involve:

- quantitative methods – for example, quantitative surveys, outcome-focused studies, socio-economic analysis
- qualitative research methods – for example, participatory action research, ethnographic research, focus groups, and interviews
- systematic reviews of existing literature.

Social care research will seek to develop knowledge in a broad range of areas :

- macro level – for example, the socio-economic factors that impact on social care needs, national and local policies, and models of social care delivery
- community level – for example, early intervention and prevention, and social and community cohesion
- individual level – for example, protection and social support services, care, support and personal assistance.

This breadth is shown in the diagram below.



## Case study

### Wales Kidney Research Unit – linking health and social care

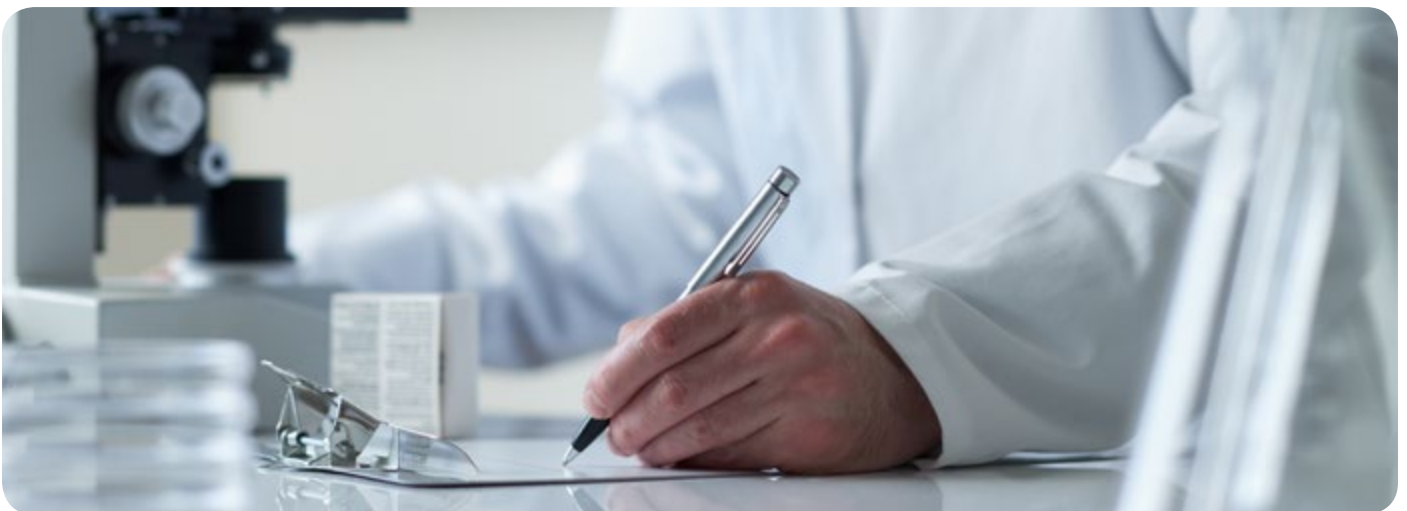
The multi-disciplinary health and social care renal team includes clinicians, specialist nurses, renal social workers, renal pharmacists and renal psychologists. Two systematic reviews were undertaken to identify renal social care priorities. There was a clear gap in published renal social care research.

### Supporting care home residents to drink enough fluids to prevent acute kidney injury

Using evidence, Owain Brooks, a pharmacist from Morriston Hospital in Swansea, is introducing and evaluating a range of interventions in care homes, such as blue tableware (cups, mugs, jugs and so on), as a visual prompt for older people and staff to drink enough fluids, and redesigning some care home food, fluid and medical record systems.

'Kidney stickers' are placed on medication administration record charts alongside medication known to damage the kidneys in acute dehydrating illness. Evidence, practice and evaluation are working together to support well-being.

For more information, visit [kidneyresearchunit.wales/en/social-care-research.htm](http://kidneyresearchunit.wales/en/social-care-research.htm)



<sup>1</sup> Independent Commission on Social Services in Wales (2010) From Vision to Action: The Report of the Independent Commission on Social Services in Wales.

<sup>2</sup> National Institute for Social Care and Health Research (NISCHR) and Academic Health Sciences Centre (AHSC) Mobilising the use of research into practice for impacts on health and wealth – Recommendations of the AHSC Knowledge Transfer Task and Finish Group to NISCHR, Welsh Government.

<sup>3</sup> Welsh Assembly Government (2007) A Strategy for Social Services in Wales over the Next Decade: Fulfilled Lives, Supportive Communities. February. Welsh Assembly Government (2011) Sustainable Social Services: A Framework for Action.

White Paper (2014) The Future of Regulation and Inspection of Care and Support in Wales. Welsh Government, WG19628.

Welsh Assembly Government (2014) Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

Welsh Assembly Government (2015) Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Independent Commission on Social Services in Wales (2010) From Vision to Action: The Report of the Independent Commission on Social Services in Wales.

<sup>5</sup> [www.scie.org.uk/publications/researchmindedness/whym/whatisresearch](http://www.scie.org.uk/publications/researchmindedness/whym/whatisresearch)

<sup>6</sup> SCIE, Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> See Appendix 1 for the full description of the Health and Care Research Wales Guidelines for Social Care Research.

## 2. Partners – Public, practitioners, researchers and policy makers

The key partners and audiences for this strategy include:

- members of the public
- people who use care and support, and carers
- social care practitioners and employing organisations
- umbrella groups
- universities/higher education institutions
- social care researchers
- government policy makers
- local government
- health boards
- Public Health Wales
- Welsh Ambulance Service
- NHS local health boards
- Economic and Social Research Council
- industry
- third sector organisations.

### 2.1 Public, people who use care and support, and carers

Involving the public, people who use care and support, and carers is a foundation stone of this strategy, reflecting the importance of public views and the involvement of people who use care and support, and carers, in social care research.

### 2.2 Social care and social work practitioners, and social care providers

Social care and social work practitioners, as well as social care providers, are a key audience in realising this strategy's ambition. They include practitioners across government, non-government and private sectors working in social care settings. The creation of Social Care Wales has established the formal structures through which research and practice can work together more closely, aligning mutual goals to ensure that research funding and activity is more transparent; better co-ordinated and better targeted; and that evidence is disseminated and implemented more effectively.

### 2.3 Social care researchers

Social care researchers are located in Welsh universities, government departments, local authorities and umbrella groups, such as the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), the third sector, and private researchers and organisations.

UK collaborators include the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE), the Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (Iriss) in Scotland, Health and Social Care (HSC) Research and Development in Northern Ireland, the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) School for Social Care Research in England, and various professional bodies.

Governments at national and local levels are key players in the development and use of social care research to inform policy development, decision making, resource use, and service development and provision. In addition, the Welsh Government is the primary commissioners and funders of social care research in Wales.

### 2.4 Health and Care Research Wales

Health and Care Research Wales is a national, multi-faceted virtual organisation, funded, overseen and created by the Welsh Government through the Research and Development Division. It leads on social care research capacity building and commits around £1.5 million per year directly to support social care research projects and initiatives.

Health and Care Research Wales funds a national research infrastructure to undertake and support high quality health and social care research across Wales, and has made more than 78 social care research funding awards since 2005 with a total value of more than £8.7 million.

---

<sup>8</sup> [www.healthandcareresearch.gov.wales/uploads/Policy%20%26%20Strategy/Health\\_and\\_Care\\_Research\\_Wales\\_Strategic\\_Plan\\_2015\\_2020.pdf](http://www.healthandcareresearch.gov.wales/uploads/Policy%20%26%20Strategy/Health_and_Care_Research_Wales_Strategic_Plan_2015_2020.pdf)



The national infrastructure incorporates a number of health and social care research centres, units, trials units and support groups, including the Wales School for Social Care Research, and the Health and Care Research Wales Support and Delivery Service. Health and Care Research Wales's strategic aims and vision are described in its strategic plan .

Outside Health and Care Research Wales, the Welsh Government also directly commissions small-scale research projects, either through its own researchers or through external research organisations, to inform the development and evaluation of social care legislation and policies.

## 3. The strategic context

The development of this strategy has been informed by Welsh public policy. The key policy areas are:

### 3.1 Prosperity for All: The national strategy

The national strategy for Wales aims to enhance the well-being of the people of Wales by creating a country that is prosperous and secure, healthy and active, ambitious and learning, and united and connected.

Five priority areas emphasising the importance of social care, housing, early years, mental health, and skills and employability cut across those key themes. In addition to further integration of social care and health services, the strategy aims to achieve a shift from treatment to prevention, and from hospitals to communities. In working towards these goals, the importance of research is emphasised, both as a force for innovation and adaptation in social care and health services, as well as a driver of economic growth.

### 3.2 Legislation

The Welsh Government's approach to social care is set out in the *Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014*, which emphasises a preventative approach to care and support through early intervention and increased integration.

It requires statutory partnerships to be created between local authorities and local health boards to drive integration, innovation and service change. Further integration of public services will also be promoted through the *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015*, which requires local authorities, local health boards, and other public services to form public service boards to assess and promote local well-being.

### 3.3 The Future of Regulation and Inspection of Care and Support in Wales

Supporting information for the *Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014* was published in *The Future of Regulation and Inspection of Care and Support in Wales* (Welsh Government, 2014). This document outlined the creation of a new organisation with a clear remit for leading on social care improvement, while supporting social care research capacity building, and the dissemination of evidence and best practice through collaborative and partnership working. The organisation was later branded Social Care Wales.

### 3.4 More than Just Words

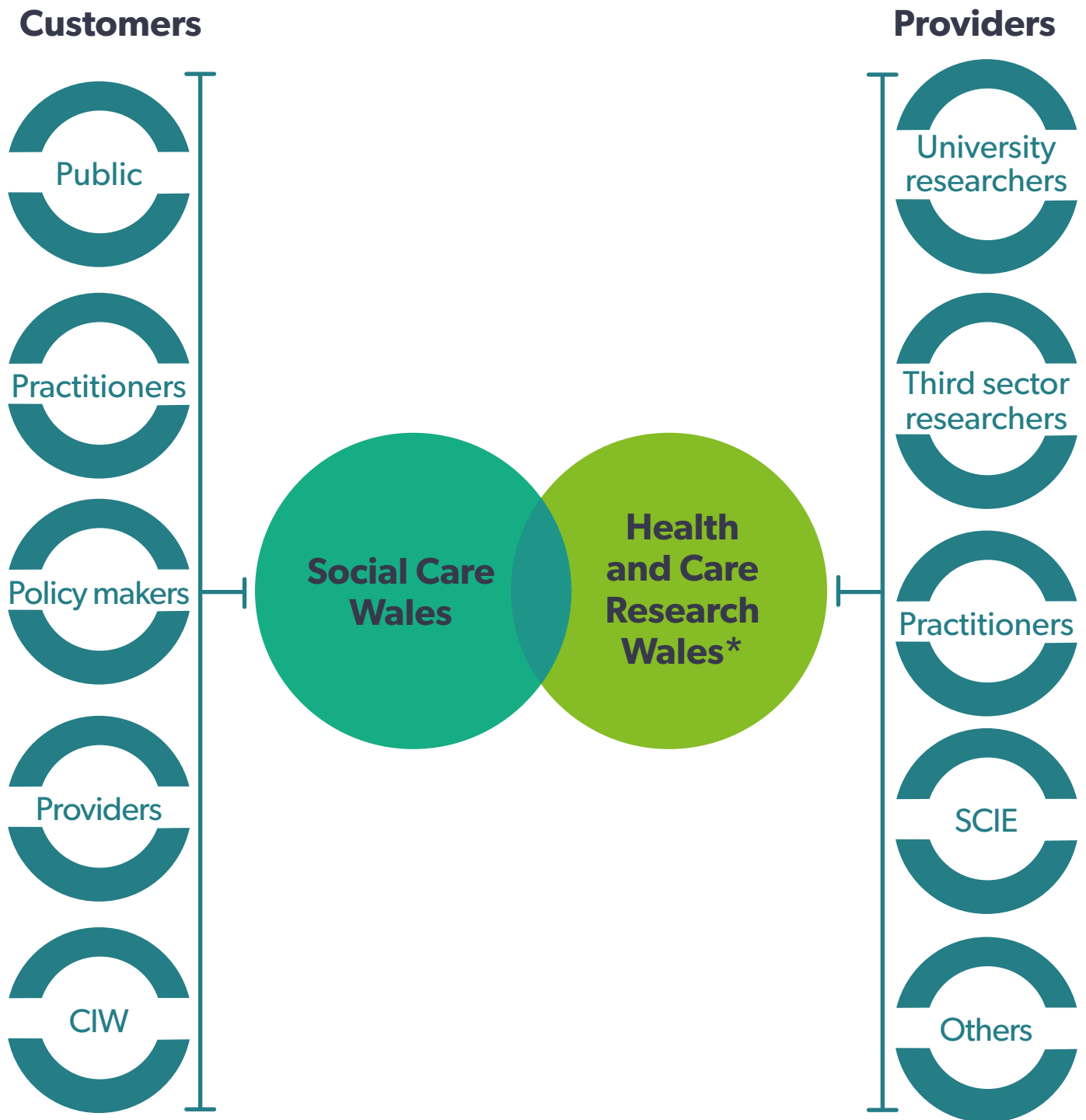
The Welsh Government is committed to ensuring the Welsh language is treated no less favourably than the English language. *More than Just Words* is a framework outlining specific actions needed to ensure that care and support services can be provided in Welsh.

The *Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011* gives the Welsh language official status and imposes duties on a number of organisations to provide services in Welsh. It also intensifies the need for research evidence to make informed policy decisions. A long-term target of achieving one million Welsh speakers by 2050 has been set by the Welsh Government.

Social Care Wales and Health and Care Research Wales have a critical role in implementing the strategy.

<sup>9</sup> Welsh Government (2016) *More than just words... Follow-on strategic framework for Welsh language services in health, social services and social care.*

# Key players



\*Includes the Health and Care Research Wales School for Social Care Research and Support and Delivery Service

## 4. Overview

This strategy sets out a direction and the steps needed to achieve the following aim:

**For Wales to be internationally renowned for its excellent social care research that supports the people of Wales by informing and improving social care policy and practice.**

The strategy looks at five areas. For each area, we have included reasons why the issue is important and an overview of what we will do. The implementation plan will outline how we put the recommendations into practice.





## 5. Focus area 1 – Involving the public in social care research

### 5.1. Why is this important?

This strategy is built upon a firm and clear commitment to public voice and control, and co-production in policy, practice and research, as articulated in Welsh Government legislation and policy guidelines. This includes involving people with experiences of using care and support, and carers.<sup>10</sup> Their involvement is important in achieving high quality, useful and effective social care research<sup>11</sup>. This has benefits in determining research questions, how research is best undertaken, and in processes of translating research findings to make a difference in social care.

Across Wales, there are many examples of strong public involvement and co-production. Social care services have processes for active public involvement, as do third sector organisations. There are networks active across Wales. Health and Care Research Wales supports and enables the involvement of the public, people who use care and support, and carers in social care research. For example, through Health Wise Wales and the Health and Care Research Wales Public Delivery Board.

A priority of the *Health and Care Research Wales Strategic Plan* is to facilitate and enable wider public involvement, engagement and participation in health and social care research. This includes awareness raising, creating opportunities for the public to engage with research, and facilitating and supporting that engagement, while being more inclusive of children, young people and people with additional needs who may need support to participate in research. We will establish Wales as a centre of excellence for active and meaningful public involvement and engagement in research.<sup>12</sup>

There are examples of active public involvement in research development and research studies across Welsh universities, such as CASCADE Voices (Cardiff University in partnership with Voices from Care Cymru), and links between the Dementia Engagement and Empowerment Project and the Wales School for Social Care Research. Third sector organisations are also experienced in using science and evidence to provide social care.

It is important to share this learning about what works well through a rigorous cycle of inquiry, development, testing and delivery.



<sup>10</sup> Commission on Public Service Governance and Delivery: Summary Report. Welsh Government; January 2014.

<sup>11</sup> Brett, J, Staniszewska, S, Mockford, C, Herron-Marx, S, Hughes, J, Tysall, C, and Suleman, R. (2014) Mapping the impact of patient and public involvement on health and social care research: a systematic review, *Health Expectations*, pp.1-14.

<sup>12</sup> [www.healthandcareresearch.gov.wales/public-engagement-involvement-and-participation](http://www.healthandcareresearch.gov.wales/public-engagement-involvement-and-participation)

## 5.2. What we will do

This focus area has four objectives. They will be achieved by the strategy's main partners working together.

### Objective 1:

Foster social care research cultures where there is authentic and meaningful involvement of the public, people who use care and support, and carers in the development of social care research questions, how research is undertaken, and how research is communicated and used.

### Objective 2:

Support the research and social care policy and practice sectors to share and build on good practices of involving the public, people who use care and support, and carers in social care research.

### Objective 3:

Explore good practices of involving the public, people who use care and support, and carers in generating and agreeing priority areas for social care research.

### Objective 4:

Collaborate to develop communication strategies regarding the benefits and purpose of involving the public, people who use care and support, and carers in social care research, including using various media.

## Case study

### Involving the public in social care research

CASCADE Voices is a group of care-experienced young people who advise on research and take part in studies as peer researchers, having received training in research methods from staff at the Children's Social Care Research and Development Centre (CASCADE) at Cardiff University.

[sites.cardiff.ac.uk/cascade/people/young-peoples-advisory-group](https://sites.cardiff.ac.uk/cascade/people/young-peoples-advisory-group)

The CASCADE research project about the experience of children who are looked after of education was commissioned by the Welsh Government. It involved producing videos about the research findings, music videos made by young people with experience of being in care, as well as articles in peer-reviewed journals. The project was undertaken in partnership with Voices from Care, the Fostering Network and the time-credit organisation Spice.

[sites.cardiff.ac.uk/cascade/looked-after-children-and-education](https://sites.cardiff.ac.uk/cascade/looked-after-children-and-education)

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the Welsh Government-funded Developing Evidence-Enriched Practice programme is a collaborative research and practice development project, which involved older people and carers as active contributors. Many of the most useful project outputs were produced by or with older people.

[www.jrf.org.uk/report/developing-evidence-enriched-practice-health-and-social-care-older-people](https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/developing-evidence-enriched-practice-health-and-social-care-older-people)

## 6. Focus area 2 – Research priorities

### 6.1. Why is this important?

Targeting scarce resources onto a small number of key priority areas so there is a concerted and consistent focus on making progress in those areas is critical to the success of any research programme. In establishing Social Care Wales, the Minister for Health and Social Services agreed the new body should focus on:

- care and support at home
- children who are looked after
- dementia.

Within these areas is a focus on prevention and early intervention. While these priorities do not preclude improvement and research in other areas, the above should be the national strategic priorities for research for the next five years and co-ordinated programmes of research should be developed.

For the longer term, the creation of an equitable, accessible and transparent process to generate and agree research priorities will be needed. Critical to this will be bringing together meaningful input from:

- the public through community involvement
- the regional partnership boards for social care and health established by the *Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014*
- providers and practitioners
- government
- researchers.

### 6.2. What we will do

This focus area has two objectives. They will be achieved by the strategy's main partners working together.

Social Care Wales will lead the research prioritisation process by providing a bridge between the social care sector (including practitioners) and the research community. The process will constitute a key part of the governance framework to be further developed between Social Care Wales and Health and Care Research Wales in 2018.

#### Objective 1:

Maximise the best use of scarce social care research resources by concentrating efforts on Social Care Wales's agreed strategic priority areas, currently:

- care and support at home
- children who are looked after
- dementia.

#### Objective 2:

Through the leadership of Social Care Wales, design and instigate an accessible, transparent, and co-productive model for the future generation and prioritisation of research areas through a systematic and inclusive process.



## 7. Focus area 3 – Use of existing and routinely collected data

### 7.1. Why is this important?

Quantitative and qualitative information that's routinely collected as part of existing social care delivery is a rich source of knowledge that informs the development and quality of social care improvement and public policy formulation.

Existing data is collected for various purposes, such as service planning, evaluation and performance management. This information can be used to paint a broader picture of gaps, patterns or trends (for example, in service delivery, population needs or resource allocations). Qualitative information can also be used to capture the nuance of the social care sector and inform future research questions.

In addition to demonstrating gaps and trends by analysing routinely collected data, bringing together existing data from a variety of sources beyond social care (such as health, housing and economic data) widens the opportunities to inform knowledge about social care needs and issues, and pathways to improvement.

In particular, the linkage of existing data can provide an inexpensive but effective means by which relationships between demand, service delivery and impact, in terms of outcomes for individuals and populations, can be assessed at a national, regional and local level.

In Wales, a key opportunity in data linkage is the SAIL (Secure Anonymised Information Linkage) Databank. This databank safely houses de-identified data from a variety of information sources, including the majority of health-related population data for Wales. For example, it includes the Patient Episode Database for Wales, the National Child Community Health

Database, and GP event data for around 78 per cent of GP practices in Wales, providing the opportunity to examine issues, such as delayed transfers of care. Data is also held on pupil attainment and housing, and work is ongoing to increase the range of datasets available for secure anonymised linking in SAIL.

Bringing together existing data on the demand and supply of social care, linked to outcomes for those who need care and support, will benefit services, researchers, and the people of Wales. It will provide a national view of the position of social care, as well as opportunities for evaluating, monitoring and researching the relationship between service activity and outcomes for users.

### 7.2. What we will do

This focus area has three objectives. They will be achieved by the strategy's main partners working together.

#### Objective 1:

Establish a social care data access and use working group to bring together key players in the social care arena who have an interest/role to play in this area.

#### Objective 2:

Establish a collaborative process with SAIL to explore the feasibility and mechanisms to link social care data into the SAIL Databank<sup>13</sup>, and data from other sectors, such as education, public health and housing.

#### Objective 3:

A National Social Care Data Set for Wales will be established comprising data drawn from a range of existing and planned routine data gathering exercises. Social Care Wales will manage a data repository for social care aggregate data.

<sup>13</sup> (Secure Anonymised Information Linkage Database) saildatabank.com

## Case study

### Data linkage in social care: a pilot project

Existing data linkage projects in Wales have primarily focused on health datasets. The aims of this pilot project, funded by NISCHR (201 to 2015), were to:

- test the feasibility of linking routinely collected health, social care and third sector data at an individual level using the Secure Anonymised Information Linkage (SAIL) system
- build a more complete picture of service provision using adults referred to social services to avoid hospital admission or to facilitate hospital discharge
- assess the range and quality of data available in each of the organisations providing services to those individuals.

A Bangor University lead research team, partnered with Gwynedd local authority, explored the governance issues and practicalities of providing an anonymised dataset to the SAIL Databank. Two third sector agencies were also approached. With the required service level agreements in place, data was put through the SAIL process.

Results show that it is feasible to link large amounts of health data in the SAIL Databank with social services and third sector data for research purposes. The data provided by social services is in the form of coded and structured labels with a high level of consistency. The high matching success rate (96.4 per cent) suggests the data is of excellent quality.

Contact: Dr Alison Orrell, Bangor University



## 8. Focus area 4 – Developing the workforce and organisations

### 8.1. Why is this issue important?

Achieving the ambition of this strategy has significant implications for culture and practices within research environments and social care organisations.

Central to the success of this strategy will be the development of a skilled research workforce, with expertise in all relevant academic disciplines. Presently, Wales lacks research capacity in some key academic areas related to social care.

First, there is limited ability to undertake economic analysis at practice/service and national or regional levels. At a time when the efficient and effective use of resources is at a premium, this deficit places the social care sector at a major disadvantage in debates regarding resource provision and accountability for resource usage.

Second, there is limited capacity for policy and strategy analysis, particularly the capacity to undertake such studies in relatively short time frames while remaining rigorous in terms of methodologies. This is an area of particular concern to social services departments in Wales and results in a significant proportion of this work being commissioned from outside Wales. There is also a general lack of quantitative research expertise.

Overall though, there is a need to increase the number of social care researchers of national and international standing in Wales who can undertake high quality research. Achieving this will increase the volume of high quality evidence being generated in Wales, attract additional resources to the country, assist with the development of new researchers, and attract additional talent to Wales.

We need to address this challenge by encouraging new social care researchers, developing existing social care researchers and drawing new researchers from other fields, such as psychology, public health,

health economics or occupational therapists, to a research career in social care or related areas. It is also important that social care researchers involve practitioners in their research to maximise the relevance and potential impact of funded social care research projects.

Research capacity also needs to be developed within social care organisations in Wales. There are practitioners and policy makers within the social care workforce who wish to use research evidence and evaluations to support their practice or to improve service effectiveness. These individuals need to be supported through the development and enhancement of research-minded cultures within social care organisations. This will help ensure that social care professionals and practitioners who want to get more involved in research work are provided with opportunities to do so and the skills to undertake high quality research once those opportunities become available.

There is also a need to encourage and support practitioners who wish to undertake small projects to inform their practice, or wish to make full use of research findings to inform their practice. This could be through conducting small projects or literature reviews on discrete areas of practice or service delivery.

The two primary obstacles that reduce the capacity of practitioners to work in this way are:

- the availability of time within their work schedules
- the limited attention paid to evaluation and research methods, and the use of evidence in practice in social work qualifying training (and even less in the training for other social care practitioner groups).

Although the Continuing Professional Education and Learning (CPEL) programme and the post-registration career framework for occupational therapists have begun to address these challenges, more work is required. These areas need to be addressed in the review of the social work qualifying training led by Social Care Wales and the development of new

qualifications for the social care workforce. Likewise, the absence of clear and accessible ethical guidelines for research undertaken outside the jurisdiction of the Welsh universities must also be addressed.

Finally, there is a need to develop and support skilled practitioner-researchers who can cross traditional boundaries between academia and practice. These individuals should be able to lead or support applications for small and large scale grants to undertake practice-relevant research in the workplace.

Developing these individuals and providing them with opportunities to develop and lead large-scale projects is therefore a key area for this strategy. The creation of relevant posts and the development of individuals to fulfil these functions will require both organisational commitment and leadership, and the development of research minded cultures.

## 8.2. What we will do

This focus area has seven objectives. They will be achieved by the strategy's main partners working together.

### Objective 1:

Through a range of actions, develop skilled social care practitioner-researchers who can bridge academic and practice and policy worlds, and practitioners in the workplace who undertake research to inform practice and service improvement.

### Objective 2:

Develop a skilled research workforce of national and international standing that can undertake high quality research.

### Objective 3:

Through the work of the Wales School for Social Care Research (DEEP programme) and the ExChange model, support connections and bridges between research institutions and policy and practice settings to support facilitating research-minded social care organisational cultures.

### Objective 4:

Support the development of tools and processes for social care practitioners to engage with evaluation and research in their setting and undertake research.

### Objective 5:

Support the development of incentives to engage in research, drawing on examples in clinical health research such as time awards for NHS clinicians.

### Objective 6:

Actively support and showcase the value of social care research and reflect this in the funding for social care research.

### Objective 7:

Review ethics and permissions processes for social care researchers.





## Case study

### Workforce and organisational development

Consultant social workers in Wales take a lead in developing evidence-informed practice and supporting development through the balance of practice, research and mentoring. Their experience, commitment to practice, and development of expertise, combined with the mentoring and coaching part of their role leads to more effective interventions with individuals, families and groups. Evidence is growing about the contribution of consultant social workers to research cultures within social care workplaces.

**The CPEL (Continuous Professional Education and Learning)** framework is a suite of programmes that has been designed to support career pathways for social workers in Wales. The CPEL framework has been commissioned and approved by Social Care Wales, and is delivered by an alliance between Cardiff, Bangor, Glyndŵr and Swansea universities.

The three programmes are designed for social workers at different stages in their career but the framework is shaped to allow practitioners to extend their knowledge and expertise while remaining in practice. There is an unrelenting focus on practice throughout all modules, and an opportunity to engage in a research project with relevance to practice. The programmes are delivered using a mixture of face-to-face and distance learning, including online learning. The rationale for this is to allow flexibility for hard-pressed practitioners, as well as equality of access across Wales.

**For more information about the programmes and accompanying material, visit [www.cpel.ac.uk](http://www.cpel.ac.uk)**



## 9. Focus area 5 – Communicating and using research

### 9.1. Why is this issue important?

A major challenge for social care is ensuring practitioners and policy makers have access to the results of research evidence, so that policy and practice, as well as service organisation and delivery, take into account the best available research evidence.

For evidence dissemination to be effective, a culture of research mindedness within social care organisational environments is also required, so that staff are both able and motivated to engage with research and make use of it. There is also a need to overcome the perception that individuals operate either as researchers or practitioners, but not both. The view of practitioners as passive recipients of research findings also needs to be overcome.

Another challenge is the question of how to enable access to research evidence in an understandable format that enables organisational leaders and practitioners to inform practice. For example, the way that research is communicated can create barriers to its adoption by those without research backgrounds. Individuals working in social care are also often restricted in their ability to access academic journal articles and some research databases. Time pressure in social care work schedules is a recognised issue, too.

A number of steps can be taken to address these challenges. Health and Care Research Wales and Social Care Wales jointly developed the *Knowledge mobilisation pathway* (Appendix 2). It provides a structured process through which existing resources can be harnessed and co-ordinated to provide evidence syntheses to support policy development, and to fund new research where knowledge gaps are identified.

Furthermore, as recommended in *Mobilising the use of research into practice for impacts on health and wealth*<sup>14</sup>, social care organisations need to develop their own internal processes and mechanisms to support knowledge dissemination and bridge building between research, practice and policy. Researchers should also aim to engage with the social care sector to maximise the utility and impact of their research. This will help them meet the requirements of the Higher Education UK Research Excellence Framework (REF), and produce evidence with the potential to inform and improve social care organisation and practice.

Responsibility for this area is shared across a number of stakeholders. First, research funders, such as Health and Care Research Wales, need to prioritise applications for funding with the potential to produce evidence that is relevant and useful to social care. Second, researchers need to disseminate their research findings and try to undertake research with the potential to have an impact on social care. Third, social care organisations need to ensure staff are able and supported to access research evidence, and use it in practice.

This strategy takes the view that many of these challenges can be overcome by establishing regular and effective dialogue between people working in practice and policy development, and those undertaking research. A concerted effort is needed to create structures and processes to support on-going communication between those communities.

<sup>14</sup> National Institute for Social Care and Health Research (NISCHR) and Academic Health Sciences Centre (AHSC) (2014) *Mobilising the use of research into practice for impacts on health and wealth – Recommendations of the AHSC Knowledge Transfer Task and Finish Group to NISCHR, Welsh Government.*



## 9.2. What we will do

This focus area has five objectives. They will be achieved by the strategy's main partners working together.

### Objective 1:

Through the Wales School for Social Care Research and Social Care Wales, develop and support on-going formal arrangements for social care researchers, leaders, and practitioners to regularly engage in focused dialogue to forge much stronger links between research and practice.

### Objective 2:

Adopt the *Knowledge mobilisation pathway* (Appendix 2) as standard working practice in strategy development, ensuring that all new Social Care Wales strategies are developed following a review of the best available research evidence.

### Objective 3:

Develop a range of strategies for practitioners and organisations to access research evidence, including SCIE resources, and online databases and resources that are relevant to Wales and Welsh legislation.

### Objective 4:

Publish guidance to encourage and support social care organisations to develop research mindedness and improve research knowledge dissemination.

### Objective 5:

Support social care researchers to plan for maximum utility and impact, and help researchers effectively communicate their research results to the practice sector (following the Recommendations of the Academic Health Sciences Collaboration (AHSC) Knowledge Transfer Task and Finish Group to Health and Care Research Wales).<sup>15</sup>

## Case study

### The Developing Evidence-Enriched Practice (DEEP) programme, Wales School for Social Care Research

DEEP is a Welsh initiative that has, at its heart, the motivation to make the world a better place. DEEP uses a range of techniques within an appreciative, democratic, narrative- and dialogue-based approach to learning and development. This process comes alive when different sorts of knowledge, including research, come together to enrich practice.

**The DEEP approach has five elements, which all need to be addressed.**

**Element 1:** Valuing and empowering all the people involved in a project.

**Element 2:** Valuing and using a range of evidence.

**Element 3:** Preparing the evidence, so that it is interesting and relevant.

**Element 4:** Facilitating the exploration and use of evidence.

**Element 5:** Recognising and addressing the national and local organisational circumstances and obstacles.

Contact Nick Andrews at [N.D.Andrews@Swansea.ac.uk](mailto:N.D.Andrews@Swansea.ac.uk)

<sup>15</sup> National Institute for Social Care and Health Research (NISCHR) and Academic Health Sciences Centre (AHSC), Mobilising the use of research into practice for impacts on health and wealth – Recommendations of the AHSC Knowledge Transfer Task and Finish Group to NISCHR, Welsh Government.

## List of abbreviations

ADSS Cymru	Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru
AHSC	Academic Health Sciences Collaboration
CASCADE	Children's Social Care Research and Development Centre
CPEL	Continuing Professional Education and Learning
CIW	Care Inspectorate Wales (formerly the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales)
DEEP	Developing Evidence-Enriched Practice
NHS	National Health Service
NISCHR	National Institute for Social Care and Health Research (predecessor to Health and Care Research Wales)
R&D	Research and development
SCIE	Social Care Institute for Excellence

# Appendix 1

## Health and Care Research Wales Guidelines for Social Care Research

According to Health and Care Research Wales guidelines<sup>16</sup>, social care research should broadly focus on at least one of the following:

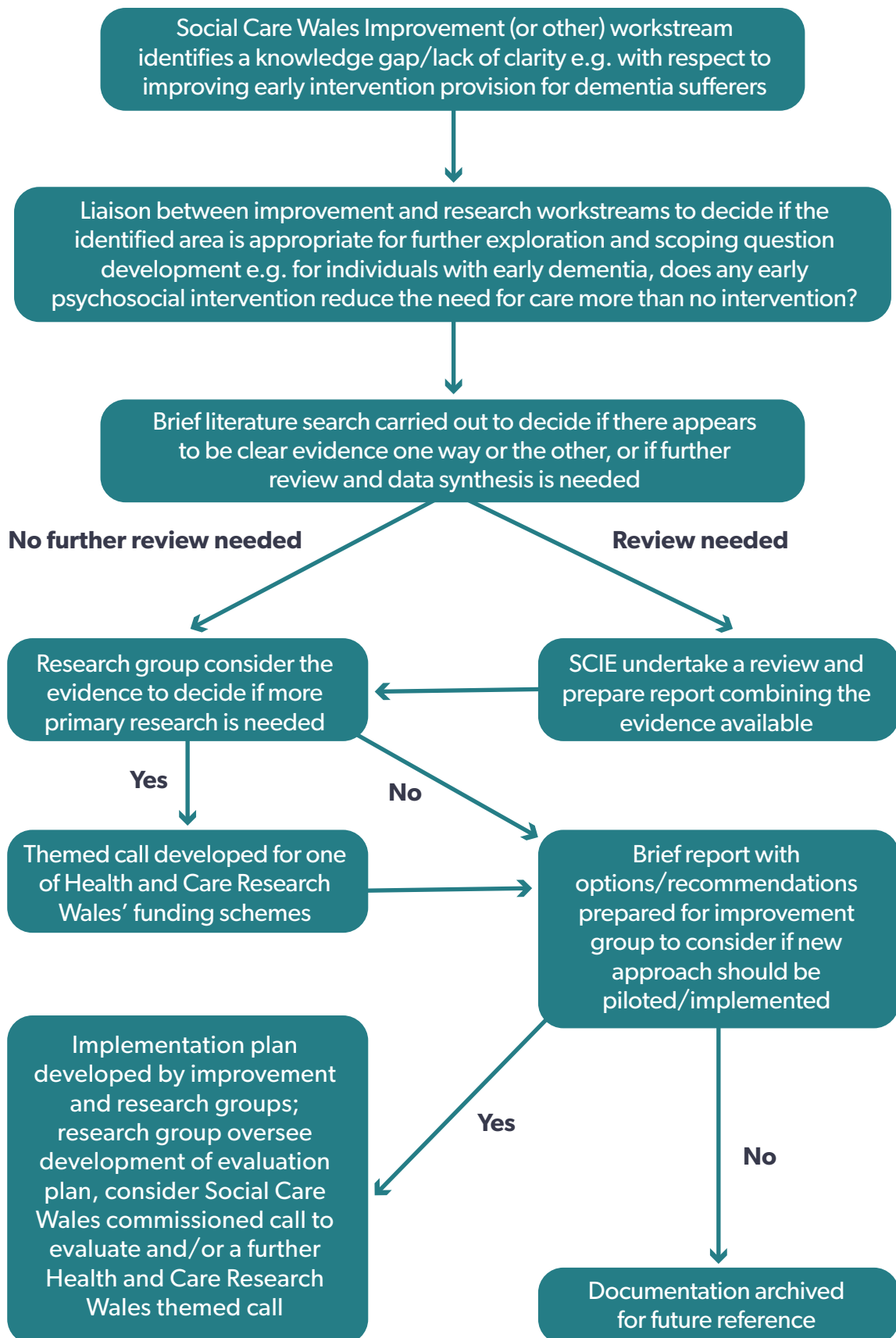
- The provision of care, support, and personal assistance in the context of interpersonal relationships, whether formal or informal, in relation to: activities of daily living, maintenance of independence, social interaction, enabling the individual to play a fuller part in society, assisting individuals to manage complex relationships, and assisting the individual to access or receive services from a care home or other supported accommodation or to take advantage of educational facilities.
- The provision of: advice; practical assistance in the home; assistance with equipment and home adaptations; visiting and befriending services; meals; or facilities for occupational, social, cultural and recreational activities outside the home.
- The provision of: protection or social support services for children or adults in need or at risk, or those with social needs arising from illness, disability, age or poverty.
- The social needs of people receiving social care, and the services or initiatives addressing those needs, including: prevention of deterioration; promotion of physical or mental health; improving opportunities and life chances; strengthening families; and protecting human rights.
- The organisational systems, infrastructures, care settings, and/or personnel involved in the management and leadership, commissioning, provision, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of care and support services, and/or the interface between; or impact of the above on related systems such as healthcare, education, housing, and the criminal justice system.



<sup>16</sup> [www.healthandcareresearch.gov.wales/research-support/](http://www.healthandcareresearch.gov.wales/research-support/)

# Appendix 2

## Proposed Social Care Wales high-level knowledge mobilisation pathway





Gofal Cymdeithasol **Cymru**  
Social Care **Wales**



Ymchwil Iechyd  
a Gofal Cymru  
Health and Care  
Research Wales

*Endorsed by Health and  
Care Research Wales*

**Social care research and development  
strategy for Wales**  
2018-2023

